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Frontiers in Organizing Processes

Collaborating against Human Trafficking/Modern Slavery for Impact and Sustainability

Edited by

Kirsten Foot, Elizabeth Shun-Ching Parks and Marcel Van der Watt

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Editorial

Special Issue "Frontiers in Organizing Processes: Collaborating against Human Trafficking/Modern Slavery for Impact and Sustainability"

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Multiprofessional, interorganizational, and cross-sector collaboration is widely recognized as essential to counter human trafficking. Considerable effort is invested in collaborating against human trafficking, both between and within countries. Recent and long-standing illustrative examples of such efforts include the initiative by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to foster public–private partnerships [1], the "enhanced collaborative model" multidisciplinary task forces funded by the United States (US) Department of Justice [2], and technologies such as the Online Community Platform [3] recently launched by the National Freedom Network in South Africa that allows for information to be shared more easily and facilitates access to resources and opportunities for organic collaboration between organizations on the African continent.

To be sustainable, such collaborative efforts must result in positive outcomes for the collaborating partners and demonstrable progress against human trafficking. However, the processes of organizing and leading robust collaborations are complex and challenging—and understudied. This Special Issue of *Societies* helps redress this knowledge gap by presenting the work of researchers and collaboration leaders in the anti-trafficking arena on ideas and evidence-supported practices for creating, catalyzing, and sustaining collaborations to counter human trafficking. The scholarship and practices presented in this Special Issue are situated in the "3P" paradigm [4]—prosecution, protection, and prevention— that continues to serve as the global framework to combat human trafficking. The articles herein not only provide support for the importance of partnership as an addition to the original "3P" (thus, 3P+1) foci [5,6], but also for the proposed fifth 'P'—participation—that denotes the active engagement of all multidisciplinary collaborators in efforts against human trafficking [7,8]. Furthermore, on 15 December 2022, UN resolution 77/194 (Trafficking in Women and Girls) implored governments and multi-sector stakeholders to implement a comprehensive approach to human trafficking combating efforts that is bolstered by partnerships and measures to prevent the crime; prosecute traffickers; and identify, protect, and support the victims of such trafficking. The importance of collaboration between governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and financial institutions was emphasized in the resolution [9].

The nine substantive articles that comprise this Special Issue include six research articles and three concept papers. The authors who contributed to this Special Issue include collaboration developers and coordinators, experts on law enforcement and survivorship, and scholars with a wide range of academic expertise areas including criminal justice, decision science, gender studies, history, management, politics, psychology, public affairs, social work, and sociology. Their articles address multiple kinds of collaborations that aim to counter human trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation and labor exploitation.

As a collection, these articles employ an impressively diverse array of methods of data collection and analysis, including (in alphabetical order) agent-based modeling, case analysis, community-based participatory research, developmental analysis, interviews, meta-analysis, participant observation, predictive modeling, surveys, and thematic analysis. The methods by which the knowledge presented in the articles of this Special Issue was generated reflect distinctly different epistemological lenses: some articles use a post-positivist lens for knowledge construction, and others use an interpretive lens. All of the articles address pragmatic concerns regarding the practices, processes, and/or outcomes of collaborating. Most importantly, they illuminate understudied but important aspects of organizing and sustaining innovative forms of collaboration to counter human trafficking and ways that collaborators from diverse sectors perceive the experience of collaborating.

There are four emergent themes that tie these articles together: (1) local anti-trafficking partnerships, (2) collaborating in order to innovate, (3) collaborators' perspectives on collaboration, and (4) developing and sustaining collaboration efforts. Juliana Rinaldi-Semione's and Ben Brewster's article, "Galvanizing Local Anti-trafficking Partnership Work Using Intelligence: Profiling the Problem and Building Resilience" [10], and Derek J. Marsh's article, "Understanding and Pursuing Labor Trafficking Cases Collaboratively" [11], both engage the first theme of local anti-trafficking partnerships. Three articles, i.e., Andrea Nichols, Sarah Slutsker, Melissa Oberstaedt, and Kourtney Gilbert's article, "Team Approaches to Addressing Sex Trafficking of Minors: Promising Practices for a Collaborative Model" [12], Matt Kammer-Kerwick, Mayra Yundt-Pacheco, Nayan Vashist, Kara Takasaki, and Noel Busch-Armendariz's article, "A Framework to Develop Interventions to Address Labor Exploitation and Trafficking: Integration of Behavioral and Decision Science within a Case Study of Day Laborers" [13], and Marcel Van der Watt's article, "Discouraging the Demand that Fosters Sex Trafficking: Collaboration through Augmented Intelligence" [14], all exhibit various facets of the second theme of collaborating in order to innovate. The third theme in this Special Issue, collaborators' perspectives on collaboration, is central to the work of Tonisha Jones in "Perceptions of the Benefits and Barriers to Human Trafficking Interagency Collaboration" [15], as well as Charles Hounmenou's and Sachi Toepp's article, "Exploring Private Investigation Agencies' Experience of Collaboration with Law Enforcement in Investigations of Human Trafficking Cases" [16]. Finally, the emergent theme of developing and sustaining collaboration efforts in this Special Issue is exhibited in the work of Jennifer Paul Ray's "Conceptualizing Task Force Sustainability" [17] and Annie Miller, Julie Laser, Annjanette Alejano-Steele, Kara Napolitano, Nevita George, Natcha Connot, and Amanda Finger's article, "Lessons Learned from the Colorado Project to Comprehensively Combat Human Trafficking" [18]. Together, the articles in this Special Issue offer insight into organizing processes that foster sustainable collaborative partnerships across sectors, expertise levels, and interests through a wide variety of methods and approaches to counter human trafficking/modern slavery. We anticipate the content of this issue will be of interest to researchers, policy-makers, anti-human trafficking professionals across sectors, collaboration developers, leaders, technologists, funders, and community members who want to learn more about how to take part in this work.

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Concept Paper

Galvanizing Local Anti-Trafficking Partnership Work Using Intelligence: Profiling the Problem and Building Resilience

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Abstract: Prior research has evidenced the importance of collaboration and multi-agency partnership work in responding to human trafficking in both the UK and US. Three previous key studies are synthesized in this paper. We situate multi-agency anti-trafficking collaborative work within conceptualizations of "resilience" and mechanisms by which to achieve it, and draw comparisons between the structure, organization, and activities of anti-trafficking partnerships in the UK and US. We present results, reflections, and discussion regarding the utility of local-problem diagnosis and multi-agency, using collaborative intelligence analysis as a mechanism to galvanize and organize local partnership action, resulting from action research conducted in one police force area. We posit the replication of this "problem profile" exercise as a mechanism for anti-trafficking collaborators to galvanize their aims and day-to-day efforts to make their communities resilient to human trafficking. We close by arguing for resilience as a framing for this mechanism and for local collaborative efforts.

Keywords: anti-trafficking; antislavery; multi-agency partnership; problem profile; resilience; task force

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1. Introduction

This article discusses its subject matter in two country contexts: the UK and the US. The terms "modern slavery" and "human trafficking" function as umbrella terms in those countries, respectively, that encapsulate many diverse forms of exploitation, including human trafficking, forced labor, criminal and sexual exploitation, forced marriage, forms of child slavery (including sexual exploitation), and debt bondage [1]. These diverse forms of exploitation (hereafter simply referred to as "human trafficking") are present in countries all over the globe and are estimated to affect up to 50 million people [2]. People who are trafficked can be forced to work against their will for little or no pay, exploited commercially for sex, held in domestic servitude, and forced into criminality. The methods and means through which victims are exploited vary widely and continually adapt to local demands for labor and services, often rooted in force, fraud, or coercion [3,4].

In addition to serious and organized crime, a wide variety of complex and entrenched factors underlie the challenge of human trafficking, including structural and societal factors such as levels of education, access to economic opportunity, embedded cultural norms, institutionalized business practices, economic development, conflict, human rights observance, and democracy [5]. Multiple cause-and-effect relationships link these factors to individuals' or communities' vulnerability—or resilience—to trafficking. They stretch beyond criminal enforcement and are intrinsically connected to aspects of community, place, and locality. These issues are also generally determined and governed at a local level but are frequently overlooked in the development of anti-trafficking strategies. Addressing the challenge of trafficking—from prevention through to achieving sustainable freedom for individuals and societies—therefore also requires the engagement of a wide range of actors, including local governments, statutory (government-mandated) and voluntary services, businesses, and publics. Social, community and professional networks may also be part of the solution due to their implication in the occurrence of human trafficking. For this reason, some studies

have called for more attention to community-based initiatives and the process of building "resilience" against human trafficking [6–8].

Within this framing, local communities themselves become vital "first responders" to victims of human trafficking and play important roles in providing long-term survivor and recovery services, as well as to the facilitation of prevention initiatives that are sustainable in the long term [9]. Yet, the role of these organizations (local government, non-governmental, community, and faith-based) in helping understand local issues is frequently underestimated, and local efforts can suffer from a lack of focus, accountability, and direction even in situations where a formalized partnership among such organizations exists.

Human trafficking itself is not constrained by administrative or jurisdictional boundaries, and the specific types and ways that exploitation occurs can vary considerably by geographic locality and region, and according to a range of determining factors. Furthermore, previous studies have identified not only significant gaps in the understanding of human trafficking by practitioners, but also in the cohesion of different organizations working against it [10], while research by Gardner has shown significant implementation gaps between national policy and local on-the-ground response [11].

Therefore, it is vital that efforts to address human trafficking are underpinned, in part, by a local and accurate problem diagnosis that provides the intelligence picture, or "problem profile" of trafficking in that area, describing the nature, frequency, and contextual conditions that surround local manifestations of trafficking, according to what information and data are available. Such an approach, for example, can enable partnership structures to draw upon principles of situational crime prevention (a framework for developing crime reduction strategies that rely on the contextual understanding of a given crime issue) to develop offender deterrence strategies, organize local knowledge, inform the requirements of crime commission [12], and to increase opportunities for criminal deterrence by removing opportunities and incentives to offend (p. 335, [13]). As part of a wider approach to building local resilience to human trafficking, we use the problem profile as a mechanism to demonstrate the collaborative benefit of multi-agency working, and the coordination of multi-sectoral skills and expertise as a means of further developing a locality's multi-agency anti-trafficking response (in the UK, antislavery partnerships are roughly counterpart to US human trafficking task forces).

In this paper, we draw from three previous articles. The first, an empirical study by Rinaldi-Semione [14], focuses on establishing conceptions of freedom and resilience from across the anti-trafficking field and provides insights into the structure and functioning of anti-trafficking partnerships in the US and UK. The second, containing conceptual research by Gardner et al. [8], is used to define the idea of 'antislavery resilience' and provides a framework for its use within anti-trafficking partnership settings. Finally, we draw new insights and reflect on Brewster et al.'s work to operationalize aspects of the Gardner et al. resilience cycle within one such anti-trafficking partnership setting [15].

We premise that organizations that are currently engaged in local anti-trafficking responses can work together to develop an understanding of the underpinning issues associated with human trafficking, which can result in a significant improvement of the coordination and specificity of localized anti-trafficking interventions. We open with an overview of the anti-trafficking partnership landscape in the UK and US. We then synthesize two conceptions of resilience against human trafficking—a concept that is core to our paper. Next, we detail what a problem profile is, what its significance can be for local anti-trafficking partnerships and communities' resilience against human trafficking, and how a problem profile was developed and used by one UK anti-trafficking partnership in Nottinghamshire County. We argue for the problem profile as a mechanism to galvanize local partnership work and build community-level resilience. The problem profile itself is rooted not only in foundational concepts but in a process that will be described later in this paper. Finally, we reflect on the preponderance of police leadership in anti-trafficking partnerships in both country contexts, drawing our reflections mainly from the process of completing the problem profile that is described in this paper. We conclude that viewing

local anti-trafficking efforts and activities through a resilience framework—and operationalizing resilience using problem profiles—sets up anti-trafficking partnerships to be effective for the organizations that participate, as well as for survivors and those who are vulnerable to being victimized in their communities.

2. Anti-Trafficking Partnerships

Globally, efforts to address human trafficking continue to have momentum, with partnership work that seeks to build cooperation and collaboration between different organizations—in one form or another—forming a central pillar of the anti-trafficking landscape. Before advancing the discussion of how anti-trafficking collaborations can build resilience using a problem profile, it is important to understand some of the key characteristics of collaborations in the UK and US, which are the subject of this paper and the studies that have informed it.

These partnerships exist at many different levels. They range from international networks advocating for systemic change, to local organizations in specific localities that collaborate on operational incidents within specific towns and cities. These networks are driven and led by a range of actors, including international organizations, law enforcement, local government, and faith- and community-based organizations, and for a range of different reasons. At the international level, the UN's Alliance 8.7 brings together a range of UN bodies, international NGOs, and the International Labor Organization to drive global action against slavery in service of the UN Sustainable Development Goals [16]. Other initiatives from faith groups, such as the Catholic Church's Santa Marta Group and Church of England's Clewer Initiative, have also increased in number and visibility at the national and regional levels [17,18]. Additionally, non-profit organizations, such as The Salvation Army, often engage in partnerships at many levels and in many capacities, from that of delivering direct victim services in local communities through to national and international collaborations to influence legislation and policy.

These collaborations can vary significantly in scope and objective. However, they have in common that they attempt to foster collaboration and draw upon the skills, experience, and roles of organizational partners in some form of anti-trafficking activity. Partnership activities often align with one or more of the three Ps that have become institutionalized across anti-trafficking work: prevention, protection, and prosecution. Some of the approaches taken by collaborations act as strategic platforms, are about building networks and facilitating knowledge exchange, while others are more operationally focused, attempting to mobilize frontline practitioners and members of the community to identify and prevent individual instances of exploitation.

2.1. UK Anti-Trafficking Partnerships

Since the introduction of the Modern Slavery Act in 2015, the UK has seen a "patchwork" of multi-agency partnerships emerge [19]. These partnerships, typically organized along police-force boundaries [19], have been signposted as vital components of the national human trafficking response and are cited within key national policy documentation, such as the Home Office Modern Slavery Strategy, as "essential" and established as a top priority [20]. These partnerships typically involve both private and public sector organizations and seek to bring together their skills, responsibilities, and expertise [21,22].

The most visible examples of collaboration exist where organizations have existing legal responsibilities related to human trafficking—such as statutory safeguarding responsibilities (in the case of local authorities) and police. It is understandable, then, that in these instances relationships are forged and driven by individuals within the police or a local authority. However, other government organizations, including the national labor inspectorate and immigration authorities, are also regular collaborators. These groups are often focused on work including victim identification, law enforcement, intelligence collection, and "days of action" targeting particular risk areas—such as airport arrivals or particular business types, such as car washes and beauty parlors [23].

A year after the implementation of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, the UK government commissioned an independent review into the Act's effectiveness as a criminal justice response to human trafficking. The resulting report indicated that partnerships have a potentially significant contribution to make in local-level responses. The report also advocated for partnerships to take a more active role in the collection and synthesis of data and intelligence from different partners, building on pre-existing relationships and networks in some UK regions between police, local authorities, the voluntary sector, and other partners in relation to child sexual exploitation [10].

While there has been support and some advocacy for partnership work within the UK anti-trafficking discourse, it is not a legal requirement. Moreover, the Home Office[1] has not significantly acknowledged the role of partnerships in the national human trafficking response. In fact, Gardner has argued that while national implementation of modern slavery responses are mostly joined-up and coupled with policy, policy solutions, and political advocacy, they are not being translated into practical solutions at the local level [11], leading to inconsistent and extremely localized responses in different areas of the country. For example, staff churn appears to be a significant inhibitor in this area. This was observed as a trend across five UK regions in a study by Brewster [23], with partnerships often shown to be contingent on key policy entrepreneurs or "special people" to drive forward activity [11]. High levels of churn across organizations means that impetus is prone to stalling, as key individuals change roles or organizations. On the other hand, the formal structure and culture of many law enforcement agencies, specifically means that portfolio responsibility is handed over more effectively even during times of turbulence and high staff churn [19,24].

Noting the above, it is perhaps unsurprising that official guidance on the implementation of multi-agency work is also limited. However, other organizations have stepped up to fill this gap in the absence of statutory support. For instance, the UK National Audit Office's "Stolen Freedom" report on reducing modern slavery and the Local Government Association's guide to modern slavery, which has been developed in conjunction with the Office of the UK's Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner (IASC), provides some guidance on multi-agency work [25–27]. Moreover, an online toolkit of resources curated by the IASC and University of Nottingham Rights Lab provides a repository of guidance including examples of promising practice, provided in-kind by antislavery partnerships themselves [28]. The toolkit includes information on topics that include partnership membership, objectives, resourcing, monitoring, and evaluation. Progressing through the resilience cycle to develop a clear diagnosis of local or regional issues can also be a key step towards building sustainable, place-based, antitrafficking efforts [8].

The lack of clear official guidance on which organizations should be involved in partnership work, and what they should do, means that the structures that emerge do so organically, and with relative autonomy, driven by local anti-trafficking entrepreneurs. While this gives flexibility in responding to local needs, it also means that there is inconsistency in the organization, the activities that partnerships undertake, and their overall focus. This is also impacted by the largely unfunded nature of partnerships, making them reliant on the commitment, knowledge, and often the drive of a few individuals to build and sustain momentum [11]. This inconsistency is even visible through the interchangeable use of "network" and "partnership"—despite public policy and local governance scholars making clear differentiations between partnerships as organizational structures and networks as modes of governance [21].

Multi-agency partnership structures in the UK have their origins in safeguarding (i.e., statutory efforts to protect the health, wellbeing and human rights of citizens, enabling them to live free from harm, abuse, and neglect [29], most notably in relation to children [22,30]). However, the activities undertaken by UK-based antislavery partnerships are seldom limited to safeguarding [24]. In fact, research shows that safeguarding is not even the most common activity anti-trafficking partnerships engage in. Instead, intelligence acquisition, training, and awareness-raising feature as common and well-received

activities [23,24]. Survivor support, victim identification, and referrals were also shown to be common [24].

2.2. US Anti-Trafficking Collaborations

This section briefly introduces US anti-trafficking collaborations for two reasons. First, several US collaborations were involved in one of the studies from which we draw conceptually in this paper. Second, we will ultimately suggest that "profiling the problem" of human trafficking can be an impactful and worthwhile exercise for galvanizing local anti-trafficking work not only in the UK (where most of the studies we appeal to were focused) but in the US.

Speaking broadly, US human trafficking collaborations—often called task forces—are the counterparts to UK antislavery partnerships. They are cross-disciplinary or multi-sector, they acknowledge the strength of coordinated anti-trafficking efforts, and they are focused on ending human trafficking locally [31]. Like UK partnerships, task forces are not uniformly structured or resourced and not all of them provide the same services or follow the same focus on prosecutions or prevention. The phenomenon of naming task forces is also inconsistent in the US, though "task force" is the prevailing label regardless of what descriptors precede it (e.g., Wisconsin Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force, Tennessee's Human Trafficking Task Force Initiative, etc.) [32].

There are also dissimilarities between UK and US collaborations. For example, many US task forces are funded, at least in part, with federal money. They are often also co-led by a law enforcement agency and a victim service provider (often an NGO). The latter fact is connected to the required "co-leadership model" for applicants to the Office for Victims of Crime's "Enhanced Collaborative Model Task Force to Combat Human Trafficking" grant scheme [33].

At the federal level and trickling down to the regional and local levels through the influence of funding, the US as a nation operates on the three Ps paradigm: prosecution, protection, and prevention. Occasionally, agencies and organizations will appeal to a fourth P: partnership. Task forces in the US embody the fourth P as a mechanism for achieving the others.

3. Resilience

The concept of resilience is key to our proposed approach to galvanizing local anti-trafficking partnership work. Our rationale for discussing resilience is linked to the role of localized efforts in building not only resilience but landscapes that are sustainably unfertile for human trafficking. Our rationale is also linked to the reality that anti-trafficking collaborations exist, in part, because trafficking is already present in their localities. This means that there are victims and survivors—not just vulnerable people and potential victims—who need to be considered in building those landscapes. Two resilience studies are described below, followed by a statement on the significance of resilience for local anti-trafficking work.

3.1. Conceptions of Resilience

The first of the two studies about resilience that we synthesize is by Gardner et al. This work conceptualizes "resilience" as a process for understanding and addressing local "social determinants" of resilience to exploitation [8]. The approach is adapted from Holling's model of eco-systems resilience, which argues for the idea of resilience as the adaptive capacity of a system to respond to change—or, as a response to vulnerability (p. 394, [34]), [35]. In it, Gardner et al. posit that the capacity to build resilience is dependent on different local or regional resources (or "assets") to address human trafficking. However, the availability of such assets can vary significantly. For example, the range and density of services in large and densely populated urban environments can be vastly different from smaller rural towns and villages, requiring that interventions be shaped accordingly. Gardner et al. conceptualize such assets as "social determinants of resilience."

Within their model, these assets exist across two axes. On one axis, assets are arranged according to whether they are at the personal (individual) level, are related to culture and locality, are legal and regulatory, or structural. On the other axis, they are arranged according to whether they play a role in prevention, discovery, respite and recovery, or sustainable resilience (see Figure 1) [8]. For example, such assets might include spot-the-signs training at a personal level to aid in the discovery of victims; at the locality level, the availability of safe and suitable housing to provide respite, and at the regulatory level, the legal mandate to provide victims with adequate physical and psychological health support.

Figure 1. The social determinants of a slavery-free community (originally in Gardner et al. [8]).

Gardner et al.'s [8] contextualized model outlines the resilience cycle and draws upon four conceptual phases to inform the development of local communities that are free from slavery (see Figure 2). This approach is based on established principles from the field of ecosystems[2] and identifies four stages of activity that are strengthened after each cycle.

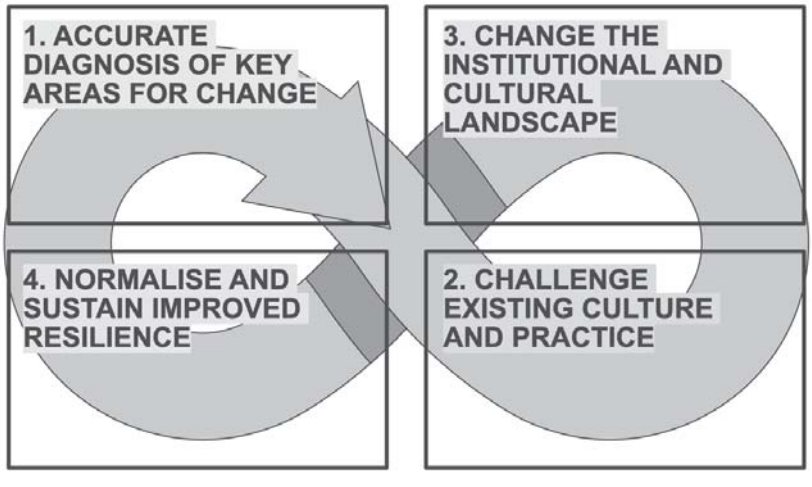

Figure 2. Adaptive cycle of resilience to build slavery-free communities (originally in Gardner et al. [8]).

The first stage of the cycle concerns the *diagnosis of problems and potential solutions*. Building resilience involves, first, an understanding of vulnerability and risk. Local manifestations of trafficking and exploitation can be understood more clearly through the analysis of risk factors, and by illuminating geographic, demographic, or sectoral weaknesses that can manifest as threats. This process can also contribute to the recognition of community assets that can help to address different forms of trafficking. By taking inputs, tools, and datasets from different local stakeholder organizations, local trends and intervention points can emerge.

When we describe the development of a problem profile later in this paper and argue for its use in local anti-trafficking partnerships, we are describing an approach to working through the first diagnostic stage of the resilience cycle.

In its second stage, the cycle encourages the *challenging of hierarchies and systems*, and initiates a process of community development involving a broad and varied range of actors who meet, validate, and exchange ideas on the risks and vulnerabilities identified during stage one. During this process, actions are prioritized for implementation, and learning from both within and outside the shared community. The process may also be informed by the input and voices of trafficking survivors, who are well positioned to challenge systemic weaknesses and imbalance.

The third stage of the cycle aims to begin the process of *changing the cultural and institutional landscape*. Specifically, this phase explores the assets and innovation that are needed to enable and foster change, especially in response to the structural determinants that were identified as promoting local vulnerability to human trafficking in stage one. This process is not isolated to government and law enforcement partners; however, others, such as the media and local business, can play important roles in creating the necessary context and will to enable and embed change.

Finally, the fourth stage considers any changes to governance, legislation, and policy that are needed to effect positive change and to embed, *normalize, and sustain resilience*. This stage focuses on monitoring and evaluating the progress being made to address trafficking, share learning, and further initiate governance changes—if they are considered necessary. The adaptive cycle is a continual process. Its purpose is not to be used as a singular linear exercise with a definitive endpoint, but as something that is continually used to adjust, adapt, and re-evaluate local work, enabling continuous improvement in a locality's response to human trafficking. Although not every problem can be resolved at a local level, by working together across key areas of action, anti-trafficking collaborations can create a context in which it is more difficult for diverse forms of exploitation to take root or retain their footing.

The second study about resilience that we draw from in this paper was undertaken by Rinaldi-Semione. In it, resilience was identified as a key component of the definition of "freedom from slavery"[3]. The full definition of freedom revealed by this qualitative–quantitative study in the UK and US was, "having free will, or the ability to do things without feeling controlled, coerced, pressured, or forced to do so; usually experienced together with choice or resilience" [14]. This is a composite definition that represents 11 unique conceptions of freedom that were discovered. The research found that free will is always paramount to freedom, and that the secondary characteristic of freedom will either be choice or resilience (pp. 208–210, [14]).

Within this research, resilience itself is broadly understood as the ability to overcome challenges or thrive, despite a previous experience of slavery. This can be experienced at the individual level (e.g., "Never seeing yourself as a slave and never accepting slavery, even if others once treated you like a slave") or at the community level (e.g., "a community deciding to work together to end human trafficking") [14]. Of the 11 conceptions of freedom, four were characterized by an emphasis on resilience. These four conceptions are:

1. Freedom as personal resilience and a positive experience of the world, "[placing] a high value on personal, internal resilience and on positive experiences of the external world";

2. Survivor-centered comprehensive resilience, where resilience is twofold. First, it means that "an individual is able to recover from their previous experience of slavery and to withstand future threats of victimization." Second, resilience "is society's ability to recover from slavery and withstand future instances of it";
3. Resilience against past enslavement and future harm, which is focused on survivors as individuals and contains three elements. Resilience against "past enslavement" "involves recovery from all aspects of that experience, culminating in a survivor's ability to live a day without reference to the physical and psychological experience of trafficking. Resilience against future harm involves having the ability to protect oneself against various types of harm, including . . . the recurrence of enslavement." This conception of freedom "also involves the internal resolve of 'never seeing yourself as a slave and never accepting slavery, even if others once treated you like a slave'"; and
4. Resilient self-perception and dignity, which "emphasizes an individual regaining control over their self-perception" and, secondarily, "being healed from the damaging effects [of trafficking] and healed from the physical harm [caused by trafficking]" (pp. 145, 152, 155, 173, 187–189, [14]).

Community-level resilience against trafficking was linked to individual resilience for survivors and to conceptions of freedom at large. This was one of the major findings related to resilience to emerge from Rinaldi-Semione's research. Within the conceptions of freedom named above, there were several specific elements identified as important for the community or societal level. These are:

- Access to justice against traffickers, which "speaks to a survivor's access to legal justice against their perpetrator . . . but is predicated on the idea that justice would be available to them in the first place. A society that facilitates justice not only supports the resilience of survivors but its own resilience to modern slavery through the righting of wrongs";
- The ability to defend oneself "against people who try to limit your well-being, dominate you, or traffic you", which both refers to an individual's resilience and "also speaks to . . . the societal level because it implies that perpetrators will have less success committing future modern slavery crimes against survivors and, by nature of being less successful in their designs toward individuals, will have less success in . . . society . . . If an individual is less vulnerable, society is less vulnerable." The ability to defend oneself "might include making use of the structures society has in place to protect and maintain individuals' rights or well-being, including making use of programs aimed at supporting survivors";
- "A community deciding to work together to end human trafficking," which is indicative of a community-level commitment "to a resilient future alongside its commitment to the resilience of individuals within that community who have already been victimized";
- Having dignity and having one's "humanity recognized by others," which is an aim in which an individual can only have limited success if their community does not acknowledge their dignity. This community responsibility has some structural elements at its core, but must also be implicit in the ethos and behavior of community members toward one another—including toward victims and survivors;
- "Living in a world without abuse or oppression," which is, similarly, a quality of society that an individual can only have limited success in securing for themself;
- Being "given an equal opportunity with everybody else to thrive" is, again, an element of resilience that depends upon a community and that cannot be created by an individual; and
- Being "protected in the areas of life where you are vulnerable," which can play out differently in the lives of specific individuals, but which relies wholly on structures and norms at the society or community level (pp. 155–156,189, [14]).

3.2. The Significance of Resilience in Local Anti-Trafficking Partnership Work

The link between resilience and freedom offers additional impetus to resolving effective, efficient pathways to resilience in local partnership working. There has been a recent discussion of resilience in the context of anti-trafficking efforts. When Gardner et al. introduced their resilience framework and social determinants model, they borrowed from the field of ecosystems studies. They said, "we ground our analysis in the eco-systems resilience of Holling (1986, 2001) who argued that resilience is the adaptive capacity of a system, and 'can be thought of as the opposite of the vulnerability of the system' (Holling, 2001, p. 394)" [8]. While the resilience framework and community-level social determinants of resilience (tailored to human trafficking) that they provide are significant contributions to the anti-trafficking field, this conception of resilience can be strengthened by a focus on the place and substance of resilience as more than the "opposite of vulnerability." Rinaldi-Semione's work provides an understanding of resilience itself that is grounded in community-level anti-trafficking efforts. Together, the two pieces of research create a more complete picture of the links between human trafficking, anti-trafficking community efforts, and resilience. Additionally, together they provide rich, operationalizable concepts and frameworks that can be of great benefit to the various actors engaged in anti-trafficking collaborations.

According to the results of Rinaldi-Semione's study, resilience can be understood as communities' and individuals' ability to overcome challenges or thrive, despite a previous experience of slavery. This conception of resilience, coupled especially with Gardner et al.'s social determinants model, can be readily operationalized in location-specific efforts to build resilience and the freedom it bears out—both at the community and individual levels. As a consistent conception, it is relevant at all stages of the resilience cycle.

Take, for example, the description of "survivor-centered comprehensive resilience"—one theme in how anti-trafficking collaborators and survivors explained the details of how "thriving despite a previous experience of slavery" plays out. Under this theme, achieving individual recovery from a "previous experience of slavery and [the ability] to withstand future threats of victimization" might be accomplished through a focus on social determinants across multiple levels of society, such as support for survivors, support for the vulnerable, and access to employment (see Figure 1). These example determinants are relevant to all four stages of the resilience cycle (see Figure 2).

4. The Problem Profile

4.1. Overview of a Problem Profile

The third piece of research that is central to our paper is by Brewster et al. and centers on the creation of a problem profile within one UK anti-trafficking partnership [15]. Problem profiles are a form of intelligence product used in UK policing, as defined by the UK College of Policing's Authorized Professional Practice (APP) database, and are part of the UK National Intelligence Model. Problem profiles are also recommended at the UN level. Problem profiles are typically developed by police forces to provide understanding of established and emerging crime, to establish details on crime trends and hotspots, and to highlight potential prevention, intelligence, and enforcement opportunities [36,37]. APP guidance goes on to state that problem profiles should consider a range of information sources (including those external to police) with the purpose of answering the "what, where, when, who, and how" of crime issues in the processes assessing the risk posed by a particular issue—in this case, human trafficking. When used within policing, problem profiles and other intelligence products are used to prompt action to address identified issues through the management of enforcement plans and operations and the allocation of policing resources, according to local requirements. In a practical sense, this can include the deployment of preventative measures—such as surveillance initiatives, community awareness campaigns, increasing resources to investigate incidents linked to specific crime trends, the proactive targeting of suspected offenders, or crime and disorder hotspots.

Used within a partnership context, however, problem profiles take on a different and additional meaning—and here we position the problem profile as a part of the first stage of developing resilience, and as a key mechanism through which to *diagnose local problems and identify possible solutions*. Within policing, data collection, intelligence analysis, and tasking and coordination are vertically integrated internal functions. However, within partnership settings, organizations are bound by their own objectives, functions, and resourcing constraints. While police may be well placed to play a role as key conveners of partnership activity—due to their inherent ability to attract organizations' attention [23]—they are not necessarily able to task and coordinate partner organizations in the same way as they would their own resources. In this sense, the role of the problem profile shifts from directly influencing policing action to galvanizing the activity of partners, and influencing and focusing partnership action-planning activity onto key problem areas identified throughout the development of the profile. The development and utilization of a problem profile can then demonstrate the collaborative benefit of multi-agency work, and can combine the skills and expertise of multi-sector partners as a means of further developing a locality-specific multi-agency anti-trafficking response.

The idea of collaborative advantage is especially important. We posit that anti-trafficking stakeholders have the potential to be more "than the sum of their . . . parts" through effective partnership working [23][4]. That is, by working together, organizations that share the remit to address human trafficking can achieve more by working together than in isolation. These partnerships, regardless of the public program or agenda on which they are focused, usually involve both public and private sector organizations.

4.2. How a Problem Profile Can Galvanize Local Anti-Trafficking Partnership Work and Build Resilience

Developing a "sustainable place-based resilience against exploitation" is one of the underpinning bases and benefits of creating a problem profile. Empowered with a rich understanding of resilience, collaborators undertaking a problem profile can target their efforts not only toward addressing identified issues of exploitation, but also toward supporting and building freedom for survivors who are already known to them—and for those who will be discovered through ongoing anti-trafficking efforts. For example, in Nottinghamshire, where local collaborators have gone through the process of creating a problem profile, labor exploitation was found to be the most common type of human trafficking affecting the area, and the dominant demographic was non-British nationals [15]. One potential application of resilience as "communities' and individuals' ability to overcome challenges or thrive, despite a previous experience of slavery," [14] could be to target the use of assets toward developing safe migration pathways (addressing the community level for future protection of community members) and access to employment (supporting both current and future individual survivors) (see Figure 1).

The problem profile can act as a catalyst for cohesion and actionable commitment for partners in anti-trafficking collaborations. It sits very naturally in the first stage of the resilience cycle and its assessments of assets and challenges—together with a plan for leveraging the former to address the latter—can guide progression through to the following three stages of that cycle (see Figure 2). If a collaboration were to follow the flow of the resilience cycle, partners should reevaluate the problem profile and update it on their return to the first stage.

5. The Methods and Process of Developing a Problem Profile

In this section we offer a discussion of the methods and process of operationalizing stage one—problem diagnosis—of Gardner et al.'s resilience cycle [8] by creating a "problem profile" of human trafficking. Our discussion builds on an abbreviated description of this work within Brewster et al. [15], and offers additional reflection, an insight into the process of co-creating the problem profile with stakeholders operating within one UK police force jurisdiction (which corresponded to the geographic remit of an anti-trafficking partnership),

describing several layers of co-development that were built into the process at different stages of the profile's completion.

Our research involved an initial analysis of data which was then combined with qualitative insights and case studies elicited from anti-trafficking partners during the consultation period to develop a report. Further consultations were then held through a series of workshops with partnership members and other local area anti-trafficking stakeholders to discuss the findings and to plan actions for future partnership activity. Using the problem profile, we sought to inform the decision-making of core partnership members, such as the police and local government, and with them, plan actions to be taken forward by the partnership and its members. At its core, the report provided contextual insights into the specific nature of human trafficking and its reported scale in the focus area, foregrounding in the process any relevant emerging or current criminal trends or threats.

For example, it revealed that criminal exploitation and labor exploitation accounted for around two thirds of recorded incidences in the area, with child criminal exploitation accounting for a significant proportion of the exploitation in the area—broadly reflecting national trends of recorded victims taken from the National Referral Mechanism (NRM)[5] during the same period. Criminal exploitation in the UK frequently involves the exploitation of children and young adults through a process known as "county lines," which involves the migration of illegal drugs (frequently, heroin and crack cocaine) between urban and rural or coastal areas [38–40][6].

Additionally, and through consultation with non-police partners, we sought to establish any intelligence gaps by qualitatively examining whether the representation of trafficking within the profile was consistent with what they understood and encountered professionally, the reasons for any disparity, and opportunities for collaboration between organizations that may assist in the illumination of previously unknown or misunderstood issues. Through the profile we also sought to create a map of local assets (support services, accommodation, etc.), highlight potential vulnerabilities within local service provision, and assist in the prioritization of risk and action planning to enable the informed operational resourcing of actions both by police and the partnership more widely—aligned to the national modern slavery strategy that follows the paradigm of the four Ps: pursue, prevent, protect, and prepare.

These aims were realized following four thematic workshops with organizations involved in the partnership. Partners were encouraged to challenge the initial draft of the problem profile—recognizing that organizations that interact with different aspects of anti-trafficking work hold valuable contextual insights based on their professional experiences and knowledge—such as those who work in survivor support settings. These discussions were used to negotiate access to additional data that could be used to close intelligence and evidence gaps, and to develop joint actions to address key challenges identified by partners. Inputs from the focus group were added alongside initial findings from the police data to inform our analysis.

Within the resilience context, this period of consultation and workshops formed part of how we practiced phase two of the resilience cycle introduced earlier, the *challenging of hierarchies and systems*. Having identified locality-specific determinants and assets during the process of developing the problem profile in stage one, these workshops were positioned as a community development process—sometimes even beyond the core membership of the partnership. The workshops involved the discussion and validation of risk and vulnerability and were used as a vehicle through which to prioritize and implement action and to share effective practice.

The first of the themes covered in the workshops related to assets, accommodation, and survivor support. Partnership members cited a need for an iterative review of survivor care practices in line with national "Survivor Care Standards," including the development of a unified referral pathway within the police-force area, and further engagement with organizations whose operations intersect with anti-trafficking work but that are not formally a part of the partnership. The second theme focused on the then emerging challenge of

child criminal exploitation (CCE) and county lines. An increase in the number of children being referred through the NRM referrals meant that they were conscious of the need to raise awareness and educate young people on issues, including grooming and CCE, to engage more effectively with parents, and to involve additional partners linked to youth justice and gang intervention services as part of their work. The third theme focused on communicating with communities. Partnership members identified a need for targeted engagement with specific communities where they understood there to be a high risk of exploitation, but where the perception of risk was not resulting in high numbers of referrals. Young people, people with cognitive impairments or who are homeless were specifically referenced as examples of groups needing to be targeted more proactively. Finally, one workshop focused on other emerging threats and trends. Partners identified emerging concerns related to the exploitation of young people as money mules, and communities that have little engagement with statutory organizations. The limited availability of intelligence from neighboring counties on cross-border issues was identified as a another gap.

The problem profile itself contains sensitive information. As such, it was shared locally within the partnership but is not more widely available. However, a publicly available research briefing summarizes the core components of the problem profile and a supplementary guide outlining why and how to create a problem profile has also been published [15,41].

6. Addressing the Preponderance of Police Leadership: Reflections after Completing a Problem Profile

In both the UK and the US, police and other law enforcement actors are frequently found in leadership roles over multi-agency anti-trafficking collaborations. The issue of who is best placed to chair and coordinate partnerships has been quietly debated among and between partnerships in the UK for several years. In the UK, "the majority of police forces . . . are working with an anti-slavery partnership at strategic or operational level" [24]. In both the UK and US, police lead a significant number of partnerships and task forces [19,24], as was the case in the studies that this article draws from. In the UK, this is at least partly because partnership funding is scarce, and where it does exist one likely source is Police and Crime Commissioners [19]. It has further been suggested that this trend of police leadership as either partnership chairs or coordinators is "symptomatic of a high level of emphasis on enforcement, and not enough on victim identification and survivor support, reflecting some wider criticisms of the overall national agenda" within the UK's anti-trafficking movement [19,24]. However, the reverse may also be indicated in this trend. That is, this leadership may well be interpreted as "a policing acknowledgement that modern slavery is not a problem that can be managed effectively through enforcement alone. And in this respect, the policing drive for partnerships, and the involvement of other statutory and non-statutory organizations can be considered as a recognition of the need for a joined-up and victim-focused response" [19].

Previous research identified funding and resourcing as key topics of discussion within UK-based antislavery partnerships [19,24]. The research identified that much of the activity and partnership work in the UK did not receive dedicated funding, with work typically funded from the existing individual budgets and staff time of participating organizations. Whilst the research identifies that organizations still view partnership activity as part of their core remit, the lack of dedicated resources for partnership activity makes it very difficult for any specific activity to be undertaken to address challenges that were identified, and puts partnerships on precarious footing, at risk of becoming a series of meetings with no actions or outcomes. The same report finds a divide between partnerships that saw multi-agency work as a core function that did not necessarily require or warrant specific dedicated funding, and those that perceived a lack of dedicated funding to be a significant barrier that limited the abilities of partnerships to effectively coordinate work and render them vulnerable to funding cuts and changes in organizational priorities. For partnerships that did attract funding, such as from Police and Crime Commissioners, NGOs, or the

police, this was often limited in scale—and provided only the means for secretariat and meeting costs rather than specific funding for service delivery and other activities.

In the US, the prevalence of police as leaders in anti-trafficking collaborations is at least partly driven by the OVC's requirement that task forces under the federally funded Enhanced Collaborative Task Force Model have a law enforcement co-lead [33]. There are documented challenges around non-police partners collaborating with police in the US anti-trafficking context, though these are not exclusive to police in collaboration leadership roles [42]. Anecdotally, from within task forces, there have also been complaints about the police as being heavy-handed, arrest-focused, or uneducated about human trafficking and engaging with victims. These complaints are regular enough that police even on long-established and generally successful task forces can be the first to point them out. One police partner interview for the study concerning freedom (introduced above) said that he and his police colleagues were used to being viewed by other partners as the "bad guys" in collaborations [14]. Therefore, in the US, as well as in the UK, there can be an animosity or resentment over whether police are the best stakeholders to be leading collaborative anti-trafficking efforts—especially those with a focus on delivering victim support.

Speculatively, a further reason law enforcement leadership might be so prevalent in both countries that are the focus of this paper may be that funding for law enforcement bodies themselves is far more stable than it is for many of the non-profit, business, and lower-profile public agencies with which they partner. That is, law enforcement bodies are likely to survive financial ebbs where other partners may not, because even if their remit is affected by changes in funding, their existence will not be threatened in most cases. Additionally, as a result of their government-pronounced mandates, they are also endowed with an authority that other partners probably are not, and that authority—under at least some circumstances—will by default include authority over their partners [42].

However, research conducted in both countries shows that police and other law enforcement partners may, in fact, be very well-suited to the task. While one common complaint against law enforcement collaborators is that they are not victim-centered enough; Rinaldi-Semione's research shows that in local collaborations, direct victim service providers do not have a strong advantage over law enforcement partners in understanding victims' and survivors' perspectives; "law enforcement professionals are not as aloof to survivors' perspectives or as coldly operational as commonly traded narratives could lead us to believe" [14]. This is true at the national level, but it is also apparent at the local level, within individual anti-trafficking collaborations. Survivors and direct victim service providers held shared conceptions of "freedom from slavery" seven out of 17 times and at four of six UK and US research sites. By comparison, law enforcement professionals and survivors held shared conceptions of freedom within those same communities six out of 17 times and at four research sites [14]. Despite research suggesting that UK-based partnerships would be better led by organizations other than the police, due to some of the challenges, partnerships continue to be overwhelmingly driven, led, and coordinated by police.

During our action research in developing the problem profile in one UK police-force area, some factors led us also to reconsider whether the police were better suited to coordinating than we initially thought.

Firstly, police were open and willing to volunteer data to create the profile—despite critiques that they can lack transparency with partner organizations or hide behind security classifications. We found a real willingness from police to invest in identifying appropriate mechanisms to sharing data—and resourcing, making raw crime, intelligence, and victim referral data available for the work—something we were not able to replicate with other organizations in the partnership, we suspect due to issues with resourcing and churn.

Police also played a key role in galvanizing and cajoling other partners around the table—inviting key personnel from different organizations to meetings, providing meeting space, and driving participation from other organizations.

Police—for better or worse—tend to have comparatively more resources at their disposal than other organizations in the partnership. A key follow-on activity following the development of the problem profile was a participatory process of identifying thematic priority areas, defining action items to address them, and assigning ownership to partners to take work forward. For example, one thematic priority area focused on the need to improve the cohesion of the multi-agency response to CCE, with actions including developing a joint county lines strategy across the partnership, identifying training needs, and mapping existing institutions working on different aspects of CCE across the region. However, with little resource or capacity available to resource work, assigning responsibility to different organizations proved challenging, with police often the ones left driving work forward.

7. Conclusions

Within this paper, we position "resilience" as a concept that equally applies to the individual ability to overcome challenges or thrive, and to "places" in their attempts to foster communities that are sustainably unfertile for human trafficking. In doing so, we offer proof of concept for a process of community-resilience building underpinned by a clear assessment of vulnerabilities and assets or levers for change [11,19,43].

We note that anti-trafficking collaborations exist, in part, because trafficking is already present in localities, and that there are victims and survivors—not just vulnerable people and potential victims—who need to be considered in building communities that are resilient to trafficking. In recent research, resilience was identified as a key component of the definition of "freedom from slavery" [14]. We apply this concept to both the individual and community and posit that the relationship between resilience and freedom gives additional impetuous to resolving efficient, effective pathways to resilience in local partnership settings. With that conceptualization, this paper discusses the operationalization of the initial stages of a collaborative, partnership-based approach to developing resilience within one UK police-force area.

We explain the role of a problem profile as a collaborative mechanism for *diagnosing a local problem and identifying solutions*, mapping community assets, and, as a catalyst, challenge *hierarchies and systems* at the local level so that communities may better address human trafficking through the identification of place and context-specific problem areas and local partnership-based actions to address them. We offered further examples of how partnerships might identify aims or the effects of resilience within their community when designing their own problem profiles and when embarking upon a resilience cycle-based approach to local partnership working.

By triangulating findings from action research in one local partnership setting with two additional studies by the authors in partnership settings across the UK and US, we also reflected upon some of the additional challenges and complexities associated with multi-agency anti-trafficking/slavery partnership work. For example, our research highlighted partnership challenges regarding leadership—particularly related to the suitability of police as coordinators and convenors of partnership work and funding. We suggest that by embarking on collaborative problem diagnosis and asset-mapping work as a first step towards a partnership approach that is grounded in the concept of resilience, partnerships can better establish a shared understanding of local assets, resources, and objectives. When seen in terms of striving towards resilient localities, this can help alleviate some challenges—for example, it ought to assist in the determination and establishment of appropriate collaboration leadership.

We believe that while the problem profile as a mechanism must be localized, its value and relevance are widely applicable across multi-agency anti-trafficking collaborations in both the UK and the US—especially when seen as a tool developed by and for a range of collaborative stakeholders from across sectors. While its roots may originate in policing, the development of a problem profile in a collaborative anti-trafficking context provides clarifying opportunities for collaborators and a valuable occasion to assess assets in a locality rather than focusing solely on challenges such as crime trends, and we would

encourage collaborations and partnerships in different settings to contextualize and adapt the approach for their own needs. Furthermore, the finished product acts as a guiding document for the decisions and strategies that were decided by collaborators during that process. Additionally, collaborators might find that the evaluation of progress against the problem profile is both straightforward and further clarifies future rounds of local anti-trafficking efforts.

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Notes

1 The Home Office is the UKs equivalent to the US Department of State. The Home Office leads and coordinates UK activity on passports and immigration, drugs policy, crime, and counterterrorism.

2 The adaptive cycle is taken from C.S. Holling's 2001 paper on Understanding the Complexity of Economic, Ecological, and Social Systems in Ecosystems, 4 (5), 390–405.

3 "Slavery" follows UK anti-trafficking vernacular and is used here because the study was undertaken by a researcher at a UK institution.

4 On Huxam's *Creating Collaborative Advantage*

5 The National Referral Mechanism, or NRM, is the UK government's policy mechanism by which trafficking survivors in the UK access government-funded support.

6 "County lines" is so-called due to the centrality of the mobile phone line which is used by dealing networks to establish a database of active drug users, using the phone as a "deal line" that connects new customers to the "out of town" dealers operating in their area.

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Concept Paper

Understanding and Pursuing Labor Trafficking Cases Collaboratively

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Abstract: The disparity between sex and labor federal prosecutions in the United States underscores the significant degree to which labor trafficking investigations and prosecutions have been marginalized since the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) was enacted in 2000 in the United States. This article focuses on the issue of labor trafficking and considers the importance of collaborating with multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional organizations to successfully pursue labor trafficking cases. Labor trafficking in the United States is defined, the importance of executive leadership support is reviewed, and suggestions for stakeholders to proactively identify potential foreign national and domestic labor trafficking cases are explored using the barrier model. A discussion of the trauma experienced by labor trafficking victims is made to further underscore the importance of including service providers in anti-labor trafficking collaborations.

Keywords: labor trafficking; collaboration; anti-human trafficking

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1. Introduction

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) was introduced in 2000, defining sex and labor trafficking and creating criminal statutes to facilitate investigations, prosecutions, and provide victim services in the United States [1]. Despite the TVPA, most local law enforcement agencies required years to begin investigating street level prostitution and residential brothels as potential sex trafficking events. The nuances between labor exploitation and labor trafficking were even less understood. In Orange County, California, labor trafficking wore a face in 2003: Shyima Hall, a 12-year-old Egyptian girl sold to a wealthy Irvine (CA) family in Cairo and who was then was subsequently brought into the United States to perform domestic services [2] (pp. 19–20).

Shyima worked 12–16-h days for approximately three to four years as a domestic servant for her traffickers. She took care of two of the five children for the family; cleaned the home, clothing, and dishes for the family; did not attend school or interact with any neighbors; and slept in one of the four garages of the Irvine residence on a mattress with one blanket and mice as frequent companions. Shyima's exploitation was discovered when a neighbor called the local police and social services about Shyima not attending school [2]. Shyima, a survivor of labor trafficking, became the early catalyst motivating local, state, and federal law enforcement to partner with victim service providers, non-profits, educators, and the faith-based community to create an anti-human trafficking task force in Orange County, CA.

Despite the labor trafficking origins of the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force (OCHTTF), the vast majority of the cases worked by task force investigators in Orange County, CA, and investigators around the country involve sex trafficking. A 2011 Department of Justice (DOJ) special report on human trafficking investigations done by federally funded task forces occurring from 2008 through 2010 showed 82% of the cases investigated were sex trafficking, whereas 14% were labor trafficking (the remainder being potential or unknown trafficking investigations) [3] (p. 3). The 2010 Trafficking in Persons

(TIP) Report documented that almost half of federally prosecuted human trafficking cases were labor trafficking [4] (p. 339). The 2021 Federal Human Trafficking Report indicates only 8% of new criminal cases were focused on labor trafficking, whereas 36% of the victims were from forced labor [5]. The 2022 TIP Report, 12 years after the 2010 TIP Report documenting approximately 50% federal cases being labor trafficking, documented 97.0% of prosecuted cases being sex trafficking and 3.0% being labor cases [6] (p. 575). The 2022 TIP Report reported concurrently that foreign national and domestic survivors of labor trafficking in the United States represented 23% of human trafficking survivors being served in the United States [6] (p. 577). The gap between the number of labor trafficking prosecutions versus the extent of domestic and foreign national labor trafficking victims is reflected internationally as well.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimated in 2022 that there are 49.6 million people estimated to be "in modern slavery on any given day" [7] (p. 2). Of those 49.6 million modern day slaves, 81.2% are trafficked for forced labor, state-forced labor, and forced marriage [7] (p. 17). In the 2020 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons (GLOTIP), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimated that 38% of trafficking cases detected in 2018 throughout the world are done for forced labor [8] (p. 95). These global estimates of labor trafficking are reflected to a degree in our foreign national victim populations in the United States. The 2022 TIP reported that 68% of the adult foreign national victims who sought federal certification as trafficking victims were labor trafficking victims, whereas more than 68% of the foreign national children seeking documentation were labor trafficking victims [6] (p. 577). The significant drop of labor trafficking prosecutions in the United States from 2010 (~50%) through 2022 (~3%) is not reflected by a substantial drop in potential labor trafficking cases or identified victims [4,6,9–19].

This paper intends to focus on clarifying issues around the investigation of labor trafficking. It is the premise of this paper that effective labor trafficking case identification, investigation, and prosecution requires the engagement of multi-jurisdictional, multi-disciplinary agencies formed into task forces committed to serving labor trafficking victims and dismantling labor trafficking criminal enterprises. This paper will briefly define labor trafficking in the United States, provide various examples of foreign national and domestic labor trafficking, and attempt to justify why law enforcement executives should prioritize labor trafficking investigations. Finally, this paper will review the importance of collaborating with victim service providers due to the scope of trauma labor trafficking victims can experience. This paper will use the Department of Justice Office of Victims of Crimes' definition of a task force: "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 response to perpetrators of this crime" [20]. Overall, I hope to inspire task forces to pursue labor trafficking investigations and prosecutions more actively or, as Smith (2020) would describe it, remove the "Labor Trafficking Eclipse" created by the belief that human trafficking is exclusively sex trafficking [21] (p. 504).

2. What Is Labor Trafficking

Fundamentally, labor trafficking occurs when a person is compelled to work against her/his will through force, fraud, and/or coercion. The federal law for severe forms of human trafficking reads: "the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery" [22]. There are several federal laws addressing forced labor, including (18 U.S.C. Section 1589) [23] and related laws, including peonage, slavery, involuntary servitude, or forced labor (18 U.S.C. Section 1590) [24]. Labor trafficking victims can be foreign nationals, domestic workers, adults, and minors [21]. Each state has their own statutes against sex and labor trafficking [25] (para. 2). In fact, anti-trafficking federal legislation has been reviewed and changed five times since the TVPA's inception, most recently in 2019 [25]. Many state laws have experienced similar processes of review and change since their origins as well.

The crime of labor trafficking is more complicated than finding labor violations. Labor trafficking is a subset of labor exploitation which is a subset of lawful labor practices. Labor exploitation includes violations such as not paying employees what was promised, not paying consistently and/or paying less than minimum wage, illegal pay deductions, and not permitting breaks and/or lunch periods [24]. Labor trafficking involves criminal acts derived from the use of force, threats of force, withholding of personal documentation, threats regarding legal status in the United States, debt manipulation, fraudulent hiring and employment practices, and coercion [24,25]. Coercion can involve the use of force, threats of force, and psychological manipulation [24,25]. Examples of coercion range from threats of violence against the victim or their family, threats regarding being deported or denying a foreign national their status, use of addictions to drugs to gain compliance, and the use of fraudulent or legitimate documents to persuade victims to comply with unsafe and unhealthy working conditions [25]. A recent analysis of labor trafficking cases found that psychological violence was the most common tactic used by traffickers [25] (p. 43). The types of labor trafficking violations can be further complicated by a victim's national and ethnic origins [25] (p. 36).

The crime of labor trafficking revolves making a profit. For instance, Tieu Tran was convicted of labor trafficking for luring three Vietnamese women into the country to work at her nail salon in 2014 [26]. Once the women were smuggled through the Mexican border, they were forced to sign documents creating significant debts for their transportation to the United States. Tran then forced the women to work both at her nail salon and her son's Vietnamese Pho restaurant to pay off their debts, as well as not paying them at all. The Polaris Project, the organization responsible for the United States national anti-trafficking hotline (888-373-7888), conducted a survey of potential victims who called the national hotline regarding labor trafficking [27]. In the 2015 Polaris Project study, foreign national labor trafficking victims working under temporary visas suffered from 11 types of "force, fraud and coercion", including economic abuse [28] (p. 5). Economic abuse involved five subcategories of labor abuses and were experienced by 68% of victims [28]. Labor trafficking investigations can be more complicated due to many factors, including the extent and complexity of the types of victimization, as well as debt manipulation and other types of economic abuse [29].

Adding to the complexities associated with the crime of labor trafficking, labor trafficking is committed throughout a wide scope of industries. Domestic servitude, such as in Shyima Hall's case, is just one type of labor trafficking. The 2015 Trafficking in Persons report documented many global industries which were "the most likely" to produce items created through slave labor; these sectors included agriculture, fishing, hospitality, transportation, and healthcare [13] (p. 23). A 2017 Polaris Project report identified 25 typologies of human trafficking in the United States after reviewing 32,000 reported cases over a ten-year span [30]; 16 of the 25 typologies identified focused on labor trafficking. Industries in the United States are not exempt from labor trafficking, and both U.S. citizens and foreign nationals are victimized.

3. Pursuing Labor Trafficking Investigations

Investigating and prosecuting labor violations has not been a traditional local law enforcement function [25,31]. Though many law enforcement agencies may have a general understanding of labor trafficking, they are not clear regarding their role with regards to investigating the criminal offense of labor trafficking [31]. Many labor code violations involve administrative or civil penalties, sanctions, and/or fines, and are pursued by specialized local, state, and/or federal agencies [21]. One study indicated that police being interviewed about labor trafficking had difficulty separating labor code violations from labor trafficking crimes, and these police were in jurisdictions with a history of pursuing labor trafficking cases [31] (p. 42). Another study found that labor trafficking was predominantly discovered through investigations of other criminal activities [25] (p. 49). In truth, basic investigation skills are all that is needed to uncover labor trafficking.

For example, during the investigation of petty theft in 2013, officers encountered an adult woman with cognitive disabilities [32]. When asked about her living situation, she said only that the people she lived with were "mean" to her. Through further investigation, the woman disclosed she was kept in a basement with her child and forced to do domestic and menial services for her traffickers for years. The traffickers coerced her to stay by exploiting her fear of snakes and dogs, humiliating her, sexually assaulting her, and physically hurting her. The traffickers forced her to work for them by making her slap her child while being videotaped, and then threatened to use the tape by showing it to social workers if she ever tried to escape. The victim stayed in an unfinished basement with her child, with little food or water available and in unsanitary conditions [32]. Perceptive law enforcement officers and case workers pursued the investigation, took the time to learn the details of her situation, and investigated and arrested the traffickers. Though an extreme example of domestic labor trafficking, this case demonstrates that labor trafficking involves multiple types of criminal misconduct, many of which local law enforcement are trained, capable, and obligated to investigate and prosecute.

An example of foreign national labor trafficking resulting from a report of possible labor exploitation can be seen in the Trillium Egg Farms case [33]. Young men and juveniles coming from Guatemala were recruited to work at the chicken processing facility. The victim's families had to put up their property to insure their positions at the farm. When crossing the border, traffickers misrepresented themselves as relatives so the victims could be admitted into the U.S. Once in Ohio, the young men and juveniles were forced to live in crowded trailers with no heating or running water and forced to work long hours (12–16 h per day) with the traffickers collecting their pay. For those who said they would not work under such conditions, they and their families were threatened with death [33]. This case too involves multiple criminal activities which distinguish it from a more basic labor code violation case. These violations would not necessarily have been observable from a patrol officer's routine patrol activities; instead, these multiple criminal violations were discovered because of persistent, victim-sensitive interviews.

Business and financial equity concerns are another reason that police executives may consider supporting the pursuit of labor trafficking investigations. Labor trafficking is motivated by profit, or at least to save money through free or underpaid services provided by its victims. Businesses engaging in labor exploitation and trafficking have an unfair advantage in the competitive marketplace [21] (p. 492). Personnel costs are a significant financial obligation for many businesses. State and local authorities recently completed sentencing of four Filipino labor trafficking suspects who operated a series of locations referred to as Rainbow Bright Day Care Centers in California [34]. Violations were discovered through employee complaints of labor violations. After a year-long investigation, authorities confirmed the labor violations and discovered labor trafficking, instances of employers raping employees, grand theft from employees, tax fraud, and false imprisonment [35]. These illegal activities had been ongoing for a decade prior to discovery and involved the victimization of fellow Filipino immigrants. Increasing profit margins through labor cost savings provides an unfair advantage when pricing products and bidding out services. This illegal practice impacts global markets, as well as local businesses: community members who are abiding by fair labor practices cannot be as competitive as those who are exploiting and/or trafficking their work force [21] (p. 492).

The low numbers of labor trafficking cases pursued and prosecuted across the United States "generally" reflect the priorities given to labor trafficking investigations and prosecutions by local, state, and federal executive law enforcement officials [25] (p. 41). There are significant examples indicating labor trafficking usually involves a constellation of criminal acts which have priority in law enforcement agencies, such as false imprisonment, torture, sexual assault, rape, fraud, and a variety of financially focused deprivations. Labor trafficking investigations can impact both foreign national and domestic communities of interest positively. Effectively pursuing labor trafficking requires a consistent commitment

of personnel and resources, as well as moving past the reactive paradigm in which most cases have been historically discovered [25] (p. 46).

4. Investigating Labor Trafficking

Being proactive with criminal cases in law enforcement has historically relied on criminal informants, officers "knowing" the streets (and now, cyber highways) within their jurisdiction, and applying elements of collaboratively focused problem-oriented and community policing. Being proactive is much easier when pursuing commercial sexual exploitation, especially of minors. Vice investigators can drive down the local "track" and find potential victims or, for those more technologically inclined, go to the web and find any number of sites offering "young" and "exotic" females and males for hire. Even field personnel can spot potential victims while driving on patrol or walking a beat.

Labor trafficking cases are more difficult to discover through calls for service or patrol checks. Labor trafficking is committed truly behind closed doors or in remote areas, in industries where law enforcement is not traditionally required to patrol. Most labor trafficking occurs outside the normal patrol beat and between jurisdictions (both geographical and agency specific). Domestic servitude and servile marriage have been discovered through calls for service related to domestic violence or sexual assault, but these cases represent only two types of labor trafficking. Many of the cases to date have not originated from in-field observations or criminal informants [21,25]. Nonetheless, labor trafficking can be done proactively.

Being proactive with labor trafficking cases requires using a victim-centered, trauma-informed approach; developing a rapport with relevant, multi-jurisdictional agencies; and sharing information responsibly while performing mutual activities with community groups, businesses, NGOs, and non-traditional administrative and law enforcement partners [36] (p. 158). According to the Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Human Trafficking in the United States, being "trauma-informed" involves appreciating how a person's victimization affects them psychologically, emotionally, and physically, while committing to both providing healing opportunities and not further traumatizing them via the criminal justice process (initial contact, investigations, interviews, arrests, prosecutions, and sentencing) [37] (p.10). "Victim-centered" means to engage trafficking survivors in the justice process, allowing them to "play a role" in the investigation and prosecution of the trafficker(s) while affirming their "rights, dignity, autonomy, and self-determination" [38] (p. 10). Those professionals, groups, and organizations who understand and practice the victim-centered, trauma-informed approach and travel in areas and jurisdictions outside normal local law enforcement's focus may provide the most actionable information to assist investigators find labor trafficking victims and cases [36] (p. 158). Nonetheless, a significant challenge in pursuing and investigating labor trafficking is finding both foreign national and domestic victims.

The current *National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking* emphasizes the need to interact with a variety of anti-trafficking agencies to successfully pursue anti-trafficking efforts [38] (p. 1). Leaders responsible for agencies engaged in anti-human trafficking efforts agree that multi-sector collaborating is critical [37–40]. Implementing the "barrier model" is a method to proactively identify and recruit diverse agencies that may be viable collaborative partners in pursuit of labor trafficking investigations [40]. The barrier model focuses on identifying five core barriers that "must be overcome in order to commit" the human trafficking of foreign nationals [40] (p. 20); however, I contend that addressing these barriers will increase the identification of domestic labor trafficking victims as well. The five core barriers include: identity, border crossings (country entry), work, housing, and financial flows [40]. Victims "crossing" these barriers provide opportunities for law enforcement and their partners to identify labor trafficking situations and victims who otherwise might remain unnoticed.

The creation and control *of identity paperwork* is the first barrier to overcome and is needed for job recruiting and placement agencies to place victims with employers [40] (p. 20).

Agencies involved with checking and confirming identity documentation are important partners in labor trafficking investigations, including Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), all levels of law enforcement, the Department of Labor Wages and Hours Division (DOL WHD), health care agencies (for birth certificates), the Department of Motor Vehicles, and immigration attorneys.

Border entry is essential for foreign national victims to be victimized in the United States; however, states and cities have borders too [40] (p. 20). Those agencies participating in border crossing are important partners, including the Immigration and Customs Enforcement, travel agencies, transportation agencies (i.e., airlines, bus and coach services), the Coast Guard, port authorities, and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). Please remember that anyone entering the country creates records, which can include those with whom they traveled and/or the vehicle they used to cross the border.

Labor trafficking involves compelling a person to *work* against her/his will. Those agencies responsible for finding jobs, placing workers, employing, and providing employment and business performance oversight are critical partners [40] (p. 21). These agencies would include local code enforcement, the state and federal Department of Labor, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), and product or work location regulatory agencies and their inspectors, such as Health Inspectors, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission personnel, and business inspectors—including fire departments.

Victims must be *housed* while they are being compelled to work. Locations can include residential homes, apartments/condominiums/town homes, commercial complexes, vehicles, and makeshift or transit housing [40] (p. 21). Those agencies responsible for the inspection and oversight of residential properties and commercial complexes and their occupants include Housing and Urban Development (including local housing authorities), local code enforcement, building inspectors, fire departments (occupancy and fire hazard issues), Alcohol and Beverage Control, parole and probation officers, homeowner and landlord associations, maintenance and utility services agencies, and medical outreach organizations.

Employers create various cash and credit *financial flows* [40] (p. 21). Agencies and organizations involved with tracking business and personal funds include the Internal Revenue Service, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, the U.S. Treasury, the U.S. Marshals, gaming commissions, mortgage/escrow companies, banks, and state tax agencies. Additional agencies could be check-cashing locations, locations producing money orders and traveler's checks, and credit card agencies (both conventional and "Green Dot" and "Vanilla" credit cards).

All of these "barriers" require victims and perpetrators to directly interact with these various agencies. Having relevant agencies trained in identifying labor trafficking situations and potential victim indicators creates greater opportunities to liberate victims and initiate investigations. However, for law enforcement to leverage these partnerships and potential intelligence, they must have pre-established relationships with these various agencies through consistent collaborative efforts.

Finally, each jurisdiction should consider their local NGOs, community groups, business entities, legal advocates, and faith-based organizations as having potential insight into current labor trafficking situations and/or access to those with lived experience. For instance, health care workers and agencies can be critical partners. Victims may require medical care for work related injuries, as well as basic medical care such as check-ups, vaccinations, and dental care. Developing the best integrated, multi-disciplinary team is critical for successful labor trafficking investigations, prosecutions, and liberating victims. The unique nature of labor trafficking crimes and situations demands criminal, administrative, and victim expertise from a wide scope of professionals, including those with lived experience.

Some additional suggestions to find and identify collaborative stakeholders with whom to create proactive labor trafficking strategies, cases, and identify victims include:

1. Collaborating with prosecutors in cases from their beginning and, when possible, having prosecutors participate in these collaborative efforts.
2. Enhance existing data tracking and intelligence databases to include ongoing information from non-criminal sources, as well as researching what intelligence can be responsibly and consistently shared with partner agencies—both law-enforcement-based and non-law-enforcement-based. Sharing relevant information responsibly and with respect to a victim's rights can be a significant bridging tool for sustaining inclusive partnerships.
3. Create and implement targeted outreach, training, and presentations in areas and with the agencies most likely to support potential labor trafficking victim populations; for example, approaching the areas in your jurisdiction that have ethnic communities and their related organizations (Chamber of Commerce, housing associations, etc.), as well as teaming up with local foreign consulates and faith communities.
4. Engage legal advocacy groups for labor trafficking victims. These agencies can determine and assist which legal relief and support can best benefit labor trafficking survivors. They can also assist with shepherding labor trafficking survivors through the court and legal systems.

Additional suggestions on creating and sustaining successful anti-trafficking collaborations can be found at the Office of Victims of Crime, Training and Technical Assistance Center website [20]. This guide was created by the Office of Victims of Crimes and the Bureau of Justice Assistance and provides promising practices by anti-trafficking professionals around the country and is updated consistently.

Being proactive with labor trafficking cases requires using non-criminal informants: citizens, community groups, businesses, and other professional and administrative agencies (federal, state, local, and tribal) that may be considered non-traditional partners for law enforcement. Pursuing these partnerships and sustaining them with shared, relevant information and meaningful activities will result in increased access to actionable information with a higher potential to identify labor trafficking cases and victims.

5. Labor Trafficking Victims

Victim-centered, trauma-informed, culturally aware approaches to victim services and investigations have become the common approach used in anti-human trafficking efforts [20,21,37,40]. Law enforcement officers and prosecutors understand these issues from their training and experiences working with child and adult victims of sexual assault, gangs, and domestic violence. Translating this training and experience into partnering with victim services providers for sex trafficking victims is done routinely by investigators and prosecutors. Most of the challenges experienced with sex trafficking victim interactions involve changing officers' and prosecutors' mindsets from victims "being prostitutes" to victims "being prostituted." The older mindset can be changed with the consistent application of victim-oriented investigative practices and teaming up with trained victim advocates and support agencies. These promising practices can be initiated from initial contact with a potential victim–survivor, to interviews, to support provided for court testimony, and through to survivorship.

Perceiving labor trafficking victims as traumatized, however, can prove more challenging. Renan Salgado, a labor trafficking victim services consultant who has worked in New York finding labor trafficking victims for 20-plus years, explains that there are many reasons why labor trafficking victims are difficult for law enforcement and other agencies to find and acknowledge [41]. Since many labor trafficking cases have centered around foreign nationals, political issues revolving around immigration can confuse the fact they are victims of labor trafficking [29,41]. Investigators may perceive a victim as willing to work in substandard conditions and with low pay, without understanding the dynamics of their victimization and victims' unwillingness to self-identify as victims of trafficking [29,41].

Victims' situations are further complicated by language limitations, cultural differences, and isolation from community and family connections [29,41]. Immigrant workers are frequently perceived to be working in our country illegally when, in fact, more than 70% of foreign national migrant workers enter the country with legal work visas [29] (p. 26). In addition, since many labor trafficking victims are not sexually assaulted, viewing them as having the same level of trauma and victimization can prove problematic for law enforcement, prosecutors, and juries. It is more intuitive for investigators to understand and prosecutors to prove how compelled sexual exploitation can result in victim trauma than it is to perceive and demonstrate in court how being compelled to work against their will for another's profit can result in equivalent levels of trauma.

The Urban Institute's study of labor trafficking in the United States in 2014 articulated the traumas potentially experienced by labor trafficking victims [29] (p. 82). The study discusses many types of traumas and lists them in seven categories, including: depriving/disorienting, threats or use of violence, demeaning and demoralizing, diminishing resistance, intimidation and control, deception concerning consequences, and use or threatened use of law [29]. The Shared Hope International Report on Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking [42] described seven types of methods of control, including: isolation, using coercion and threats, emotional violence, physical violence, sexual violence, purposeful manipulation, and economic dependence [42] (p. 37). The economic dependence experienced by sex trafficking victims is mirrored in labor trafficking victims via the withholding of paychecks, debt bondage, receiving no pay or low pay, and being forced into substandard living conditions. Sexual violence is core to the sexual trafficking victim experience, as are the threats of deportation to foreign national labor trafficking victims; however, some victims of labor trafficking suffer sexual assault and rape as part of their victimization too. The deprivation and disorientation for labor trafficking victims is like the isolation process used by sex traffickers against their victims. The trauma described in both studies, when compared, indicate labor and sex trafficking victims have substantially comparable victimization experiences. I am not suggesting sex trafficking victims experience the same trauma as labor trafficking victims; each case and victim is unique, so to make categorical assertions would be a mistake. Instead, I am arguing that the trauma experienced by both victim groups is very similar and requires equal attention when deciding whether to pursue labor or sex trafficking cases.

Previous case examples have shown how labor trafficking victims can experience a wide range of significant trauma. Another case which illustrates this point is US v. Kaufman [43]. Mr. and Mrs. Kaufman maintained an assisted living care facility for 24 years housing mentally ill and elderly clients. The traffickers used nude therapy with their "clients," resulting in sexual exploitation and videos of patients involved in various directed sexual acts. In addition, these victims were forced to work on the traffickers' farm naked and, in some cases, had their social security checks garnished by the Kaufmans [43]. It would be difficult to argue the labor trafficking victims in the Kaufman's case were less traumatized by their experiences than sex trafficking victims. Understanding victim trauma and being focused on the needs of victims are critical skills and practices required to developing, pursuing, and prosecuting successful labor trafficking cases. Having a multi-disciplinary collaboration with law enforcement and service providers provides the best chance to assist victims to become survivors [25] and to successfully prosecute labor trafficking cases [20]. In addition, the extent of trauma in labor trafficking argues for the inclusion of victim advocacy and victim services agencies being key partners in any anti-labor-trafficking task force.

6. Conclusions

There is a significant gap between the number of labor trafficking and sex trafficking federal prosecutions since the TVPA was implemented in 2000 in the United States. Short of having an anti-trafficking task force, most local law enforcement agencies do not pursue labor trafficking investigations. However, labor trafficking involves many crimes for which

local law enforcement have been trained and for which they are responsible to investigate. Labor trafficking occurs in many industries and venues, many of which do not fall under the normal jurisdiction of local, state, and federal law enforcement. Understanding the scope of labor trafficking and how it can potentially impact a jurisdiction helps justify agencies to create and sustain multi-disciplinary, multi-jurisdictional partnerships, ideally supported by the executives of each organization. These partnerships can create intelligence and leads which can result in proactively-generated labor trafficking cases and the discovery of victims of labor trafficking.

Victims of labor and sex trafficking suffer similar types of victimization. In some cases, labor trafficking victims suffer equivalent depredations. A fundamental benefit of anti-trafficking collaborations is providing the victims of trafficking the services they require and shepherding them through the criminal justice system and to survivorship, while investigators and prosecutors hold traffickers accountable via comprehensive investigations and diligent prosecutions. These efforts depend on multi-agency cooperation using trauma-informed, victim-centered techniques to inform intelligence-led cases and prosecutions. This article has articulated the importance of and methods for pursuing labor trafficking investigations with the hope of motivating and equipping readers to initiate and/or support and sustain anti-labor-trafficking partnerships.

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Team Approaches to Addressing Sex Trafficking of Minors: Promising Practices for a Collaborative Model

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Abstract: The extant research literature is lacking in its focus on community-based responses (CBRs) to sex trafficking involving minors in the juvenile justice system. To address this research gap, the present study draws from 35 interviews with social service and justice system practitioners who work with juvenile justice-involved minors experiencing sex trafficking to examine collaborative responses in two Study Sites. Specifically, protocols to respond to trafficking and collaboration with community partners are explored. Results indicate that a formal protocol engaging a team approach inclusive of multiple community partners is a promising mezzo level response to addressing the sex trafficking of minors involved in the juvenile justice system. Informal and formal relationships, establishing a shared goal, open and ongoing communication, and trust building were also found to enhance community-based responses. Implications include establishing a protocol to respond to sex trafficking in the juvenile court system when sex trafficking is suspected and/or confirmed, which would engage a CBR team involving the survivor, parent(s)/guardian(s), DJO, supervisor, investigator, judge, Children's Division caseworker, and social services provider(s). Establishing a shared goal within the CBR team and developing a pattern of communication and follow up can facilitate trust building, ultimately benefitting CBRs addressing the sex trafficking of minors involved with the juvenile justice system.

Keywords: community-based responses; collaborative response model; human trafficking; sex trafficking; DMST; juvenile justice

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1. Introduction

Community-based response models were largely developed and gained popularity following the advent of the U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act in 2000, with the aim of providing a coordinated and collaborative response to address human trafficking. The extant research examining community-based responses to sex trafficking is primarily focused on education and awareness initiatives, with the aim of increased identification, the inner workings of coalitions, and legislative efforts such as the development of a safe harbor policy. There is a dearth of literature examining mezzo level practices across organizational sectors used by practitioners when working with minors experiencing sex trafficking. In particular, little is known about the processes and ways actors within organizations interact with one another to adequately respond to the sex trafficking of minors. Drawing from 35 interviews with social service and justice system practitioners, the present study examines mezzo level practices among stakeholders in two Study Sites in a Midwestern region. Specifically, the current study explores the processes and collaboration among social and justice system practitioners in addressing the sex trafficking of minors who are involved with the juvenile justice system.

1.1. Development of Community-Based Responses

Community-Based Responses (CBRs), sometimes referred to as interagency or multidisciplinary coalitions or teams, coordinated community responses, or collaborative response models, aim to provide a coordinated service response to improve outcomes for those receiving services. While varying in their forms, CBRs typically build partnerships between social service providers, justice system personnel, and other select community partners. CBRs range from informal relationships and referral networks among practitioners in various organizational sectors to formalized government-funded interagency collaborations. CBRs first became popularized in the response to intimate partner violence and rape and sexual assault [1,2]. Decades of research focusing on CBRs involving intimate partner violence and rape and sexual assault find support for CBRs; findings show reduced future victimization, increased likelihood of willingness to use services again in the future, increased well-being, and increased satisfaction with services [2–6]. Because of the identified benefits of collaborative responses in other areas, CBRs were replicated in anti-trafficking response [7]. The U.S. TVPA unlocked funding streams for anti-trafficking collaborative models in the form of task forces, coalitions, and multidisciplinary teams [8].

1.2. Community-Based Responses to Sex Trafficking

The aim behind the development of CBRs to address sex trafficking involves coordinating and thus streamlining and strengthening the responses of law enforcement, service organizations, and political leaders in areas such as policy and legislative advocacy, prosecution efforts, social service coordination, and education and awareness initiatives within the community [5,8–10]. Initially, Rescue and Restore Coalitions and specialized task forces were tasked with providing education and awareness to the broader community, as well as professionals likely to encounter trafficking. The purpose of such efforts emphasized the identification of trafficking survivors. Related research focuses on various elements of outreach and identification, education and awareness, and prevention efforts [7,11,12]. The extant research also emphasizes the inner workings of coalitions and the benefits and challenges of CBRs. For example, collaboration facilitated by CBRs can enhance key stakeholders' understandings of a particular social issue and further develop partnerships to address it [13]. Anti-trafficking CBRs also work to build mutual understandings of various stakeholders' goals, and to develop a shared goal among CBR members providing enhanced cohesion and trust building [14]. CBRs can enhance cooperation between survivor-centered organizations and law enforcement, and increase service collaborations and resource referrals [14,15]. Furthermore, collaborative responses result in streamlined services for trafficking survivors; when services are streamlined and coordinated, outcomes for survivors are improved [16,17].

Despite such benefits of anti-trafficking CBRs, challenges have been identified as well, including developing and maintaining a shared goal and mutual trust among stakeholders. "Long-standing tensions between the law enforcement and victim services sectors are also acknowledged; these are characterized as impeding collaboration" [8]. Law enforcement's emphasis on prosecution may take precedence over the goals and long-term needs of survivors [18]. Furthermore, Jones and Lutze (2016) found that meaningful participation in anti-trafficking coalitions was challenging because of lack of formalized roles and responsibilities [19]. Bintliff and colleagues (2020) uncovered the ongoing need for enhanced collaboration and referral networks, as well as addressing service gaps [20]. Another study found that divisive perspectives on trafficking within a coalition (e.g., all commercial sex is trafficking/sex trafficking and sex work are distinct) resulted in differing policy response preferences (e.g., abolition/decriminalization), which further fragmented coalition action in community-based responses [21]. While some benefits and challenges to anti-trafficking CBRs are known from this small body of work, less is known about CBRs specifically focused on trafficked minors involved in the juvenile justice system.

1.3. Community-Based Responses to Juvenile Justice System-Involved Minors Experiencing Sex Trafficking

CBRs to sex trafficking involving minors within the juvenile justice system largely emphasize the development of domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST) courts, as well as advocating for related legislative changes, such as Safe Harbor laws [24]. DMST courts typically aim to divert minors away from punitive responses, such as juvenile detention and towards social and mental healthcare services. Safe Harbor laws predominantly focus on decriminalizing minors involved in commercial sex, and increasing penalties for traffickers as well as those who are buying sex. Other focal points of CBRs include educating others in multi-system responses to minor sex trafficking, cross-training involving multiple organizational sectors, and advocacy across multi-systems [22–24]. Developing collaborative reports and making referrals to other system partners, such as between counselors and child welfare and law enforcement is also recommended and has been identified as a benefit of CBRs more broadly [14,23]. Rebecca Bender, a survivor-leader, indicated "organizations should develop a response protocol when referring clients, and then engage in professional networking to connect with others who are credible and committed to delivering supportive practices" [20]. Yet research specifically examining response protocols involving juvenile justice-involved sex trafficking survivors outside of diversion to MST[1] courts is lacking. Much of the existing research examining juvenile justice-involved MST survivors focuses on risk factors, identification practices, or Safe Harbor laws rather than specific mezzo level CBR protocols [25–33]. Other work focusing on juvenile justice-involved sex trafficked minors emphasizes transformational relationships [30,32] survivors' positive perceptions about specialty courts [31], or survivors' negative perceptions about punitive responses they experience in social services and the criminal justice system [34]. Furthermore, research broadly indicates the multitude of immediate and aftercare needs of survivors [35–37], and that such needs are better met when coordinated [16,17,38]. Reed and colleagues (2021) indicated minors should receive a combination of services to meet basic needs, as well as mental healthcare and interventions to address trauma and safety [39]. Yet, Vollinger and Campbell (2020) found in their exploration of a collaborative task force, that respondents reported the lack of service availability and lack of centralized referral protocols as key barriers to an adequate trafficking response to youth [38].

In summary, much of the literature on sex trafficking-related CBRs focuses on the inner workings of coalitions, legislative advocacy/DMST courts, education and awareness initiatives, and survivors' perceptions of responses. The ways CBRs function specifically among collaborating organizations responding to MST is understudied [14,19]. The research is extremely limited in specifically examining the role of CBRs in responding to the sex trafficking of minors involved with the juvenile justice system, including formal or informal processes used post-identification of sex trafficking and the benefits and challenges to collaboration with community partners. To address these gaps and contribute to the small body of literature in this area, the present study focuses on the following research questions, with the aim of scaling beneficial responses and addressing challenges:

1. What are the benefits and challenges to collaboration with various community partners in social services, the justice system, and the child welfare system?
2. What processes are being used in the juvenile justice response to trafficking, and how do practitioners perceive their efficacy?

2. Methods

2.1. Sample

The current study is drawn from a larger study broadly examining the experiences and perceptions of social service providers and justice system professionals who work with minor sex trafficking (MST) survivors involved in the juvenile justice system, emphasizing micro, mezzo, and macro level responses. The present study focuses specifically on identified processes in addressing MST in two Study Sites, and related collaboration within and between systems. Data are drawn from in-depth interviews with 35 participants who were

involved in the response to juvenile justice system-involved MST in two Study Sites (henceforth referred to as Study Site A and Study Site B), including social service providers and justice system personnel who worked with minors experiencing ST. Sample information, such as job title (e.g., investigator/therapist) and Study Site location are provided in Table 1. Further sample details, including demographic characteristics, can be found in [40].

Table 1. Study Site Participants and Job Titles.

Study Site A (n = 13)		**Study Site B (n = 9)**		**Study Site A and B (n = 13)**	
Participant	**Job Title**	**Participant**	**Job Title**	**Participant**	**Job Title**
Taryn	Investigator	Dominick	Investigator	Janet	Therapist/Director, Children's Services
Kevin	Investigator	Peter	Investigator	Debbie	Therapist, Children's Services
T'Asia	Shelter staff	Phil	Investigator	Anita	Therapist/Coordinator of Prevention Education Groups
Bruce	Truancy Officer	Griffin	Investigator	Chloe	Program Director
David	Truancy Officer	Carla	DJO	Clover	Therapist, Residential and Outpatient, sex trafficking specific
Sophie	DJO	Candy	DJO	Lynda	Director, Youth Shelter
Henry	DJO	Diane	DJO	Dorothy	Therapist, Youth Shelter
Elliot	DJO	Leslie	DJO	Jenna	Case Manager, Youth Shelter
Shirley	DJO	Ruby	DJO	Amelia	Case Manager, Children's Services
Cassandra	DJO			Madonna	Director, Case Manager, Youth Drop-In Center
Shileah	DJO			Kristi	Program director, Youth Shelter
Thalia	DJO			Tessa	Case manager
Tina	DJO			Nora	Drop-In Center

Sample Recruitment

The sample was recruited through purposive and snowball sampling methods. The first author has more than ten years of involvement in a large, local anti-trafficking coalition, and has engaged in multiple research studies involving community action research methodology with the coalition. As such, longstanding relationships allowed for initial contacts and entrée into the sample of providers in social service and justice system sectors. Initial contacts included two justice system officials (one in each Study Site), two directors working in the family courts in Study Site A, and social service organizations serving both Study Sites A and B which included one director working in residential services, another director working in drop-in services, one therapist working in residential services, and one case manager working in residential services. Snowball sampling from the initial contacts, involving referrals from these initial contacts to further contacts, then led to expansion of the sample. After each interview, each respondent was also asked for referrals to other potential interviewees, consistent with snowball sampling methodology. In addition to snowball sampling from the initial contacts, purposive sampling was conducted to recruit individuals in underrepresented organizational contexts (such as foster care; homeless youth services) through referrals and email introductions from initial and snowball-sampling-derived contacts. These contacts were asked if they knew individuals working in the underrepresented areas, and were then asked for an introduction and referral.

The first wave of sampling and data collection in both Study Sites included those working directly within the justice system (n = 21), including deputy juvenile officers (DJOs), police/investigators, and truancy officers (see Table 1). DJOs in both Study Sites provide case management to juveniles with criminal or status offenses (i.e., running away, curfew violations, and truancy), and are trained to identify MST. Truancy officers in Study Site A work to identify minors with excessive absences from school and are also trained to identify MST. There are no truancy officers in Study Site B. Police investigators investigate cases of human trafficking, including MST, and were part of specific units or task forces focused exclusively on human trafficking. The second wave of sampling and data collection in both Study Sites included social service providers (n = 14), who were case managers or therapists who encounter MST survivors in various organizational contexts, such as homeless youth shelters, transitional housing and children's services residential programs, youth drop-in centers, foster care, and sex-trafficking specific residential programs for minors.

The justice system officials worked largely within a single Study Site (A or B), although there was occasionally some crossover when the minors they worked with moved from one Study Site to the other if placed in foster or other protective care, or were picked up in one location for a status or criminal offence but resided in another. However, the social service providers served both Study Sites A and B (see Table 1).

2.2. Data Collection

Interviews were conducted in person in the first author's private office (n = 3), or the respondents' offices (n = 31). One respondent chose a quiet coffee shop. At the time of the interview, respondents were given an informed consent form, which indicated anticipated risks and benefits of the project and assured confidentiality through de-identifying audios and transcripts. Pseudonyms for individuals and organizations are used throughout this manuscript. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed by a professional transcriptionist, and rechecked by the first author. Only one participant declined recording, and field notes were used in this instance. The interviews on average were approximately 30–45 min in length. IRB approval was obtained for this project. An interview guide was used, but interviews were semi-structured in nature. Additional themes were allowed to develop, following the natural flow of the conversation. The interview guide was structured to address confirmatory bias by eliciting negative cases through specific questioning about both the benefits and challenges of various aspects of collaboration.

Systems theory was used as a general framework to develop the research questions and interview guide in the larger study from which the present study is drawn [41,42]. Systems theory is an interdisciplinary organizational model centered on the interrelated concepts of (1) objects ("parts" of systems/variables), (2) attributes (qualities, aspects, properties, or contexts of the system and its objects), (3) internal relationships (collaborations within a system and between objects), and (4) the environment (external/ecological factors that impact the system). The "system" as a whole involves these interrelated aspects. The system is designed to address sex trafficking among juvenile justice-involved minors; its objects, attributes, internal relationships and collaborations, and environment were examined in the larger study from which the present study is drawn, specifically focused on the benefits and challenges experienced within these four major areas. Objects include the juvenile courts, child protective services, law enforcement, and social service organizations. Attributes include processes, policies, and practices. Internal relationships and collaborations include those that reflect both formal and informal connections between the objects. The environment includes ecological factors such as access to resources and family environments.

Data specifically examined in this study focus on the mezzo level, including processes (attributes) and collaborations (relationships) among the objects and are derived from the following interview questions and prompts: 1. What does the typical process look like when a juvenile becomes involved with the system? (Prompts: What types of services do youth receive? Is there a procedure or protocol to follow? What does that look like? What are the benefits and challenges of any procedures/protocols?) 2. What systems do you collaborate with? Can you describe the benefits and challenges of working with (each group named)? (Prompts re: justice system officials, children's division, and social service providers).

2.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis of the transcribed interviews was inductive in nature, and initially involved both open coding by hand and selective coding based upon the research design (e.g., coding the benefits and challenges of processes and collaboration with various groups). A coding tree was developed as a result of coding the first set of transcripts, and subsequent coding was guided by the coding tree. The first set of transcripts involving justice system practitioners was independently coded by three members of the research team, including two graduate students trained in qualitative coding and one experienced coder. The

second set of transcripts was independently coded in pairings of two experienced coders with two mentees, who received hands-on instruction and training. After independent coding, discussion of codes and any discrepancies were noted and recoded as a part of the multi-phase coding process. Any discrepancies in codes involved overlapping codes (e.g., something that was simultaneously a process as well as involving collaboration with law enforcement) or identification of additional subthemes which were then coded as such. Following the coding of the transcripts and identification of core themes, merged narrative accounts for each core theme were created [43,44]. The merged narrative accounts of core themes were then further coded through taxonomic analysis [45]. Taxonomic analysis involved the independent coding of the transcripts by two members of the research team to identify subthemes, who then met to discuss each individually-coded transcript to ensure reliability in the interpretation of the data and related codes, recoding overlapping areas with both codes, following the same practice as the initial coding.

3. Results

Results are presented with the juvenile courts as the primary point of interest, organized by Study Site for comparative purposes, with data triangulated by the community partners—social service providers and investigators—working with each Study Site.

3.1. Processes Used in Study Site A

Study Site A had an established process related to MST. Specifically, when any member of the juvenile court system identified or suspected MST, they reported it to the supervisor, which then engaged a team approach to the issue (see Figure 1). The team typically included the deputy juvenile officer (DJO), a Children's Division Caseworker, a detective from the Human Trafficking Unit (HTU), any social service providers they were working with, the minor, and the minor's family member(s) or guardian(s). A plan for the minor would then be collaboratively developed by the team. All DJOs offices in this Study Site were centrally located, along with their supervisor.

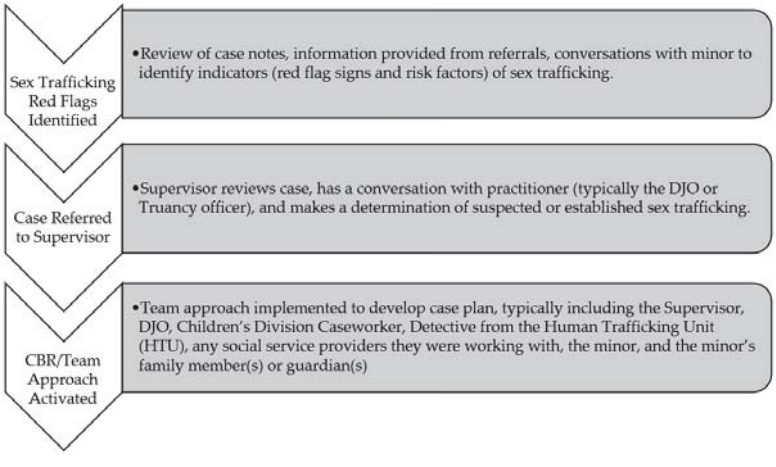

Figure 1. Process used in Juvenile Justice System, Study Site A.

To illustrate the process used in Study Site A, when asked if he had a process to follow once identifying a minor experiencing sex trafficking, Bruce, a truancy officer stated,

> What's the protocol? So, there's a long form that the chief gave us a while back and I rarely use it because it's so long. It's a lot of information we don't have. So, I'll immediately talk to my supervisor if she's here but then, the investigator,

> almost immediately, we shoot an email or a text or make a phone call and say, "Hey, I have this situation. Can we talk about it? . . . "

Importantly, in Bruce's narrative he indicates the use of an assessment tool but found it impractical to use because of its length. He indicated their process was to refer to the supervisor, and if the supervisor was not immediately available, to go to the next step in the CBR to contact an investigator from the HTU.

Internal Organizational Collaboration

Respondents in the juvenile courts in Study Site A indicated that working with people in their unit, including supervisors, truancy officers, and DJOs with prior experience working with MST, was beneficial. They were able to gain advice and expertise from their co-workers within the unit. Bruce, a truancy officer in Study Site A indicated, "So because there are people in the unit like Devan, supervisors, etc. who have gone through similar stuff, so you bounce it off the unit and get ideas." When asked, "Could you give me an example of what that might look like or how that might be beneficial?" Bruce responded,

> Right, so, I actually got a call from somebody last night at 10:34. A kid at [High School] who had some trafficking concerns. So, I didn't really know what to do with it. And so, you go and you get direction. I mean, supervisors give you direction anyway, but it's helpful for clarity because with this stuff, you really don't want to miss something. It's kind of critical. I mean, attendance- that's important. Trafficking is a different concern.

Bruce further elaborated,

> It's scary to think about the stuff these kids go through. And so when you're uncertain, you have got to have people and certainly the inner unit stuff is a good process before you even start talking to the police department and other people, just so you cover all your bases. You know, experience is important, especially if they've succeeded in helping the kid and stuff, it's really important.

Bruce indicated that having inner unit support and discussions, drawing from the expertise of other co-workers who had more experience working with sex trafficking survivors was beneficial to his work as a truancy officer when encountering survivors with identified risk factors of trafficking.

3.2. Benefits of Team Approach Used in Study Site A

When asked about her perspective of the benefits of the process used in her unit, Shileah, a DJO in Study Site A, indicated,

> I think when the child come in and see there's a lot of people who have an interest in her and want to help her. And then, each of us have our own ideas of how to bring positive things to the team, because no one person thinks the same and everybody has different ideas, but if it can be brought to the team and we can all agree to it, I think that's one of the things, you know—cause I think each team member has something to bring to the team, including the child herself.

Shileah's narrative shows that different stakeholders can offer different ideas to ultimately benefit the minor. These ideas are then collaboratively discussed, and the case plan agreed upon. Importantly, minors themselves are included in this collaboration, and have a voice in their own case plans. This survivor-centered approach centers the minor's goals and needs, and they are participants in the development of their own case plans. As Clover, a social service provider, stated, "Nothing about you without you" was a shared value among providers using the team approach.

3.2.1. Collaboration between Social Service Providers and DJOs

Chloe, a social service provider, described positive collaborations using a team approach in Study Site A, in which the courts and DJOs working within the courts engaged

not only in collaboration with particular cases, but also with working to fill gaps such as prevention, services, grant collaboration, and facilitating a team model through site visits to the residential services offered by her organization:

> With the DJOs in [Study Site A], they have been very intentional . . . . And so they've been very good about, "Okay, let's try to look at the gaps. What can we do?" Looking at it bigger than just like the courts, but how can we help supplement these other agencies? What grants can we bring into the city so that we have some different avenues. And little things like we're talking to them even right now about could we set up some groups for their kids, some preventative measures so that even if kids haven't been identified [e.g., suspected trafficking/high risk], they have these options where they can come here for services or we can go there for services. So I think they've been very intentional. And they're very good about, their DJOs come and- I think this is important. They're very good about coming to see the home and the program and wanting to know where they're referring kids.

Chloe's narrative delineates cohesion with members of the juvenile courts in Study Site A, particularly the DJOs, in actively participating in the collaborative "Team" approach, inviting the social service providers from the [organization providing services, including therapeutic residential services, to trafficked minors], visiting the residential home and learning about the services offered to inform their work, and writing grants to support service access to children at risk of or experiencing sex trafficking.

Clover, also a social service provider, described how the supervisor in the juvenile division of the family courts in Study Site A coordinated connections between DJOs and social services, making sure to include them as a part of the Team:

> She's just really good on working and making sure DJOs . . . they invite us to family support team meetings, they invite us to just about everything, and they're really involved. In [Study Site B], I've only worked with a few, and it's been a hit or miss. I'll be honest with you, that the procedures are more defined in [Study Site A], or more . . . the enforcement and follow-through . . . .Better involvement. So even if it's on the detention side, the juvenile side, or if it's on the protective custody side, I've seemed to have a better relationship because it's more . . . I don't know. I guess the enforcement of it is better . . . That's a big part of it. They bring the whole team to the table, and they're making sure that everybody's talking . . . And the [Study Site A] is kind of DJO-led, and they have a really good system. It's effective.

Clover further elaborated that the DJOs in Study Site A were effective in bringing the judges to share the goals of the team and educating judges about the dynamics of trafficking:

> And they get the judges on board. And that's the best part about the DJO's, is they get the judges on board. And so they're the ones who educate the judges on trafficking and saying, "Hey, here's the situation that we have, and we need to look at it differently." And then when we're in court and the attorney for the court presents, "The DJO is saying this," and they have their report, the judges are asking different questions now, versus just looking at behavior. They're looking at the whole scope. So the DJO is that liaison with that too, with the court. And so that helps a lot with making sure that sentences aren't punitive, or they're really looking at parents, or looking at the actual danger in the situation of the trafficking.

3.2.2. Collaboration between Social Service Providers and Judges

Like Clover, Chloe further noted that collaboration with judges was an important part of her work in Study Site A. While not a part of the Team process, judges in this Study Site

were described as having positive informal relationships with Team members, including the DJOs, supervisors, and social service providers:

> Where a lot of times, judges go based on what a DJO recommends . . . but it seems like they're very active in like "Let's look at all the pieces and see what we can do to get the services for the kids." So it looks very different and recognizing them as a victim so that was something that I've seen just in the courts as a whole from everyone I've interacted with. It's how do we get the services for the kids that they need.

This approach resulted in a shared goal between service providers and the juvenile courts, ultimately working to support the well-being of the minor experiencing trafficking.

3.2.3. Collaboration between the Juvenile Court and Investigators

In Study Site A, all the DJOs were aware of who to call and built a specific relationship with a particular police investigator. Cassandra stated, "And with most of the cases that have any form of trafficking, Detective Stark is the one we talk with." When asked about what makes the collaboration successful or challenging, she replied,

> Dedication to what you're doing. Trying to help save these kids. To me, that's it. Just being dedicated to what you're doing, knowing that you're doing something to help somebody. I mean, that's . . . We're in helping professions. And that to me makes all the difference.

In Study Site A, the DJOs had built a relationship with investigators, who were called in every case of suspected ST. They had a shared goal, which was viewed as looking out for the best interests of the kids and helping them. Communication with the investigators in Study Site A was also described as beneficial to the collaboration, as Bruce noted,

> Mr. Stark, and so, I definitely like the way he does his follow-ups, and if there's something pertinent, of course he's going to follow up . . . Because it actually happens. You know, and so sometimes it's just a professional courtesy to say hey okay, so we just took this next step with your client. There's nothing you can do about this next step we took, all right, you can't add to it, you can't stop it, take away from it. But I thought you should know this just in case it comes up when you meet with the parent or the kid. And so that stuff, in that respect, it's important.

Similarly, Shileah, a DJO in Study Site A, also described the positive interactions with detectives, highlighting good communication as key:

> With the cases I had, I describe it as very good. They [detectives] were very helpful. They kept us in contact what was going on. I was able to keep in contact with the prosecuting attorney, also with the FBI, and all of those that was involved. So they were very supportive.

Further, Shirley, A DJO in Study Site A, pointed out the importance of trust and relationship building in a collaborative system:

> I think we trust them [Study Site A detectives], they trust us, and having that good rapport, whether it starts from the police department or what not. Having that good rapport relationship with them- it helps us to build that relationship, that positive relationship, so that we can see a case through.

In Study Site A, collaboration, trust, relationship building, communication, and a shared goal were described favorably by justice system officials and social service providers alike. They appeared to have a strong collaborative model that was based on informal relationships as well as an established team approach. As Taryn, an investigator, stated,

> Yeah, I think a lot of working together with other organizations, having resources, and knowing people in those resources that you can call and contact and open

> lines of communications so that when we do have victims, we know where to send them. We can find places for them to go . . .

Kevin Stark, another investigator working primarily in Study Site A, similarly described trust building with the Juvenile Courts and DJOs, through a shared goal of serving the survivors' best interests:

> That's big. Trust is big with juvenile courts because you're looking at trust on two sides. You're looking at trust on, not just the attorney side, but you're looking at trust on the defense attorney's side to know that your goal is not to have their client incarcerated. When the defense attorney's know what you're ultimate goal is in understanding that's what you're looking at, that is the most important and key part of relationship building and trust.

Kevin further elaborated on his collaboration with DJOs:

> the good thing about is that they're able to call us after hours when they need things as well. That's big for them, because they don't have basic law enforcement contact. When they need something specific that needs to be done related to these kids, they will call . . . Typically, we find the missing kids if they're involved in exploitation, which they know that, so they'll call us and tell us hey, this particular kid is missing. They're probably involved in exploitation. What do you suggest we do? Are you able to go look for them? This is what we have set up if you find them.

3.2.4. Collaboration between the Juvenile Court and the Children's Division

One collaboration which was described as problematic by DJOs and Truancy Officers in Study Site A was with the Children's Division. Bruce indicated that once an investigation started, the communication broke down and the collaboration was nil:

> So, when we make a hotline call, after they do their investigation, then yeah, they will call us back and tell us what's going on usually. Especially if we have an active case in the unit. Usually. But in terms of collaborating an investigation-they do their own thing once they get this information. Right? And I do have a current case in the unit where initially the children's division investigator talked to me but they haven't talked to me since then about anything.

Tensions with children's division caseworkers were continuously described as problematic, primarily due to their large caseloads, which resulted in a lack of follow up, gaps in communication, and frequent caseworker turnover.

3.3. Processes Used in Study Site B

Study Site B did not have an established process to report MST to supervisors; however, supervisors were sometimes aware of cases involving MST that the DJOs were working on through informal conversations. Most DJOs in Study Site B were located off-site from where the supervisor was located. In Study Site B, there was not a formal process, rather, DJOs engaged in case management and referrals in cases of MST and relied on informal relationships largely with area social service providers (See Figure 2), particularly with an organization that explicitly provided services to sex trafficked minors. The juvenile courts did not have a specific process to contact or work with investigators. Supervisors also indicated that they did not have a specific position of Truancy Officer that they regularly worked with. There was a human trafficking task force established in Study Site B, in which investigators worked with front line officers and social service providers when cases of ST were identified. Relationships between investigators and DJOs were described by both parties as non-existent or strained; thus law enforcement was rarely a part of the informal collaborative response. However, investigators did have informal relationships with social service providers which were mutually described as beneficial. Service providers described investigators as working with minor survivors authentically, respectfully, and working for

their best interests. Investigators described service providers as benefitting their work with survivors, by providing crisis intervention, advocacy, and residential or outpatient care. Service providers also described having strong informal relationships with select DJOs, but not with supervisors or judges. Overall, the process in Study Site B could be described as fragmented; it involved various informal collaborations between various groups without any structure or cohesive inclusion of multiple collaborative partners simultaneously.

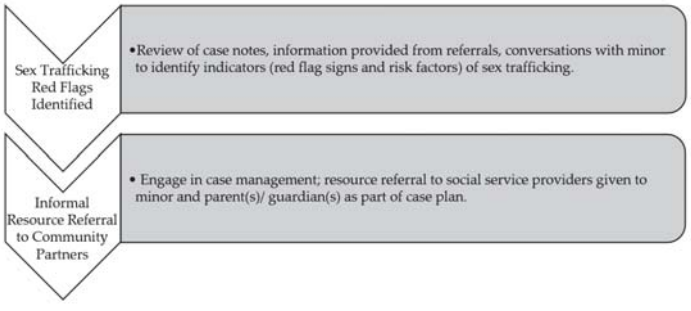

Figure 2. Process in Juvenile Justice System Study Site B.

When asked if she had a process to follow once identifying a minor experiencing sex trafficking, Carla, a DJO, indicated, "We don't have a process." Other DJOs in Study Site B similarly responded that there was no specific process in place, and there was no established formal or informal CBR process. When asked, as a follow up, "Do you think a process would be helpful?" Carla replied,

> Yeah, I do. I think we all need to be informed, because I think we sometimes think in categories, like we have the sex-offender unit, we've got the informal unit, we've got the investigative unit. I think that if we, in general, all are aware and it's a protocol for everyone, not just a particular unit, that would be very helpful.

Carla's narrative indicates that she believed having a process would be useful to bring awareness and connection among the different units in her group.

3.3.1. Collaboration between Social Services and the Juvenile Courts

Chloe, a social service provider, indicated her work with Study Site B was very positive with DJOs, but not as much with court administrators:

> With [Study Site B], it hasn't been as intentional from the administrative level, but we've had some really good luck with DJOs. So we have like 3 or 4 DJOs that I think are really intentional about looking for it [sex trafficking] and having us come in . . .

Chloe further described that their collaboration relied largely on informal relationships with the DJOs in Study Site B:

> . . . we've had really good experiences, but it's been very specific DJOs. But it's the DJOs who are seeking it out, not because they have some kind of process. And if I look at my [Study Site B] girls, they're coming to us predominantly through three DJOs. Okay. So it's usually like -and those DJOs they have my cell number. We may talk on the weekends because they're trying to figure out what's best services for their kids, but it's usually those specific three DJOs so to speak.

The DJOs in Study Site B confirmed their relationship with Chloe's organization, as Diane illustrated:

> Well first of all, I discovered them quite a while ago and asked them to come and speak to our group and our unit during a unit meeting so we could get

> information about who they are. So, that collaboration right there is a good one because they're willing to share information about who they are and what services they offer. In regards to my youth and other people's, as DJOs that are . . . have been in [Organization] and used their service, they're very prompt on letting you know what the youth, and the family, and the admission, and how they're doing.

These narratives suggest that a successful informal relationship, communication, referral process, and education and training were provided, largely through the actions of a few DJOs in Study Site B rather than a formal process inclusive of multiple community partners.

3.3.2. Collaboration between Social Service Providers and Judges

Chloe went further to describe challenges in Study Site B with judges and court supervisors:

> The difference for me is I've also had interactions with their [Study Site A] judges and their commissioner, so it's pretty universal in the sense of like I couldn't say the same thing about [Study Site B]. Like I couldn't— Like I know who the judges are, but I never had like meetings and conferences with them so to speak. Even some of the, like I said, at the administrative level, we know who each other—we've been introduced to each other. But I don't necessarily work with them as closely as—Violet and Helen [court administrators in Study Site A] . . .

Thus, there was some communication breakdown with court administrators and judges in Study Site B, which resulted in a breakdown of the collaborative model, which appeared to be rooted in a lack of formal and informal relationships.

3.3.3. Collaboration between the Juvenile Court and Investigators

Dominick, an investigator in Study Site B, similarly described positive relationships and informal connections with local area social service providers, but similarly noted a breakdown in communications and relationships with the family court system, including both DJOs and prosecutors:

> Well, it can kind of be a pain. We kind of look forward to when they [minors experiencing sex trafficking] get assigned to a facility out of the DJO system because it's easier to have access to them than it is sometimes with the DJOs, and that sometimes can allow their attorneys, which . . . Even when we try to talk to them as victims, not as a suspect of any crime, their attorneys often tell them, "Don't say a word to the police ever about anything," which then stops us from being able to help them as a victim, if that makes sense.

When asked for an example to illustrate, Dominick stated,

> Well, we had several occasions where we had notified -Through whatever means, we had notified that there is a young girl over at the juvenile building that is there that they believe is a trafficking victim, so we'll say, "Okay, we want to go talk to them." And then we'll come over to talk to them as a victim, but they say, "Well, we gotta talk to their attorney first." And then, of course, their attorneys will say, "Don't say a word."

The lack of collaboration between investigators, DJOs, and attorneys indicated that there was a breakdown in the collaborative system in Study Site B.

When asked about collaborating with police, Carla, a DJO stated, "I've been to trainings where the task force has come in and we've been trained about what to look for and all that, the signs. That's probably it." When asked if she worked with investigators or police officers in the trafficking cases she had come across, her response was, "No." She was not aware of officers to collaborate with, and said there was no process to work with police: "I'm sure there's an officer that is probably assigned, I'm just not aware of who that

is." However, Diane, also a DJO in Study Site B, did know the detective to call, in both Study Sites:

> I have had contact with [Study Site A detective] and [Study Site B police investigator] in regards to this particular youth. I don't look at anything as being any obstacles with them. . . . it's always been cooperative. I mean, it really has been with them as far as dealing with the situation. They do what they can and we do what we can. [Interviewer: What makes those relationships seem cooperative?] The communication. We communicate well and we're all on the same page. It's the concern, I think, for the youth.

In this example, Diane delineates the importance of a shared goal and the concern for the youth they worked with, as well as highlighting communication as the impetus for positive collaboration. Carla and Diane may have different experiences in collaborating with law enforcement, because Study Site B DJOs were spread across a county in different locations, with Diane being in a more central location.

3.3.4. Collaboration with Social Service Providers and Investigators

In contrast, social service providers and investigators in Study Site B worked well together, largely when specific investigators built relationships with service providers and survivors, building trust, a shared goal, and enhanced communication. Peter, an investigator working largely in Study Site B, maintained,

> I think that we-and I'm speaking about this point of contact, she and I are on the same page as far as wanting to be able to get a particular victim into a stable home . . . But I think that because we understand what is best for this victim and what's not, because we talk about it, we can relate to each other, and work towards this goal.

Peter's narrative illustrates a shared goal between investigators and social service providers in focusing on what is best for the survivor, and communicating in an open and ongoing dialogue about working towards this shared goal.

3.3.5. Collaboration between the Juvenile Court and Children's Division

Like DJOs in Study Site A, DJOs in Study Site B also reported collaboration with Children's Division as often challenging due to caseworkers' high loads and high turnover. Carla added that while they did not have a formal process specifically to address sex trafficking and develop collaborative case plans in Study Site B, there were family support team meetings established through the Children's Division, but the DJOs were not typically invited or encouraged to attend:

> It wasn't encouraged. That's the problem, too. The management in CPS does not encourage DJOs and CPS to go to family support team meetings. That's where you learn everything. That's where you learn about who their supports are, what's happening, what's not happening.

Respondents indicated that often it was the DJOs who were the constants in a child's life, because they had the most consistent presence. In both study sites, the turnover of DJOs was low, yet DJOs reported frustration at not being included in meetings, communication, or follow up in their cases involving juvenile justice-involved sex trafficking survivors.

4. Discussion

The research findings indicated some differences between Study Sites A and B related to their processes, which impacted collaborations among community partners. First, in Study Site A, a team approach was established in the juvenile court system that applied to all confirmed or suspected cases of sex trafficking. DJOs, Children's Division caseworkers, detectives, social service providers, the minor involved, and their family members/guardians were a part of the collaborative model. Respondents in both social

services and in various aspects of the justice system generally described the team approach as effective, and illustrated a high level of collaboration among various individuals and systems. This was a formal process, as the juvenile courts implemented a protocol requiring a team approach.

Overall, Study Site A reported high levels of collaboration among the various systems involved, indicated by justice system officials and social service providers alike. In the HTU, the lead investigator was well known and well liked throughout the anti-trafficking community. In the majority of interviews, he was described as the primary person to call, along with the supervisor in the juvenile division of the family courts. Interestingly, he had a background in social work as well as policing, which may account for the strong collaboration with DJOs, court administration, and social service providers.

Social service providers also indicated that their relationships with judges and administrators in the juvenile courts were strong in Study Site A. In addition to the team approach, informal relationships between detectives, social service providers, judges, and DJOs were generally described as positive, beneficial, and contributing to the overall efficacy of the system. This was described as making responses to trafficking easier and more appropriately focused on the needs of each individual child in the system. Shared goals, trust building, ongoing communication, and establishing a formal process in the form of a team approach were described as beneficial by DJOs, investigators, and social service providers alike in Study Site A. The only collaboration that was consistently described as problematic in Study Site A was the relationship with children's division caseworkers, whose high caseloads and consistent turnover impacted their ability to effectively participate on the teams in terms of communication and follow up.

In contrast, Study Site B did not have a specific process in the juvenile courts or a formal protocol; instead, DJOs engaged in case management and referral, and relied on limited informal connections to respond to MST. In Study Site B, collaboration was described as positive between individual DJOs and social service providers, and investigators and social service providers, but there was very little or strained collaboration between investigators and DJOs in most instances. Specific actors within the system in Study Site B were described as contributing to the efficacy of the system by social service providers, particularly three DJOs. While collaboration with specific DJOs and investigators was described by social service providers as positive, relationships with judges, court administrators and supervisors were described as ineffective, largely because those connections were not present; there was no real communication, and this caused ineffectiveness within the system. Essentially, service providers and DJOs in Study Site B were relying on informal relationships as they had no process or structure in place to guide their responses and collaborations. DJOs engaged in case management in order to find the best resources for their clients. Relying on these informal relationships and resource referrals was key to responding to MST, but the relationships were limited, and the communication breakdown and varied relationships between investigators and the courts contributed to the lack of a holistic team approach. The perception of juvenile court personnel that investigators would criminalize survivors, as well as the failure to establish open communication and a shared goal resulted in stymied collaboration.

While Study Site B was lacking in a formal process and team approach, specific actors within the system were described as contributing to the efficacy of the system. However, there is the possibility of a lack of continuity in structure built on informal relationships and key people, for example, if any of the three DJOs identified in Study Site B retired or changed positions, the relationship with social service providers and the courts to address trafficking would be significantly limited. Some DJOs in Study Site B indicated that they would like to establish a formalized process, as well as a team approach in all suspected cases of trafficking. This approach would create a sustainable protocol that is not dependent upon key actors in the system.

5. Implications

5.1. Team Approach

The team approach was supported by participants working in the juvenile justice system in Study Site A, as well as by the social service providers and investigators who worked with them. The study findings showed triangulated support for the team approach; DJOs, service providers, and investigators provided similar responses related to the effectiveness of this approach. The team approach is potentially scalable to other sites; thus, a recommendation of the present study is to establish a formal protocol within the juvenile courts, to establish a team approach to any case in which there is a suspicion or confirmation of sex trafficking.

In Study Site A, a protocol was implemented in which all cases of suspected MST were reported to the supervisor. This provided the first step in the process when identifying suspected sex trafficking in the juvenile courts. The supervisor then worked to establish a team meeting/team approach to address the child's needs holistically. This team approach is a form of CBR, and is supported by prior work indicating a wrap-around approach to trafficking is the most effective [17,39]. Implementation of regular team meetings to collaborate and establish shared goals and develop informal relationships to build trust may also be beneficial, as respondents in both study sites indicated that these informal relationships were necessary for formal relationships and the team approach and/or informal referral networks to work as intended. Prior work supports this approach, as one study found that coalition building may be a fruitful avenue for engaging in trust building, establishing a shared goal, enhancing communication, and building informal and formal referral networks [14].

Respondents also indicated having an assessment tool available to them that they did not use, because it was too long and cumbersome to work with. This indicates that DJOs should be aware of short assessments validated for use in the juvenile court system such as the STAR [25]. Training to identify indicators specific to MST survivors may also supplement a short assessment rather than a lengthy tool found to be impractical by respondents [11].

Respondents in Study Site A described informal relationships within their unit, in which they could go to co-workers and their supervisor for advice in cases in which they suspected trafficking. These discussions and support from their supervisors were described as beneficial. Implications include facilitating a community of support, and making it known in the unit which co-workers have the experience and expertise to provide advice. Implications also include having supervisors and judges who are well educated about the dynamics of trafficking (e.g., cross-training), as both were described as benefitting the collaborative response by the service providers and investigators who worked with them. This finding is consistent with prior research indicating cross-training positively impacts responses [22–24]. We also recommend including judges as a part of the team. Notably, collaboration included working for the interests of the minor involved, but also included things like prevention efforts and grant-related collaboration. This type of collaboration can also be supported through coalition involvement, networking, and building formal and informal relationships [14].

Such findings also parallel the concept of capacity, rooted in organizational theory research, which relates to attributes of organizations that facilitate goal achievement [46]. Inner unit collaboration, as well as collaboration among cross-trained judges, supervisors, investigators, DJOs, truancy officers, and Children's Division caseworkers facilitates informal and formal relationships and a team approach to the issue, and creates the capacity to accomplish a streamlined anti-trafficking response to the sex trafficking of minors involved with the juvenile justice system. Attributes of capacity in the present study included establishing a shared goal, trust building, and communication [46].

5.2. Shared Goals and Trust Building

Development of shared goals among stakeholders appears to be a key aspect of success/difficulty in team responses. Respondents described an ideal scenario of cross-team collaboration working toward a shared goal: what is best for the survivor. Professionals involved in response to the domestic sex trafficking of minors often have markedly different backgrounds, which may in turn be conducive to different approaches to engagement with clients. Indeed some professional backgrounds may foster mistrust of other professional backgrounds [8]. In the present study, in Study Site B, there was discord between the juvenile courts and investigators, in which survivors were essentially warned not to disclose to investigators. A history among criminal–legal system workers of treating sex trafficking victims/survivors as criminals is likely a contributing factor to mistrust. Education surrounding specific sexual victimization and sex trafficking myths (e.g., viewing survivors as such rather than criminalizing minors with prostitution) may create the common ground for re-establishing such trust.

Organizational theory research emphasizes general barriers to collaborative models, and working to address such barriers is key to trust building and collaboration [8,14,46]. Focusing attention on creating a shared goal and agreed problem definition works to address uncertainty, establish trust, and facilitate informal and formal collaboration [46]. Another facet of organizational theory research is the concept of incongruence, and the ways that divisive ideological perspectives stymie collaboration and subsequent action in anti-trafficking work [14,46]. Finding common ground through a shared goal is a way to address barriers and incongruence among collaborative partners.

5.3. Communication

Cross-training may be useful in responding to MST, to facilitate not only a shared goal, but also to enhance communication. Several professionals indicated a need for increased training, whether for themselves or others they have come into contact with during their practice. Cross-training may provide the opportunity to create communication channels, or shore up existing communication channels. Research finds cross-training improves responses to the issue [14,22–24]. There are multiple implications for communication that can be derived from the results. First, the existence of formal channels for communication may be beneficial. Though professionals in Site B had informal processes for connecting with detectives experienced in the world of MST, the knowledge was (a) not standardized across those working in Study Site B and (b) had nothing to ensure its continuity. Informal processes can be wonderfully functional; however, the success of the model depends almost exclusively on the individuals involved.

Providing a structure for communication through an established protocol and team approach would be beneficial. Respondents also described updates and follow ups from community partners as benefitting their work. This aspect of communication could potentially be built into a formal protocol. Having shared language for discussing common scenarios and issues may promote both efficiency and collaboration, and may in turn facilitate the development of a referral process across teams/groups. Research supports coalition involvement as facilitating informal and formal relationships, trust building, and establishing a shared goal [14]. Consistent with this previous research, joining or creating a coalition of professionals likely to serve on such teams is consequently recommended. Respondents in both study sites indicated experiencing challenging collaboration with the Children's Division, largely due to high staff turnover and high caseloads, which resulted in fragmented communication and a lack of follow up. Study Site B DJOs also reported being excluded from family team meetings with the Children's Division. Jones (2023) indicated that a negative collaborative environment contains barriers to collaboration among potential community partners, rather than facilitating collaboration [46]. Examining the ways an organizational structure facilitates or hinders collaboration can be used to build capacity, allowing for collaborative models to develop [36,47]. While a predictable implication, reducing the caseloads of Children's Division caseworkers and providing assistance with

addressing vicarious trauma to reduce turnover is recommended. It is difficult to build relationships, shared goals, and communication under the current conditions caseworkers are often faced with.

Jones (2023) maintained that "Collaboration can also be challenged without relevant stakeholders at the planning and implementation stages to inform and help make decisions about collaborative activities [46]." Inviting DJOs to family team meetings can also expand the communication and support network for minors experiencing trafficking. DJOs in the current study were center points of identification, service referral, and case management. Their exclusion as community partners in addressing the trafficking of children involved in the juvenile justice system is problematic. Service providers and investigators in the current study found DJO and supervisor involvement in the team approach to trafficking as highly effective in Study Site A.

5.4. Conceptual Model

Infante (1997) indicated that an integrated theoretical model can be used to build theory within specific contexts; a grounded theoretical approach [43,44] combined with tenets of systems theory and organizational theory research [41,42,46] were utilized to develop a conceptual model related to anti-trafficking response in the juvenile justice system.

As shown in Figure 3, collaboration and capacity are reciprocal; capacity includes elements of organizations that allow for and enhance collaboration, "the inputs, throughputs, and outputs that can help agencies working together on anti-human trafficking activities to achieve desired collective outcomes [45], p. 11." Collaboration allows for capacity building, in turn providing the grounding for a Team Approach protocol to address the sex trafficking of minors involved in the juvenile justice system. Collaboration is more likely to be successful if collaborative partners are able to first develop capacity. In the present study, an attribute of capacity included establishing a shared goal among stakeholders (e.g., not criminalizing survivors; obtaining the services that they need). Having a common way of conceptualizing the problem and developing a shared goal among stakeholders in turn can facilitate trust building and open communication, which better allows for addressing barriers and improving collaboration. Taken together, these facets of collaboration allow for the formal and informal relationships needed to develop and sustain a collaborative response to the issue: a team approach involving multiple collaborative partners.

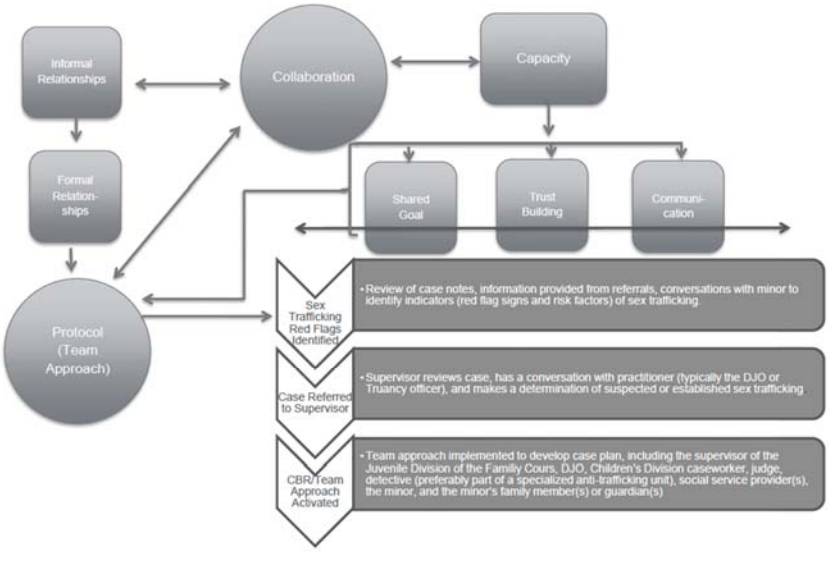

Figure 3. Conceptual Model of Mezzo Level Collaborative Anti-Trafficking Response.

6. Limitations

The current study is limited by its regional context, in that the research findings reflect the experiences and perspectives of those who work with MST in two sites in one region of the Midwest. Responses to MST vary widely across the nation, and dynamics of MST may be distinct in various regions. Yet the aim of the study was to uncover the benefits and challenges of CBRs. Key findings, such as developing informal collaborative relationships and a team approach to responding to the issue have the potential to be replicated in any system. Further, the challenges identified in this study, such as communication breakdown and lack of collaborative responses may parallel those seen in other locales, and the study recommendations may be useful for those with similar challenges or those who are in the process of developing or revising their response to MST.

7. Conclusions

In conclusion, the current study indicates that establishing a formal process in the form of a team approach to addressing MST in the juvenile courts is recommended. This study identified promising practices for CBRs, such as developing informal relationships with collaborative partners through establishing a shared goal, open communication, and trust-building. Drawing attention to challenges to guide targeted change, such as the lack of a protocol to address sex trafficking of minors in the justice system and communication breakdown among collaborative partners, is another implication of the study. Our aim in the present study was to examine processes and collaboration in community-based responses to juvenile justice-involved MST. As a result, we were able to uncover phenomena that were described as positively impacting respondents' work, as well as those that presented challenges. It is our hope that this research can be used for organizations to better identify challenges in order to address them, and to scale the formal processes and practices that benefit collaboration.

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Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author due to privacy restrictions.

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Notes

[1] DMST (domestic minor sex trafficking) is the term often used to describe sex trafficking of minors, however, the authors prefer MST (minor sex trafficking) to include survivors who are trafficked internationally.

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Article

A Framework to Develop Interventions to Address Labor Exploitation and Trafficking: Integration of Behavioral and Decision Science within a Case Study of Day Laborers

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Abstract: This paper describes a process that integrates behavioral and decision science methods to design and evaluate interventions to disrupt illicit behaviors. We developed this process by extending a framework used to study systems with uncertain outcomes, where only partial information is observable, and wherein there are multiple participating parties with competing goals. The extended framework that we propose builds from artefactual data collection, thematic analysis, and descriptive analysis, toward predictive modeling and agent-based modeling. We use agent-based modeling to characterize and predict interactions between system participants for the purpose of improving our understanding of interventional targets in a virtual environment before piloting them in the field. We apply our extended framework to an exploratory case study that examines the potential of worker centers as a venue for deploying interventions to address labor exploitation and human trafficking. This case study focuses on reducing wage theft, the most prevalent form of exploitation experienced by day laborers and applies the first three steps of the extended framework. Specifically, the case study makes a preliminary assessment of two types of social interventions designed to disrupt exploitative processes and improve the experiences of day laborers, namely: (1) advocates training day laborers about their workers' rights and options that they have for addressing wage theft and (2) media campaigns designed to disseminate similar educational messages about workers' rights and options to address wage theft through broadcast channels. Applying the extended framework to this case study of day laborers at a worker center demonstrates how digital technology could be used to monitor, evaluate, and support collaborations between worker center staff and day laborers. Ideally, these collaborations could be improved to mitigate the risks and costs of wage theft, build trust between worker center stakeholders, and address communication challenges between day laborers and employers, in the context of temporary work. Based on the application of the extended framework to this case study of worker center day laborers, we discuss how next steps in the research framework should prioritize understanding how and why employers make decisions to participate in wage theft and the potential for restorative justice and equity matching as a relationship model for employers and laborers in a well-being economy.

Keywords: labor exploitation; labor trafficking; intervention framework; agent-based models; disruption; collaboration; worker centers; well-being economy

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1. Introduction

This study proposes the extension of a behavioral framework, introduced by Battista and colleagues [1]. This framework applies broadly to problems where data are scarce, the system is only partially available, and classes of ecosystem participants have conflicting objectives. We apply the extended framework to understand interventions in the problem domain of labor exploitation and trafficking. The current study builds on research by the authors [2] that

examined the potential of worker centers as a venue for introducing interventions that disrupt illicit behavior and promote cooperation between workers and employers.

For our study, the term day laborer refers to a person that is hired for a job, without the protection of a formal contract with an employer. Jobs are usually temporary positions that do not offer job security or additional benefits. These jobs are part of the informal sector, referring to the part of the economy that the government does not regulate with taxes or social welfare benefits. Without the protection of a legally enforceable contract, day laborers are vulnerable to a wide range of types and intensities of labor exploitation. This project adds to extant literature with similar goals in the exploitation of wildlife, community operations research, social and restorative justice, and the well-being economy [3–12]. A case study in labor exploitation and trafficking is used to demonstrate the utility of the approach.

We have organized the presentation of our research as follows. We introduce our approach to developing appropriate evidence-based interventions through complex sociological system analysis and modeling (Section 1.1). Then we provide background on our application domain of human trafficking and exploitation (Section 1.2) as behavior that can be addressed through our decision-science-based extension of [1] to iteratively develop interventions (Section 2). We then apply the proposed extension (Section 3) to a case study that focuses on wage theft as the most common form of exploitation experienced by day laborers [2]. It is important to note that, as an iterative process, our application of the proposed framework in this example case study involves the first 3 steps. Specifically, we utilize an agent-based model to examine the efficacy of educating day laborers about their rights and reporting options if they experience wage theft. Finally, we experiment with the model to hypothesize additional interventional targets. In Section 4, we continue our presentation with a discussion of future iterations needed for the development of effective interventions, following the extended framework. The paper concludes with a summary of the research presented.

1.1. Approach: Intervention Design for Complex Sociological Systems

An interventional framework can be analyzed through the lens of a complex sociological system that encompasses all relevant agents, interactions, and environments [8]. Past literature has defined a social system as 'complex' if ongoing interactions exist between active agents within some established organizational structure. These structures are self-organized by either the agents themselves or molded through pressure from external systems [13]. In either case, the organizational process is maintained through the system status quo, which all agents either adhere to passively or actively enforce through interactions [14]. If these interactions continue and become habitual, any intervention which seeks to change interactions by disrupting the system will be dismissed by at least one set of agents in favor of maintaining the status quo [15].

The stability of a complex sociological system depends on an adherence to the 'norm'—A pre-established understanding and expectation of how specific interactions will go [15]. These norms are foundational to the system operation and essential for agents' engagement with one another [15]. Within the complex sociological system of the informal labor sector, the most apparent interactions are between an employer agent and a worker agent. Those outside the informal sector maintain the expectation that (1) an employer hires a worker, (2) the worker does whatever labor was agreed to, and (3) the worker is paid, after which both agents part ways. This is the external status quo expected of a formal work sector. Previous research into the informal sector worker-employer interactions revealed that most day laborers had experienced some form of labor exploitation, the most common of which was wage theft [2]. A 2019 survey found that 86% of day laborers had experienced some form of exploitation, with 66% reporting wage theft. Although wage theft may not be a generally accepted status quo, it is a norm in specific informal sectors, thus part of the status quo of the sociological system [2]. Therefore, worker agents in this system make decisions based on the understanding that they may not be paid in full but being paid in part is preferred to not being paid at all [2]. Interventions to change the

outcome of such interactions have most commonly been implemented through a top-down approach [15]. While the problem and desired outcome are identified correctly, the success of past interventions has been lacking [7]. Agents must adopt an intervention as part of the system to see significant changes [8].

In the past, methodological advances to evaluate an intervention's development, practicality, effectiveness, and implementation were considered primarily theoretical, with limited evidence of in-practice application [15]. Guidance frameworks such as the 2008 UK's Medical Research Council were instrumental in reforming public health research design by assessing complex interventions and the systems in which they operate. However, the 'whole systems' approach has been criticized for overlooking critical aspects of the system itself [16]. The most common response is an intervention focusing exclusively on the victims. Obtaining information from victims to inform a response is the accepted model for intervention creation [15]. However, this approach only brings in one-half of the participants in the established sociological system. Community behavioral theory suggests that behavior change is unlikely when only one party is being directed to modify their response [15]. In the case of day laborers and exploitative employers, an intervention approach must address all participants in the system and community, rather than attempting to change the system itself or only a part of it [8].

Integrating an intervention into a community instead of blunt enforcement deviates from previous decision-making and behavioral science literature. Intervention frameworks such as the Battista 5-step process [1,17] focus on promoting system change through a change in the agents' behavior. Such an approach is rooted in a holistic understanding of why, how, and when the participants within a system operate. The interventions can then be implemented by drawing from both victims and perpetrators to achieve the desired outcome.

Gomes et al. (2018) discuss how community-based operational research can support the development of solutions to "complex, messy problems related to public goods" [7]. Research on such complex systems has benefited from the inclusion of qualitative methods, such as observation, interviews, and surveys among ecosystem participants, to expand the evaluative framework in an iterative, adaptive process to improve understanding of fit, adoption likelihood, use propensity, barriers to adoption, barriers to successful usage, and the likelihood of referral to others. For example, Arem et al. [18] report on a mixed-method operations research evaluation of a randomized trial for an antiretroviral therapy that assessed the efficacy of peer health workers in a low-resourced community in Uganda. This assessment incorporated in-depth interviews, focus groups, and direct observation sessions in addition to clinical data. Customizable analytic methodologies are needed for successful multidisciplinary effort(s) focused on specific social-ecological systems. In the current study, we apply agent-based modeling (ABM) to examine the employer-day laborer system dynamics.

1.2. Application: Labor Exploitation and Trafficking

Legal structures and law enforcement interventions to respond to exploitation are numerous and largely ineffective because they are reactive to events that are partially observable in informal processes that generally involve little documentation. We propose strategies informed by a public health perspective that focus on multiple levels of prevention, including primordial, primary, secondary, and tertiary. Further, we propose a broad decision-making framework that is fit for developing such interventions from early exploratory research, as examined in this manuscript, through to randomized control trials at scale.

Taylor [19] reviews the Palermo Agreement's 3Ps, adopted in 2000, and the Ruggie Principle, adopted in 2011. The former established a focus on prevention, prosecution, and protection for antitrafficking efforts. The latter established that governments and businesses have the duty to protect workers built from the 3Ps. Taylor observes that the limited impact of much of what has been implemented to address exploitative practices is due to a transactional focus rather than attempting to transform systems that contain those practices. The focus shifts to extreme cases that meet specific legal requirements. Taylor concludes, "I argue that

undermining the anti-trafficking cause to more directly challenge the systems producing everyday abuses within the global economy should be a goal, if not a moral imperative, for anyone serious about making workers' lives better" [19]. To these same ends, we encourage policy and social change efforts that focus on primordial and primary prevention. Primordial prevention [20] "focuses on the alteration of societal (i.e., environmental, economic, social, behavioral, cultural) structures that affect disease risk".

Past attempts to mitigate labor exploitation have focused on protecting victims and prosecuting offenders rather than attempting to fix the root causes of exploitation and the systems that allow such abuse to occur in the first place. A study of forced labor and human trafficking by the Issara Institute found that out of 81,690 workers in Cambodia, Myanmar, and Thailand, 19,978 met the international definition of forced laborers [19]. The most common exploitative behaviors endorsed in that report were being overworked, underpaid, deceived, coerced into recruitment, threatened, abused, and placed in debt bondage. Further, attempts at combatting instances of labor exploitation occasionally involved government intervention. However, remediation efforts most often came from the employer. Since day laborers are often self-employed and do not have the protection of a larger entity, the supply chain and retail partnerships that could provide protection for laborers are usually lacking. Taylor suggests that an inclusive approach is the most effective solution, explicitly developing intervention mechanisms that encourage, advocate for, and partner with the day laborers themselves [19].

Day laborers are especially at risk for exploitation since not all forms of wage theft result from the widely accepted definition of forced labor or human trafficking. This has allowed many day laborers in financially extractive (wage below the legal minimum) but not explicitly coercive (threats or physical violence) situations to slip between the cracks. A recent report in Australia found that over half of migrant workers were paid below the minimum wage [21]. Yet, the focus on interventions continues to be on workers suffering more outright, severe forms of exploitation.

Prior research has examined policies to remediate the problem of human trafficking, specifically labor exploitation, from the perspective of assessing the efficacy of existing laws and making recommendations for improved remediation [22–25]. Davy [26] systematically reviewed the human trafficking intervention literature, concluding that intervention evaluation is a substantial need. Davy found that although there are hundreds of anti-trafficking intervention programs and millions of dollars spent annually, the impact of these programs is relatively unknown due to limited program evaluation. Improving the quality and frequency of evaluations is critical [26]. Data collection to inform future anti-trafficking interventions has failed to include victims in the data collection process, thus reducing the quality of the data relating to the program impact, the extent of trafficking, and how victims think the situation could be improved [26].

The reasons why employers exploit their employees, especially day laborers, have not been studied extensively due to the reluctance of employers to admit their illegal practices. Past literature on systemic reviews of factors that contribute to exploitation has identified that: acceptance of wage theft [27], benefits [28], and misinformation [21] are commonly cited as primary reasons that wage theft occurs. Using these drivers as a starting point, our proposed extension of Battista's framework can be applied to develop a behavioral intervention.

2. A Framework to Develop Interventions Targeting Human Behavior

Battista and colleagues [1] proposed a behavioral science-based process to develop nominal interventions for illegal fishing in fishery systems with resource levels that constrain the use of strict sanctions and extensive monitoring. Instead, their process focuses on changing participant behavior within the system. This process focuses on the social and psychological factors influencing behavior, such as norms, expectations, trust, and perceived legitimacy of regulations as the foundation for interventions. By altering the motivation and behavior of agents, interventions are longer lasting and farther reaching than limited enforcement capacities. The agents themselves enforce the social discouragement of undesired behav-

ior [29]—Illegal fishing for Battista or wage theft in our study—Rather than relying solely on pressure from external forces. Rational agents will perpetuate illicit behaviors which fall within acceptable norms, expectations, and beliefs [30]. By introducing interventions that alter these factors, continuing to act in an undesirable manner becomes too costly, and the behavior begins to change. However, people are not always rational actors [31]. Often their actions are due to automatic processes and mental unawareness [32]. Battista's framework targets for intervention the factors that most strongly influence illegal behavior.

The Battista process has broad application and is adapted here based on the lessons from a case study of labor exploitation and trafficking of day laborers. Their process focuses on changing specific illegal fishing behaviors and begins with characterizing beliefs, norms, ways of thinking, and ways of acting relative to illegal fishing. The process continues with artefactual experiments to pilot potential interventions before implementing them at scale. Specifically, Battista and colleagues develop a 5-step process, included below and in Figure 1 as Steps 1, 2, 4, 6, and 8. Motivated by our case study, we propose additional steps 3, 5, and 7 to illustrate where community operations research, specifically through simulation and machine learning, can be incorporated into this process in a manner that integrates behavioral and decision science to improve understanding of the problem domain.

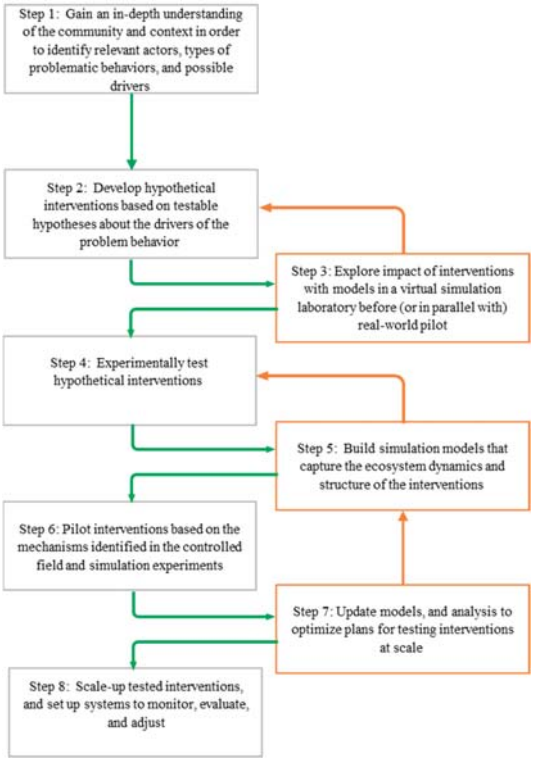

Figure 1. Behavioral and Decision Science Framework to Design and Implement Interventions. Figure 1 displays the proposed behavioral and decision science framework. The original five steps (1, 2, 4, 6, 8) have been augmented with steps 3, 5, and 7, wherein modeling and simulation are used to improve the design and implementation process.

2.1. Extending the Behavioral Framework by Battista and Colleagues

Starting with the 5-step Battista process for implementing the intervention, the ABM supplementation adds three more steps (3, 5, and 7) to the process. Step 1 aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the community and context to identify relevant actors, types of

problematic behaviors, and possible drivers. Step 2 is to develop hypothetical interventions based on testable hypotheses about the drivers of the problem behavior. The theories and hypotheses should formalize the relation between the expected behavior, including contextual factors and the individual circumstances of those displaying the problem behavior. Step 3, the first instance of the ABM -enhanced process, is to build simulation models that capture the ecosystem dynamics and structure of the interventions. Research and data gathering as part of ABM development will enhance the learning from Steps 1 and 2. Step 4 is to experimentally test hypothetical interventions on populations resembling the target population, using artefactual field experiments and additional simulated experiments to test hypotheses developed in Step 2. Step 5, the second ABM addition, explores the impact of interventions with models in a virtual simulation laboratory before (or in parallel with) a real-world pilot. Step 6 pilots interventions based on the mechanisms identified in the controlled field and simulation experiments. Step 7, the final ABM step addition, is to update models and analysis to optimize plans for testing interventions at scale. The final step, Step 8, is to scale-up tested interventions and set up systems to monitor, evaluate, and adjust to fit different contexts for retesting.

The benefits of this integration follow a theme: study the system toward the goal of developing and testing interventions using participatory methods and simulation and modeling methods to learn more about the system virtually to reduce risk and time when testing or deploying those interventions in the real-world system. The three added decision science steps in the behavioral science process utilize essential artefactual data from local communities as ground truth to enhance modeling and analysis. They also incorporate empirically supported utility functions for the decision-making of ecosystem participants in a manner that allows multiple criteria to be considered, thereby reducing the likelihood of experiencing unintended consequences in deployment. The resulting integration provides a framework for generating and collecting evaluative data that can increase the effective deployment speed and efficacy of deployed interventions. The case study that is integral to this project incorporates the first three steps and informs our plans for future research that corresponds to an iteration back through Steps 1 through 3 before incorporating additional experiments as we plan for Steps 4 through 8.

2.2. Utility of Simulation and Agent-Based Models in the Extended Framework

Our additional Steps 3, 5, and 7 incorporate ABMs, which we introduce before presenting our case study. Macal [33] provides an accessible tutorial on ABMs for readers who are new to the approach. As part of this introduction, we connect several reviewed models with the model we developed for this case study.

We begin this introduction by citing observations made by Lindkvist [34], who examined the utility of ABMs in the problem domain studied by Battista and colleagues: the sustainable governance and management of small-scale fisheries. Lindkvist [34] identifies three main challenges of small fisheries management that are addressable by ABMs: (1) improving the way collective action and heterogeneity in human behavior can be incorporated into research and management, (2) developing policies that are sensitive to local contexts while also accounting for regional and global contexts; and, aligning with Battista and colleagues, (3) tackling data scarcity and uncertainty. While all three challenges are relevant to our framework and case study, data paucity is particularly salient. As commented above, complex systems are often partially observable, and ABMs provide a means of integrating disparate sources of qualitative and quantitative data into a structurally realistic model that can generate synthetic data about the system. Some caution is warranted, however: model development can be slow due to the need to study complex processes, and balancing the ability to characterize complexity while retaining interpretability can be challenging [34]. In wildlife and ecology management, broadly, ABMs are "capable of simultaneously distinguishing animal densities from habitat quality, can explicitly represent the environment and its dynamism can accommodate spatial patterns of inter- and intra-species mechanisms, and can explore feedbacks and adaptations inherent in these systems" [35]. Agent-based

simulations reveal emergent behavior in more complex real-world modeling environments and generate data that can be used in other models and analyses that, in turn, are used to plan and deploy interventions to meet policy objectives. Constructing an ABM is valuable as part of observing the consequences of policy and social theory in an artificial environment based on reality. ABMs can trace the observed interactions among agents back to actual individuals while providing feedback on each agent [36]. While constructing the model, researchers are tasked with establishing what decision-makers need to know about specific parameters to fully understand the potential for the behavior being studied [36]. In the case of our model, that behavior is whether a laborer will accept a job, and the model allows that behavior to emerge under various circumstances that include opportunities for the worker as well as exposure to hazards of exploitive employment.

Utomo [37] the literature on using ABMs in agricultural food supply chains. Their review reveals that most ABM studies have focused on licit aspects of agricultural food supply, including production planning, investment, technology adoption, cooperation and partnerships, product quality, selling, and distribution. They develop a research segmentation and discuss gaps in the literature that can be addressed with future research. Notably absent from the studies reviewed and their discussion is studies dealing with worker rights and exploitation, the subject of our case study.

As a notable exception to this pattern, and a motivating example to the current study, Chesney et al. [38], used an ABM approach to study labor exploitation in the Spanish agricultural sector, confirming that various socioeconomic aspects of labor supply and demand increase the likelihood and degree of exploitation, including labor trafficking. Their study, in turn, builds on a framework from Crane [29] that characterizes labor exploitation and trafficking as a management practice that includes five enabling conditions for such exploitation: industry context, disadvantaged populations, geographic context, cultural context, and regulatory context, all of which have relevance in the case study for this project. Chesney et al. [38] use an ABM to investigate the propositions developed by Crane [29], implementing employer and worker agent types. In summary, employers aim to hire workers at a minimum cost. Workers can accept or decline a job offer and have the option of leaving an area if they can't find work or earn enough. Employers can change the amount they pay workers unilaterally as a percentage of the promised amount. The ABM generated experimental data using graphical and regression methods [38].

Zhang et al. [39] developed an ABM to study the safety behaviors of construction workers and how they interact with managerial safety policies. They view "safety performance as an emergent property of the behaviors and interactions of construction workers and management teams". The behaviors of the agents in their ABM were informed by two surveys conducted across different classes of workers, including managers and safety professionals, and construction workers. The research process to develop the model included visits to construction sites to observe and record unsafe behaviors. Ultimately, their model included agent classes for workers, supervisors, safety officers, and senior management.

In the ABM constructed by Busby [36], media is used as the central risk communication intervention, which connects risk responses with decisions and behaviors of agents within the model. The interactions that occur in natural disaster models are reflected in how the worldview of agents affects their tendency to amplify risk, more specifically, how certain actors or interventions can be used to influence opinions, risk assessment, and future decisions [36]. The information diffusion for modifying behavior occurs when the social actors find out about risks from other actors, and so update their own beliefs [36]. The model demonstrated that the risk perception of individual actors correlates with and influences people like them most effectively. Busby and colleagues included risk principles, which are social actors that fail to act appropriately and whose reputation affected the action of agents who interacted with them [36]. In the case of natural disasters, these risk principles were governmental organizations; for our case study, the risk principles which day laborers interacted with include the Texas Workforce Commission, OSHA, and exploitative employers. Finally, Busby and colleagues introduced risk communications,

which are influenced by the chosen risk communication intervention, such as the news, media, or public service announcements [36]. In our case study, we incorporate a media campaign as an intervention to augment the effect of direct action by advocates.

3. Extended Framework Application: Day Laborers & Exploitation Interventions Study

Authors [2] report on a case study that included three data collection phases of in-depth interviews among day laborers in the Houston area in 2016 (Study 1) and again in 2018 (Study 2) and a set of two-part interviews in the Austin area in 2021 (Study 3). The current study builds directly from this prior work [2,40], and we include a summary here for continuity and to connect it to the proposed framework.

Our three-part case study builds on prior empirical evidence about day laborers in Texas, partly motivated by examining how natural disasters might exacerbate exploitive dynamics for precarious workers in construction.

3.1. Background–Artifactual Study of Day Labor in Texas

In the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, Theodore [41,42] surveyed the Houston area's day laborers (n = 361). Data were collected at 20 informal hiring sites located in Houston and Pasadena. Post-disaster, immediate risks faced by workers—Such as injuries, infection, and rushed hiring of crews–spiked, with 64% of undocumented workers stating that they would not seek help for emergencies or report violations to government agencies out of fear of deportation [41]. Among the findings, Table 1 summarizes those results pertinent to the current project [41]. More than half of the day laborers in the Theodore study had experienced wage theft in the first month after Hurricane Harvey. They found work on about 2.5 days per week and had low awareness of the agency responsible for addressing wage theft violations, in this case, the Texas Workforce Commission. They also had low levels of familiarity with organizations that might be able to assist them in recovering stolen wages. Last, they were often asked to perform tasks beyond those they were hired to perform, and few had received any training. This study concluded that worker centers are critical disaster recovery hubs [41] during reconstruction clean-up efforts.

Table 1. Summary of Results from Theodore (2017).

Summary Metrics for Day Laborers (n = 361)	Result
Hour wage paid	$13.40
Median hour per day worked	8
Median daily wage paid	$100
Days of work per week	2.5
Experienced wage theft	57%
The average amount of wage theft per instance	$225
Percent that was asked to perform tasks beyond what they were hired to perform	61%
Percent that was aware of the agency responsible for wage theft violations	0%
Percent unable to name an organization that could provide wage theft assistance	92%
Percent who had not received any training for the tasks they were hired to perform	85%

3.2. Summary of Prior Three-Part Case Study

Study 1 [2,40] included 44 interviews (22 men and 22 women) at street corners, provided rich qualitative information about the lived experience of day laborers, and quantified the rate at which they endured a range of exploitive behavior, including abusive labor practices and human trafficking violations. This survey revealed the following structural aspects of decision-making by day laborers:

- Day laborers generally have imperfect information about the job that they are offered and decide about that job myopically or choose to wait for another job opportunity.

- Occasionally laborers employ risk mitigation strategies, but economic pressures are usually sufficient to induce accepting a job offer with imperfect information. These occasional strategies include:
  - Safety in numbers (a group of laborers seeks employment together)
  - Waiting for a trusted employer (employer reputation is a critical factor, and to the degree that they can, laborers prefer employers that are known to them.
- Often the laborer does not know their actual employment state until the job or day is finished. The employer may pay them in full, partly, or (occasionally) not at all.
- Full pay is typically $120 per day but can range between $80 and $150.
- Jobs frequently last multiple days (1–4 days is typical)
- Wage theft occurs between 10% and 30% of the time.
- Wage theft results in the loss of between 10% and 25% of income earned.

Study 2 [2,43] included 19 interviews (17 men and 2 women) with day laborers at street corners and examined the decision-making processes by day laborers when seeking work, including the trade-offs they are forced to make when navigating the hazards present in their precarious work environment. This study revealed that the employer's reputation for paying the worker as agreed and for providing a safe work site substantially impacts participants' decisions to choose a job. Similarly, a worker's likelihood of a job being accepted when the safety condition is perceived as entirely safe is substantially higher than when the site has little to no safety precautions. While these results were based on a small number of interviews, the model provided a means of characterizing the importance of worker perceptions about the employer and the job site, with implications on benefits to workers of having more reliable information about employers.

Study 3 [2] included 36 interviews with male day laborers contacted through a worker center and investigated the potential of providing day laborers with training designed to increase their knowledge of their rights as workers and the options that they have if they experience labor exploitation and trafficking. This study included two interviews: the first provided participants with an experimental manipulation wherein they were read a statement about their rights as workers and allowed to discuss and ask questions about this material. The first interview measured their likelihood of reporting a future event of wage theft before and after the experimental manipulation. They were also asked about the likelihood of sharing that information with other workers. The second interview, completed by 28 of the original participants, was conducted 48 to 72 h later and covered their recall of the information and the likelihood of sharing it. Specifically, although this was a small experiment, these artefactual findings suggest that education among those who have experienced wage theft has the potential to increase their likelihood of informal reporting if they have never reported before. Of relevance to the current study, we observed a 50% increase in the likelihood to report wage theft after a single dose of education about worker rights and reporting options among those workers who had experienced wage theft but had not reported it.

3.3. Implications for the Current Study

Through these artifactual experiments, we observed that, regardless of whether a worker discusses the pay, site conditions, specific job tasks, or hours of work for a job, the reality of what the worker experiences on-site can vary significantly from their initial perception. The change from a worker's expectation to experience is due to actions by the employer, who regulates what occurs from the moment the job begins until after it has ended. Within the informal day laborer sector, and due to personal circumstances, a worker may accept a job they assume will be unfair, whether in pay theft, extended hours, unsuitable work conditions, or numerous other violations that constitute worker exploitation and labor trafficking. The point when a worker must decide whether to accept or forego a job offer made by an employer is when the worker holds the most agency in the laborer-employer interaction. Throughout the job and immediately afterward, the employer holds the most power. The worker can regain that power and agency should they

decide to pursue justice and disclose instances of exploitation through nongovernmental agencies, advocates, and other legal avenues.

Training for worker center employers, paired with incentives to implement fair employment practices [44], can curb repeated wage theft more effectively than employer training alone. Primary prevention programs, law enforcement support, and continued education for workers and employers are different avenues that all work to reduce abuse [45]. We have summarized these dynamics and intervention targets in Figure 2.

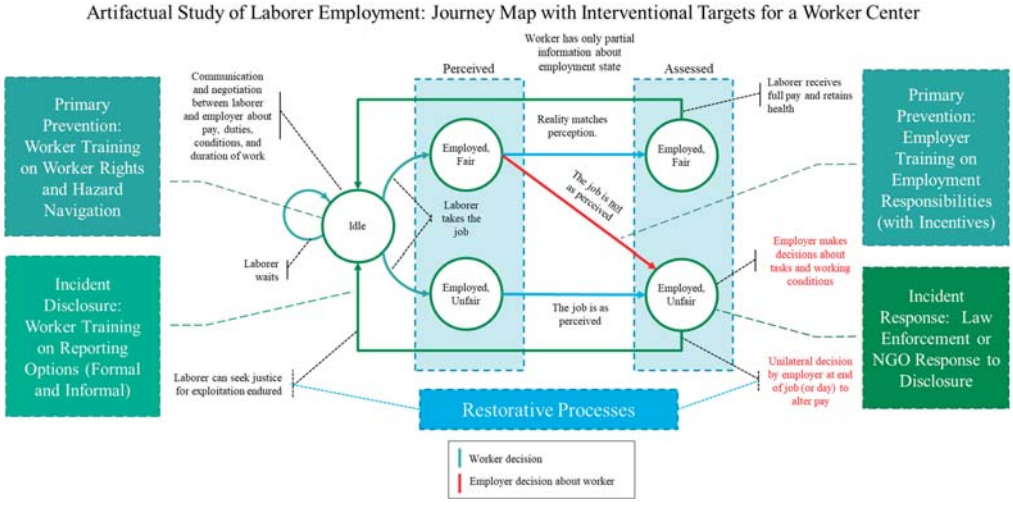

Figure 2. Interventions and Interventional Targets to Ameliorate Poor Labor Conditions. Figure 2 displays a typical journey cycle for day laborers as they navigate decisions about opportunities for work and some of the hazards in that employment ecosystem. Select interventional targets are shown, including primary prevention options that might be integrated into a worker center and coordinated law enforcement interventions [2].

Interventions aimed directly at the workers– education, talks, training, advocates, pamphlets, etc.—Are most common [46–48]. The success of such interventions varies and depends primarily on how integrated the center is with the day laborer community [47]. Worker centers that community members operate here to the culture and language of the day worker demographic are in areas with a high likelihood of worker-employer interactions and have high engagement rates [49,50]. Additionally, community-centered workers' centers provide a clear and open line of communication between center employees and day laborers. As trust builds, day laborers feel secure in sharing concerns and instances of abuse with employees, who can introduce or adjust interventions or aid in addressing the exploitation [50]. The effect of interventions becomes more effective as the target population becomes increasingly enthusiastic about the interventions [51].

3.4. The Agent Based Model

The current study draws from our artifactual study of day laborers (Steps 1 and 2) to develop an ABM sufficient to examine various interventional candidates in a virtual environment (Step 3) before conducting pilot studies (Step 4) or RCTs at-scale in the field (Step 6). Figure 3 displays the translation of the day laborer journey map of Figure 2 into a multi-agent, state, and decision diagram that we implemented as an ABM. In our model, there are agent classes for (1) laborers, (2) employers, and (3) interventions. While all three are dynamic objects created in the model that are endowed with data properties and computational functionality, the first two are the human participants in our system. The intervention agent could be a human (advocate) or control policies (PSA) to be added to the model.

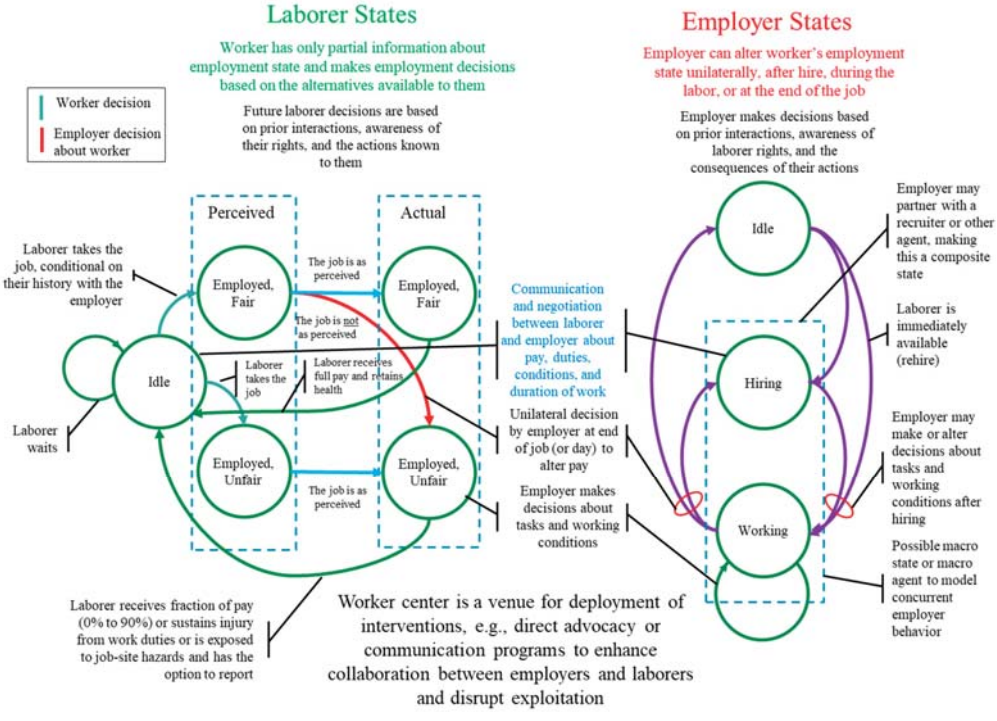

Figure 3. Relationship between Labor and Employer State & Decision Spaces. Figure 3 displays the decision-making process associated with the day laborer journey of Figure 2, now identifying the agent classes, the states for those agent classes, and the possible transitions, both controlled and uncontrolled, that are incorporated in the ABM developed from the case study.

In this translation, we identified the relevant agent classes for participants in the ecosystem (laborers and employers), the states for those agent classes, and the transitions that are possible, both those that can be controlled by actions taken by an agent and those that occur without control, either associated with a stochastic event or a deterministic outcome defined by dynamics modeled in the ecosystem.

Further, we incorporated the training manipulation examined in the case study as a third category of agent implemented as a type of Bass diffusion model (BDM). Within the BDM approach, we implemented a modality to include the effect of advocates working directly with laborers in the field and a modality associated with a public awareness campaign (PSA). We introduce the BDM and discuss its use in similar systems and our ABM next.

3.5. Bass Diffusion within ABM

The BDM captures the dynamics of the response and rationale of a population when presented with a new product and documents the adoption process of the product [52]. For our study, the 'products' introduced to the labor agents are anti-exploitation interventions: advocates and public service campaigns. The product adoption rate throughout the population in a BDM depends on exposure to the product and feedback from adopters to non-adopters [52]. The dynamics of the model are defined by a differential Equation (1) which describes the process of a new product, information, or diffusion into a population [52].

$$\frac{dN(t)}{dt} = (m - N(t))\left[p + \frac{q}{m}N(t)\right],\ t \geq 0 \quad (1)$$

where

N(t) ≡ number of people converted at time t as part of the campaign.

m ≡ size of population

p ≡ conversion as a direct consequence of the campaign (innovation)

q ≡ conversion from word of mouth

The degree of innovation, ***p***, represents the external motivation for adoption, while the degree of imitation, ***q***, is the effect of word of mouth in the diffusion of a product. In the present case study, ***p*** and ***q*** are coefficients that were determined by reviewing previous research. The quantity ***m–N(t)*** is the number of members of the population who have not adopted at time ***t***. The quantity ***p + q*(N(t)/m)*** is the probability of adoption at time t, and incorporates the direct effect of the campaign, ***p***, and word of mouth, ***q*N(t)/m***, from those who have adopted.

Bastani [45] used a BDM within an ABM to simulate the diffusion of energy-saving policies among the occupants and the related impact on energy consumption of commercial buildings. The agents in Bastani's BDM have a rate of contact (ROC) in which one agent can contact several agents to introduce energy-saving policies [45]. The rate of contact illustrates the number of connections each agent will attempt to make and is related to word-of-mouth (WOM) diffusion adoption. Multiple trials of the Bastani model revealed that the effect of word of mouth among occupants had the strongest influence in persuading occupants to save energy, the other alternative manner of information diffusion communication included media [45].

In the current study, the ABM was developed to allow for two forms of intervention to be tested: direct training by advocates alone and supplemental media campaigns in addition to direct advocacy. This modeling decision was based on strategies we have observed by service providers and communities who add media campaigns to advocacy based on the availability of resources. Our case study's educational manipulation informed how direct training was incorporated into the model.

The specific motivation for supplementing direct advocacy with the media campaign is drawn from a campaign developed by the City of Houston utilized in the reconstruction period after Hurricane Harvey [53] and interviews with advocates. The campaign, Build Better Houston, had components that were motivated by post-Harvey reconstruction efforts and policies adopted in the rebuilding efforts in New York after Hurricane Sandy. Among other protections, the program included a $15 per hour base wage, workers' compensation insurance, and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) construction certification training. Other initiatives, including executive orders for city procurement, operational policies, and media campaigns, are documented in the City of Houston's Anti-Human Trafficking strategic plan. At a high level, this plan establishes a complementary community-based paradigm that adds a nontraditional municipal response and public health approach to a traditional law enforcement approach.

This campaign was not implemented with any measurement components but was executed through several media channels. Thus, the dynamics of the media campaigns used in the model are based on extant literature about how information diffuses through a community. Specifically, the model incorporates dynamics from the BDM.

3.6. ABM Specification and Development

The following sections describe key programming aspects of the ABM which were designed to incorporate the relationships in Figure 3 and the influence of the planned interventions. The model was programmed in AnyLogic and included custom Java implementation of many sub-models guiding an agent's behavior, as discussed in detail below. As a novel feature, Laborer agent behavior includes memory decay and access. It is important to note that while many aspects of the ABM are based on observed behavior in our empirical exercises, some aspects of this demonstration model have been specified in ways that we hypothesize the system behaves. This aspect of the model design is consistent with the iterative process in the intervention framework, and we propose future research

to further study these hypothesized dynamics. Prominent among our proposed future research is a deeper examination of the decision-making processes of employers.

Agents: In addition to agents for laborers and employers, described earlier, the ABM implements two different intervention agents that model high-level diffusion through an advertising campaign and a more direct "word-of-mouth" approach, as well as other features relevant to this scenario, such as a laborer reporting feature when a laborer has faced exploitation. More information about the ABM and our implementation in AnyLogic is available as a supplementary document from the corresponding author.

The model is initiated with a set of laborer and employer agents. The interaction between these agent classes is initiated, as shown in Algorithm 1. An employer agent creates a job and announces that job to a nearby available laborer agent. The job is an abstraction within the ABM that enables dynamic behavior between laborer and employer agents and consolidates variables and methods that are used/accessed extensively by them. The laborer agents are endowed with the ability to form and store memories about past employment experiences.

Algorithm 1: Job Creation and Acceptance Decision Logic

```
While (Simulation Runs)
Employer agent creates Job(current_simulation_time)
Employer agent sends Job to single randomly chosen nearby Laborer agent
Chosen_Laborer.current_job = Employer Sent Job
For each memory in chosen Laborer agent
    If memory.Employer = = current_job.Employer:
        If memory.access( ):
            If memory.tolerate( ):
                Chosen_Laborer.accept_job = true
                break
            Else:
                Chosen_Laborer.accept_job = false
                break
If Chosen_Laborer.accept_job:
    Laborer and Employer leave Idle States and enter Working States
```

Mirroring our observations in the real system, the employer makes a decision about stealing the laborer's wage at the time the job is over and it is time to pay and move into the 'Paid' state. Literature and past interviews have revealed that the more dire the employer's economic situation is, the more likely they are to steal; on the other side, the more dire the economic situation is of the Laborer, the more likely they are to report. Technically, a job is created with the capacity to store a 'fairness' calculation. The value from this calculation determines whether the job will be fair—the actual amount paid out to the worker matches the perceived pay amount- and this calculation is only revealed after the job is complete. The agents' response depends on the socioeconomic characteristics drawn from literature and interview data.

At the same time, laborer agents—who begin in an Idle state as well—receive the said message and decide to decline or accept the job. We have assumed an exponential decay for this decision based on qualitative insights from our empirical research. As shown in Algorithm 1, if the laborer has the memory of a prior theft by the employer, they are likely to decline that job. However, it won't be long before they would accept a job again from the same employer. If no Laborer accepts the job, or if the job is declined, the job will eventually time out, and the Employer agent will remain in an Idle State. If the Laborer decides to accept the job, both the Employer and Laborer move into a Working state.

Algorithms 2 and 3 illustrate the logic implemented in the ABM as pseudocode for how a laborer agent responds to wage theft based on whether they have received education about their rights and how they retain memories of the behaviors they have endured before re-entering the Idle state.

Algorithm 2: Job Completion and Reporting

```
Wait Chosen_Laborer.current_job.hours
    //Employer theft propensity functionality
    Employer pays Laborer Agent full pay or commits wage exploitation
    If Laborer.informed:
        Laborer reports Employer
        //Reporting functionality
Laborer creates JobMemory(current_simulation_time, current_job)
Laborer.memories.add(new JobMemory)
Laborer and Employer return to Idle States
```

In the ABM, the employer and the labor agents focus on the job that connects them. For simplicity in the current ABM, the employer can only focus on one job at a time. Once the job has been completed, the laborer agent receives a message from the employer agent, revealing if the job they were working was 'fair' or 'unfair'. If the job is fair, the Laborer will be paid and return to the Idle state until a new job message is received. An unfair job is characterized by the Laborer experiencing a certain amount of wage theft randomly generated from a uniform distribution whose bounds are set as parameters. At this point, the laborer agent is at a decision-making node in the ABM where they can choose to report a job if it is revealed to be 'unfair.' Based on our qualitative insight from empirical research, we have implemented the decision logic for reporting by a laborer agent as outlined in Algorithm 3. In the current reality, reports of wage theft are extremely rare. Therefore, we have devised logic that approximates this situation.

Algorithm 3: Reporting functionality

```
If Laborer.Cumulative_income is negative
    Report = true
Else if exposure to educational messages
    Report = true
Else
    Report = false
```

The calculation for reporting likelihood is implemented and activated in an unfair job. The reporting functionality is a cascading logic and is based on artifactual evidence. An informed laborer will report if (1) the theft results in the daily pay being less than their daily expenses and (2) the efficacy of the interventions. Laborers' likelihood of reporting is implemented as a function of educational messages. We have assumed an exponential relationship between the doses of education received and the likelihood of reporting. We have calibrated this curve (see Figure 4) to the results of an experimental manipulation by the authors. This manipulation involved a pre/post-education measurement of familiarity with reporting options. Specifically, the reporting likelihood prior to education is approximately zero and increased to approximately 0.5 in a survey of day laborers [2]. More training means there is a greater chance of reporting.

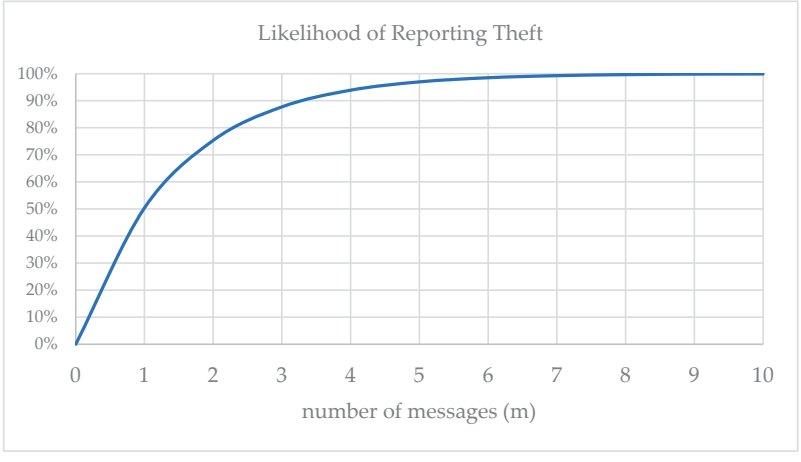

Figure 4. Learning Curve as a function of Number of Exposures to Education. Figure 4 displays the assumed learning curve as a function of number of exposures to education. Caption: This exponential relationship was calibrated to the results of an experimental manipulation by the authors. Specifically, the reporting likelihood prior to education is approximately zero and increased to approximately 0.5 in a survey of day laborers [2].

Laborers become informed about their rights and options as they receive repeated messages (from advocates, media campaigns, or other workers). A report made by the laborer affects the employer's future behavior. As their inclination to report goes up, the penalty for the employer goes up, and hence the overall wage theft goes down. This feedback loop is governed by the employer's theft propensity variable.

Employer Theft Propensity: We assume based on qualitative insight from our empirical research that day laborers' specific actions like reporting wage theft will reduce an employer's future propensity for theft. Specifically, in the ABM, reporting wage theft incurs a penalty for the employer. Once the employer is reported, the propensity for future theft is lowered. As more reports occur, the employer is less likely to commit wage theft, eventually tending to zero. The degree of decreased theft propensity depends on the effectiveness of reporting and the associated penalty. The likelihood of the reporting success will determine if the employer returns the stolen wages to the laborer. Additionally, if a successful report also includes punitive damages, then the future theft propensity on the side of the employer is calculated through the total funds subtracted by the sum of total stolen wages and an additional penalty, divided by the total funds. The resulting amount is how much 'punishment' the employer will endure if wage theft is reported. In the current ABM, future theft propensity for an employer agent e is adjusted through a scaling factor, $\boldsymbol{\Theta}_{e,p}$ that is in the range 0 to 1, with a dynamic value set based on a report of wage theft by a laborer. Specifically, the propensity for theft is multiplied by $\boldsymbol{\Theta}_{e,p}$, and that propensity is guaranteed to be less than 1. If there is a low chance of being penalized, the potential gain of exploiting workers is worth the risk. However, if an employer is penalized once, there is a deterrent in place to caution them against exploiting their workers again in the future. Although future research is needed to refine our understanding of how reporting impacts employer decision-making, these relationships have been operationalized in the model as follows, where e indexes employers and t' is future time. Each employer agent maintains a value of the total funds they have accrued as the proceeds of jobs they have created, $\text{Funds}_{\text{total}}$. We adjust $\boldsymbol{\Theta}_{e,p}$ by subtracting stolen wages that are returned and any associated penalties from the total funds available to the employer. $\boldsymbol{\Theta}_{e,p}$ is not allowed to become negative.

$$\boldsymbol{Propensity}_{e,t'} = \boldsymbol{\theta}_{e,p} * \boldsymbol{Propensity}_{e,t}$$

If a laborer agent endures wage theft from employer e and decides to report:

$$\theta_{e,p} = \frac{Funds_{total} - (Wages_{stolen} + penalty)}{Funds_{total}} \; \forall \; \theta_{e,p} \in [0, 1]$$

Interventions: We incorporated the training manipulation examined in the case study as a third category of agent implemented as a type of Bass diffusion model (BDM) described above. Within the BDM approach, we modeled a modality to include the effect of advocates working directly with laborers in the field and a modality associated with a public awareness campaign (PSA). The ABM model has multiple intervention mechanisms that operate as separate agents. The primary avenues are Direct Intervention through Word of Mouth (Advocates) and Broadcast Intervention (Public Service Announcements). All interventions serve to transform idle or uninformed labor into an informed agent. Informed agents can spread information to other workers via word of mouth, thus creating more informed agents. As more worker agents become informed, their likelihood of reporting increases. Both Direct and Broadcasting Interventions have two main variables: contact_rate and adoption_rate. The Broadcasting Intervention has an additional variable: campaign_effectiveness. The interventions can occur at any point in the model for the worker—before, during, or after a job. Direct Interventions work through Direct Campaigns and Broadcast Campaigns. Word of Mouth Interventions works as a Direct Word of Mouth and Word of Mouth Broadcast. Most Word-of-Mouth work occurs through advocates or through workers who, after interacting with one of the interventions, become informed and speak to other laborers, who also become informed. The worker's inhibitions must be considered for the diffusion of Word of Mouth among the worker population. The conversion rate is associated with either direct or broadcast campaigns; the effectiveness of the informed worker's word-of-mouth information diffusion is a function of how they were informed. Campaign effectiveness is not utilized by the direct intervention agent as they only send out messages within their social distance network reach. Contact rate and adoption fraction are incorporated into the model. Reinforcement capability is put into the model as messages of enforcement from multiple channels are received.

3.7. Model Validation

The present study outlines the development of an Agent-Based Model (ABM) that incorporates the agents' interrelationships as depicted in Figure 3, as well as the effects of planned interventions. To ensure the credibility, precision, and dependability of the model and its outcomes, it is imperative to validate the ABM. Numerous validation techniques are described in the literature [54], and in this study, we adopted the framework proposed by [55], which has also been employed in a similar study by [56]. Specifically, we concentrated on the processes entailed in the structural validation technique that are pertinent to our ABM. The structural validation technique entails the generation of observed system behavior and encompasses the following processes:

- ***Calibration***: The initial step in the validation process is calibration, which involves determining the model parameters using empirical data from the real world. This step is essential and should be conducted prior to model validation. In the present study, the parameter values (or ranges) used in our ABM, as presented in Table 2, were established based on insights gained from our own empirical research as well as from pertinent extant literature.
- ***Sensitivity Analysis***: A crucial step in model validation is sensitivity analysis, which involves altering parameters and observing how the results change. This process helps to assess the model's robustness to changes in the parameters and identify the parameters that have the greatest impact on the results. In this study, the ABM was designed to test two forms of intervention: direct training by advocates and media campaigns. The sensitivity analysis of the model examines the behavior change of laborer agents due to the addition of a direct intervention and a media campaign that complement the effects of two advocates working with the day labor community. This

enables the impact of the Public Service Announcement (PSA) to be observed in a virtual environment, dependent on the effectiveness of the campaign. It is expected that these interventions will increase the likelihood of laborers reporting wage theft, thereby reducing the employer agents' propensity to steal and overall wage theft. Three different scenarios were tested in this analysis, each run for a two-year period with 30 replications of the simulation to ensure steady-state results. Additionally, the effect of the return wages probability parameter on model dynamics was explored. This parameter represents the effectiveness of a laborer's report on decreasing theft propensity. It is hypothesized that a higher probability of reporting success will lead to greater punishment for the employer and a reduction in future theft propensity. Sensitivity analysis was performed by running simulations for reporting success rates of 10% to 50%, in addition to the default 1% rate. The simulation period of two years with 30 replications was used for all runs.

- ***Output Validation:*** Output validation is the process of comparing the model results to real-world data. However, due to limited real-world data available for validation of our ABM model, we instead verified the logical consistency of our model output against the initial conditions and the rules governing agent behavior. In our ABM model, we used empirical results from our case studies to validate the non-intervened nominal setting run of the model. To accomplish this, we simulated the model for two years with calibrated parameter values and replicated the simulation 30 times. We expect the output behavior to be consistent with current real-world conditions, in which workers remain uninformed about their rights and wage theft reporting does not occur. Over time, total wages stolen should increase as wage theft occurs and no wage thefts are reported. Based on our artifactual study of day laborers, we know that laborers probabilistically decline work from employers who have previously engaged in wage theft. As a result, we expect to observe the total number of jobs declined by laborers to increase over time as they experience more wage theft.

Table 2. ABM Parameters.

Parameter	Value
Laborer population	100
Cost of living ($ per day)–min	$40
Cost of living ($ per day)–max	$60
Employer population	50
Job rate (per week)	5
Theft percent range–min	10%
Theft percent range–max	25%
Theft propensity	0.2
Job day range–min	1
Job day range–max	1
Job pay range ($ per day)–min	$80
Job pay range ($ per day)–max	$150
Job markup	20%
Broadcast intervention–enabled	False
Broadcast intervention–campaign effectiveness	0.015
Broadcast intervention–adoption fraction	0.015
Broadcast intervention–contact rate (people/day)	10

Table 2. *Cont.*

Parameter	Value
Direct intervention–quantity	0
Direct intervention–adoption fraction	0.015
Direct intervention–contact rate (people/day)	10
Return wages probability	0.01
Punitive damages–nominal value	$500
Punitive damages–probability	0.01

Table 2 below presents the value or ranges used for each parameter in the ABM model. Most of these parameter values were determined based on insights gained from our empirical research, as described earlier, or from other relevant extant literature in the field, cited earlier. However, several assumptions are made that are supported anecdotally, and our assumptions are commented on next. The value of the job to the employer is assumed to be a 20% markup on their labor cost. Markup rates in practice vary extensively, ranging from a few percent on commodities to 100% on some highly technical services. We believe 20% is a reasonable rate for the type of work typically provided by day laborers. In the ABM the markup is used to calculate the value of the job to the employer and is factored into the $\text{Funds}_{\text{total}}$ value stored by an employer agent. This assumption has been held constant across our simulations. The three intervention parameters: campaign effectiveness, adoption fraction, and contact rate are based on an empirical study by Redmond of a campaign to create a behavior change, namely the cessation of smoking [57]. Like Redmond's study, we are examining prosocial behavioral changes rather than the increases in awareness and familiarity that are the focus of many other studies. We have included a review of empirical studies using the Bass diffusion model in our supplement for the interested reader. Here again, we held these parameter assumptions constant across our simulations.

We are assuming that whenever a report is made, there is a 1% probability of the report resulting in the successful restoration of stolen wages to a laborer. Our research on this subject corroborates other studies cited above. Basically, wage thefts are almost never reported through official channels and, when they are, positive outcomes almost never benefit laborers. Similarly, we assume a 1% likelihood that a successful wage theft report also includes a return of punitive damages along with the stolen wages to the laborer. We tested the sensitivity of these assumptions in our simulation experiments. Last, we assume the nominal value of the punitive damages to be $500. This value represents about a week's wages for a day laborer. It is worth noting that day laborers with whom we have spoken in our interview are not generally interested in receiving punitive damages. They have explained to us that they just want to be paid what they have earned. We hold this punitive damage assumption constant in our simulations, and its impact is limited stochastically only to cases of a report with a successful outcome and, given that success, to cases where such damages are assessed.

3.8. Simulations

Within this section, we present the results obtained from the experiments run for each component of the agent-based model validation framework. To allow the educational interventions to establish a stable state of worker rights awareness, the simulations were executed for a period of two years. The parameter settings were initialized according to Table 2, wherein the model was configured such that laborers found work for roughly 2.5 days per week while facing wage theft on approximately 20% of their working days, resulting in a loss of 20% of their earnings. These settings, which were observed during the artifactual study of day laborers seeking employment at a worker center, serve as the foundation for our output validation.

Nominal. Figure 5 shows that consistent with current conditions in the real world, wage theft occurs with a growing total for wages stolen, workers remain uninformed about their rights, and no wage thefts are reported. Consistent with our interviews, laborer agents can learn from the wage thefts they endure, probabilistically declining work from employers who have previously perpetrated wage theft against them. Based on our conversations with workers, the decision to decline is a function of the recency of the prior theft experience from the employer offering the job balanced against their current financial needs.

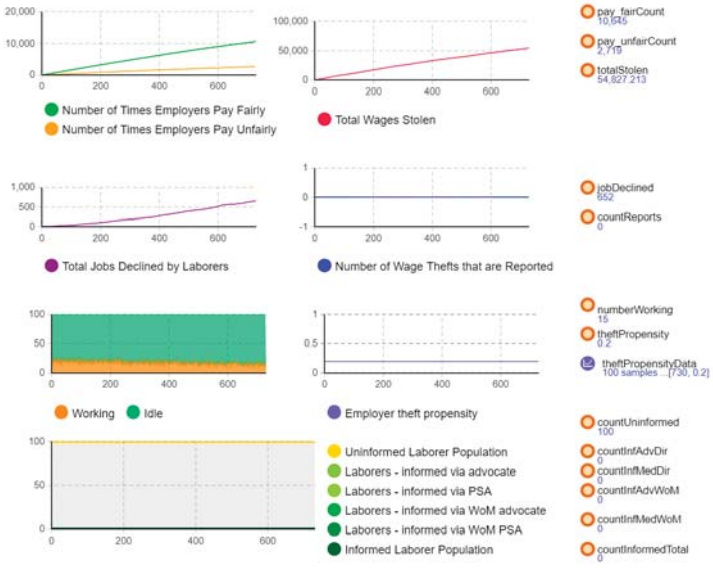

Figure 5. Non-Intervened Nominal Setting. Figure 5 displays the results of a two-year simulation at current, non-intervened settings, including $P_{success} = 0.01$. The *X*-axis in all the graphs represents the simulation days.

Adding Education. Figure 6 demonstrates the educational benefits of two advocates working directly with laborers at the worker center to provide education about their rights as employees, which lead to a decline in the number of uninformed laborers over time. A growing number of wage thefts are reported; however, the probability of reporting success is low, and no significant reduction in the employer's theft propensity or total wages stolen is observed.

In Figure 7, the impact of adding a PSA campaign in addition to the two advocates as an intervention to the model is presented. The results show that the number of uninformed laborers declined faster than with just the advocates, and a steady state is reached earlier. The efficacy of the educational intervention is improved through the direct intervention complemented by the PSA campaign, and its effectiveness is dependent on the effectiveness of the PSA campaign. However, our model is using campaign effectiveness settings drawn from literature, and the benefits seen in the simulation are quite modest.

Figure 6. Direct Advocacy Intervention. Figure 6 displays the results of a two-year simulation with the deployment of two advocates who provide training about workers' rights, including $P_{success} = 0.01$. The *X*-axis in all the graphs represents the simulation days.

Figure 7. Direct Advocacy with a Complementary PSA. Figure 7 displays the results of a two-year simulation with the deployment of two advocates who provide training about workers' rights and a PSA, including $P_{success} = 0.01$. The *X*-axis in all the graphs represents the simulation days.

In addition to providing for visual examination of effects, as shown in Figures 5–7, the ABM was used to generate samples of data analyzed separately. Following [56], we replicated all our simulations 30 times. Figure 8 presents the results obtained from these replications of the simulation to investigate the effects of two interventional strategies in comparison to the nominal state. The figure displays the theft propensity over time

by intervention and the probability of success ($P_{success}$) when reporting wage theft. The data from individual runs and an average of runs are shown in a linear model with a 0.999 confidence interval. Across the simulations, the synthetic dataset analyzed includes a total of 525,690 observations across the three interventional settings with $P_{success}$ set at the nominal, of current real world, value of 0.01. Figure 8 illustrates that the educational interventions do not create meaningful change in employers at $P_{success}$ = 0.01. Note that the vertical axis has been allowed to scale with the data, confirming that there are tiny, structurally consistent changes predicted by the model even at $P_{success}$ = 0.01. It is also apparent that the additional change induced through the inclusion of a PSA is small with the efficacy of typical campaigns that we assume from our literature review. These simulations suggest that in addition to providing education to laborers about their rights as workers, other changes may be required for education to translate into change among employers.

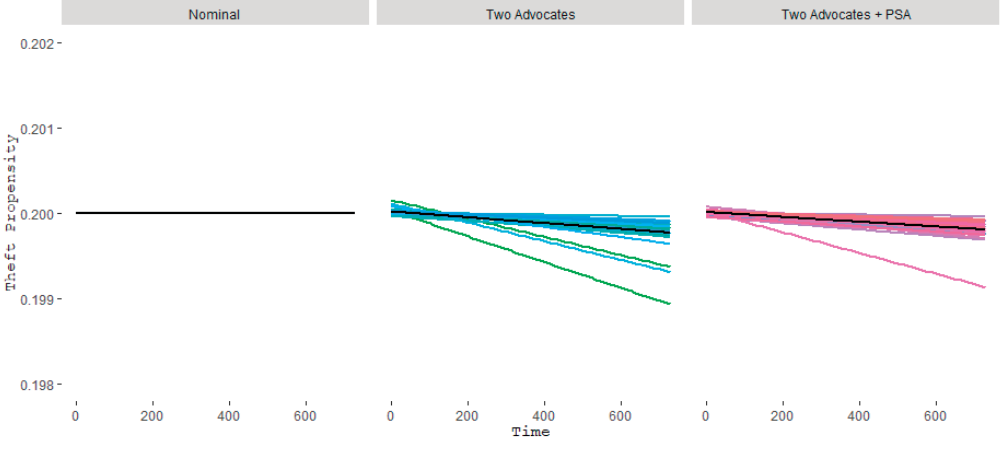

Figure 8. Theft Propensity over Time at $P_{success}$ = 0.01 by Intervention (30 Replications plus Average in Black).

Examining other Structural Changes. To that end, we continue this analysis by examining the change that might be possible if educational interventions are designed to be accompanied by other, unspecified system changes that allow for degrees of improvement in the likelihood of success when reporting occurs. For simplicity here, we limit this examination to the intervention scenario of two advocates supplemented by a PSA. We vary $P_{success}$ from the current, nominal, value of 0.01 up to 0.50.

Figure 9 illustrates the changes in system dynamics that were observed at the end of a two-year simulation period across six levels of probability of success for reporting wage theft ($P_{success}$), ranging from the present state (0.01) to five levels of enhancement (0.10 to 0.50). The simulation was replicated 30 times, and the summary analysis focused on the effect of increasing $P_{success}$ on the cumulative wages stolen, jobs declined, and thefts reported. Our findings indicate a modest negative association between $P_{success}$ and cumulative wages stolen, with employers committing less wage theft as the probability of punishment increases. Specifically, as wage theft declines, there is a corresponding modest reduction in both the number of reported thefts and jobs declined, as the employer behavior correction feedback loop mitigates the need for employees to decline jobs or report theft.

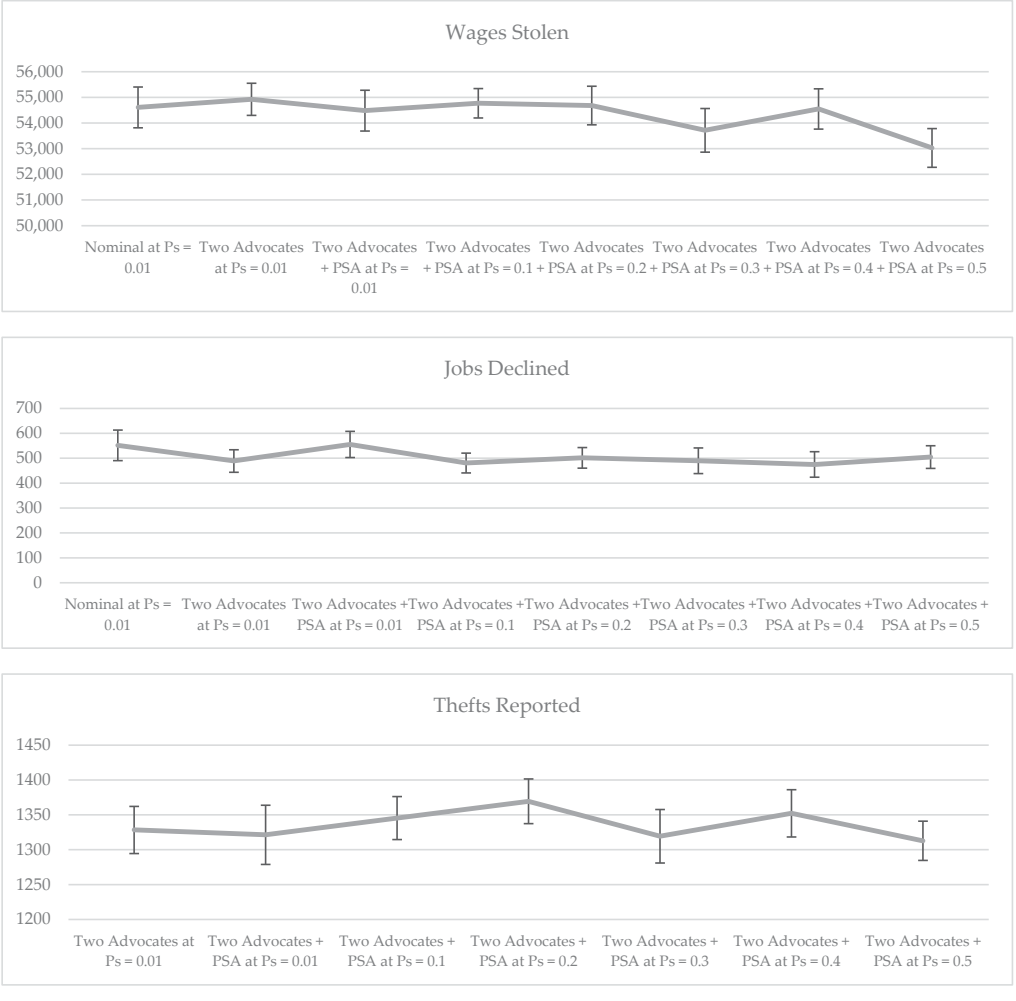

Figure 9. Select Cumulative Simulation Outputs at Two Years from 30 Replications (Average and 95% CI). Figure 9 summaries key metrics across the replicated simulation runs for the non-intervened system, the system with 2 advocates, and the system with 2 advocates supplemented by a PSA, the later with several levels of $P_{success}$. The runs highlight the changes in system dynamics at the end of the simulation horizon. All 30 replications were run for two years.

Similar to Figure 8, we have extended this analysis to include the theft propensity variable, which tracks employer behavior and influences decision-making in the ABM. Figure 10 superimposes the smoothed theft propensity plots for $P_{success}$ at 0.01, 0.1, 0.2, 0.3, 0.4, and 0.5. For completeness, the summary of the mixed linear model with a random intercept for replication is reported in Table 3, however, in this demonstration, the specific parameter estimates are of less importance than the structural relationships shown visually.

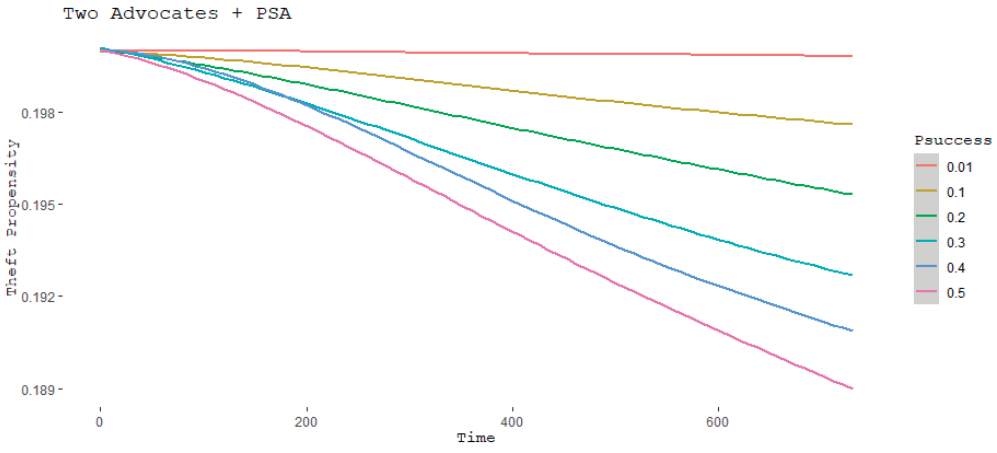

Figure 10. Theft Propensity over time for Two Advocates + PSA at various levels of $P_{success}$ (Results averaged over 30 replications).

Table 3. Linear Model Fixed Effect Summary.

	Estimate	Std. Error	t Value	Sig.
Intercept	2.000×10^{-1}	7.658×10^{-5}	2611.19	<0.000
Time (days–linear)	-2.177×10^{-7}	7.323×10^{-9}	−29.73	<0.000
$P_{success}$	1.360×10^{-3}	1.020×10^{-5}	133.29	<0.000
Time × $P_{success}$	-3.293×10^{-5}	2.419	−1661.38	<0.000

Caption: A generalized linear mixed model with a random intercept for replication was used to estimate the effects of a range of values for $P_{success}$ over time (days). The model was fit in R using the lme4 package with Satterthwaite's method to produce t-test values with significance estimates.

Conceptually, this analysis illustrates that behavioral interventions like education may have a more profound impact when paired with system changes that allow such behavioral change for one agent (laborers) to translate into change for another agent (employers). This conjecture will be examined further in the discussion below. Further, this model indicates that the degree of improvement in reporting required to create meaningful change among employers is substantial and that the time horizon involved is measured in years.

As a demonstration of how ABM simulations might inform the next iteration of the proposed framework for developing interventions, we conclude our analysis with the following observations:

1. Using representative values for the dynamics of the diffusion of information, PSAs added only incremental benefits beyond the deployment of advocates. This is consistent with real-world practice, where PSAs are infrequently used.
2. Increased awareness of workers' rights and reporting options may need to be accompanied by other changes in this complex sociological system to allow the increased reporting to be effective. This is also consistent with what we heard from laborers, that among the few who had some awareness and familiarity of reporting options, perceptions of efficacy are extremely low. In fact, informal mechanisms appear to be preferred over formal reporting.
3. The duration of educational programs needs to be in years to achieve full effectiveness. To be fair, we utilized a BDM driven by parameters drawn from other real-world settings, but more needs to be learned about how information is shared by laborers.
4. Our ABM was designed based on and calibrated by the results from three artifactual experiments among laborers. Much was revealed about laborers' lived experiences

in these experiments, but more needs to be learned in the next iteration about the decision-making processes of employers and about the specific interpersonal dynamics between laborers and employers.

4. Discussion

Consistent with the original process developed by Battista and colleagues, the present study has illustrated the potential of steps 1–3 in the process outlined above. This approach can add meaningful learning and calls for additional iterations before advancing to subsequent steps. Specifically, the case study presented here illustrated the application of the framework to develop interventions to disrupt illicit behavior and enhance prosocial behavior in complex sociological systems and applied this framework to the problem domain of labor exploitation and trafficking. Steps 1 and 2 provided evidence to propose a series of hypothetical interventions. The first iteration of Step 3 tested two of those interventional candidates in a virtual (ABM) setting. Our case study has shown the utility of connecting relevant theories (Step 1) and has outlined a plan for the next round of artifactual experiments (Step 2) and model enhancement (Step 3). Application of Steps 4 through 8, and iterations therein, remain future work.

The interventional scenarios included in the current case study illustrate the potential efficacy of educational campaigns in two forms, direct advocacy, and PSAs. This potential is examined in the case study as conditional on the degree of change in the likelihood of a successful outcome from reporting exploitation. Advocates can effectively make outreach and transfer information that will continue to spread throughout the community through word of mouth. Worker center staff and advocates from other allied service providers are an effective way to deliver such training to the laborer community. PSAs provide a mechanism for extending advocate outreach. More needs to be learned about the differential efficacy of advocates and PSAs and the degree to which these strategies create equity for laborers. Our case study suggests that education alone is insufficient to eliminate wage theft. The likelihood of a successful outcome from reporting will need to increase dramatically before substantive system change will be seen. Further, this case study suggests substantive system change will require sustained effort (2 years in our illustrative model). Our example case study employed reasonable levels of resource allocation and campaign effectiveness. Additional empirical research and modeling are required to move our work from an illustrative case study to a real-world intervention design project.

Specific to methodology, an agent-based model was developed as part of the extension of the framework. While simplistic, this model illustrates the utility of the integration of decision and behavioral sciences because the approach allows early interventional candidates to be examined in a virtual environment before deployment in the field, including pilot deployments. As an example, the critical thinking process utilized during the development of the simulation environment elucidated additional information needed to expand the functionality of the ABM to endow employer agents more completely with appropriate behaviors in the next iteration of the intervention design process. Our reflective analysis of the current study suggests that the next steps for this research should include empirical investigations of perpetration behavior grounded in theory and the incorporation of network-based data structures and data that allow the model to address the interactions between perpetrators and victims. These improved measurements will allow future research to incorporate network models that examine these interactions directly, compared to the simple Bass Diffusion Model employed in this initial iteration of the framework.

Further, a simplified diffusion model (the BDM) was used in this case study to model how information flows from advocates and PSAs to and among workers. Additional data collection before and after deployment of an educational intervention would support a more detailed and dynamic network modeling approach, e.g., stochastic actor-oriented models. Such stochastic actor-oriented models (SAOMs) [58,59] have the potential to elucidate the social network ties between community members, employers, and community members and employers. This modeling activity can improve understanding of the respective and

interactive effects of influence, selection, and social norms in accounting for ecosystem participants' co-evolution of fair and exploitive behaviors. SAOMs can also be formulated to include the possible diffusion of interventions into the network [58,60]. Such models require different data collection procedures than those used in the present study, including data that records the network structure and dynamics between network participants. An improved understanding of the interactions between ecosystem participants would support improvement to the ABM test bed and further preparation for the testing of interventions at scale in Step 8.

To effectively address labor exploitation, we must better understand the motivations and actions of perpetrators and victims. One of the most well-known criminal behavior theories, the theory of differential association, attests that criminal behavior is, at its core, learned behavior [61]. This learning theory states that the process of learning criminal behavior occurs through an ongoing association with those who display criminal attitudes or values. Learning theory, the overarching framework from which differential association theory came, is based on the concept of conditioning, where behavior is related to its relative environment. Operant behaviors are one step further, wherein behaviors occur in the presence of a specific environmental or stimulus and can be maintained by the environment's response to the specific behavior. This maintenance of a particular behavior is amplified when the response is positive. Criminal behavior, like all social interactions, is operant behavior. As such, the behavior is maintained by the responses it brings up in the environment. Specifically, the frequency of the behavior is determined by the consequence or lack thereof. The criminal act of underpaying employees can produce costs saved and more profit, which would fall under a positive stimulus and provide a reinforcement to repeat the criminal action. Sutherland's theory also states that fellow human beings often act as the primary reinforcers of criminal activities [61]. If exploited day laborers do not voice their protests, the employer may believe that their actions are not causing significant enough harm to stop. Likewise, suppose other employers see that one can extract more labor for less and comment on it, whether from envy, admiration, or simply an observation. In that case, the exploitative employer may be encouraged to continue with the criminal action.

As a familiar foundation, Merton's strain theory states that the social structure and environment, rather than culture or company, pressure specific individuals to commit crimes [62]. This theory was initially developed to explain the high frequency of crime in low-income areas instead of in high-income areas. Various types of strain–stress, financial distress, perceived disrespect, desired status, and dissatisfaction–can lead an individual to engage in specific criminal activity. While these strains are present in various socioeconomic levels, strain theory proposes that individual strain is more severe and frequent among people who desire and internalize the societal goals of high status and wealth but are aware of the barriers that exist for their attainment [62]. This clash between expectations and perceived attainment can drive people to engage in criminal activity out of desperation or a twisted sense of justification, in which they feel the system at large, not themselves, is to blame for their actions. Individuals who desire financial success, but view going to college as unattainable, are more likely to seek other avenues to achieve that success, including crime. For employers who employ day laborers, exploiting their workers may relieve some of the strain they experience. Analyzing the demographics of employers in this informal sector, specifically looking at education level and economic aspirations could reveal strains that would increase the likelihood of offending.

Such future research on perpetration behaviors will need to address enduring challenges associated with measuring those behaviors. For example, the authors have investigated perpetration behavior in sexual violence and misconduct. The most common strategy for measuring perpetration that we are aware of includes modifying established victimization protocols designed to measure specific behaviors, e.g., the Sexual Experiences Survey (SES) [63], into perpetration-focused behavioral protocols. These modifications have been reliable, but scholars believe they likely underrepresent perpetration rates [64–66]. Measurement tools for human trafficking are available, but fewer studies have been con-

ducted using them to examine perpetration. The Trafficking Victim Identification Tool (TVIT) screener [67] was designed for labor and sex trafficking. The Human Trafficking Interview and Assessment Measure (HTIAM-14) and the Human Trafficking Screening Tool (HTST) are rigorously designed screening tools that include labor exploitation. Still, they were developed primarily to identify sex trafficking [68,69]. Our research has largely been informed by methods developed by Zhang and colleagues, whose research is specific to labor exploitation and trafficking, focusing on victimization [70]. Our future research will examine how to adapt such measurement approaches best to identify perpetration.

The current study suggests the potential of a third class of interventions, restorative processes. Restorative justice focuses on a healing process for victims of crimes. Restorative processes involve balancing the needs of individuals and communities in the pursuit of justice [9]. Rather than focusing solely on punitive justice, restorative justice seeks to raise the understanding and impact of crime for those who have caused harm. Traditional justice methods can prove challenging for victims of labor trafficking; in the United States, day laborers are often foreign-born or primarily speak Spanish. These are barriers to interacting with law enforcement. Studies have found that while 52% of survivors are referred to the criminal justice system to address their cases, most are not interested in pursuing specific criminal justice solutions against their traffickers [9,71]. A combination of mistrust and negative experiences with law enforcement leaves many victims of wage theft unsure of how to seek justice. Furthermore, human trafficking victims see the prevention of harm to others rather than a narrow focus on the incarceration of their trafficker as an ideal endpoint in seeking justice [71]. Survivors have voiced critiques over the effectiveness of incarceration in promoting accountability and changing behavior [11]. Foreign and natural-born survivors of human trafficking view justice as two-tiered: receiving their stolen wages and preventing the traffickers from continuing to harm others [71]. Foreign-born survivors were particularly adamant about the immigration status of perpetrators, stating that "…traffickers should be prevented from re-entering the US and obtaining permission to hire additional workers" [72]. While the exact number of perpetrators who hold illegal immigration status is unknown, the high frequency of survivors mentioning the immigration status of employers presents an opportunity for a connection between the victims and perpetrators [72]. Day laborers have expressed confusion about the criminal justice system and their rights as workers, so similar confusion may exist for foreign-born employers [10]. To understand its occurrence, addressing labor trafficking must factor in the reasons for the criminal behavior [73–75]. Restorative justice initiatives recognize the humanity and complexities within the victim and preparator alike and seek justice by working with community members to heal and ultimately change their behavior [10,71,72].

Although, restorative processes were not empirically examined evidence gathered in this case study supports the potential of this approach, especially in the context of a labor center wherein laborers, employers, and center staff convene in a venue that is amenable to restorative processes to disrupt illicit behavior and build trust and open communication. The current study illustrates the limitations of education without a focus on improved outcomes. Such system changes can be implemented in formal reporting channels. But system changes can also be implemented informally, for example, at a worker center. How might such changes be achieved?

The type of intervention best suited to address labor exploitation should consider participants' desired outcomes within the social system. Interviews with day laborers have shown that the majority believe 'money recovery' to be the most successful outcome, as opposed to the exploitative employer facing legal ramifications beyond wage recovery [2,71]. Many day laborers would prefer to pursue justice by correcting a past grievance without the process and ramifications of involving the legal and criminal justice system [66,72]. Additional analysis of the data reported by the authors has revealed a willingness from day laborers to reengage with previously exploitative employers under certain conditions [2]. This initial inclination to work once more with an offender could safely be supported through restorative justice programs [9]. Interventions that center on restorative justice may

allow victims to safely voice their needs and establish norms for individual and community healing and offender accountability. In this way, such restorative approaches to employment can foster cooperation in the sense of Fiske [76] and contribute to sustainable economic growth and well-being in the sense of Coscieme et al. [77] and Fioramonti et al. [78].

Differential association and strain theories recognize that perpetration is learned behavior grounded in contextual stressors. Various forms of justice have been applied historically, with a common focus broadly in labor exploitation and trafficking being on procedural strategies of reporting infractions with penalties for offenders. Coupled with common mistrust by victims of formal reporting mechanisms and law enforcement, restorative processes have potential, especially within a worker center. The same education tools used for day laborers could be applied to employers as a preventative measure against exploitation. Just as advocates work with day laborers to understand their rights and reduce their tolerance for being exploited, so can employers learn from and work with day laborers. Fostering empathy, justice, and understanding of why wage theft and other forms of labor trafficking are wrong, beyond being a crime has significant value.

5. Conclusions

The cumulative evidence from our artifactual and virtual experiments to date supports continued research into the response of employers to interventions designed to protect day laborers and the potential of restorative processes applied within a labor center as a means of addressing exploitative behaviors, like wage theft.

We have extended the process by Battista and colleagues [1] for developing an intervention to alter behavior with the introduction of agent-based modeling. Additional steps (3, 5, and 7) illustrate where simulation models can be incorporated to improve the understanding of the problem domain and generate data for evaluating the effects of potential interventions.

1. Gain an in-depth understanding of the community and context; it is possible to identify relevant actors, types of problematic behaviors, and potential drivers.
2. Develop hypothetical interventions based on testable hypotheses about the drivers of the problem behavior.
3. Build simulation models that capture the ecosystem dynamics and structure of the interventions.
4. Experimentally test hypothetical interventions.
5. Explore the impact of hypothetical interventions with models in the virtual simulation laboratory before (or in parallel) real-world pilots.
6. Pilot interventions based on the mechanisms identified.
7. Update models and analysis to optimize plans for testing interventions at scale.
8. Scale-up tested interventions and set up systems to monitor, evaluate, and adjust.

A case study of labor exploitation and trafficking demonstrated the utility of developing and testing interventions using participatory methods and simulation and modeling methods to learn more about the system virtually to reduce risk and time when testing or deploying those interventions in the real-world system. Specifically, worker centers are viable venues for various interventions that target the disruption of illicit behaviors like wage theft and promote prosocial behaviors. For example, education targeted at laborers and employers about workers' rights and the obligations of employers to workers is a critically needed primordial prevention. Such an intervention would benefit from the inclusion of labor organization principles optimized for the informal setting of day labor. Additionally, education should include curricula on workplace safety, the second most common form of labor exploitation. Such multilayered system approaches have been recognized previously as viable for a range of policy and social action domains, including sexual violence and misconduct [79,80], sex trafficking and sexual exploitation [81,82], and wildlife trafficking and emerging infectious disease [5], among others.

The three added decision science phases of activity in the behavioral science process are constructed from data from local communities to reflect the ground truth and enhance

the accuracy of modeling and analysis. Labor exploitation [6] can be considered a complex system that is ultimately rooted in human behavior, with direct and indirect bidirectional effects across a network of employees and workers. Approaching anti-exploitation interventions through a multidisciplinary lens can lead to a greater understanding of the tolerance, willingness, and behavior of exploitation and create a framework for developing effective strategies for change. Agent-based simulation is an appropriate methodological approach to include in this process because such models can reveal emergent behavior in more complex real-world modeling environments and generate data that can be used in other models, e.g., optimization models and reinforcement learning methods, which, in turn, can be used to plan and deploy interventions to meet policy objectives.

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Discouraging the Demand That Fosters Sex Trafficking: Collaboration through Augmented Intelligence

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Abstract: Augmented intelligence—as the fusion of human and artificial intelligence—is effectively being employed in response to a spectrum of risks and crimes that stem from the online sexual exploitation marketplace. As part of a study that was sponsored by the National Institute of Justice, the National Center on Sexual Exploitation has documented 15 tactics that have been used in more than 2650 US cities and counties to deter sex buyers from engaging with prostitution and sex trafficking systems. One of these tactics, technology-based enforcement and deterrence methods, has been used in more than 78 locations in the United States. This paper explores the issue of technology-facilitated trafficking in the online sexual exploitation marketplace and juxtaposes this with the use of augmented intelligence in collaborative responses to these crimes. Illustrative case studies are presented that describe how two organizations employ technology that utilizes the complementary strengths of humans and machines to deter sex buyers at the point of purchase. The human(e) touch of these organizations, combined with artificial intelligence, natural language processing, constructed websites, photos, and mobile technology, show significant potential for operational scaling, and provide a template for consideration by law enforcement agencies, criminal justice systems, and the larger multidisciplinary counter-trafficking community for collaborative replication in other settings.

Keywords: artificial intelligence; augmented intelligence; demand reduction; prostitution; sex trafficking; technology

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1. Introduction

A range of multilateral legal obligations and political commitments geared towards discouraging the demand that fosters sex trafficking are in existence and mandate action from participating states. As a participating state of the Organization for Security and Co-Operation (OSCE) in Europe, and as a country which signed and ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children of the United Nations (UN) Convention against Transnational Organized Crime [1] (hereafter Trafficking Protocol), the United States (US) has an obligation to discourage the demand that fosters trafficking for sexual exploitation. Article 9(5) of the Trafficking Protocol mandates that signatories strengthen legislative and other measures such as "educational, social or cultural measures" that seek to "discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation of persons, especially women and children, that leads to trafficking". Article 9(5) of the Trafficking Protocol is also foundational to the relevant OSCE commitments [2,3] that give guidance on how the United States should carry out its anti-sex trafficking measures. Further, on 15 December 2022, UN resolution 77/194 (Trafficking in Women and Girls) reiterated the call upon governments to intensify their efforts to "prevent and address, with a view to eliminating, the demand that fosters the trafficking of women and girls for all forms of exploitation", and it implored countries to inculcate or amplify measures geared towards prevention, "including legislative and punitive measures to deter exploiters of trafficked persons, as well as ensure their accountability" [4] (p. 8). The Internet infrastructure, the online sexual exploitation ecosystem, and the countless technological tools available to its users to navigate the endless forays of the surface, deep,

and dark web, are critical to consider when acting on these obligations to implement demand reduction strategies in the US.

Since the advent of the 21st century, police departments nationwide have observed sharp increases in the use of the Internet for soliciting prostitution and a decline in their yield of arrests made in street-based stings and reverse stings [5–10]. Conventional reverse stings [11–15] are law enforcement operations targeting buyers who engage in purchasing sexual access to others. Following the widespread use of the Internet and the rise of online prostitution advertising, police conducting reverse stings began employing online decoy sex advertisements, which are posted by a law enforcement agent who poses as a prostituted person when transacting with the targeted buyer. These communications usually take place via text message or voice phone call. Law enforcement will call and text buyers from their official phones and do so using altered identities. An "in-call" service, in which the buyer arranges to meet the prostituting person at some location, is negotiated between an undercover officer and the buyer with the agreed upon location for the solicited sex acts usually taking place at a hotel room or law enforcement-controlled premises. When the buyer arrives, he is arrested and processed [11–15]. The expansion of online prostitution and its sex trafficking nexus, as well as the risks, costs, and labor intensity of conventional reverse stings, favorably positions the use of technologies as alternative means of pursuing primary prevention at a vastly expanded scale. Today, chatbots, artificial intelligence, natural language processing (NLP), constructed websites, photos, and mobile technology are woven into most of the technology-based enforcement methods aimed at discouraging the demand that fosters sex trafficking.

Scope and Delimitation

Accordingly, this paper examines the ways in which technology has been harnessed to discourage the demand that fosters sex trafficking, and employs a deterrence lens [16–20] to describe collaborative efforts by law enforcement agencies, technologists, and anti-trafficking role-players to dissuade buyers at points of purchase. In the US, the conduct of sex buyers in prostitution and sex trafficking are proscribed by various state and federal laws [21,22], while persons under the age of 18 who perform a commercial sex act are considered victims of child sex trafficking [23]. An established legal framework therefore undergirds efforts geared towards discouraging the demand that fosters sex trafficking. Several matters are beyond the scope of this paper and are not litigated. The decisions that determine the degree to which legal obligations to deter demand are enforced at the city, county, state, and federal levels, and the methods used to achieve them, are contingent upon a complex mix of legal, political, and social factors. Neither a survey of these factors nor a critical analysis of what appear to be irreconcilable philosophical debates surrounding prostitution public policy [24–28] in the US (or globally) were the focus of this paper, and nor was that of the larger research project from which the findings in this paper stem. This includes contentions around Internet governance and the relevance and impact of laws such as FOSTA-SESTA [29–32] in the US. Although the ongoing debates regarding artificial intelligence and ethics [33–37] are beyond the scope of this paper, the practical implications and compliance guidelines around issues of data protection and ethics [38–41] are explicated in the case studies.

The growing calls for collaboration between governments, the technology industry, and anti-trafficking stakeholders to fuse their efforts in response to human trafficking [42,43] as well as this Special Issue's focus on research findings and evidence-supported practices pertaining to multisector collaboration and the use of digital technologies in efforts to combat human trafficking both informed the aims and scope of this paper. Two organizations and their use of these technologies within collaborative settings are the subjects of this paper. It starts with an introduction of collaboration and augmented intelligence within the context of human trafficking combatting efforts, and continues with an overview of existing scholarship and practice around technology's role in sex trafficking perpetration and prevention. This serves as the theoretical foundation for presenting the two organiza-

tions, Street Grace and The EPIK Project, as illustrative case studies [44] that show much potential for scaling innovative collaborations and impactful efforts designed to deter the consumer-level demand[1] that fosters sex trafficking.

2. Collaboration and Augmented Intelligence

At the core of what has been described as a 'battle of wits' between systems that perpetrate human trafficking and systems that seek to combat the crime [45] is the "capacity to harness complexity and co-axe solutions from [a] volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) landscape" [46] (p. 777). The required agility that enables this capacity is not the result of serendipity but is nurtured through cross-sector and human-centered collaboration that is often challenged by competing objectives, paralyzing bureaucracies, and incongruencies in values and priorities [47]. The importance of collaboration is consistently underscored in human trafficking scholarship. This includes collaboration as the lifeblood for success in human trafficking task force operations, interagency collaboration, and operational sustainability [48–51], and the understanding that efforts to combat sexual exploitation exist along a continuum of care that can reveal opportunities where strategic collaboration can influence prevention, intervention, restoration, and reintegration [52,53]. Placing survivor perspectives and leadership at the center of collaborative spaces can also influence policy and practice towards more meaningful results [54]. The addition of *partnership* to the existing foci of the federal government's initiatives, namely, prevention, protection and prosecution, demonstrates the increasing recognition of collaboration as essential at the national and local levels [55,56]. A fifth 'P'—participation—has also been proposed and denotes the active engagement of all multidisciplinary role-players and service providers in efforts against human trafficking [57,58].

The reliance on technology and artificial intelligence to strengthen collaborative efforts against sex trafficking and consumer-level demand reduction, have received a fair amount of attention in recent years [59–61]. The focus of artificial intelligence is largely on aspects such as computer science, datasets, and the sub-fields of machine learning and deep learning [62], whereas 'augmented intelligence' accentuates the importance of human collaboration with machines. As observed recently in the field of mental health, artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots are not yet able to fully replace human interactions. While having the capacity to improve efficiency, affordability, convenience, and patient-driven access, AI interfaces and chatbots "cannot be expected to provide the feelings of respect and subtle constellations of interpersonal supports necessary for a sense of social agency, inclusion and equity" [63] (p. 4). Among the ways in which the two organizations discussed in this study seem to eclipse a sole reliance on technology is how their operations include the interface between humans and "machines," and how they augment and amplify each other's strength while managing implicit weaknesses. Augmented Intelligence is considered as:

> [A]n umbrella-term used in media theory, cognitive sciences, neurosciences, philosophy of mind and political philosophy to cover the complex relation between human intelligence, on one side, and mnemo-techniques and computational machines, on the other, both understood as an expansion (also to a social and political degree) of human cognitive faculties". [64] (p. 203)

More simply, augmented intelligence refers to the merging of the power and strengths of AI with those of humans by "integrating AI systems into the day-to-day work of people to help them make better decisions" [65] (p. 1). Practitioners and their coexistence with technology and the application of artificial intelligence in counter-human trafficking initiatives are here to stay. This merits an engagement with the idea of augmented intelligence that differs from AI in that "many models of AI suggest that its purpose is to wholly supplant human intelligence" [66] (p. 451). To highlight the need for collaboration and augmented intelligence, and to show how Street Grace and The EPIK project espouse these concepts, it is important to reflect on technology-facilitated trafficking in the online sexual exploitation ecosystem and the nature of consumer-level demand that fosters sex trafficking. This will be followed by an overview of technological developments in response to these crimes.

3. Technology-Facilitated Trafficking

Latonero and colleagues refer to technology-facilitated trafficking as the "social and technical ecosystem wherein individuals use information and communication technologies to engage in human trafficking and related behaviors" [67] (p. 10). Pioneers that formed part of this online sexual exploitation ecosystem included the now defunct "Erotic Services" section of Craigslist and the website Backpage [68–70]. A 2017 report on Backpage by the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the US Senate, which followed an extensive investigation into the prostitution advertising platform, found that the company knowingly facilitated child sex trafficking and concealed evidence of criminality [68]. Among the ways it facilitated sex trafficking was its use of an automated filter, which would strip key words such as "Lolita", "teenage", "amber alert", "little girl", "fresh", and "school girl" from prostitution ads posted to its site by third parties [68] (pp. 22–23). At the time, Backpage was involved in 73% of all reports of child sex trafficking from the public to the National Center on Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) [68]. Backpage was seized and shut down by the US Justice Department in April of 2018, which filed a 93-count federal indictment against seven individuals associated with the business [71].

Platforms now include several other classified advertising sites that facilitate the illicit sex trade [72–75], including other web-based interactive technologies used for the business of commercial sex. The latter includes online gaming systems, such as Xbox Live, and social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook [76–78]. It therefore comes as no surprise that the use of technology by sex traffickers and buyers is increasing. In tandem with cellular technology, the Internet offers its users the opportunity to stay connected interminably from any geographic location. The Internet's seemingly limitless supply of information is the same feature that supports its growing popularity as a venue that facilitates domestic minor sex trafficking [74] (among other crimes). Even though digital technologies such as mobile phones, social media, and the Internet have added significant benefits to every stratum of society at large, new opportunities and conduits for sexual exploitation have become equally diffused [67]. The expansion of online prostitution with its manifold manifestations [79–81] and the oft-indiscernible distinction between prostitution and sex trafficking [82] have made the online environment a flourishing ecosystem of sexual exploitation. These technologies increasingly impact every aspect of the sex trafficking cycle, and a functional understanding of their uses is a critical component for the multidisciplinary response to sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of adults and children. Technology is used [83] in the recruitment phase by facilitating the identification, location, and contact of potential victims. This may include job advertisements or recruitment via social media platforms and dating applications. The exploitation phase may include technology being used to facilitate the sale of sex acts to sex trafficking victims via internet websites or live-streaming services [84]. Online prostitution advertisements associated with sex trafficking obfuscate [85] prostitution transactions, moving them from streets and bars to Internet-based forums, thereby obviating easy law enforcement detection. Further clouding the situation, online prostitution advertisements may include the use of coded emojis instead of words where the use of an umbrella emoji may denote condom use and a crown may signify services managed by a pimp. The use of a combination of letters and numbers from character symbols or interspersing text within a phone number are other methods of obfuscation [85].

Roe-Sepowitz explored the behavior and characteristics of a national cross-sectional sample of sex traffickers arrested for the sex trafficking of minors in the United States [86]. A total of 1416 sex traffickers were identified in a 6-year period from 2010 to 2015. Both the numbers of arrests and the use of technology by sex traffickers progressively increased annually during this period. Technology was used during the minor's sexual exploitation in more than two-thirds of cases (n = 950, 67.1%) by either advertising victims online or by furnishing a mobile phone to the victim. Online ads were used in nearly two-thirds of the cases (n = 889, 63.5%). The website Backpage was specifically used in more than one-third of these cases (n = 592, 41.8%), though the name of the advertising website was not always

provided in reports, so the incidence rate may have been higher. A disturbing finding from this study was the fact that there exists such a significant commercial market for sex with minors. Roe-Sepowitz notes:

> While the demand for sex is significant, the demand for sex with minors is especially important to note. Sex traffickers of minors are intentionally offering children for sex, and adults are intentionally engaging in sex with children with no compunction or inhibition. [86] (p. 627)

A 2018 study [74] by Thorn provides further evidence of the scope of the online sexual exploitation marketplace. A total of 260 survivors of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST) who were contacted through 24 survivor organizations that spanned 14 states completed a survey that focused on understanding what role technology played in a victim's recruitment into, time spent in, and exit from DMST. One of the central themes from survey responses was that technology played an increasing role in the grooming and control of DMST victims. Findings included that 1 in 6 victims were trafficked under the age of twelve and that 75% of those who entered "the life" in 2004 or later were advertised online. Especially noteworthy are the study's findings related to interactions with sex buyers. Phone calls and texting remain the foremost methods of communicating with sex buyers. The study found that the majority of respondents said that they communicated with the buyers themselves (56%; $n = 139$). Among those with a sex trafficker, 42% ($n = 85$) stated that the trafficker communicated with the buyers while 51% ($n = 104$) said they communicated with buyers themselves. When sex traffickers do the communicating with buyers, there is a strong indication that the age of the victim is likely younger than 13 years old. Of the 104 respondents with a sex trafficker who communicated with buyers themselves, 87% were 13 to 17 years old when they entered the life. Conversely, those who reported that their sex trafficker conducted the communication with the buyers were significantly more likely to be younger when they entered the sex trade—of the 106 respondents who reported that their sex trafficker communicated with the buyers, 40% were 12 or younger.

The online commercial sexual exploitation landscape of the US has a global footprint with global ramifications. For instance, a US-based live "camming" website (streamatemodels)[2] was implicated in the successful prosecution of two sex traffickers, both Lesotho nationals, in a South African High Court [87] for the sexual exploitation of a 16-year-old minor in December 2019 (State v Seleso)[3]. The Pretoria Office of Homeland Security Investigations provided investigative support to South African law enforcement agencies as the website was hosted in the United States. The investigation revealed that the account used to exploit the victim had more than 6000 logins by sex buyers from across the globe to view the victim over the two-year period during which she was exploited. A 2022 report [88] also confirmed that several widely-used online prostitution websites in South Africa, some advertising on public roadways in close proximity to schools, were implicated in several successfully prosecuted sex trafficking cases and provide further evidence of the inextricable link between prostitution and sex trafficking. The global footprint and the egregious nature of crimes associated with the online sexual exploitation marketplace, the blurry line between prostitution and sex trafficking, and the fact that online prostitution provides a way to advertise that is not as easily detected by law enforcement [81] all necessitate bridging the gap between limited human capabilities and the new possibilities afforded by technological innovations.

4. Technological Developments in Response to the Online Sexual Exploitation Marketplace

Scholarship and operations pertaining to the expanding use of technology in crime deterrence provide promising insights into the strategic impact and scalability of these domains and the amplification of its dovetailing theory and practice [89–91]. The same applies to the application of technology, big data, and artificial intelligence with the aim of obstructing the growth of the online sexual exploitation marketplace. Researchers investigated computational approaches [92] that utilize text or meta-data/multimedia for

online sexual risk detection that included sexual predation, sexual grooming, sexual assault, sexual abuse, sex trafficking, and sexually abusive conversations. The research included approaches comprised of system architecture on text and multi-modal data (i.e., Natural Language Processing, Machine Learning). In their analysis of 73 peer-reviewed articles published between 2007 and 2020, researchers found that the majority (93%) of research has focused on identifying sexual predators after-the-fact instead of a more discerning approach that identifies potential victims as well as indicators that could enable the prevention of victimization before it occurs. They identified three types of online sexual risk detection in the extant literature. These included sexual grooming (75%), sex trafficking (12%), and sexual harassment and/or abuse (12%). In a study by Keskin [85] and colleagues, a variety of computational methods were used to present a framework for harvesting, linking, and detecting patterns in a dataset comprising more than 10 million advertisements linked to illicit sexual activities and sex trafficking. Their framework provides valuable insights that may assist law enforcement agencies to proactively combat sex trafficking networks, and it provides researchers with additional insights for developing advanced interdiction models that target illicit sexual activities. An analysis [93] of unstructured deep web data related to approximately 14 million prostitution advertisements used a machine learning framework that combines natural language processing, active learning, and network analysis. The research uncovered likely trafficking routes and provided large-scale insight into where and how victims are recruited—often through deception. The results enable more effective coordination and the prioritization of "resource allocation to maximize impact" [93] (p. 20) in a landscape where "social resources are often highly constrained" [93] (p. 20).

The essence of several technologies identified in this research combines "a text message back-end with an autonomous chat bot trained on conversations between sex buyers and undercover agents" [82] (p. 14). Once a buyer engages via text with a number from a decoy sex advertisement, the chat bot connects with the most appropriate response from the information and transcripts it was trained on. Implicit to this approach is the risk of law enforcement action to deter sex buyers [94] and using the opportunity to have conversations with buyers to raise awareness about the harms of sex trafficking while bringing about an attitude change towards buying sex [95]. Innovative concepts include chatbots, computer programs which can simulate human conversations with people via the Internet. One such chatbot is PrevBOT, [96] an AI-based Police Robot for Preventing Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse initiated in a chatroom environment. Knowledge and research related to online automatic policing, forensic linguistics, criminology, machine learning, and the law underpins the conceptualization and development of PrevBOT by Norwegian researchers who seek to optimize its operation "in an effective, fair, and lawful manner" [96] (p. 2). Similarly, Terre des Hommes' Sweetie 2.0 [97] was a virtual female 10-year-old Philippine chatbot, which tracked, identified, and deterred individuals using the Internet for the purpose of sexually abusing children, and Street Grace's Gracie [98] is a US-based artificial intelligence chatbot that not only warns predators of the implicit risks and consequences of their actions but also provides them with trauma and therapy resources, thus further shifting the boundaries of innovation. In a similar vein, C3-Sex [99] is an example of an automatic software-controlled conversational agent that is deployed online and interacts with users autonomously. It uses NLP and is deployed on websites or in scenarios where it profiles the interests of suspects regarding online child sexual abuse. Researchers from Colombia and Spain conducted a 50-day experiment between April and June 2020, and connected C3-Sex to the online chat platform Omegle and typed "sex" as a conversational topic of interest. When a conversation between a user (suspect) and the chatbot ensued, the suspect's willingness to exchange multimedia content was confirmed. C3-Sex then proceeded to suggest Snapchat as the platform to exchange the multimedia content. Once the suspect left the chat room, C3-Sex closed the conversation and continued to analyze the interaction using profiling metrics and AI models. The 50-day experiment revealed that, on average, the C3-Sex smart chatbot can interact with 900 suspects weekly

and was able to stay online throughout the eight weeks of the experiment, with a total of 7199 users contacted.

In February 2018, the Cook County Sheriff's Office reported [100] on its partnership with Seattle Against Slavery during the 15th National Johns Suppression Initiative (NJSI) operation which ran from 7 January to 4 February and included more than 30 law enforcement agencies across 16 states. Ads were posted online that connected to chatbots posing as sex trafficking victims. The bots, with names such as 'Ariel,' 'Brook', and 'Cari', were said to "fluidly interact via text message with individuals seeking to buy sex". If a price for the service was eventually set and agreed upon, the bot sent a deterrence message informing the sex buyer that soliciting sex is a crime. During the campaign, the bot was activated in Boston, King County (Seattle), Los Angeles County, and Phoenix. A total of 9114 potential sex buyers were engaged, and more than 60% of sex buyers received the deterrence message. Cook County Sheriff Thomas J. Dart lauded the technology and commented:

> "This incredible technology helps to further the work done by law enforcement to bring attention to the exploitive nature of the sex trafficking industry and reduce the demand for purchased sex that serves to perpetuate a cycle of violence, mental illness and drug addiction for victims."

Data aggregation is another tool being utilized to help law enforcement identify and deter sex buying. Childsafe.ai, a software startup that deploys machine learning and active collection networks that monitor actors that "buy and sell human beings from within the surface, deep and dark web marketplaces in which those transactions occur" [72] (p. 10), delivers a Demand Deterrence Platform serving law enforcement anti-human trafficking units around the country to reduce the illicit finances pouring into their local sex trafficking economies. ChildSafe.ai also amplifies the ability to identify and respond to online sexual exploitation by mobilizing chatbots. When comprehending the conversations of a potential sex buyer, ChildSafe.ai delivers a customized deterrence message in which it warns the buyer of the legal and social ramifications of buying sexual access to others. In a 2020 example, several law enforcement agencies had implemented the ChildSafe.ai platform, which resulted in the cumulative engagement of 1477 potential sex buyers with an estimated total of 8500 customized deterrence messages being sent [101].

Through their principal technology tool Spotlight, Thorn also utilizes data aggregation and has reported [102] having identified 3977 children and reduced law enforcement investigation time by 61%. More than 2700 agencies are reported to be using Thorn tools, with the number of children identified since the inception of the technology totaling 24,366. Police investigators laud [103] the value and efficiency of Spotlight. According to Kyle Woods and Kyle Hartsock, detectives inside the Ghost Unit with the Bernalillo County New Mexico's Sheriff's Office, Spotlight is used to aggregate online data and enables the use of data gathered from websites. Apart from utilizing Spotlight for victim interviews, it provides much value in tracking "a victim's movement across the country, with exact dates and times of posts as well as when phone numbers changed (the trafficker picked her up, etc.). We have identified ads 6 months after the incident utilizing Spotlight, which, in one case, cracked open the case and lead to a successful prosecution of a child sex trafficker" [104].

Although not primarily focussed on discouraging the demand that fosters sex trafficking, ShadowDragon.io [105] endeavors to make the world a safer place by developing easy-to-use digital investigation tools that address the complexities of modern online investigations and augment the capabilities of in-house teams. The organization partners with nonprofits that share the common goal of ending human trafficking by using sophisticated digital tools and tested investigative methods. These tools enable human trafficking investigators [106] to identify where information is being talked about and enables the monitoring of specific areas of interest, including the DarkNet, online forums, chat rooms, data dump sites, and online marketplaces. Sites can be monitored "to pick up new leads and chatter". The tools also enable a "robust intelligence product output, enabling attribution, action and disruption".

In a 2019 ShadowDragon blog entitled "It's Hard Out There for a Pimp" [73], the organization asserts that sex traffickers are using the expansion of escort websites to "advertise their products to the world". An example of an online investigation using their OIMonitor tool is showcased by employing it on some of the largest escort sites in operation and searching them for potential sex trafficking ads. They reported that one data point has the potential to unveil hundreds of posts—many of which will be the same and possibly in different cities. According to ShadowDragon, a reason for repeated data could be that changing information in online posts has cost implications, and pimps may thus only purchase a limited number of ads. Posting the same data is also easier than creating new language for each post. When potential sex traffickers are identified by specific data points, they are added to an OIMonitor project that alerts the user when that data is posted. OIMonitor's historical search and alerting functionalities are therefore able to locate potential sex traffickers and setup alerts. The specific online investigation that was showcased in the blog was "put together in just under an hour" and highlights the remarkable contribution of technology to sex trafficking investigations.

5. Methodology

To combat the overlapping systems of prostitution and sex trafficking, criminal justice strategies and collaborative programs have emerged that focus on depriving these illicit markets of their sole revenue source: consumer-level demand. From 2008 to 2012, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) sponsored a study, the "National Assessment of Demand Reduction Efforts", [107] that entailed the systematic gathering of information to determine the types and distribution of demand reduction tactics implemented throughout the United States. These efforts resulted in a typology of law enforcement and community-based tactics identifying 12 distinct methods for deterring people (overwhelmingly men) from buying sex or which sanction those individuals who seek to purchase sexual access. The study found that these tactics were used by law enforcement and community action groups in more than 800 U.S. cities and counties in efforts to deter this damaging behavior and to hold perpetrators accountable. The key product of that study was the Demand Forum [108] website, which launched in 2013. For 10 years, Demand Forum has provided information about demand reduction interventions in the United States, and its content has been updated and expanded through daily web searches, supplemented by periodic literature reviews or direct contact with a network of practitioners and other experts. While Demand Forum has continued to be a useful tool, much has changed since it was launched in 2013 and conceived years before then. The most significant development has been the emergence of new tactics using information and communication technology (ICT) to deter buyers and develop evidence to apprehend those actively seeking to purchase sex.

To keep pace with innovations and evolving responses to emerging threats, and to continue to provide useful support for practice and policy, the current study was initiated to build upon the methodology and knowledge base of the first National Assessment. In January 2021, work began on a new grant from NIJ that supported the current study entitled "National Assessment of Demand Reduction Efforts, Part II: New Developments in the Primary Prevention of Sex Trafficking" [109]. The methodology for curating new content about existing tactics and their implementation in U.S. cities and counties featured (1) Web-based surveys of law enforcement agencies, (2) interviews with practitioners, policy makers, program staff, and advocates, (3) web searches of open-source reports, and (4) reviews of prostitution laws in the criminal codes of all 50 states. Throughout, the research was guided by input from a panel of survivor content experts. These tasks have resulted in the identification of nearly 500 additional cities and counties that have implemented demand reduction tactics (for a total of more than 2650 cities and counties). Much of the research effort was directed toward understanding and documenting the use of information technology to detect, investigate, apprehend, and deter sex buyers that has emerged as a distinct and new class of intervention, which was prompted by a shift in the market for illicit commercial sex away from in-person solicitation and toward various

advertising websites and social media applications on the Internet. The study received ethical approval after a two-step ethical clearance process.

To gather content about this newer tactic, a comprehensive literature search was conducted, followed by an iterative cycle of deductive and inductive coding and analysis of the literature using Atlas.ti (Version 22) [110]. Four organizations that employ technology-based methods with a specific focus on efforts targeting consumer-level demand that fosters sex trafficking were identified. Available open-source data was then consulted and informed the first draft of an organizational profile for each entity that described their approaches to demand reduction and the use of technology. All four of the organizations agreed to participate in the research. What followed was an iterative cycle of conversations, information exchange, and an experience-led write-up of how they employ technology-based demand reduction tactics. This was complemented by a practitioner-led approach to data collection by engaging with those in the broader law enforcement arena for insights into law enforcement tactics like reverse stings and its overlap with technology-based demand reduction tactics.

The two organizations discussed here, Street Grace and The EPIK Project, actively participated during the entire lifecycle of the research project and were able to provide novel insights into the collaboration of humans, humaneness, and technology in their demand deterrence initiatives. An organizationally based case study approach [111] and pathways to rigor [112] in case study research informed the write-up and discussion concerning the use of technology-based deterrence methods used by Street Grace and The EPIK Project. The cases are presented as illustrations [44] that provide practical insights into how humans and technology augment each other's strengths in collaborative efforts to deter consumer-level demand that fosters sex trafficking in online sexual exploitation marketplaces. Lessons can therefore be gleaned for applications to other empirical settings.

6. Case Studies

6.1. Street Grace and Transaction Intercept

Street Grace, a nonprofit, was founded in 2009. Based in Atlanta, Georgia, Street Grace has offices in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and in Houston, Texas, and provides help to several areas in the United States. Transaction Intercept [98], an initiative of Street Grace, seeks to identify individuals seeking to purchase sexual access to minors and strip away their cloak of anonymity. According to Jamey Caruthers[4], Director of Demand Reduction and Policy, using technology to reduce the demand within the online commercial sexual exploitation marketplace is, in Street Grace's view, "the most effective, scalable counter-demand tactic in the fight against minor sexual exploitation".

When potential buyers are identified by having contacted a decoy ad placed by Street Grace, the organization connects with these individuals through "Gracie"—an artificial intelligence chatbot—who communicates the risks and consequences of the potential buyer's actions when the intent to purchase a minor is confirmed by Gracie. Gracie was launched manually (without AI) in 2015 and subsequently launched as an AI chatbot in 2018. A collaborative effort led to the relaunch of Gracie in 2021 after law enforcement input. Transaction Intercept, an enhanced version of Gracie's platform available only to law enforcement, was established as the outcome of this collaboration.

Since mid-2022, Transaction Intercept and Gracie work as fully automated technology platforms. Human behavior is mimicked by Gracie in an SMS (text messaging) environment. Gracie is not merely a chatbot, but also a collection of technologies that operate in tandem to automate the demand reduction process. This automatization removes the cumbersome efforts of conventional human efforts to monitor ads, respond to incoming messages, document outcomes, and interpret the data. Several technologies are intrinsic to this process and make up an ever scaling and artificially intelligent chatbot that actually learns.

Ads are placed and maintained across the online prostitution marketplace where Gracie is employed and "she" intercepts conversations by harnessing SMS technology. Gracie utilizes 112 distinct adolescent personas, interprets these conversations, and then

responds in a typical human manner that includes "convincing slang and SMS lingo". Conversations and the phone numbers of engaged buyers are logged in a database and, upon confirmation of an appointment for a paid sexual exchange, Gracie sends out a deterrence message to warn the buyer of the malfeasance being documented and the potential consequences of the putative buyer's actions. A follow-up message is sent that offers resources to the buyer and the number of clicks to those resources is tracked. All actions are methodically captured and displayed by Gracie on a dashboard. The data is made available to law enforcement and relevant role-players and geared towards helping to end the sexual exploitation of both children and adults online. The value of Gracie is summarized by Jamie Caruthers as follows:

> "Every conversation that a would-be sex buyer has with Gracie is a conversation that he/she isn't having with a real minor, and some of the conversations will result in a buyer being brought to justice".

Street Grace, according to Caruthers, has constructed a "custom dashboard from the ground up to maintain all of the data" and to fuse the "powerful stack of technologies" used by Gracie. The dashboard is constantly kept up-to-date, and cloud-based data storage services are utilized that enable the storage of all buyer interactions with Gracie. A special communications platform is used for SMS communications that has the capacity to link local phone numbers to the Gracie tech stack. NodeJS, a leading programming language for next-generation web projects, is used to code the conversations, and Google is used for Natural Language Processing (NLP). NLP allows Street Grace to elucidate all incoming messages from sex buyers and determine the meaning of the messages. Street Grace describes [113] the power of Google's NLP:

> "Google's NLP is constantly learning, using data from Google web and voice search. These technologies make for a human-like bot that can handle boundless conversations in real time".

Transaction Intercept "enables law enforcement to monitor an exponentially greater number of conversations with potential purchasers of minors", says Jamie Caruthers. This capacity far exceeds what would be possible if unaided by the technology, and law enforcement can "step in" and take control of a given exchange once they identify a buyer who shows interest in a child. This enables law enforcement to initiate a criminal case, which may result in a physical meet-up between law enforcement officials and a prospective child sexual exploitation perpetrator or trafficker.

Challenges that the Street Grace team continue to navigate include getting ads onto and keeping ads on sites frequented by buyers. Many sites, albeit for liability reasons, actively monitor the ads and, in doing so, they put security measures in place in an effort to keep minors off their platforms. Verification sometimes includes a picture of the person in the ad holding their state-issued ID document, or a request for an actual copy of their state-issued ID document. Despite this challenge, Transaction Intercept is currently being enhanced with several new add-ons and features to further improve its use as a counter-demand tool that minimizes the expenditure of law enforcement resources and maximizes reach and impact.

In a 5-month period, Gracie has reached:

- 25 States and 78 Cities.
- over 1000 intercepts a month.
- More than 54,000 messages exchanged.
- More than 6000 would-be predators reported.

Gracie also offers trauma and therapy resources to individual sex buyers to assist them in taking the first step toward receiving help.

Early on, Street Grace made the strategic decision to remain focused on the use of technology to increase the number of successful arrests and prosecutions of buyers rather than on identity disclosure tactics. Gracie's conversations and the phone numbers she obtains are only made available to law enforcement agencies, and there are no other entities

that have access to this data. This phone and conversation data can be used effectively by law enforcement agencies for a variety of purposes, including identifying when sex buyers emerge in overlapping law enforcement systems and interventions (i.e., traffic stops, other sex offences, crimes, or misdemeanors). There are instances where the same phone number could be logged five times, and law enforcement would be most interested in ascertaining who these callers are.

An ethical consideration navigated by the Street Grace team is the use of photographs for ads that are posted on prostitution advertising websites. Street Grace only uses photos from adult volunteers that are digitally altered to such an extent that the volunteer cannot be identified. The comprehensive tech stack and tools used by Street Grace enabled the in-house development of Gracie's AI component. Street Grace calls upon outside sources for technical and development expertise (including programming knowledge). This includes for-profit professionals volunteering their services. After beta-testing with a number of different law enforcement agencies, Street Grace is in the process of continuing to raise funds to enable Transaction Intercept to be used nationally with no subscription fees, dues, or costs to law enforcement (outside of incidental costs such as ad purchases). Currently, Transaction Intercept is available to any jurisdiction or agency that wants to use it.

6.2. The EPIK Project

Based in the Portland/Vancouver area, the EPIK Project [114] (hereafter EPIK) was founded in 2012 in response to sex trafficking in the United States. It actively utilizes technology to disrupt paid sex at the point of sale. Tom Perez[5], Founder and CEO of EPIK, says the organization was prompted by the concern about how technology was used to sexually exploit people and asked the question: "How can we use the same technology being used to exploit people to fight the demand fueling that exploitation?"

In the early days of online prostitution platforms, sites like Backpage were an open marketplace for prostitution and anybody looking for anything related to paying for sexual access would start there. The evolution of EPIK started with a burner phone and a donated laptop. EPIK posted ads without pictures on Backpage and it was clear that getting a response from buyers was not a challenge. The "phone blew up and we were furiously writing numbers down on a writing pad, but we just couldn't keep up", says Perez.

During its first three years of operations, EPIK became part of the CEASE Network (Cities Empowered Against Sexual Exploitation), a project that was launched by Demand Abolition[6] in 2014. As part of this project, Demand Abolition provided financial and technical assistance to cities that were developing local demand-reduction strategies, tactics, and partnerships. Twelve cities participated in the initiative that focused on reducing the demand for illicit sex and holding buyers accountable across the United States.

EPIK's technology platform utilizes custom-built commercial grade call center software and market leading database tools, and it leverages machine learning to continually optimize the impact of volunteer efforts. EPIK's program functions as a "highly trained and sophisticated neighborhood watch program" by providing law enforcement with specific information related to the illegal activity of prostitution and sex trafficking. "There is a well-established flow (and boundaries) of technical intelligence from EPIK to law enforcement" that is credited by Tom Perez to "keeping the boundary clear between Agents of law enforcement and us as Allies".

EPIK also seeks to mobilize male allies to disrupt the illicit sex markets by equipping them to confront the roots of exploitation—male buyers—and encouraging them to effectively collaborate within the broader anti-sex trafficking movement. Sex buyers are connected via text and phone at the attempted point of purchase with 1 of nearly 200 active male volunteers who seek to educate them about the harms of the sex trade while also helping buyers to discover why they are seeking to buy sex acts. EPIK's male volunteers have had tens of thousands of calls and texts with buyers, eliciting a broad range of responses. EPIK volunteers are trained to avoid the use of shaming language.

More than 300 men have been trained to disrupt the demand for sexual exploitation in 21 U.S. cities, and these teams conduct "Cyber Patrols" over 20 nights per month. The training sets the foundation of the long game of Demand Reduction and is rooted in the leadership of the Survivor community. While no formal technical qualifications are needed to serve as an EPIK volunteer, they undergo a vetting process that involves passing a criminal background check and a sex addiction screening test. EPIK has had interested volunteers disqualify themselves from the role saying they were not ready. It is made very clear to volunteers that they are not "going after" buyers as they have no legal authority to do so. Instead, they are trained to provide an offramp to perpetuating the sex trade. Thus, the relationship with law enforcement is such that EPIK works to help buyers who are ready to stop buying, while those in authority handle buyers who are not ready to change.

EPIK recognizes the power of automation but sees technology as a way to help scale what humans can do. Justin Euteneier[7], Program Director and the architect of Cyber Patrols, said: "trafficking cannot end until demand ends. And demand cannot end by technology alone. Humans change culture". EPIK leverages technology to scale that improves the way engagement with buyers take place. They endeavor to find "the sweet spot of using both technology and humans to engage with sex buyers", states Euteneier. This has proven to be very efficient when engaging men. As Tom Perez points out: "We have identified roughly 125,000 active sex buyers through our work. We know that a significant number of these guys might be open to further dialogue . . . We've learned a lot about how to talk to guys about these issues".

After nearly a decade of direct buyer engagement, EPIK has realized the need for proactive outreach to sex buyers and it is here that technology plays a substantial role. By leveraging technologies such as AI and NLP, EPIK focuses its efforts on those men more open to change and to continual learning. Thus, EPIK takes into account research that indicates that many active sex buyers would like to stop [115]. The organization combines the power of technology and volunteers trained to use non-shaming tactics and uses their copious opportunities to help active buyers become former buyers.

As for buyer accountability, EPIK is playing the long game. Buyers' behavior is never excused and the harm they cause is never minimized. However, instead of focusing on the singular act on a given night, volunteers are trained to invite buyers into the bigger picture of what they are doing. "Shaming language is replaced with questions. Questions open doors. Open doors lead to discoveries. Discoveries lead to change", stated Euteneier. He continued: "We talk about leaving the baseball bat at the door. That is also why we talk about technology and the human connection. This method has allowed us to make real connections with buyers for a significant impact".

Calls as long as an hour are not uncommon with buyers trying to make sense of their actions. To date, the EPIK Project has logged over 250,000 attempts by an estimated 125,000 men intent on buying sexual access to another person. These interruptions have led to tens of thousands of meaningful conversations. EPIK enjoys support from survivors, advocates, and city officials and is recognized as a leader in demand reduction efforts. A contributing factor to the EPIK Project's success is its collaboration with law enforcement agencies. "We want to be allies to law enforcement, not agents" and "we want to make sure to draw that line", asserts Perez.

EPIK has three ways of collaborating with law enforcement. First, law enforcement agencies are offered information about local buyer activity. This includes phone numbers and any relevant information that could be useful to them. For instance, in the first few years of its operation, EPIK was encountering the same buyers that were repeatedly engaging with ads. Upon realizing these were high frequency buyers, EPIK shared this information with law enforcement. This helped law enforcement to use their resources more efficiently when conducting their own buyer operations. Having the numbers of known active buyers provides insight when decisions are made about which buyers to pursue. Second, law enforcement may invite EPIK to do undercover operations with them. This includes having trained and vetted EPIK volunteers engaging with actual buyers

who are arrested following their processing. After the arrested buyers are processed by police, they are given the option to speak to the volunteers from EPIK. Many of those arrested agree to engage in a conversation even though they are free to go. Third, EPIK also participates in sex buyer diversion programs in some cities.

The technology stack used by EPIK can be summarized as follows:

- Web-based call center software. This requires minimal tech savviness and anyone with basic technology skills can answer calls and texts and start engaging buyers.
- Database management tools. This is used to keep track of all buyer activity, which allows for larger scale data analysis.
- Machine Learning and Natural Language Processing. This allows for deep analysis of effective and/or ineffective communications and improved training.
- Artificial Intelligence: Machine Learning and Natural Language Processing is leveraged to build tools that will optimize volunteer effort and buyer engagements.

According to Tom Perez, "the sexual exploitation ecosystem has changed substantially in recent years. There is no longer anything subtle about the commercial sex marketplace—it is in your face". Not only has the ecosystem radically changed, but it is diffused into apps and numerous other subsystems. Ethical decision-making is a constant consideration. EPIK takes its cues from the wisdom and leadership of people with lived experience in systems of prostitution. Working to end demand requires tact and thoughtfulness about how people are impacted: buyers, survivors, volunteers, everyone. Collaboration is a significant value at EPIK.

6.3. Technology, Ethics, and Data Security

Sophisticated technological tools, increasingly forming part of government, civil society, and private sector responses to human trafficking, have not been absolved from scrutiny [116,117]. Data privacy, ethics, transparency, accountability, and informed consent are therefore some of the issues that have come into focus as increasing reliance is placed on technology. Some form of collecting, storing, sharing, and analysis of data is inevitable and each of these comes with its own inherent risks that mandates protocols and protections. No comprehensive list of measures for data protection, ethics and informed consent are in existence when developing technological solutions to help combat human trafficking, but several basic aspects need to be addressed by technology companies and NGOs [38–40]. In addition to the well-established and sophisticated technologies used by Street Grace and EPIK, both organizations have iterative processes that consider risks, ethics, data storage, and privacy. These processes and the functionalities of chatbots are managed with comprehensive human guidance and oversight. Clear parameters are in place for AI operability. Here, the importance of collaboration is again underscored in the real-world experiences of survivor leaders and technical knowledge from the broader technology industry, which is invited and continually woven into strategies and operations. Data collection by the organizations focus solely on buyer interactions with chatbots, and analysis is conducted on conversations. Chatbots take affirmative actions in response to prompts by buyers and are trained only on a databank of solicitation conversations that bears the basic tenets of illegal conduct in terms of prostitution and/or sex trafficking laws. Unless shared with law enforcement agencies, all information is deidentified and securely stored. Data reserves are entirely protected and not shared with outsiders. Deterrence at the point of purchase is the nucleus of the tactics employed by Street Grace and EPIK, and meaningful conversations—not shaming—are embraced. In summary, both organizations follow established best practices proposed for technology use in human trafficking combating efforts [38–40] and accord these practices with five ethical principles that have been identified from the global corpus of principles and guidelines on ethical AI: transparency, justice and fairness, non-maleficence, responsibility, and privacy [41].

7. Discussion

The confluence of complexities intrinsic to the ever-expanding capabilities of technology and the online environment continues to eclipse operational responses by law enforcement agencies when dealing with technology-facilitated crime [118]. Conversely, technological tools have the ability to scale and catalyze the work that law enforcement is already doing and can provide macro-level intelligence about the commercial sex market. Embracing and optimally using available technology tools to discourage the demand that fosters sex trafficking and the online sexual exploitation marketplace is no longer optional. Parents, families, communities, law enforcement agencies, and corporations across the globe are all concerned and affected, directly and indirectly, by the sexual exploitation of adults and children. Similar to what has been pointed out [119] in the context of available police technologies, citizens and society at large know that these technology tools exist and expect law enforcement agencies and leaders to employ them in their efforts to protect people and create safer communities—both online and offline.

Available technologies provide an automated means of (1) scanning online communications and advertising, (2) identifying instances of illicit transactions, and (3) identifying individual buyers who have responded to online ads or social media messages. They also engage buyers in some form of interaction designed to deter individuals from attempting to purchase sexual access at the present "point of purchase" moment as well as in the future. They can operate in fully automated mode and can be deployed at all times. Bots are programmed to identify communications indicative of commercial sex or sex trafficking and obtain contact information based on the accounts used by buyers via voice, text, email, or chat function to initiate a commercial sex transaction. Through extensive testing, development, and live deployment, artificial intelligence supports the evolution of the automated messaging that is pushed out to buyers so that the language used, pacing, and local dialects become tailored to appear authentic rather than computer-generated. These and other capabilities allow the constant deployment of the technology to gather rich data about patterns in local illicit markets and have the capacity to identify activity consistent with attempts to purchase sex. Automated scanning and identification, coupled with realistic automated responses to buyers, thus provides the only feasible means of constantly (rather than periodically) attempting to undercut markets for sexual exploitation by dissuading buyers at points of purchase. In addition to cost effectiveness and scalability in addressing demand, the technologies also appeal to law enforcement agencies and anti-sex trafficking organizations by providing methods for addressing the supply and distribution components of local markets. The constant scanning and analytic capabilities of these technologies also identify likely cases of child sex trafficking and other exploitation and have successfully aided law enforcement agencies in identifying victims, as well as identifying sex traffickers and sex trafficking networks.

As found in this research, collaboration through augmented intelligence is central to the efforts by Street Grace and EPIK to discourage the demand that fosters sex trafficking. Their operational postures are characterized by the following: (1) system-wide collaboration on all aspects of technology, development, and innovation, (2) collaboration with law enforcement and other partners in the counter-human trafficking arena, and (3) relational collaboration with the survivor community. Both organizations seek the council and involvement of survivors in all aspects of their operations, which informs organizational strategy and machine learning aspects of the technology they use. A relationship of trust with law enforcement agencies is credited as being at the nucleus of their tactical and strategic success. Both Street Grace's and EPIK's approach feature a consistent use of human labor where technology identifies people actively seeking to purchase sex, and then trained volunteers step in to provide deterrence messages. As highlighted by EPIK's Justin Euteneier: "An over dependence on technology undermines the story we tell victims and survivors; that they are valued. If so, then they are worthy of our time, not just our capacity to create technology". Technology is not the panacea for ending consumer-level demand or eradicating the online commercial sexual exploitation infrastructure. Ending demand

"requires humans who will change cultural norms that make sexual exploitation so easy and accepted", said Euteneier.

From a complex systems [46,120] perspective, the ability of augmented intelligence to amplify the "density, intensity, and quality" [46] (p. 772) of collaborative connections allows for an agile retort that looks remarkably similar to the complex systems that fuel the demand for sex trafficking and perpetrates it. The manifold uncertainties and blind spots that emanate from the external environment require not only managers and strategists but also frontline actors like law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and multidisciplinary practitioners to embrace peripheral visioning as "a way of knowing". Peripheral visioning enables actors to "*identify opportunities and threats emerging from far beyond the theoretical boundary*" [121] (p. 80) of an organization or response agency. Augmented intelligence supports peripheral visioning and the iterative probing of events in the external environment to "examine their potential implications on future competitiveness" [121] (p. 80). Furthermore, augmented intelligence fits well into the "3P" paradigm [122]—prosecution, protection, and prevention—that continues to serve as the global framework used to combat human trafficking. It allows for *prosecutorial* enhancements through court-driven digital evidence collection, the *protection* of adults and children in harm's way, and systemic *prevention* by disrupting consumer-level demand at the point of purchase, while offering services that inhibit predatory behavior. *Partnerships* and *participation* can be strengthened by augmented intelligence and contribute to a more holistic '3P+2′ paradigm [57,58] for counter-trafficking efforts in general. Technology permits these endeavors to be scaled and geared for impact monitoring and evaluation.

Finally, technology-facilitated trafficking requires certitude related to legislative action by the government and the establishment of industry standards, the harmonization of approaches, and the support of enforcement initiatives. Policymakers should therefore garner insights from non-State initiatives by organizations like Street Grace and EPIK to learn from their innovative approaches to demand reduction while gleaning insights into "how different sectors can be impacted by future policy development at the State level" [123] (p. 4).

8. Conclusions

The spectrum of available and developing technologies are expanding and are here to stay, while human(e) faculties, creativity, and connectedness are, equally, not in short supply. As the fusion of these genii, augmented intelligence is poised to play a significant role in the ongoing battle to disrupt online sex trafficking-related criminality and prevent its physical, psychological, and sexual scarring in the offline environment. The 2022 World Day Against Trafficking theme's focus [124] on the role of technology as a tool that can impede human trafficking and the restated resolve [4] by the United Nations to multilevel strategies aimed at discouraging the demand that fosters trafficking for sexual exploitation both serve as call to actions that are backed by an established international legal framework. The Street Grace and EPIK cases discussed here provide promising insights for operational scaling, and a template for consideration by law enforcement agencies, criminal justice systems, and the larger multidisciplinary counter-trafficking community of their vantage point and their collaborative role in the future of augmented intelligence efforts to discourage the demand that fosters trafficking for sexual exploitation. From an innovative non-State perspective, the cases respond to the call by UN Secretary-General António Guterres for governments, regulators, businesses and civil society to collaborate by investing in "policies, laws and technology-based solutions that can identify and support victims, locate and punish perpetrators, and ensure a safe, open and secure internet for all" [43]. Winsome collaboration between law enforcement, the technology industry, and anti-trafficking stakeholders are taking place, and granular considerations for capacity building in areas of Internet monitoring and undercover online investigations as possible responses to sex trafficking [42] are available for implementation. Augmented intelligence

is already flourishing and primed for further expansion in efforts to discourage the demand that fosters sex trafficking.

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Institutional Review Board Statement: The study received ethical approval after a two-step ethical clearance process. Advarra, a company which provides IRB services, is fully accredited by the Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs, Inc. Advarra found, "Using the Department of Justice (DOJ) regulations 28 CFR 46, the IRB determined that your research project does not meet the DOJ definition of human subjects research under 28 CFR 46 and, therefore, does not require IRB oversight." DOJ's National Institute of Justice concurred with this finding.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: Data collected and relevant insights from more than 2650 cities and counties in the U.S. can be accessed at Demand Forum: https://demand-forum.org (accessed on 20 March 2023).

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Notes

[1] A presentation entitled '*A.I. et al: Sailing the Internet's Oceans to Deter Sex Buyers*,' was an outcome of this research project and delivered by the author during the American Society of Criminology's (ASC) annual meeting, during November 16-19, 2022 in Atlanta, Georgia.

[2] A website called 'Streamate' was implicated by one respondent in the 2018 study by Thorn. It could not be confirmed whether this is the same website implicated in the South African child sex trafficking case (State v Seleso).

[3] The author provided expert court testimony in the South African case (State v Seleso). Case References (South Africa): Westonaria Police CAS 150/10/2017 and Johannesburg High Court Case no 41/2017.

[4] The initial discussion with Jamie Caruthers, Director, Demand Reduction and Policy, at Street Grace took place on February 25, 2022. Multiple follow-up calls and email conversations took place during which the Street Grace case study was refined and finalized.

[5] The initial discussion with Tom Perez, Founder and CEO, of EPIK took place on 17 June 2022. Multiple follow-up calls and email conversations took place during which the EPIK case study was refined and finalized.

[6] Demand Abolition was established in 2008 by Ambassador Swanee Hunt through the Hunt Alternatives Fund to stop sex trafficking in the US by combatting the purchase of adults and children in prostitution. In 2020, the foundation decided to embed Demand Abolition in a like-minded organization with long-term sustainability. In 2022, the National Center on Sexual Exploitation absorbed the archives and active projects of "Demand Abolition."

[7] The initial discussion with Justin Euteneier, Program Director, of EPIK, took place on 17 August 2022. Multiple follow-up calls and email conversations took place during which the EPIK case study was refined and finalized.

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Perceptions of the Benefits and Barriers to Anti-Human Trafficking Interagency Collaboration: An Exploratory Factor Analysis Study

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Abstract: To effectively address human trafficking, it is increasingly recognized that anti-human trafficking efforts need to include a collaborative approach between agencies most likely to come into contact with human trafficking victims and offenders. While literature is available that discusses the benefits and barriers to such collaboration, there is limited empirical research on the topic. Surveying professionals engaged in anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration in a Midwest state in the United States, this exploratory factor analysis study explores their perceptions of the benefits and barriers to such collaboration. Based on the results, professionals' perceived benefits and barriers to anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration, with capacity perceived as the underlying benefit and collaborative uncertainty, agency incongruence, an unfavorable collaborative environment, and inadequate problem framing perceived as the underlying barriers. These findings can inform anti-human trafficking interagency collaborative practice, leading to more successful collaborative outcomes. Future research should include a confirmatory factor analysis to validate the factor structure found in this study.

Keywords: perceptions; human trafficking; interagency collaboration

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1. Introduction

Human trafficking is considered modern day slavery [1]. The United States (U.S.) Department of State defines human trafficking as "the act of recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, or obtaining a person for compelled labor or commercial sex acts through the use of force, fraud, or coercion" [1] (p.5). Using global law enforcement data, the U.S. Department of State estimates that, in 2021, there were 90,354 human trafficking victims identified, 10,572 human trafficking prosecutions, and 5260 human trafficking convictions [1]. In 2000, the U.S. Congress enacted the "Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act" (TVPA), the first federal human trafficking legislation designed to prevent human trafficking, prosecute offenders, and protect victims [1]. Today, all U.S. states have human trafficking legislation [2].

To effectively address human trafficking, it is increasingly recognized that anti-human trafficking efforts need to include a collaborative approach between agencies most likely to come into contact with human trafficking victims and offenders [3–9]. While literature is available that discusses the benefits and barriers to anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration [3–6,10–13], there is limited empirical research on the topic. This exploratory factor analysis study seeks to fill this research gap. Surveying professionals engaged in anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration in a Midwest state in the U.S., this study explores their perceptions of the benefits and barriers to such collaboration. Building understanding on this topic can help inform anti-human trafficking interagency collaborative practice, thus leading to more successful collaborative outcomes.

2. Anti-Human Trafficking Interagency Collaboration

Interagency collaboration, defined as "mutually beneficial and well-defined relationships entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals" [14] (p.4), is stated to be essential to effectively prevent and control human trafficking [15]. There is growing consensus among researchers and stakeholders [16,17] that human trafficking identification, investigation, prosecution, and victim service provision necessitate collaboration between the criminal justice system, human/social services, victim service providers, and allied professionals [1] to achieve meaningful short- and long-term solutions to the crime [3–5,18–35]. It is suggested that there are many benefits to anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration [13]. However, it is also acknowledged that barriers exist that challenge such collaboration, or prevent it altogether [12].

2.1. Benefits to Anti-Human Trafficking Interagency Collaboration

Anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration is stated to have many benefits. For example, anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration increases learning and understanding about the issue among professionals working to address the crime as they share their knowledge about human trafficking, their perspectives concerning its causes and best solutions, and their experiences responding to human trafficking situations. This increased learning and understanding produces a deeper awareness and appreciation of the complexity of human trafficking. It can also lead to the development and implementation of more comprehensive and integrated approaches to victim service provision. Furthermore, it can even result in cultural change in organizations traditionally considered uninformed about, or unresponsive to, the issue of human trafficking, such as law enforcement agencies [3–6,9,19,23,29,36–41].

Anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration also allows agencies engaged in anti-human trafficking efforts to pool their financial and human resources to share the often substantial monetary and labor costs associated with responding to such a complex social issue. Sharing such costs provides agencies with limited budgets and personnel access to greater resources to support their anti-human trafficking activities. It also increases agency scale of coverage so their anti-human trafficking actions can impact a larger population or geographic area. Furthermore, it improves the sustainability of their anti-human trafficking efforts over the long-term. Sharing such costs can also improve the morale of individuals working to combat human trafficking because they have the financial and human resource backing necessary to carry out their work [9,40,42].

In addition, anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration allows agencies engaged in anti-human trafficking efforts to establish a common mission for responding to human trafficking, set long-term goals to achieve the mission, and identify measurable objectives to actualize the goals [33,40]. This common mission and set of goals and objectives can aid in the establishment of a formalized infrastructure and strategic framework that can help mitigate the challenges of integrating the anti-human trafficking activities of multiple and varied agency types [33,40]. A formalized infrastructure and strategic framework can not only help build agency consensus concerning how to respond to human trafficking and facilitate positive and effective communication during the implementation of anti-human trafficking activities, but can also improve the coordination of agencies' anti-human trafficking activities making such efforts more efficient and productive [3–6,18,43]. This can improve the overall outcomes of anti-human trafficking interagency collaborative efforts with results that are more likely to achieve the TVPA's three-pronged goal of preventing human trafficking, prosecuting offenders, and protecting victims [9].

Finally, successful anti-human trafficking interagency collaborative partnerships can lead to the establishment of positive and productive interagency relationships, increase levels of trust between agencies, and heighten agency perception that such interagency collaboration is worth the effort. This can ultimately encourage continued and future collaborative exchanges. Successful anti-human trafficking interagency collaborative case outcomes can also increase anti-human trafficking workers' confidence in their ability

and capacity to respond effectively to the crime and improve public perceptions of the legitimacy of the agencies' collaborative actions [9,18,19,43,44].

2.2. Barriers to Anti-Human Trafficking Interagency Collaboration

While anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration has many benefits that can result in improved human trafficking case outcomes, trying to merge multiple diverse agencies and coordinate their activities around anti-human trafficking efforts also poses several challenges [9,11–13,19,40,45,46]. First, anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration presents basic logistical hurdles when agencies lack financial and human resources, as well as time, to devote to such collaboration and do not possess autonomy from their parent agency to make decisions about their collaborative involvement. Additional barriers occur when professionals do not have broader agency or community support for their collaborative efforts and lack meaningful incentives to engage in such collaborative exchanges [9,11–13,19,40,42,45–47].

Difficultly can also arise because agencies engaged in anti-human trafficking efforts (again, including but not limited to the criminal justice system, human/social services, victim service providers, and allied professionals) are often fundamentally different with varying ideological frameworks, missions, and objectives. They can also have different cultures and values, professional language, policies, protocols and procedures, and perspectives on procedural justice [3–6,9,18,19,40,43,45–48].

In addition, agencies can have dissimilar levels of knowledge about human trafficking and can view the problem of human trafficking from a somewhat different perspective. In addition, they might not share the same ideas concerning the most appropriate response to the crime, or the best way to engage in anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration [5,6,9,18,19,40,43,45,46,48]. Furthermore, power issues, mistrust, and territorialism over mission, resources, or jurisdiction can inhibit successful collaboration. A lack of effective leadership and the absence of key stakeholders in the planning and implementation stage of anti-human trafficking efforts can produce the same result [3,4,9,16,45,49].

For those agencies that do collaborate, factors related to the collaborative process itself can further challenge the collaborative exchange. These factors include an agency's lack of clarity concerning their role and responsibilities during the collaboration, differing expectations for collaborative engagement, and the absence of clearly defined outcomes for the collaboration. These factors can also include a lack of team building and conflict resolution strategies to build and sustain positive interagency collaborative relationships, as well as a lack of monitoring and evaluation of the collaborative exchange to determine whether the collaborative is progressing as planned and producing the desired outcomes [9,10,19,40,45,46].

Finally, the temporary nature of many anti-human trafficking collaborative groups, characterized as *"time-bound and task-specific"* [43] (p. 91) can impede the establishment of a group norm and culture that is necessary to work together across agency boundaries as a part of a collaborative team [9,40,43].

Taken together, agencies' anti-human trafficking interagency collaborative experiences and outcomes can influence whether they view collaborative participation as worth the effort, impacting the likelihood of further or new collaborative exchanges. This makes it especially important to examine the perceptions of professionals engaged in anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration of the benefits and barriers to such collaboration. Building understanding on this topic can help inform anti-human trafficking interagency collaborative practice leading to more successful collaborative outcomes.

3. Current Study

The current study fills the research gap about professionals' perceptions of the benefits and barriers to anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration by answering the following research questions:

1. Do professionals engaged in anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration perceive that there are benefits to such collaboration?
2. What do professionals engaged in anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration perceive as the underlying benefits to such collaboration?
3. Do professionals engaged in anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration perceive that there are barriers to such collaboration?
4. What do professionals engaged in anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration perceive as the underlying barriers to such collaboration?

4. Methods

4.1. Participants

Using purposive sampling, this study targeted professionals formally participating in anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration through anti-human trafficking task forces, commissions, and coalitions in a Midwest state in the U.S.

4.2. Measures

This study measured two constructs that included: (a) professionals' perceptions that there are benefits and barriers to anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration; and (b) professionals' perceptions about the underlying benefits and barriers to anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration. The development of this study's constructs was informed by human trafficking and organizational theory research [3,10–13,18,22,46,50–55].

The first construct was measured using a five-point Likert scale to rate participants' level of agreement with the statement that there are benefits and barriers to anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration. The second construct was measured using the same five-point Likert scale to rate participants' level of agreement with a 15-item list of statements about the benefits of anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration (see Appendix A) and a 36-item list of statements about the barriers (see Appendix B).

4.3. Procedure

The participant list for this study was generated by reviewing web-based anti-human trafficking task force, commission, and coalition membership lists made available to the general public. The data for this study was collected using an online survey. In October 2013, a solicitation email that included informed consent and the survey URL was sent to the participants. Three email reminders were sent to those who had not completed the survey. The study was closed December 2013. Prior to survey dissemination, the study was reviewed and approved for human participation by the researcher's institutional review board.

4.4. Analyses

The survey data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to provide a general description of participants' demographic characteristics. Descriptive statistical techniques were also employed to provide a general description of respondents' perceptions that there are benefits and barriers to anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration. To reduce the 15 and 36-item lists of statements and then determine their underlying factor structures, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted separately on the 15 benefit and 36 barrier items using principle axis factoring with oblique rotation [56–60]. The Kaiser's criterion of one rule (K1 rule), scree plot inspection, and parallel analysis were used to identify the appropriate numbers of factors to retain [56–59,61–64]. Items with factor loadings of 0.30 or higher were interpreted to fit well with the other items in the factor [57,58,65]. The reliability of the factors was examined using Cronbach's alpha with a value of 0.70 or higher interpreted to indicate good internal consistency [58,66]. All analyses were performed using IBM® SPSS® Statistics Version 22.

5. Results

Table 1 presents the participants' demographic characteristics and indicates that the largest percentage of participants were female (55.6 percent), identified as White (85.6 percent), and were between the ages of 55–64 (31.5 percent), followed by 35–44 and 45–54 (both 24.2 percent). The majority of participants worked in the criminal justice system (41.4 percent), were higher-level administrators (61.8 percent), and worked for a local agency (44.9 percent).

Table 1. Participants' Demographic Characteristics (*n* = 178).

	Participants	
Variable	***n***	***(%)***
Gender		
Male	78	(43.8)
Female	99	(55.6)
Transgender	1	(0.6)
Race		
White	149	(85.6)
Non-white	25	(14.4)
Age		
18–34	27	(15.2)
35–44	43	(24.2)
45–54	43	(24.2)
55–64	56	(31.5)
65 or more	9	(5.1)
Position Level		
Higher-level administrator	110	(61.8)
Manager	26	(14.6)
Supervisor	17	(9.6)
Line worker or equivalent	25	(14.0)
Length of Employment		
Less than 5 years	81	(45.3)
6–10 years	34	(19.0)
11–20 years	35	(19.6)
21–30 years	18	(10.1)
More than 30 years	11	(6.1)
Type of Agency		
Criminal justice system	74	(41.1)
Human/social services	57	(31.7)
Victim service provision	21	(11.7)
Allied	28	(15.6)
Agency Level		
State	25	(14)
Local	80	(44.9)
Non-governmental	43	(24.2)
Private	30	(16.9)
Number of Agency Employees		
1–10	49	(27.1)
11–50	74	(40.9)
51–250	36	(19.9)
250+	22	(12.2)

Note: Allied = Business, educational sector, and faith-based community.

In addition, the greatest percentage of participants reported working in their current job position for less than five years (45.3 percent), followed by 11–20 years (19.6 percent) and 6–10 years (19 percent), and were employed by an agency with between 11–50 employees (40.9 percent).

5.1. Perceptions That There Are Benefits and Barriers to Anti-Human Trafficking Interagency Collaboration

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of participants' perceptions that there are benefits and barriers to anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration. The highest percentage of participants strongly agreed that there are benefits to anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration (60.8 percent). The largest percentage of participants agreed that there are barriers to such collaboration (57.1 percent).

Table 2. Participants' Perceptions that there are Benefits and Barriers to Anti-Human Trafficking Interagency Collaboration (n = 168).

	Perceptions			
	There Are Benefits to Anti-Human Trafficking Interagency Collaboration		**There Are Barriers to Anti-Human Trafficking Interagency Collaboration**	
	n	***(%)***	***n***	***(%)***
Strongly agree	101	(60.8)	27	(16.1)
Agree	60	(20.3)	96	(57.1)
Neither agree nor disagree	5	(1.7)	35	(20.8)
Disagree	—	—	7	(4.2)
Strongly disagree	—	—	3	(1.8)

5.2. Perceptions of the Underlying Benefits and Barriers to Anti-Human Trafficking Interagency Collaboration

Table 3 presents the exploratory factor analysis results for the benefit items. The KMO measure verified sampling adequacy for the analysis (0.924) and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant (χ^2 = 2322.772, df = 105, p = 0.000). The K1 rule indicated two factors with eigenvalues greater than one. The scree test identified a one-factor solution before the last drop in the eigenvalues could be observed. Since it is stated the K1 rule tends to overestimate factors and the scree test is subjective in application [56–60,62,63,67], a parallel analysis was performed [57,59,62]. The results of the parallel analysis supported a one-factor solution. One factor was retained because of the convergence of the scree test and the results of the parallel analysis. The one factor solution explained 66.25 percent of the variance (Factor 1 = 66.25 percent). The factor was labeled "Capacity." All 15 items on the factor had loadings higher than 0.30 and the factor had acceptable reliability (Factor 1 α = 0.96).

Table 3. Exploratory Factor Analysis Results for the Participants' Perceptions of the Benefits to Anti-Human Trafficking Interagency Collaboration Items Using Principle Axis Factoring and Promax Rotation (n = 156).

	Factor 1	h^2
Abbreviated Item Names [1]	**Capacity**	
Benefits Include:		
Increased levels of trust	0.85	0.71
Increased consensus building	0.84	0.71
Improved outcomes for end users	0.84	0.71
Increased sustainability	0.83	0.69
Increased morale	0.83	0.69
Increased scale of coverage	0.83	0.69
Increased communication	0.82	0.68
Increased learning and understanding	0.82	0.68
Improved coordination	0.82	0.67
Increased productivity	0.82	0.66
Increased efficiency	0.78	0.61
Cultural change	0.77	0.60
Increased legitimacy	0.75	0.57
Access to resources	0.74	0.54
Shared risk	0.62	0.38
Eigenvalues	9.94	
Variance explained (%)	66.25	
α	0.96	

Note. [1] See Appendix A for non-abbreviated item names; h^2 = communality. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin = 0.924; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Chi-square = 2322.772, df = 105, p = 0.000.

Table 4 presents the exploratory factor analysis results for the barrier items. The initial rotated solution revealed a five-factor solution. However, the fifth factor contained only two items (lack of resources; lack of time), indicating a weak and unstable factor [57]; therefore, the two items were removed. The remaining 34 items were submitted to a second exploratory factor analysis using the same procedure. The KMO measure verified sampling adequacy for the analysis (0.926) and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant (χ^2 = 4863.542, df = 561, p = 0.000). The K1 rule indicated four factors with eigenvalues greater than one. The scree test identified a four-factor solution before the last drop in the eigenvalues could be observed. The results of the parallel analysis supported a four-factor solution. Four factors were retained because of the convergence of the K1 rule, the scree test, and the results of the parallel analysis. The four-factor solution in combination explained 69.59 percent of the variance (Factor 1 = 56.57 percent, Factor 2 = 4.87 percent, Factor 3 = 4.50 percent, Factor 4 = 3.65 percent). Factor 1 contained eleven items and was label "Collaborative Uncertainty." Factor 2 contained nine items and was labeled "Agency Incongruence." Factor 3 contained ten items and was labeled "Unfavorable Collaborative Environment," and Factor 4 contained four items and was labeled "Inadequate Problem Framing." All 34 barrier items had factor loadings higher than 0.30. The four factors had acceptable reliability (Factor 1 α = 0.96; Factor 2 α = 0.94; Factor 3 α = 0.91; Factor 4 α = 0.90). Table 5 indicates the correlation between the factors ranged from moderate to high.

Table 4. Exploratory Factor Analysis Results for the Participants' Perceptions of the Barriers to Anti-Human Trafficking Interagency Collaboration Items Using Principle Axis Factoring and Promax Rotation (n = 138).

Abbreviated Item Names [1]	Factor 1 Collaborative Uncertainty	Factor 2 Agency Incongruence Environment	Factor 3 Unfavorable Collaborative Framing	Factor 4 Inadequate Problem	h^2
Barriers Include:					
Differing expectations for collaborative	**1.01**	−0.05	−0.19	0.07	0.78
Lack of clarity roles/responsibilities	**0.87**	−0.06	−0.21	0.28	0.72
Lack of clearly defined outcome	**0.76**	−0.05	0.09	0.14	0.76
Lack of monitoring/evaluation collaborative	**0.76**	0.06	0.01	0.07	0.73
Lack of conflict resolution strategies	**0.70**	0.10	0.18	−0.05	0.80
Lack of team building strategies	**0.70**	−0.04	0.26	−0.03	0.75
Temporary nature collaborative effort	**0.66**	0.02	0.11	0.06	0.61
Perceived marginalization of members	**0.65**	0.20	0.13	−0.08	0.77
Lack of understanding other agency	**0.57**	0.07	0.11	0.09	0.58
Lack of cultural competence	**0.49**	−0.16	0.39	0.08	0.58
Lack of willingness to truly collaborate	**0.49**	0.05	0.33	−0.00	0.66
Organizational missions/goals/objectives that are DCCI	−0.12	**0.97**	−0.11	0.20	0.85
Organizational policies/procedures/protocols that are DCCI	0.03	**0.97**	−0.09	−0.05	0.81
Organizational cultures/values that are DCCI	−0.03	**0.91**	−0.01	0.06	0.83
Organizational ideologies that are DCCI	−0.07	**0.78**	0.07	0.12	0.72
Organizational data/computer systems that are DCCI	0.10	**0.50**	0.10	0.10	0.50
Turfism	0.29	**0.38**	0.25	−0.90	0.63
Differing professional languages	0.01	**0.37**	0.34	0.08	0.51
Perceived power differentials	0.34	**0.36**	0.29	−0.18	0.67
Lack of effective communication	0.27	**0.32**	0.30	−0.06	0.59
Lack of community support	−0.18	−0.13	**0.94**	0.23	0.72
Lack of organizational support	−0.11	0.07	**0.61**	0.33	0.62
Lack of effective leadership	0.15	0.18	**0.59**	−0.15	0.62
Lack of incentives	0.09	−0.05	**0.53**	0.23	0.49
Absence of key stakeholders	0.28	−0.08	**0.51**	0.11	0.56
Lack of autonomy	0.08	0.18	**0.51**	0.05	0.55
History	0.27	0.18	**0.49**	−0.23	0.59
Confidentiality concerns	0.02	0.09	**0.49**	0.26	0.53
Lack of network list	0.26	−0.15	**0.40**	0.19	0.39
Lack of trust	0.21	0.36	**0.38**	−0.05	0.71
Lack of common MGOS to address HT	0.09	0.16	0.05	**0.77**	0.89
Differing levels of knowledge about HT	0.21	−0.08	0.11	**0.61**	0.58
Lack of common problem definition HT	−0.07	0.12	0.30	**0.59**	0.64
Lack of agreed upon PPP to address HT	0.41	0.30	−0.19	**0.44**	0.70
Eigenvalues	19.24		1.66	1.53	1.24
Variance explained (%)	56.57		4.87	4.50	3.65
α	0.96	0.94	0.91	0.90	

Note. Values in bold indicate highest factor loading; [1] see Appendix B for non-abbreviated item names; h^2 = communality; DCCI = different, conflicting, competing, incompatible MGOS = mission, goals, objectives, strategies; HT = human trafficking; PPP = policies, procedures, protocols. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin = 0.926; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Chi-square = 4863.542, df = 561, p = 0.000.

Table 5. Factor Correlation Matrix of the Barrier Items.

Factor	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
	Collaborative Uncertainty	**Agency Incongruence**	**Unfavorable Collaborative Environment**	**Inadequate Problem Framing**
Collaborative Uncertainty	1.00			
Agency Incongruence	0.717	1.00		
Unfavorable Collaborative Environment	0.755	0.718	1.00	
Inadequate Problem Framing	0.513	0.477	0.457	1.00

6. Discussion

While it is increasingly recognized that anti-human trafficking efforts require an interagency collaborative approach to effectively address the crime, and while literature exists that cites the benefits and barriers to such collaboration, there is a lack of empirical research on the topic. Building understanding on this topic can help inform anti-human trafficking interagency collaborative practice leading to more successful collaborative outcomes. This study sought to fill this research gap by examining professionals engaged in anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration concerning their perceptions of the benefits and barriers to such collaboration. Findings emerged that can inform anti-human trafficking interagency collaborative practices, as well as future research on the topic.

6.1. Perceptions That There Are Benefits and Barriers to Anti-Human Trafficking Interagency Collaboration

In this study, professionals did perceive barriers to anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration. However, the largest majority of professionals perceived benefits to such collaboration. These findings align with current literature citing such benefits and barriers [9,10,19,40,45,46], but also extend this literature with an empirical examination of professionals' actual perceptions of their own joint efforts. The specific finding that the majority of professionals perceived benefits to anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration provides confirmation of the value of agencies working together to combat trafficking. This specific finding also affirms recommendations made by human trafficking scholars, as well as professionals engaged in anti-human trafficking work, for continued interagency collaborative approaches to address the crime [18,22,23,33,35]. Future research would benefit from an empirical examination of the relationship between professionals' perceptions of the benefits and barriers to anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration and their perceptions concerning whether such collaborative efforts were a success and worth the effort, as well as their plans for future collaborative engagement.

6.2. Perceptions of the Underlying Benefits and Barriers to Anti-Human Trafficking Interagency Collaboration

Underlying benefits. In this study capacity was identified as the underlying benefit to anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration. Within organizational theory research, capacity is conceptualized as a set of attributes that enable organizations to attain stated goals [68–70]. While the concept of capacity has been examined within organizational theory research in relation to the public, private, and non-profit sectors, to date, the concept has not been considered with respect to, nor applied to the topic of anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration. This study contributes to current research on the topic of human trafficking by identifying the underlying benefit to anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration, finding that such collaboration provides capacity—the inputs, throughputs, and outputs that can help agencies working together on anti-human trafficking activities to achieve desired collective outcomes. Future research should investigate the impact of

capacity on specific anti-human trafficking activity outcomes such as human trafficking detection, case processing, and victim service provision. The results of such research could help determine whether interagency collaborative efforts do in fact produce the most effective responses to the crime, as is often asserted.

Underlying barriers. In this study, collaborative uncertainty, agency incongruence, an unfavorable collaborative environment, and inadequate problem framing were identified as the underlying barriers to anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration. Within organizational theory research general barriers to interagency collaboration have been described [14,51,53,54,71–74]. While many of these general barriers have been discussed within literature on the topic of human trafficking [9,10,19,40,45], the underlying constructs of the barriers to anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration have to date, not been explored, nor identified. This study expands current research on the topic by identifying these underlying barriers, finding first that collaborative uncertainty is one such underlying barrier. This finding is consistent with organizational theory research that suggests that uncertainty about the purpose, process, and outcomes of the collaborative, the absence of deliberate efforts to build and maintain positive working relationships between collaborative members, and short-lived collaborative exchanges can impede collaborative endeavors [14,75–77].

Second, this study found that agency incongruence is another underlying barrier to anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration. This finding is also in accordance with organizational theory research that states that agencies engaged in collaborative activities often possess fundamental differences that can make collaboration a difficult or impossible task. For example, collaborating agencies may possess ideological differences causing members to tackle the same social issues in radically different ways [54,78]. In addition, agencies core missions, goals, and objectives may also vary dramatically from one another preventing necessary agreement needed to proceed with the collaborative process [3,44,54,76]. Agencies' differing cultures and values can also prevent collaborative relationships from ever forming or can make seemingly straightforward issues difficult to tackle, resulting in a lengthy collaborative process or even stagnation [3,44,54,78]. In addition, agencies' differing professional languages can make communication within existing collaborative partnerships very difficult. Furthermore, perceived power differences between collaborating agencies can create negative feelings, exacerbating misunderstandings, ultimately hindering the overall collaborative process [3,53,54]. Finally, variations between agencies' basic business practices and technological systems may inhibit the operation of collaborative partnerships [44].

Third, this study found that an unfavorable collaborative environment is also an underlying barrier to anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration. This finding aligns with organizational theory research that suggests that a negative collaborative climate can hinder the collaborative process. It is stated that a lack of broader agency and community support for interagency collaborative efforts can render such efforts unsuccessful [14,75,76,79], Collaboration can be further challenged without the presence of effective leaders to promote, manage, and nurture the collaborative process. Collaboration can also be challenged without relevant stakeholders at the planning and implementation stages to inform and help make decisions about collaborative activities [3,54,73,76]. Collaboration can also be impeded by suspicion and mistrust among collaborative members based on agency reputation, past collaborative experiences, or a history of collaborative failures [54,72,78,80,81]. Furthermore, collaboration can be blocked when workers are not provided meaningful incentives by their parent agency to engage in collaborative exchanges or afforded the autonomy necessary to make decisions about their involvement in and contribution to the collaborative partnership [53].

Finally, this study found that inadequate problem framing is an additional underlying barrier to anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration. This finding is consistent with human trafficking and organizational theory research that states that during problem framing a person's knowledge about a problem impacts how they define the problem, and

their problem definition then impacts how they approach the problem [82–89]. Inadequate problem framing can produce a barrier to anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration because agencies engaged in anti-human trafficking efforts can possess varying levels of knowledge about human trafficking impacting the problem definition they adopt. Agencies problem definitions can contrast sharping concerning the scope, causes, and consequences of human trafficking, complicating the collaborative exchange. The problem definition adopted can then result in very different ideas held by agencies concerning the best way to address human trafficking further challenging the collaborative process. If consensus concerning an approach can be reached, agencies may still clash when trying to determine how to work together to achieve their anti-human trafficking goals. Just as future research should investigate the impact of capacity on specific anti-human trafficking outcomes such as human trafficking detection, case processing, and victim service provision, future research should also investigate the impact of the four underlying barriers on such outcomes. The results of such research could help determine what barrier type presents the most significant impediment to achieving these broader anti-human trafficking goals.

6.3. Implications

This study's findings have important implications. First, before any anti-human trafficking interagency collaborative activities take place, collaborative group members should spend sufficient time framing the problem of human trafficking. Research states that when there is shared framing around a social problem, more cohesive group actions and successful group outcomes result [84,85,87–89]. Anti-human trafficking interagency collaborative group members should make deliberate efforts at the start of the collaborative exchange to ascertain group members' levels of knowledge about human trafficking, perspectives concerning human trafficking's status as a social problem, and ideas about the most appropriate response to the crime. These efforts can help build group consensus from which to build upon and move the collaborative process forward.

Second, after the problem of human trafficking has been sufficiently framed, to minimize the barriers associated with anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration, collaborative groups should establish a formalized infrastructure with a strategic framework to help inform and direct their efforts. At minimum, anti-human trafficking interagency collaborative groups should establish mutually agreed-upon goals and outcomes for the collaborative exchange and delineate roles and responsibilities of collative group members while working together. Collaborative groups should also standardize protocols, policies, and procedures for communication, data gathering, information sharing, and referrals, and adopt uniform mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the collaborative process and its outcomes [13,45,46,90,91], Establishing mutually agreed upon goals and outcomes can help orient and guide the group's collaborative efforts [13,18,19,39,40,43,46].Delineating roles and responsibilities can assist in the development of mutually reinforcing work strategies [13,18,19,39,40,43,46]. Standardizing protocols, policies, and procedures can streamline the collaborative process [13,40,45,46]. Adopting uniform mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation can help provide information concerning how the collaborative group is proceeding and whether it is effective, enhancing the collaborative group's transparency and accountability [13,18,19,39,40,43,46]. Taken together, these efforts can reduce the level of uncertainty associated with anti-human trafficking interagency collaborative efforts, decrease the difficulties of trying to merge the anti-human trafficking activities of often very incongruent agencies, and, with demonstrated collaborative successes, increase support from parent agencies and the broader community for continued collaborative efforts.

Third, once a formalized infrastructure and strategic framework has been established, agencies should provide professionals' supports and incentives to encourage anti-human trafficking interagency collaborative engagement. Dependent upon resources available, supports can include release time to engage in anti-human trafficking activities, as well as resources, whether financial, material, or personnel-related, devoted to anti-human trafficking interagency collaborative efforts [13,18,19,39,40,43,46]. Incentives can include

funding for and mandating the human trafficking interagency collaborative exchange, as well as incorporating interagency collaborative activities into position descriptions and performance reviews [13,18,19,39,40,43,46]. Such supports and incentives can provide the means necessary to build and sustain interagency collaborative partnerships. Collectively, framing the problem of human trafficking, establishing a formalized infrastructure and strategic framework, and supporting and incentivizing anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration can help enhance and sustain anti-human trafficking collaborative efforts and ultimately provide a more comprehensive and effective, response to the crime.

6.4. Study Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although this study helps inform our understanding about professionals' perceptions of the benefits and barriers to anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration, it is not without limitations. First, the exploratory nature of the study in general, and the exploratory design of exploratory factor analysis in particular [57], limit the ability to draw definitive conclusions about the findings. Second, the state selected for the study site may not be representative of the human trafficking issue in other parts of the country. Third, the purposive sampling technique can introduce sampling bias with respondents potentially not reflecting individuals engaged in anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration throughout the state. Finally, anti-human trafficking interagency collaborative practices today may not reflect the practices present when the data was collected. Organizational theory research states that common benefits and barriers to interagency collaboration remain stable over time [92–94]. However, this research also suggests that extreme events can significantly alter traditional interagency collaborative approaches [95]. Recent human trafficking research supports this assertion, finding that the current COVID-19 global pandemic has greatly challenged anti-human trafficking interagency collaborative efforts [96–98]. Future research, through a confirmatory factor analysis, should confirm whether the underlying benefits and barriers to anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration identified in this study have in fact remained stable over time. In all, this study's limitations restrict the generalizability of the findings and highlight the need for additional research on the topic.

Despite these limitations, this study provides an empirical examination of a topic that, to date, has receive limited attention in the broader human trafficking research. Understanding professionals' perceptions of the benefits and barriers to anti-human trafficking interagency collaboration is vital to informing such collaborative efforts and achieving successful collaborative outcomes. Future research can benefit from a confirmatory factor analysis to validate the factorial validity of the models derived from this study's exploratory factor analysis results [60] and determine whether the models have the same structure when applied to different populations [57]. In addition to the confirmatory factor analysis, future research can also benefit from conducting this study in other regions of the country and/or using a different sampling frame to see if this study's findings can be replicated.

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Appendix A. Non-Abbreviated Anti-Human Trafficking Interagency Collaborative Benefit Item Names

Non-Abbreviated Item Names
Benefits Include:
Increased level of trust (e.g., individuals, organizations, populations being served)
Increased consensus building (e.g., ability to collectively identify and solve a problem)
Improved outcome for end users (e.g., population being served)
Increased sustainability (e.g., activities, services)
Increased morale (e.g., individuals, organizations)
Increased scale of coverage (e.g., activities, services)
Increased communication (e.g., between individuals, organizations, populations being served)
Increased learning and understanding (e.g., about an issue, organization, services)
Improved coordination (e.g., activities, services)
Increased productivity (e.g., activities, services)
Increased efficiency (e.g., financial, operational)
Cultural change (e.g., individuals, organizations)
Increased legitimacy (e.g., individuals, organizations, issue)
Access to resources (e.g., financial, equipment, facilities, expertise, research, training, technology, staff, social networks)
Shared risk

Appendix B. Non-Abbreviated Anti-Human Trafficking Interagency Collaborative Barrier Item Names

Non-Abbreviated Item Names
Barriers Include:
Differing expectations for collaborative engagement and output
Lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities
Lack of clearly defined outcome
Lack of monitoring and evaluation of interagency collaborative activities and efforts
Lack of conflict resolution strategies
Lack of team building strategies
Temporary nature of collaborative effort
Perceived marginalization of members
Lack of understanding of other agency/organizations member's professional roles and responsibilities
Lack of cultural competence
Lack of willingness to truly collaborate
Organizational missions, goals and objectives that are different, conflicting, competing and/or incompatible
Organizational policies, procedures, and protocols that are different, conflicting, competing and/or incompatible
Organizational cultures and values that are different, conflicting, competing and/or incompatible
Organizational ideologies that are different, conflicting, competing and/or incompatible
Organizational data and computer systems that are different, conflicting, competing and/or incompatible
Turfism (e.g., territorialism over mission, resources, jurisdiction)
Differing professional languages
Perceived power differentials
Lack of effective communication
Lack of community support
Lack of organizational support
Lack of effective leadership
Lack of incentives (e.g., not mandated, not part of job description, not part of performance review)
Absence of key stakeholders
Lack of autonomy (i.e., discretion and independence to make decisions without immediate organizational oversight)
History (e.g., past history of interagency collaborative failures)
Confidentiality concerns

Non-Abbreviated Item Names
Lack of network list
Lack of trust
Lack of common mission, goals, objectives, and strategies to address human trafficking
Differing levels of knowledge about human trafficking
Lack of common problem definition concerning human trafficking
Lack of agreed upon policies, procedures, and protocols to address human trafficking
Lack of resources (e.g., financial, equipment, facilities, expertise, research, training, technology, staff, social networks)
Lack of time

Notes

[1] An allied professional refers to an individual working in the business and educational sector or faith-based community.

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Exploring Private Investigation Agencies' Experience of Collaboration with Law Enforcement in Investigations of Human Trafficking Cases

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Abstract: In their forefront role to address human trafficking, law enforcement agencies (LEAs) have often faced challenges in efforts to investigate this crime. Non-traditional partnerships should be explored to improve strategies to investigate human trafficking. Could private investigation agencies (PIAs) collaborate with LEAs to help improve human trafficking investigations? The present study examines PIAs' experiences of collaboration with LEAs for human trafficking investigations. A mixed research method design was used. Purposive sampling was used to select 81 participants representing 81 PIAs for a survey. Follow-up semi-structured interviews were conducted with 28 of the 39 survey participants who reported that their agencies had collaborated with LEAs for human trafficking investigations. The findings show varying levels of success and challenges for PIAs in interagency collaboration with LEAs. The challenges to collaboration identified could be mostly explained by LEAs' misperceptions of private investigators, their over-reliance on a criminal approach instead of a victim-centered one in investigating trafficking cases and recovering victims, and legal or ethical limitations. Positive aspects of PIA–LEA partnerships regarding human trafficking investigations were discussed and so were strategies to address inherent challenges to interagency collaboration. Several policy implications were discussed for developing and improving partnership initiatives with law enforcement in an effort to prevent human trafficking, protect victims, and prosecute trafficking cases.

Keywords: challenges; collaboration; investigations; law enforcement; human trafficking; private investigation agencies

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1. Introduction

Law enforcement agencies (LEAs) play a frontline role in efforts to prevent human trafficking, protect victims, and investigate trafficking cases [1–5]. Yet, their efforts to investigate human trafficking cases and recover victims have often faced challenges due to varied reasons, including misconceptions about the problem, community fear and distrust of law enforcement, an insufficient number of officers, a lack of training about the problem and its scope, limited appropriate resources, reliance on reactive identification strategies, and limited interagency collaboration [1,2,6–10]. Most state and local LEAs in the United States lacked specialized units or personnel dedicated to human trafficking [1,10]. Having many crime investigations to conduct, police departments are rarely proactive on crimes such as human trafficking or such investigations are often closed prematurely [11,12].

Human trafficking investigators are primarily found in the sex crime or vice units of police departments, and they focus primarily on sex trafficking [1]. LEAs have difficulty identifying and investigating labor trafficking because the use of traditional vice tactics, such as responding to referrals about potential victims or relying on non-governmental agencies or other law enforcement agencies to provide tips in investigating sex trafficking cases, are ineffective in dealing with labor trafficking cases [8,10]. Discussing LEAs' difficulty in dealing with human trafficking crimes, Nietzel, a 15-year police veteran and

human trafficking investigation specialist, observed that law enforcement officers often found themselves looking at so many different avenues and so many other labor markets that they were not able to be proactive in human trafficking investigations [13].

LEAs acknowledged that collaborating with specialized organizations other than LEAs that deal with this problem is crucial [13,14]. The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) [15] found that partnering with outside organizations and individuals allows LEAs to effectively investigate trafficking cases, identify and recover trafficking victims, and support the prosecution of traffickers through joint responses and coordinated services. Thus, increasingly LEAs rely on collaboration with partners in the private and nonprofit sectors to reinforce their capacity to investigate human trafficking cases [7,14,16]. Nietzel [13] stated that "Collaboration among law enforcement is vital for human trafficking investigations, but equally as important are the partnerships formed with victim service providers and other community stakeholders" (para 4).

Developing innovative partnerships is necessary to improve LEAs' capacity to investigate human trafficking cases and recover and protect victims because, as Nietzel observed, "Human trafficking can absorb a lot of an investigator's time. The solution is having partners who are trained to do this. It's important for agencies to realize that help is available and they don't have to do it alone," (para 2). A question raised by Nietzel's point would be to know what types of trained partners, outside of LEAs, can potentially enhance human trafficking investigations. Could professionals in the private police sector, especially private investigation agencies (PIAs), supplement and assist LEAs in improving human trafficking investigation outcomes?

While there is some literature about collaboration initiatives between law enforcement (i.e., public police) and private police in areas of security such as terrorism and cybersecurity during the last five decades [17–20], there is almost no literature, however, about partnerships between the two sectors regarding human trafficking investigations. The present study explores PIAs' experiences and perceptions of collaboration with LEAs on human trafficking investigations through three research questions: (1) How do PIAs perceive collaboration with law enforcement on human trafficking cases? (2) To what extent have PIAs collaborated with LEAs on human trafficking cases? (3) What potential benefits and challenges can be drawn from PIA–LEA's interagency collaboration for human trafficking investigations?

1.1. Law Enforcement–Private Police Partnership Crimes

Private police, also known as private security, are law enforcement bodies that are owned and/or controlled by non-governmental entities [21]. They provide a broad range of services to prevent crimes and protect persons and property from injury, hazards, damage, loss, and criminal acts [21–23]. These can be firms to which the government may contract out police work. Private police remain largely overlooked in the literature because researchers, especially those who study the police, have paid very limited attention to private policing [18,24,25]. Yet, the functions of private police and public police (i.e., law enforcement) are increasingly similar [17,18,26]. Both private police and law enforcement are concerned with crime prevention and reduction and order maintenance [22,27]. The primary role of private police, that is, crime prevention [28], is often misunderstood and misinterpreted by law enforcement personnel, which makes it difficult for the latter to embrace "private security efforts as complementing and assisting public efforts in crime prevention and reduction," [22] p. 7. The overwhelming presence of former law enforcement officers in the private security sector suggests a considerable overlap between the activities of the private police and the public police [24].

Research shows that the private police industry is by far the largest provider of policing services in the United States, with at least triple the size of the public police [18,20,29–33]. Policing services include protecting citizens and property, surveillance, maintenance of order, crowd control, crime prevention, conducting investigations, providing information technology security, and many other functions [20]. They have outpaced the public police

in terms of persons employed and dollars spent [16,20]. According to the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics [34], by May 2020, there were 1,054,400 private security officers in the U.S. In contrast, there were 696,644 full-time law enforcement officers employed in the U.S. [35].

Even though the need for more cooperation between private police and public police has been documented, issues of mutual distrust affect their relationship [20,36]. The main obstacles to collaboration between the two sides of policing include limited information sharing, mistrust, misinformation, and competition [16,24,37–39]. Historically, law enforcement officers have often shown a patronizing, suspicious, and antagonistic attitude toward private security professionals [20,22,27,38]. Their unfamiliarity and limited appreciation of the private security sector's policing roles contribute to this distrust [22,36,38]. Police officers perceive that private police agents lack appropriate training and are threats to the professional policing domain [16,24,27]. Despite the lingering distrust between the public police and private police sectors, some efforts for partnerships between both sides have been made [23,40,41].

In its (2009) Operation Partnership report, the Law Enforcement–Private Security Consortium [20] of the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services reported that, as of 2006, over 450 private security–public police partnerships were established in the United States. The success of these partnerships focuses on several major factors, including a compelling mission to keep members interested and attract new members; external support of models for training; strong, active founders, leaders, and facilitators; regular communication through meetings, training, newsletters, websites, etc.; and established methods to sustain structure and sufficient resources [20]. In some U.S. cities, private police agencies have been given law enforcement powers to provide certain police functions (e.g., protecting public property, surveillance, crowd control, crime prevention, conducting investigations, providing information technology security, etc.) so as to decrease resource costs and improve policing services in a particular area [33]. For instance, Ruddell, Thomas, and Patten [42] examined the deployment of public police and private police officers in the 300 most densely populated U.S. counties. They found a clear and consistent relationship between crime and the deployment of officers from both the public police and the private police. Their study showed that private police personnel have a significant role in expanding the activities of the public police by shaping urban social control. The percentage of the county population that was Black and the underclass factor were positively associated with the deployment of private police officers. It was also found that private police forces were more likely to be deployed in high-crime counties than their public law enforcement counterparts. However, while LEAs have established formal relationships with big, private police agencies, such levels of cooperation rarely extend to PIAs, a key component of the private security sector [18,25,42–44].

1.2. What Is a Private Investigator?

A private investigator (PI) is licensed to carry out various policing services, including finding missing persons, carrying out surveillance, preventing crime, and collecting factual evidence that could help solve crimes [36,44]. Allan Pinkerton, a former deputy sheriff of Cook County and the chief of police of Chicago, Illinois, established the first professional private investigation organization, the Pinkerton Detective Agency, in the United States in 1850 [28]. Pinkerton formed his private investigation agency because LEAs at that time were unable to cope with the increasing crime problem in the United States. Thus, during that time, he offered nationwide investigative coverage by his detectives, something that no LEA was able to offer. As Benny [28] stated, "It was not until 1924, with the establishment of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), that any law enforcement could equal Pinkerton's scope and size of operation," (p. 3). During the Civil War, Pinkerton provided a valuable service to the United States by organizing the first Secret Service to stop the counterfeiting of U.S. currency by the Confederates and collecting intelligence on behalf of the U.S. government. In essence, Pinkerton was providing homeland security

for the United States. Because of his reputation, Pinkerton and his PIA were hired to protect Abraham Lincoln personally during his inauguration. Before that, he suppressed an assassination attempt against Lincoln [44]. Many law enforcement agencies in the United States began as PIAs. For instance, the U.S. Secret Service was formed out of necessity after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln and was initially protected by the private Pinkerton Detective Agency.

PIs do not have the special power that law enforcement officers have [44]. Yet, they have a legal right to make a citizen's arrest under restrictive circumstances. They may carry firearms based on the legal requirements of the country or state in which they operate [28]. Laws governing the licensing and practice of PIs vary from state to state in the USA. Some U.S. states have reciprocal licensing agreements allowing a licensed PI to start an investigation in one state and continue it in another [28]. Regardless of the area or industry in which they work, PIs follow a strict set of standards dictated by state law. Many PIs are members of state, national, and international professional investigator associations, which also require them to work under a code of ethics [28,43,45].

Many PIs hold college degrees along with various types of professional certifications. A great number of PIs are former police officers, former government secret or undercover agents, former investigators from other fields (e.g., federal law enforcement, insurance, law) [44]. Most PIs are self-employed, and some work as investigation specialists in large private security corporations [44]. They perform different types of investigations, including, but not limited to, domestic investigations, employment investigations, undercover investigations, fraud investigations, claims investigations, corporate investigations, background checks, and criminal investigations. In criminal investigations, PIs work either for the victim or the defendant, or attorneys in the proceedings of serious crimes such as homicide, car accidents, fraud, and kidnapping [28,44,45]. In 2019, there were approximately 96,100 licensed PIs in the U.S. [34,46].

1.3. PIs' Distinctive Competencies

The literature shows that PIs not only have various investigative competencies, but they also operate in both the private and public sectors in different capacities. In a qualitative study with 33 PIs specialized in corporate investigations in Australia, King [47] found that corporate investigators not only share detective skills with the police but also rely on knowledge of law and accountancy to complement these investigative skills. In a survey of 206 PIs working in the UK, Gill and Hart [24] found that they had provided various policing services in the previous 12 months before the study, including road traffic accident inquiries (81%); claims investigations (72%); domestic investigations (68%); criminal investigations (53%); fraud investigations (50%); and asset tracing (51%). In another survey of 331 PIs in the UK, Button, Kapend, and Stiernstedt [36] found that the most significant skill of participants was fraud investigations. It was estimated that approximately 15,000 PIs are employed in the UK's central government for fraud investigations and intelligence work [36]. Most forms of surveillance in the UK are the responsibility of PIs.

In the United States, PIs are hired to conduct investigations for governmental agencies at various levels, thus directly contributing to national security. According to Benny [28], "Numerous federal agencies, such as the Defense Security Service, the Office of Personnel Management, and even the Federal Bureau of Investigation contract private investigators to perform routine background investigations related to government security clearances" (p. 25). Likewise, throughout the nation, state and local government agencies hire PIs for various investigative functions such as pre-employment background checks, security consulting, or assignments with a special prosecutor investigating government corruption, ethics, or agency regulation and policy violations [28]. Still, in the United States, many local courts contract PIs for pretrial investigations for a public defender's office; civil service commissions also employ PIs for background investigations on potential police officers or other public employees. Overall, the future employment outlook of the PI profession

in conducting traditional investigations as well as national security investigations in the United States is projected to grow by five percent from 2015 to 2024 [28].

In some areas of investigations, PIs arguably outpace the ability of police officers [23,28,40,44,48,49]. PIs can draw from their various skill sets to conduct investigations that law enforcement cannot carry out due to legal or administrative hurdles (e.g., the volume of their investigation workload, standard operation procedures, delays in obtaining a judge's warrant for a search, etc.) [48,49]. Some PIs are able to provide crime prevention services not usually available from even the best police departments [28,40,44]. Time is not a big obstacle for PIs because, contrary to police officers, they tend to focus on single investigations until completion [49]. They have advanced interview and covert/overt surveillance competencies and are not burdened by the need to handle as many investigation cases as police officers [48]. The past professional law enforcement experience of most PIs could be considered another major asset for the profession. PIs can provide continuity of case management, surveillance, and communication, not usually available from even the best police departments [40,44]. Considering that the primary role of the private police sector is crime prevention [20], PIs can provide law enforcement proactive support to prevent crimes at various levels (e.g., local, state, and national levels) if there are opportunities for partnership [28].

Collaboration PIA–LEA. There is very limited literature on LEAs' collaboration with PIAs for investigations [21,23,27,40,41]. Based on data from a sample of 377 police officers in South Korea, Lee and Yun [23] found that officers were more likely to collaborate with PIs if they perceived that there were more benefits than costs involved in a partnership with PIs. Likewise, in a survey of 362 participants, Paek, Nalla, and Lee [41] examined police officers' perceptions of their partnership with PIs in policing cyberspace in South Korea. They found that officers' perceptions of the seriousness and the frequency of cybercrimes, their computer proficiency, and their training level were positively associated with their support for partnership with PIs. In addition, the number of years of experience was negatively related to police support for any partnership with PIs. Sarre and Prenzler [27] found that LEAs in Australia have collaborated with PIs to investigate crimes in a few ways, including discussion forums; joint investigations; neighborhood-watch-style meetings; joint taskforces; crime-stoppers-style hotlines; and vendor–supplier relationships. Overall, the literature shows a few instances in which law enforcement partnered with PIs when they found there were more benefits than costs [23]. Human trafficking could be another area where law enforcement may find interest in developing investigation partnerships with PIs.

1.4. PIs' Potential for Human Trafficking Investigations

Exploring factors affecting citizens' likelihood of hiring PIs to resolve their criminal and/or civil matters, Leea, Leea, Choib, Leec, and Hong [50] found that citizens' desire for personalized justice was the most significant factor affecting the likelihood of hiring PIs. They also found that citizen's satisfaction with investigations by the police was negatively related to the likelihood of hiring PIs for criminal cases. According to Mahon [43], "The PI is often the last hope for many people," (p. 17) to rescue their loved ones from risky situations such as kidnapping or human trafficking. There have been instances where the police have ignored families' suspicion of a human trafficking incident or viewed it as a prostitution or runaway child situation [51,52]. As a result, people have sometimes hired PIs to supplement investigations carried out by law enforcement or to conduct their own investigations and recovery operations [50,53].

On behalf of families, PIs have often helped monitor online sex trafficking sites, and social media sites of missing children and then have set up surveillance and brought in the police to make arrests and save trafficking victims [48,53]. Time is a decisive factor in searching for and recovering potential victims of human trafficking [48]. PIs can spend as much time as necessary to find victims in such situations because, as mentioned above, they tend to focus on single investigations. Very often, the police have difficulty conducting investigations in some communities because they are feared for their use of force and

criminal approaches to obtain information [1]. In contrast, thanks to their versatile skills in interviewing, gathering evidence, conducting surveillance, building trust with key contact persons in a target, and using a victim-centered approach, PIs are likely to find facts that can be crucial in a hidden crime such as human trafficking. Dottie Laster, a veteran female PI, argued that PIs have the distinctive capacities to complement law enforcement's efforts in human trafficking investigations [53]. "They [PIs] can fill in gaps that law enforcement can't do," she said [53] (para.3). She explained that PIs' skills in finding missing persons and runaways and conducting covert/overt surveillance are crucial in investigating a hidden and moving crime such as human trafficking. She described cases of trafficking investigations she completed before referring them to the police for victim recovery and trafficker arrests. However, knowledge related to the work of PIs about human trafficking is primarily found in the grey literature, i.e., [48,53–55]. In his article titled, *Inside Human Trafficking Investigations* [56], Matt Blumenthal, a deputy sheriff in the San Diego County Sheriff's Department, stated that law enforcement "face several challenges when taking on human trafficking investigations—time, money, manpower, along with countless search warrants for social media and technology (cell phones)," (para 5). PIs could help limit the challenges LEAs often face in human trafficking investigations.

Hounmenou and O'Grady [57] is arguably the only study that has explored PIs' experiences in human trafficking investigations. PIs' strengths identified in the findings include victim-centered interview skills, the capacity to build trust with victims and ethnic communities that fear or distrust the police, surveillance expertise, the ability to focus on single cases, and the capacity to deploy personnel and rely on networks across state and international borders, etc. The agencies of 39 of the 81 participants in that research not only conducted human trafficking investigations but also had human trafficking as a major service area. The types of human-trafficking-related services the PIAs provided within the last five years include: recovering human trafficking victims; assisting law enforcement with human trafficking investigations; tracking human trafficking activities on the Internet; providing witness protection in trafficking investigations; tracking and disrupting human trafficking networks; and testifying in court for human trafficking prosecutions [57]. The PIAs recovered 36 trafficking victims on average (SD = 24) within the five years before the study. Approximately 52% of the agencies recovered minor victims under the age of 18 and 48% recovered adult victims. The findings show that 64% of the victims recovered by the PIAs were citizens of the countries where the study was conducted and 36% were non-citizens. PIAs received requests or referrals for human-trafficking-related services from three sources: victims' families; people in PI's networks such as former clients, attorneys, church leaders, or community leaders; and people who had found out about PIAs' trafficking investigation services online. That study provides important background knowledge for the current study that examines PIs' experiences and perceptions of collaboration with law enforcement for human trafficking investigations because both studies are based on the same dataset.

2. Methods

2.1. Research Design

A mixed-method design, including a survey and an interview, was used. Purposive sampling was used to recruit the participants. The Google search engine was utilized to gather lists, websites, and contact information of PIAs and associations of PIAs in the 50 U.S. states; the online directory of the World Association of Detectives (W.A.D.) was also accessed for information about PIs and associations of PIAs both inside and outside the USA. The search consisted of three stages.

First, the Boolean search strategy and the modifiers AND, NOT, and OR were used with the following keywords and phrases to find lists and directories of potential participants: *private investigator, directory, association, investigation specialist, private police, security services, private detective, and independent detective*. Second, the accessed online lists and directories were systematically filtered for PIAs with specialties linked to two groups of keywords: (1) *missing persons, locating persons, kidnapping, skip tracing, surveillance, employment fraud, identity theft, and rescue operations; and* (2) *human trafficking, labor trafficking, labor exploitation, sex trafficking, drug addiction, domestic violence, prostitution, mail bride, sexual exploitation, online exploitation, sexual abuse, runaway,* etc. Following this filtering, the e-mail addresses and/or phone numbers of 400 PIAs in 39 U.S. states and five other countries, including Canada, Australia, England, France, and Germany, were collected. Third, the leaders of the 400 PIAs were contacted by phone and/or e-mail to inform them about the research project and asked them to designate one spokesperson for their agencies to participate in the study.

Yet only 360 PIAs were successfully reached, whereas 40 were not for two reasons: invalid e-mail addresses and phone numbers out of service. Thus, the following three criteria were used to select a survey participant from each of the PIAs successfully reached: (1) being a PI whose agency is a member of an association of PIAs; (2) being specialized in services for missing persons, skip tracing, surveillance, rescue, child sexual exploitation, human trafficking, or related issues; and (3) having at least two years of experience as a PI.

A subsample of the survey participants was selected for the follow-up interview component of the study through a screening question in the survey questionnaire. The four criteria of selection for interview participants included: (1) selecting 'YES' to the screening question at the end of the first section of the survey questionnaire asking participants if the agency had carried out any human trafficking work; (2) completing the second section of the survey, which was for participants whose agencies were experienced in carrying out human trafficking work; (3) answering 'YES' for participation in a follow-up interview to discuss their agency's experience of human trafficking work; and (4) providing a preferred e-mail address or phone number at the end of the survey to be contacted for an interview.

2.2. Data Collection

The online Qualtrics XM survey program was used to collect data with the survey questionnaire, which was password-protected and self-administered. An e-mail with a unique survey link per organization was sent to each of the leaders of 360 PIAs to have one designated spokesperson complete the questionnaire. Thus, each PIA had only one participant. To increase the response rate, two reminder e-mails were sent to only participants who had yet to complete the online questionnaire a week and two weeks after the first e-mail.

Eighty-one of the 360 PIAs contacted in the USA, Canada, and Australia each had a participant complete the online survey. The 81 participants included: (1) 42 participants who were screened out at the end of Section 1 of the survey after they had indicated that their agencies did not conduct any human trafficking-related investigations and (2) 39 participants who completed both Sections 1 and 2 of the survey. While Section 1 focused on participants' demographics, work experience, and knowledge of human trafficking, Section 2 focused on PIAs' work experience with human trafficking investigations and their experiences and perceptions of collaboration with law enforcement conducting this work. The findings from Section 1 of the survey have been published (see [57]).

Thirty-three of the 39 respondents who completed both sections of the survey agreed to participate in a follow-up, semi-structured interview via Zoom or phone. However, only 28 of these 33 participants were successfully interviewed, and the other five could not be interviewed due to time constraints. The 28 interview respondents included 26 in the United States, one PIA in Canada, and one PIA in Australia. The semi-structured interview guide helped to collect data on the following variables: PIAs' experiences of interagency collaboration with LEAs; perceptions on the importance of interagency collaboration

between PIAs and LEAs; perceptions of challenges for interagency collaboration with LEAs; and recommendations about initiatives of partnership with LEAs regarding human trafficking investigations. Twenty of the interviews were conducted via Zoom meeting and eight were conducted by phone. Each interview took 40–50 min to complete. The research project was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of the researchers' university. All of the participants gave informed consent to both the survey and interview components. The survey data were downloaded from Qualtrics XM into the SPSS 20 data analysis program.

2.3. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical analyses, consisting of univariate and bivariate analyses of the data collected from the 39 participants who completed both Sections 1 and 2 of the survey, were conducted. Thematic analysis of the data collected from the 28 respondents in the follow-up interview was conducted. The Atlas.ti 8 program was used to code and analyze the interview data. The following seven variables from both the survey and from the interview were analyzed for the present article: (1) level of collaboration of PIAs with LEAs for investigations; (2) participant perception of difficulty for PIAs' collaboration with LEAs for investigations; (3) participant perception of the importance of LEAs' assistance for investigations conducted by PIAs; (4) participant perception of the importance of PIAs' assistance for investigations conducted by LEAs; (5) having collaborated or not with LEAs on human trafficking investigations; (6) frequency of PIAs' collaboration with LEAs for investigations; and (7) PIAs' potential skills and strengths crucial for investigations.

Twelve themes emerged from the coded data. Peer debriefing and member checking were used to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the thematic analysis of the interview data. Two research team members separately coded, reviewed, and discussed the interpretation of their findings to ensure the credibility of the coding. To check for the accuracy of the findings, parts of the analyzed data were reviewed by five respondents and revised as necessary.

3. Results

3.1. Participant Characteristics

Table 1 displays the demographic characteristics of the subsample of 39 survey participants. Twenty-nine (74%) participants self-identified as male and 10 (26%) self-identified as female. Most of the participants (n = 17; 44%) were between 61 and 70 years old (M = 59.6 years; SD = 11.3). Before becoming PIs, approximately half the number of participants (n = 19; 49%) used to be law enforcement officers (i.e., including FBI special agents and police officers from city and state law enforcement departments), while 9 (23%) had worked in intelligence services or the armed forces. Most of the participants were in senior management positions inside their agencies. While 22 participants (56%) reported being the owners and senior investigators of their agencies, 5 (13%) reported being the CEO/presidents of their organizations and 5 (13%) reported being directors. On average, the participants had been PIs for 24 years (SD = 14.5).

The survey subsample of 28 interview respondents in the present study included eight (29%) PIs who self-identified as female and 20 (71%) who self-identified as male. Eighteen of these respondents (64%) were former law enforcement officers. Two of the thirty-nine PIAs were nonprofit organizations and Thirty-seven were for-profit organizations. On average, the PIAs have existed for 23 years (SD = 17.2). Many agencies provided services at multiple geographical levels, including (60%) at a state-wide level, 45% at the national level, and 16% at the international level.

Table 1. Survey participants' demographics *.

Variables (*N* = 39)	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	29	74.4
Female	10	25.6
Total	39	100.0
Age (*M* = 59.6, *SD* = 11.3)		
Age 22–30	1	2.6
Age 41–50	5	12.8
Age 51–60	11	28.2
Age 61–70	17	43.6
Age 71–80	4	10.3
Age 81–90	1	2.6
Total	39	100.0
Number of years as a PI (*M* = 23.8, *SD* = 14.5)		
1–5 work years	5	12.8
6–10 work years	5	12.8
11–15 work years	3	7.7
16–20 work years	3	7.7
21–25 work years	5	12.8
26–30 work years	5	12.8
31–35 work years	2	5.1
36–40 work years	8	20.5
Over 40 years	3	7.8
Total	39	100.0
Current PI position in the agency		
Owner and Senior Investigator	22	56.2
CEO/President	5	12.9
Director/Managing Director	5	12.9
Chief Investigator	5	12.9
Field Investigator	2	5.1
Total	39	100.0
Profession before becoming PI		
Law enforcement officer	19	48.7
Intelligence services agent	5	12.8
No prior profession	5	12.8
Security consultant	4	10.3
Armed forces agent	4	10.3
Insurance/paralegal agent	3	7.7
Bodyguard/security officer	2	5.1
Total	39	100.0

* Adapted from Hounmenou and O'Grady [57].

3.2. Experiences of Collaboration between PIAs and LEAs for Human Trafficking Investigations

Using the same dataset as the present study, Hounmenou and O'Grady [57] provided details about PIs' skills and experience in investigating human trafficking cases. The findings below focus on PIs' experience of collaboration with LEAs for human trafficking investigations.

3.2.1. Frequency of Collaboration between PIAs and LEAs for Human Trafficking Investigations

On a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 'never' to 5 'always', the survey participants' perception was sought about how often PIAs and LEAs, in general, collaborate on human trafficking investigations. As shown in Table 2, most of the participants (n = 23; 61%) selected 2 to indicate their perception that PIAs and LEAs 'rarely' collaborate for human trafficking investigations, while 11 participants (29%) selected 3 'sometimes' (M = 2.42, SD = 0.68).

Table 2. Survey participants' knowledge and perceptions of PIAs' collaboration with LEAs.

Variables (N = 39)	**Frequency**	**Percent**
In your opinion, how often do private investigations agencies and law enforcement agencies (i.e., police departments, sheriff's office, FBI, U.S. Marshals Services, etc.) collaborate on human trafficking investigations? (M = 2.42; SD = 0.68)		
1 = Never	1	2.6
2 = Rarely	23	60.5
3 = Sometimes	11	28.9
4 = Often	3	7.9
5 = Always	–	–
Total	38	100.0
How would you rate collaboration between private investigations agencies and law enforcement agencies on human trafficking investigations? (M = 3.51; SD = 1.17)		
1 = Not difficult	1	2.7
2 = Slightly difficult	6	16.2
3 = Somewhat difficult	14	37.8
4 = Moderately difficult	5	13.5
5 = Very difficult	11	29.7
Total	37	100.0
How would you rate law enforcement agencies' help for human trafficking investigations conducted by private investigations agencies? (M = 3.35; SD = 1.47)		
1 = Not important	4	10.8
2 = Slightly important	11	29.7
3 = Somewhat important	2	5.4
4 = Moderately important	8	21.6
5 = Very important	12	32.4
Total	37	100.0

Table 2. *Cont.*

Variables (*N* = 39)	Frequency	Percent
How would you rate private investigations agencies' help for human trafficking investigations conducted by law enforcement agencies? (*M* = 3.64; *SD* = 1.41)		
1 = Not important	4	11.1
2 = Slightly important	5	13.9
3 = Somewhat important	5	13.9
4 = Moderately important	8	22.2
5 = Very important	14	38.9
Total	36	100.0
Has your agency ever collaborated with any law enforcement agencies on human trafficking investigations?		
Yes	28	73.7
No	10	26.3
Total	38	100.0
How often has your agency collaborated with law enforcement agencies on human trafficking investigations? (In number)		
Collaborated with LEA 1–5 times	18	64.3
Collaborated with LEA 6–10 times	6	21.4
Collaborated with LEA 11–20 times	4	14.3
Total	28	100.0

The survey participants were then asked whether their agencies collaborated with LEAs for any human trafficking investigations. Of the 38 participants who responded to this question, 28 (74%) answered 'yes', and 10 (26%) responded 'no', (Table 2). The 28 participants who responded 'yes' were then asked about the frequency of collaboration their agencies had with LEAs on human trafficking investigations. Of these participants, 18 (64%) indicated their agencies collaborated with LEAs 1–5 times', six (22%) indicated '6–10 times', and four (14%) indicated '11–20 times'.

3.2.2. Extent of Collaboration between PIAs and LEAs

The findings show that the agencies of 20 of the 28 interview respondents collaborated with LEAs for human trafficking investigations they conducted. As mentioned in the literature review, they provided several types of human trafficking-related services, including trafficking victim recovery; assisting law enforcement with trafficking investigations; tracking human trafficking activities on the Internet; providing witness protection during trafficking investigations and prosecutions; tracking and disrupting human trafficking networks; and testifying in court for trafficking prosecutions. There are varying responses regarding the extent of their collaboration with LEAs. Some PIAs collaborated with LEAs on a consistent basis. For instance, S.R. stated, "We collaborate with law enforcement almost on every investigation that we work on, but it wasn't easy to get to that point." Likewise, K.S.'s agency successfully collaborated with LEAs due to her prior background in law enforcement:

> Pretty well, because I am a former law enforcement officer. I do cooperate with the police if I have some questions, I know who to go to, and who to talk to, and if I have some human trafficking going on, I get their cooperation too, and I give them my information. I don't think they're hesitant towards me or the human trafficking cases I work with.

K.S.'s easy access to LEAs for partnership on investigations her agency initiated appeared to be due to her past career in the FBI before she became a PI. Thus, law enforcement experience helps PIs establish connections with the police and share information with them. Thanks to their law enforcement experience, some participants understood the importance of sharing criminal investigation information with the police. However, the extent of collaboration between PIAs and LEAs depends on the state or country where a PIA is located. The findings show that LEAs in states such as New York and New Jersey appeared receptive to collaboration with PIAs. LEAs' openness to partnering with PIAs also depends on the state laws governing PI's profession and work with LEAs. Discussing his PIA's experience of partnering with LEAs, T.S. stated,

> Well, we worked exclusively with different organizations of law enforcement organizations when I was operating in New York, mostly on federal and state levels, for that matter, and the local level area of deputy sheriffs. We were able to collaborate with the state and the federal government where we actually had resources that we could make referrals by telephone.

However, some interview participants were unsuccessful or had never collaborated with LEAs. There are varying perspectives on opportunities or the need to collaborate with LEAs. Seven of the respondents reported having tried to collaborate with LEAs, even to volunteer to help with ongoing investigations by LEAs, but in vain. Such rejections were more pronounced among PIs without or with limited connections with LEAs than those who were retired law enforcement officers or those who had an extensive network inside the circle of LEAs. C.M., who has been a PI for over 30 years, found no need to collaborate with LEAs:

> There's never been a need for me to because I've been hired by families and private clients. I think the only real circumstance where I would use law enforcement is if I need to do what we refer to [as] a dynamic entry into a building. But other than that, I wouldn't want to involve law enforcement because I think that it would reduce my chances of recovering a victim successfully.

C.M.'s point above suggests that PIs would avoid reaching out to the police when they knew or believed the police would arrest trafficking victims and treat them as criminals. In situations with serious violence risks, some respondents said they could consider asking for law enforcement support so long as there was an understanding that the clients being recovered would not be arrested.

3.2.3. Successful Interagency Collaboration between PIAs and LEAs for Human Trafficking Investigations

Eight respondents reported having successfully collaborated with LEAs on many human trafficking investigations. While all these respondents described investigations of sex trafficking cases they conducted, only three participants discussed investigations of labor trafficking cases. For instance, T.S. reported that his PIA successfully collaborated with law enforcement at both state and federal levels for labor trafficking investigations. Describing one successful investigation of international labor trafficking his agency conducted in collaboration with law enforcement, he said:

> One of the labor trafficking cases that we worked on in our investigations culminated in a successful prosecution of a labor trafficker. A school district in upstate New York had hired a general contractor who, in turn, hired a subcontractor whose bid came in significantly lower than the local area economy dictated. So, we were asked to investigate the subcontractor, who happened to be from New York City. Through the course of on-site interviews and videotaping and monitoring of the project, we learned the workers were all undocumented immigrants being housed together. They weren't being paid proper rates, and some of them weren't being paid at all. We documented the case and referred it to the New York State Police and to the General Attorney's Office. The state ultimately prose-

> cuted the contractor for labor trafficking and gained repayment for wages to the workers who were grieved. There are a number of those kinds of cases that we've worked on through the years.

This respondent reported that his PIA successfully investigated at least two dozen labor trafficking cases. His agency's success in labor trafficking investigations resulted in sustained collaboration with LEAs across New York State. As he explained:

> We had monthly meetings with law enforcement representatives from different counties, states, and government officials and we've developed these relationships with our community and their community. We discussed how we were going to approach cases, what cases were on the rise, how we felt, what we need to get better addressed, and what they needed to get better addressed.

A.S. described another investigation of a labor trafficking case his agency collaborated with LEAs on:

> We were conducting a counterfeit product investigation and the merchandise was being sold in a flea market. As we conducted and concluded our investigation, we realized that the folks that were working in their booths selling were more than likely folks that were human trafficked, brought into the country specifically to do the work for the folks that owned and ran that enterprise. So, once we determined these folks aren't really doing this voluntarily, we then notified the Vice Unit of the Metropolitan Police Department. They handled the rest of the human trafficking investigation based on the information that we had turned over to them. Yet, I don't honestly know the outcome of the investigation because it was turned over to law enforcement.

D.L., a female PI with 17 years of professional experience, described a successful case of investigation and recovery of a labor trafficking male victim that she conducted across the U.S.–Mexico border yet without collaborating with the police department that was supposed to investigate the case but did not:

> One case that comes to mind is one man, very brilliant, who was missing for weeks. He was taken to Mexico, missing for weeks when we got the call on day 18, and I had him home by day 21. The police had not even responded yet; they responded the day after we got him home. I did a lot of Internet and phone investigations like the old style. Calling neighbors, looking at maps. And I found out it was a drug cartel keeping him, and I figured out where their safe house was. I went to their safe house and I told them, 'I will never leave this house until that young man is home', and I had a very big scary guy with me. I got the victim home that night. The way that they targeted him was that he was working in a nearby gym and they became friends with him and helped him build up his muscle and get stronger and bigger; then they lured him to be a controller in one of their brothels in Mexico. That was a U.S. citizen.

This case of investigation that D.L. reported, if verified, could have put herself and the male victim she recovered in a deadly situation, especially because it was related to a drug cartel and in another country. As stated above, collaborating with LEAs for any human trafficking investigations was emphasized as very important by most respondents.

However, according to most respondents, in any instances of collaboration initiatives with LEAs, only the latter received credit in the media and their department for the successful human trafficking investigations that had PIs collaborated on. According to B.E., the frustration and difficulty for PIs to conduct human trafficking investigations have to do not only with the refusal of law enforcement to assist PIs in the recovery of victims in dangerous situations but also with their reluctance to acknowledge the vital information that PIs had shared with them. D.L. reported that she collaborated a few times with LEAs but obtained no recognition for her contributions. She claimed that she received no recognition for her significant input in a major trafficking investigation in collaboration

with an LEA, which resulted in the arrest of about 140 people involved in a trafficking ring. As she stated, "The agency got the FBI's highest honor, but it was never attributed to me or my work. And sometimes that's good. It's not a criticism. I do not want the credit for getting 140 arrests."

3.3. PIAs' Potential Contributions to Human Trafficking Investigations Initiated by LEAs

The 39 survey participants were asked about their perception of how important PIAs' assistance could be in human trafficking investigations conducted by LEAs. Most participants (n = 14; 39%) selected 5 to indicate that PIAs' assistance could be '*very important*', and eight participants (22%) selected 4 to indicate it could be '*moderately important*' (M = 3.64, SD = 1.41). These findings indicate many participants' perception that PIAs' input in human trafficking investigations conducted by LEAs could be crucial. There was a significantly positive and strong relationship between the variables "PIAs' support for investigations by LEAs" and "LEAs' support for investigations by PIAs," r = 0.62, $p < 0.01$ (Table 3). The results suggest that PIs' perception of difficulty in collaboration between PIAs and LEAs depends upon their level of perception of any collaboration between the two sides.

Table 3. Correlation of scales assessing perceptions of collaboration between PIAs and LEAs about human trafficking.

	Variables	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4
1	Perception of collaboration between PIAs and LEAs.	2.42	0.68	1			
2	Difficulty in collaboration between PIAs and LEAs.	3.51	1.17	−0.490 **	1		
3	LEAs' support for investigations by PIAs.	3.35	1.47	0.092	−0.365 *	1	
4	PIAs' support for investigations by LEAs.	3.64	1.41	−0.026	0.008	0.616 **	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Corroborating the survey findings, the interview respondents discussed the contributions PIs could make to investigations of trafficking cases initiated by LEAs. The following sub-themes were identified from the data: the openness of PIs to cooperate with LEAs; providing training to LEAs about human trafficking; getting people to collaborate with LEAs; conducting interviewing with hard-to-reach witnesses; conducting surveillance support for LEAs; collecting intelligence and sharing information with LEAs; and the capacity to a make citizen's arrests.

3.3.1. PIs' Disposition to Cooperate with LEAs

Seventeen of the twenty-eight interview respondents, especially veteran PIs, reported not having much difficulty reaching out to LEAs. They informed or partnered with LEAs on almost all cases of human trafficking they investigated. Yet, most of these participants acknowledged that, very often, they had to overcome difficulties in getting LEAs to carry out their part of the work, meaning intervening to recover victims and arrest potential traffickers. As M.M. stated, "I don't have many issues to deal with law enforcement that I have to overcome. They have to overcome difficulty with working with a non-law enforcement person." The respondents reported having had many cases of sex trafficking investigations where they partnered with LEAs, in which the victims were arrested and charged with crimes. Thus, in efforts to prevent law enforcement from treating their clients as perpetrators of trafficking crimes, before collaborating with LEAs, some PIs would ask LEAs for a formal agreement for the immunity of trafficking victims they were hired to recover. As C.M. explained,

> I think the biggest thing that they [LEAs] can do, if they could promise me that if I'm pursuing the victim and they're not going to arrest the victim, and that they could put something in writing because I need more than a handshake from them or the DEA.

3.3.2. Providing Training to LEAs for Human Trafficking Investigations

The findings show that PIs who are human trafficking experts provide training to LEAs in many U.S. states. Seven of the twenty-eight respondents reported having trained hundreds of officers. Law enforcement experience in vice and drug units and human trafficking task forces, added to extensive practice in private investigations, enhanced the expertise of some of the participants in this study, which allowed them to train officers on trafficking investigations. As described above, half of the PIs in this study were retired law enforcement officers, including special FBI agents who had worked in vice units or human trafficking task forces; three were army veterans. C.C., a retired FBI special agent, reported being the lead expert on an anti-trafficking statewide task force and provided training to hundreds of officers in her state. S.R., another respondent, reported having provided training to approximately 2500 law enforcement officers on investigating human trafficking cases. He had been in federal law enforcement before establishing his PIA for over 20 years by the time the present study was conducted. Discussing his experience of training officers, he explained,

> They [police officers] don't get that type of training at the academy, and they don't get it at their office. My training is post-certified; law enforcement has to have 40 h of training throughout the year, and the block of instruction we offer is free to them. We train them on what to look for, and what websites to go to because a lot of these websites that these victims are advertised on, don't know.

3.3.3. Serving as Intermediaries between Families and LEAs

The respondents discussed how PIs are intermediaries between LEAs and families or communities that need help to find members that may have fallen victim to human trafficking. The respondents perceived that one of the great advantages of PIs is that they can gain victims' families' trust more quickly than law enforcement. Interestingly, three female respondents argued that being a female PI was a great advantage in getting family members to share information that could help investigate human trafficking and missing person cases. To illustrate how helpful it was to be a female PI, K.H. said,

> I mean, there's quite a few ways. One, I'm in plain clothes, I am not law enforcement and getting someone to talk to law enforcement and I am someone who looks like a mom, all that can make a huge difference in getting a name, a location, who a victim's friends are, etc. So, I think that's one aspect is that we are not an authoritative figure that police are and people are not scared to talk to us. I am a mom and I can talk to people and they don't expect what I do and people are more trusting of a female to give them information about their neighbors or all that kind of stuff. I do think it is an advantage.

C.A., another female PI, discussed how she often served as an intermediary to LEAs during investigations:

> One of the things law enforcement has used me to do as well is sometimes being a go-between with family members. Some mothers can be super manic. Like I had a case in California where the mom was just a wreck because her child was being trafficked. Her boyfriend was trafficking her daughter. So, the police have me basically case managing with the mother, so she's not bothering the police. I know the police appreciate my help. I've had a few detectives who have said really kind things about me and even referred private cases to me.

3.3.4. Locating Missing People, Gathering Intelligence, and Conducting Surveillance

The respondents argued that PIs are most competent in locating missing and trafficked persons and conducting surveillance support for LEAs. Though they have substantial funding, LEAs do not have the manpower and the time necessary to investigate cases of human trafficking adequately. As J.K. argued,

> We can do all the skip tracing; we can do the locating and the leg work. The police don't have the resources. If there is a special victim's unit, I think we can help them and tip them off eventually.

In the state of T . . . . . ., only three law enforcement agents worked on human trafficking. "So, they often will call us if they don't have the resources to do surveillance and ask us, 'Can you guys assist us on surveillance and tell us what you think?'" said S.R., who managed a big trafficking-focused investigation agency.

The respondents reported that sometimes people are leery of speaking to LEAs. Thus, one advantage PIs have, which can be important for trafficking investigations, is that they are not law enforcement officers. As R.H. observed, "It would assist having somebody who is not law enforcement, who has the skills and the training, and the experience to do what law enforcement does. That's what a PI can contribute to law enforcement, another asset in their toolbox." T.S. stressed another advantage for PIs, that is, being accessible to and familiar with people in the local communities where they work:

> We are familiar with the ins and outs of the way a business operates, we're familiar with the specific areas within our geographical region, some cases in states you don't know where necessarily to go or who to talk to, and I think that us as part of the community we are able to know who the players are.

The respondents also reported that PIs have access to information without any legal hurdles, contrary to law enforcement officers. For instance, R.H. explained,

> There is information that I can get, and I can get it legally, and I don't need a subpoena because we get our information from different sources. So, we can cooperate with them [LEAs] not only with the actual case in the investigation but also with our sources of information and our assets. This is what we can contribute.

However, some respondents reported being frustrated when LEAs would refuse any help PIs volunteered to offer them or would show selfishness when soliciting assistance from PIs. It was interesting to find that one way to get law enforcement to trust a PI and seek their help is only when the PI has vital information on an investigation and has shared it with law enforcement. Thus, once the police realize a PI has good contacts and the know-how to gather valuable information, they want to work with them, but in only one direction and on their own terms. C.L. explained that,

> They still are not going to tell you their secrets, but they want you to tell them what you know. When you tell them something, and they find out it's the truth, they will go back to you immediately and ask you for other things because you have already proved once or twice that the information you have is the truth.

The respondents reported that being a PI can give you some leverage and shortcuts you can use because you are not bound by the law as much as police officers. M.H. explained that PIs do not have to follow the rule of statutes, subpoenas and summonses to obtain information. They can go out and ask questions. Summarizing the shared view among participants about ways PIs could enhance investigations of human trafficking cases, one respondent observed,

> The police are not winning the war against human trafficking. However, if they start working with PIs, then they would probably catch more human trafficking perpetrators. What they would be getting from PIs would be additional expertise, additional sources, and actually a different viewpoint on how to approach investigations.

3.4. LEAs' Potential Contributions to Human Trafficking Investigations Initiated by PIAs

The 39 survey participants were asked about their perception of the importance of having LEAs' assistance for human trafficking investigations conducted by PIAs, on a scale ranging from 1 '*not important*' to 5 '*very important*', (Table 2). Most participants (n = 12; 32%) selected 5 to indicate that LEAs' assistance is '*very important*' and 11 participants (30%)

selected 2 '*slightly important*', (M = 3.35, SD = 1.47). The findings suggest that LEAs have a key role to play in human trafficking investigations conducted by PIAs.

3.4.1. Importance of Reaching Out to LEAs for Human Trafficking Investigations

Despite various challenges when reaching out to LEAs for help in investigations, 10 of the 28 interview respondents emphasized the importance of collaboration with LEAs. Confirming this point, E.W. discussed how he would often refer his cases to LEAs for criminal investigations:

> If someone hired me because they suspected their daughter was involved in human trafficking, for example, and we found evidence to indicate they were, the next step would be to get a criminal investigation going, which we're not able to do. We would have to get law enforcement involved.

Though he liked collaborating with LEAs, E.W. acknowledged that the level of co-operation with LEAs often depends upon your connection with officers and the type of investigation you are conducting. Yet, some participants only had negative experiences trying to partner with LEAs. There was a shared view among all the respondents that cooperation with LEAs highly depends on the PI's network capacity and size. As J.S. stated,

> Unless you have personal contact with law enforcement, forget about them assisting you. Now, most, if not, all PDs require you to file some sort of report before they investigate the matter, and in all cases, a PI is not the victim, so they can't file a report.

Nevertheless, many respondents agreed that collaboration between LEAs and PIAs could play an essential role in any successful investigations. They stressed the importance of proactively networking with LEAs. As B.W. shared,

> As a PI, you can't wait until you need assistance from law enforcement and then go in and expect that assistance to go over. You have to go proactively before you have any cases and develop that relationship, you need to go in and talk to law enforcement on the local level. If you develop those relationships upfront and don't wait until you need their assistance, you can be way more successful.

K.R., a seasoned PI, discussed how his agency was successful in solving a trafficking case by reaching out to law enforcement and letting them know ahead of time about the ongoing investigation:

> You need to reach out to law enforcement to let them know that you have something so that there's already Intel and they already have someone assigned to contact and so we literally were able to get them on site within three hours after the initial call.

The respondents stressed the importance of making efforts to develop collaboration with LEA despite the latter's resentment. As B.L. said, "The important thing is just working with law enforcement and not against them."

Almost all of the respondents discussed the crucial role of LEAs in criminal investigations because they have the legal powers to arrest and prosecute perpetrators. A.S. explained,

> We could generate a lot of information that they could use, but they are going to be the ones that are handling the filing of the criminal case and all that, so ultimately, I mean I would say they are very important because if it's a criminal thing they are going to take care of that.

Likewise, many respondents believed that LEAs need PIs in criminal investigations because the latter could perform the groundwork required to make arrests and gather information about victims and suspects.

3.4.2. Sharing Information and Resources with PIAs

At least 20 of the 28 respondents concurred that LEAs should share information from their plethora of databases with PIs, who rarely have access to these resources. B.K. explained,

> In some instances, I would say some PIs might be at the end of their rope as far as finding out information on individuals, and it would be great to collaborate with law enforcement to say, 'Hey, this is who I am investigating, I think that they might be connected to this person or this other person and into this activity, can you look these people up in these systems to help me out?'

However, there are varying opinions on whether PIs need LEAs' databases to find background information for their investigations. While some PIs may not need access to LEAs' databases or resources for their investigations, most participants pointed out the necessity for building partnerships between LEAs and PIAs for successful investigations. As B.W. stated,

> It is imperative that there is close coordination between PIs and law enforcement for these cases to be successful. We have to work hand in hand, we have certain abilities that they do not have, law enforcement has a jurisdiction area and they can't go outside of that jurisdiction; we can, we can go outside of a jurisdiction to continue an investigation somewhere else. But they also have the ability to subpoena and the ability to run cell phone traces and things of that nature, so it needs to be a collaborative effort for successful completion of a case because we don't have all the tools that they have and they don't have all the tools that we have.

In contrast to PIs in Australia and Canada, a few PIs in the U.S. had a better experience collaborating with LEAs. However, D.L. advised that PIs should utilize LEAs as a tool to be used at the right time. She explained her point, stating,

> I don't often count on police; I use them as one of my many tools. I don't let them be the first part of the case, and I develop many human trafficking task forces with law enforcement; so, I'm knowledgeable of who and which agency to use for what. So, I use them in that way . . . Only when it's time to investigate for the purpose of prosecution is the time to start using them as a tool in the case.

As stated above, a recurrent issue with collaborating with LEAs is that they will ask for PIs' information but will not share any information. M.P. emphasized this biased poor communication and dynamic between PIAs and LEAs:

> . . . If you are stuck and you go to the police, they are not going to give you their information and there is no help unless when they see that you are a paid agent from the family member or whatever, then they will ask you for a lot of information they cannot find by themselves . . . So, they will use your information to get their file complete . . . they may talk to you, but they will give you all the information they want to give, not the accurate information.

3.5. PIs' Perception of Challenges for Collaboration with LEAs for Human Trafficking Investigations

The survey participants were asked about their perception of the difficulty of PIAs to work with LEAs on human trafficking investigations on a five-point scale ranging from 1 '*not difficult*' to 5 '*very difficult*' (Table 2). Most of the participants (n = 14; 38%) selected 3 to indicate their perception that it was '*somewhat difficult*' for PIAs to collaborate with LEAs, while 11 participants (29%) selected 5 to indicate it was '*very difficult*' to do so (M = 3.51, SD = 1.17). These findings suggest a shared perception among the participants that PIAs often face challenges collaborating with law enforcement. There was a significant and negatively moderate correlation between the variables 'Perception of collaboration between PIAs and LEAs' and 'Difficulty for collaboration between PIAs and LEAs', r = −0.49, $p < 0.01$ (Table 3).

Challenges to collaboration between PIs and law enforcement can be highlighted through the following subthemes from the interview data: LEAs' resistance to information

sharing; law enforcement's culture of distrust with PIs; law enforcement's selfishness and feeling of power; and legal issues with law enforcement sharing information with PIs. Corroborating the survey findings above, the interview findings show that LEAs dislike partnering or cooperating with PIs and often prefer not to have a working relationship with the latter. Ten interview respondents mentioned LEAs even questioning the credibility of PIs' legitimacy and skills. As J.S. explained:

> Obstacles and challenges are many. First that private investigation is not a political entity and is a business, and the purpose of a business is to make money. You can only afford to do so much pro bono work. Second, the police, in most cases, do not like working or taking referrals from private investigators as they view PIs as second-class citizens not the professionals they are. Or the police view your nosing around as interfering with their investigations or informants.

On a similar note, T.S. mentioned how a poor level of interaction between PIs and LEAs contributed to the lack of cooperation:

> I think one of the problems that I've encountered, particularly in my state, is that there is a lack of interaction between PIs and law enforcement. Law enforcement community in my rural, poor area is not available to have a discussion or for me to make a report or referral about labor trafficking or sex trafficking for that matter.

3.5.1. Law Enforcement's Culture of Distrust with PIAs

The interview respondents expressed frustration with LEAs for the latter's disinclination to share information with PIAs regarding human trafficking investigations and recovery of potential victims. The findings show that LEAs' refusal to work with PIAs was especially strong in countries such as Australia and Canada. K.S., a veteran Australian PI with over 35 years of professional experience, explained, "In Australia, we cannot check a license plate, and law enforcement should provide that information, but they neglect to provide the help . . . they do not like sharing information. They don't like PIs doing more than they can do." On a similar note, R.W., another veteran PI in Canada, who also worked in the U.S. for over a decade, observed,

> You just don't get cooperation from law enforcement to the private sector. Like me, if you ask them questions, they look at you like you're deaf, dumb, and blind. Eh, like again, my experience is that you come to make the complaint and then you leave it with them because you're out of the picture.

The respondents agreed that one of the biggest obstacles to collaboration with law enforcement, in general, is related to police culture where police only trust other police, a culture ingrained in police departments, according to some of the respondents. They do not trust PIs and do not believe that PIs have the ability to help them. Seven respondents reported that law enforcement rarely contacts PIs for any investigation, even when they know the latter can assist them. Law enforcement would rather that PIs shared with them information that could help conduct their own investigations. R.T. stated,

> Really the only time that law enforcement will be open to cooperating with PIs is two ways. One is if you're a process server, if you are serving court papers to defendants or plaintiffs, you're then an extension of the court by doing that. Second, if you happen to get a contract with a state entity, then they know you and come to you for information. Before a law enforcement officer comes out and asks for your opinion or your help, I would say it does not happen unless your name comes up in an investigation.

In the same line of view, C.L. explained,

> Cops don't want other people working alongside them. They want you to give them all the information you have. But they aren't going to give you any information. In general, police do not like to work hand in hand or alongside PIs on anything, unless they know you.

LEAs like protecting their monopoly over investigations because they perceive they are the only ones to enforce laws. S.R. explained, "Law enforcement has a blinder mentality that they don't want anyone else working on this than them. I think it was a very hard inroad to get them to trust another organization to work towards an investigation." Another participant added, "As a PI, your credibility does not matter much for an LEA that does not have any previous interaction with you unless you have some inner connection to the law enforcement department." T.H. appeared to have a better understanding of law enforcement's complex of superiority in information sharing:

> I think it is very important for law enforcement to collaborate with whoever is willing to help them. But they don't have the ability to do that, and I don't know if they would really want to. They don't like to share; you know they don't like to entrust things to other people. And they don't need more work given to them. They don't look for more crimes.

The findings also showed that it is very difficult to cooperate with LEAs because the inner circles of LEAs themselves are very competitive. As S.L. stated,

> You have LEAs that won't collaborate with each other. So, you have city, county, and state agencies that will not collaborate, and then you have the federal agencies, and everybody is competing against each other, and it makes it very difficult to get a job done.

3.5.2. LEAs' Self-Centeredness and Feeling of Power Entitlement

Almost all of the 28 interview respondents shared the perception that collaboration with law enforcement is highly affected by other behaviors: selfishness and a sense of power entitlement. C.C. perceived,

> Law enforcement has egos that become involved when you have an experienced retired officer who is now a PI and knows how to do the talk. And they approach the law enforcement officer, and he quickly realizes that he or she does not have that experience. So, the ego becomes affected, and that's the first issue you have to deal with. Then, the second one is the current law enforcement officer saying, 'You're trying to tell me how to do my job, this is my job, not your job. You are interfering', even if they may not have anything going on.

Likewise, B.K. observed, " . . . When somebody else comes in and tells you something that you didn't know, the problem is keeping those egos out of the way, and there are a lot of egos in law enforcement." For B.W., the biggest obstacle to cooperation has to do with personalities, "with individuals not wanting to share information, individuals not wanting to work with another organization that even happens between different LEAs. They tend to get possessive of their information and their investigation." C.C., a veteran female PI, argued that the pride of a law enforcement officer would be further hurt when she presented herself during training:

> There is even a double ego issue against me because I am a female and because they assume when I tell them I'm a retired FBI agent, they assume that I sat at a desk and pushed paper around on a computer and I wasn't actually out on the field working on violent crime. So, the first thing I do when I present to a law enforcement audience is just give them a little bit of my background that I've been on the street and I know what I'm doing and I've done this and you can benefit from my experiences.

According to some respondents, due to ego issues, law enforcement would often make errors in investigations because it would be an anathema to take any advice from outsiders about their job. As M.M. remarked,

> Many law enforcement officers do their thing, and they think they are right, but they are not right. There have been so many crash reports that I've had to change,

> of course, you can't get them changed, but you have to show why a crash report isn't accurate because that investigator didn't do a good investigation. They don't like to be told by someone outside their department that they didn't do it the right way.

It was also reported that it is not only selfishness that affects PIs' relations with law enforcement, but also a sense of absolute power that the latter are desperate to protect. Interestingly, after retirement and becoming PIs, they too are shocked to experience the same disdain from young law enforcement officers:

> Oh, you know it's a funny weird thing. It's like when you are in law enforcement, you don't want to give it out. Everybody thinks that everybody else can't be trusted, and then they get out and go like 'Why can't you trust me?' They don't want anybody else to be as powerful as them. It's kind of the personality of most cops, and it's become systemic.

Furthermore, not only is there distrust of law enforcement towards PIs but there is also untruthfulness. Some respondents reported that police would not share information with anybody unless they gave you the wrong information in order to get the right information from you. M.P. justified that behavior of the police by stating, "The police don't care about cooperation with anybody, especially PIs. They want the information, that's all, no cooperation, no help, no information, nada. That is very important for you to know".

3.5.3. Law Enforcement's Lack of Understanding of PIs' Competencies

The respondents believed that law enforcement has little understanding of what PIs do and what skills they can contribute to investigations. According to T.S., "There might be some mistrust in PIs because they don't understand what we do or understand why we do what we do, why they don't do what they do," It will be very difficult for any PI who is working on an investigation to get any help from a law enforcement officer he/she has never worked with before. According to K.R.:

> The biggest obstacle, anytime you do an investigation with law enforcement is their lack of understanding of the private investigation industry. They don't understand us; all they think we do is cheating spouses, and that's all. So, they tend not to take us seriously.

Two respondents raised a concern about LEAs being sometimes complacent and negating the existence of human trafficking in ways to cover up, for unknown reasons, criminal activities of trafficking rings. As L.S. stated,

> In my experience, we also have people out there who are involved in law enforcement, and who also work for the other side. That makes it very difficult when you are giving them training. They say human trafficking is not going on. And I have been to those trainings where I argued with them, and they said, 'No, you are absolutely wrong; why you are lying to the crowd right now?' They become very defensive because they've been bought.

The point in the quote above-mentioned by L.S., a female PI who was a retired FBI special agent, could further be explained in two ways. First, an issue of ego among law enforcement regarding obtaining any assistance or lessons from PIs. Second, trainees might resent that the trainer was a female PI, even though she had extensive experience in vice units.

3.5.4. Legal Restrictions to LEAs' Ability to Share Information

Five respondents, all retired law enforcement officers turned PIs, explained that law enforcement will not or cannot share information with PIs regarding any investigations because of legal barriers. T.H., who retired from Air Force Intelligence and a state law enforcement department, said, "It's not like they don't like helping PIs. The reason is

that the law doesn't allow them to work together. They're able to take whatever information, but not give away any information." He provided further justification for law enforcement's behavior:

> They like you to make the cases for them, but they won't cooperate with you to get information that will help you and your investigation because it's actually illegal to do that. It didn't use to be so, but it is now. If you have a personal relationship with somebody, they might give you information, but they're giving you information illegally. Informal, but also illegal. If they got found out, they would be fired at the least.

Actually, some laws prevent law enforcement from sharing information about investigations. As T.H. explained,

> There are a number of laws that prevent it, I can't give you a citation. But for example, in the NCIC (National Crime Information Center) information, it's illegal for LEAs to provide that to anybody. They have to have a legitimate reason just to inquire for themselves; they can't inquire into the NCIC system on behalf of somebody else.

In addition, most state jurisdictions in the United States restrict access to law enforcement databases. Any open cases handled by law enforcement are not subject to the Freedom of Information Act. As T.H. said,

> So, a lot of times, even if the police close a criminal case, it's not available under the Freedom of Information Act because even if it's closed and it's not been solved, it's just an appending status, it's not been resolved; so, it's still outside the scope of the Freedom of Information and that applies locally, in the state, and federally.

Like T.H., L.S. justified law enforcement's challenge for sharing information with PIs:

> A law enforcement officer cannot share back with us because they are limited in what they are allowed to provide to us, so that's where the inter-agency collaboration becomes difficult, unless there was some agreement or waiver or if we were hired on a voluntary or contractual basis from the agency itself.

Thus, part of the obstacle to a PIA-LEA partnership is that law enforcement has to abide by regulations on what they can share about their investigations. However, T.H. counterargued that:

> Even if those laws were eliminated, the reality is that there's a great deal of insecurity among law enforcement investigators. For one thing, every investigator thinks he's the best out there, so he doesn't like someone else second-guessing what he's doing. If they open information up to someone from the outside, even from somebody from their own department, they're often hesitant to share. That exposes them to potential criticism, so they like to keep everything close to the vest.

According to some respondents, PIs too are bound by their professional ethics of privacy and confidentiality about the relationship and information regarding investigations they have conducted on behalf of their clients. For instance, PIs cannot share information with law enforcement without their client's consent. As L.S. said, "So, as a PI, I can share everything with the law enforcement officer regarding my case as long as my client approves." Overall, an underlying point most respondents concurred about was that, in their criminal investigations, PIs should avoid obstructing ongoing investigations by law enforcement and keep the latter informed of any parallel investigations they are conducting. This point is well summarized by K.R. stating:

> In almost all the cases, on some level, number one, we need to make sure that we're not stepping on an investigation or sting operation that they're doing. Then,

> number 2, we need to make them aware that if we do find any lead, then we are going to need to contact somebody to move in quickly.

To avoid obstructing any LEAs' ongoing investigation, R.T. advised:

> One thing that you have to be very knowledgeable about and to know not what to do is you don't want to put yourself in a position of obstruction or that, so that if it ever came up with me, what I would do is, you know, go to the state's DND [not defined], keep them informed of what you're doing and where you're going for you to ensure that you're not stepping on their toes or not interfering with something that you don't know with what they're doing. That's just common courtesy for professional relationships.

3.6. Addressing PIA's Challenges for Collaborating with LEAs

To address PIs' difficulty collaborating with LEAs, the interview respondents put forward substantial suggestions, including: creating opportunities for formal mixed training or conferences; identifying expert PIs to be in contact with law enforcement officers specialized in human trafficking investigations in each county or state; LEAs signing contracts with expert PIs; having the state manage the licensing of PIs and allowing access to crime databases; PIs volunteering their time for investigations of suspect human trafficking cases; etc. Illustrating some of these points, K.R. suggested,:

> An association of both PIs and law enforcement officers that come together under one header and one topic so that we can have that ability to communicate with law enforcement officers. They also then have the availability to reach out to those PIs in those areas. So, it really needs to come under one umbrella.

J.K. had a similar idea:

> I would start locally and have a spokesperson. You know, more teaching and training about it and bringing the PIs together with law enforcement. We do group meetings more like every quarter, we always have a speaker or a topic. 'Here's what we can do, do you see a lot of this?' and 'Do you know how prominent this is in your area?'

K.R. explained that if LEAs would agree to participate in co-sponsored training, then this would first get everyone on the same page and give collaboration and networking abilities. Doing so helps develop comradery through face-to-face meetings. He explained that PIs in his county in Texas did meet the local sheriff informally and regularly and discussed issues around human trafficking. "But it will be more effective if we formalize discussions on a monthly or bi-monthly or twice a year basis, maybe three professionals in human trafficking to do a seminar, a webinar, or a meeting between all the interested parties," he said. J.J. proposed that law enforcement should take the initiative by partnering with their state's association of PIs to organize training and talks with PIs, because, as she said,

> Some PIs don't really know whom to call because they don't have the skill. So, let's give them the tools. If you have a family that comes in and they are asking and bringing this up, your antenna should go up, and you should immediately call law enforcement and pass that information along.

According to D.L., "Intelligence officers should work with us; those are the best law enforcement agents I've worked with. It's not necessarily a detective or patrol [officer], but the intelligence officers; I have a great relationship with them." R.H. described how PIAs could contract with PIs by allocating some funding for assistance by outside people for specific investigations. He said, "If they are looking at changing the police now, I believe they would include the private sector, mainly PIs, in these types of cases; it would increase their assets." Then, they should invite licensed PIs to the team to collaborate. "I think that would go a long way in breaking down the barriers we have between the two entities," B.W. said.

Finally, B.K. suggested developing a network of investigators in the state who are willing to carry out that type of volunteer work, and then they could present themselves to law enforcement and say,

> Hey, we are a dozen PIs here in the state of Tennessee; we volunteer our time; this is the name of our group. I think power comes from numbers, and I've even thought of expanding that. Here in the southeast region, if we could have a network and expand that network of volunteer PIs into other states, that would be powerful.

According to some respondents, it can be very difficult for PIs to be given due respect for human trafficking investigations if they do not make efforts to have a relationship with others in the criminal justice system apart from law enforcement. S.R., whose investigation agency developed a strong connection with state attorneys and prosecutors, showed how doing so helped his agency to negotiate around obstacles of working with LEAs. As he explained:

> You may be able to recover a victim and get them back to their family, but there is still a trafficker out there that must face justice and be arrested. If you don't have a connection or a liaison with the law enforcement officers or the prosecutors, then you'll never be able to get that person prosecuted.

He reported that his agency had a relationship with the district attorney in the state capital city, whose specific role was prosecuting human trafficking cases.

> We'll bring our cases directly to her, and then sometimes she'll send us cases and say, 'Hey, I can't get metro PD to work this case because they don't have the time. Can you go flush it out and let us know if it is trafficking or if it's not trafficking?' and we'll do that with her. But having a relationship with prosecution or law enforcement is a must, concluded S.R.

Likewise, C.L., a veteran PI with over 50 years of experience, described how PIs could connect with major stakeholders by volunteering with any state attorney's division on human trafficking:

> They need to donate their time in the human trafficking division in the district attorney's office. They will find civilians working in that office. The district attorney's office is not like the policemen; it will cooperate much more with PIs than the policemen will.

4. Discussion

An observation about the demographic characteristics of the study sample is that most of the participants were former law enforcement officers with substantial work experience in vice units at several levels (i.e., federal, state, city, etc.). The length and wealth of professional law enforcement experience reported could be considered a key strength in enhancing their work, and more importantly, their collaboration with law enforcement agents still in service. Hounmenou and O'Grady [57] show that PIs have versatile skills and substantial experience in conducting human trafficking investigations, which make them key stakeholders and resourceful professionals—overlooked till now—for collaboration with LEAs to address human trafficking and recover victims.

4.1. Interagency Collaboration between PIAs and LEAs

The survey finding that most of the 39 survey participants (61%) believed that PIAs would collaborate with LEAs *rarely*, while 29% would do so *sometimes*, indicates that collaboration between PIAs and LEAs occurs at a very small scale and mostly informally. It also shows some distrust between these two sides of the investigation. This point was further reinforced by the finding that 10 of the 39 participants reported not having associated with LEAs for any human trafficking investigations they had conducted. Another finding further emphasizes these two findings highlighting challenges in the collaboration of PIAs

with LEAs: the average rating close to 4 on a scale of 1–5 for the participants' level of perception of difficulty for PIAs to work with LEAs.

Despite the perception that it is challenging to get LEAs to collaborate with PIAs on trafficking investigations, it is noteworthy that most of the 39 survey participants (32%) acknowledged that it was *very important* for PIAs to collaborate with LEAs for investigations of human trafficking. Yet, most of the participants also perceived that PIAs' assistance to LEA-led investigations is relatively more important than LEAs' assistance to PIA-led investigations. The findings that three out of every four PIAs (74%) were reported as having collaborated with LEAs on trafficking-related investigations and that seven out of every ten PIAs (70%) did so 1–5 times are important because these findings indicate that the expertise of PIAs for human trafficking work is acknowledged and solicited by some LEAs. However, the findings from the interviews discussed next not only corroborate most of the survey findings but also highlight substantial nuances and challenges in collaboration between PIAs and LEAs.

The interview findings that the agencies of 20 of the 28 respondents (71%) collaborated, to varying extents, with LEAs on trafficking-related investigations, and that some agencies collaborated with LEAs on all trafficking cases they investigated, indicate some visibility and recognition of PIA by LEAs in the fight against human trafficking. It was found that successful collaborations often depended on the state where the PIAs worked. For instance, PIs who previously had an excellent partnership with LEAs in New York later met many challenges for similar opportunities in a state such as Tennessee. The level of collaboration between PIAs and LEAs, and other public institutions in New York and other states such New Jersey, as reported in this study, indicates that the potential for PIAs to enhance human trafficking investigations is not overlooked in some areas of the criminal justice system. The interview respondents emphasized the importance of PIAs reaching out to LEAs for mutual support in the trafficking-related investigations they initiated. This indicates the availability of PIAs to assist and supplement law enforcement for improved investigation outcomes. Though they acknowledged the importance of both PIAs and LEAs collaborating on human trafficking, assessing whether LEAs would be open to compromise around sharing information and collaboration would be valuable.

However, collaboration with LEAs was found to be highly dependent on the size of the PI's network and past law enforcement career. Participants who successfully partner with LEAs could be found mostly among PIs who were former law enforcement agents, and to some extent, among well-known veteran PIs with excellent track records and extensive connections. Contrary to PIs younger than 50, those in their 60s and 70s tend to have more success collaborating with LEAs because, as some of them explained, it takes time to create networks, and a past career in law enforcement appears to be a key factor in gaining the trust of LEAs.

Among the distinctive contributions PIAs could make to investigations initiated by LEAs, three deserve discussing: the ability to provide training to law enforcement, the ability to be an intermediary between law enforcement and victims' families, and the ability to locate missing persons and conduct surveillance. First, veteran PIs reported and described their experience of training hundreds of LEAs. They could contribute to strengthening LEAs' capacity because of the extensive professional experience of most of them in both law enforcement and the PI field. LEAs could use PIs as persons of resources by contracting with them to train their staff about advanced interview skills and interactions with trafficking victims. For example, research shows that LEAs sometimes hire specialized staff with IT backgrounds to help train and increase the educational requirements for their staff across the board [9]. First, similar contract initiatives could be developed to get PIs to work with LEAs. Second, considering the victim-protection approach they prioritize, PIs could be excellent intermediaries between families and LEAs on the one hand and between victims and LEAs on the other hand. Victims and families are likely to trust PIs more because of their victim-centered service approach. Research shows that law

enforcement has difficulty developing trust with trafficking victims, which is necessary to gather information during investigations [10,14].

Third, considering their advanced skills in locating missing people and conducting surveillance, PIs could provide critical support for LEAs in tracing and recovering victims of trafficking. However, as stressed through the interview findings, PIAs must make efforts to inform LEAs about the investigations of trafficking they conduct to obtain technical support only LEAs can provide because LEAs have exclusive access to federal and state crime data. Most respondents agreed that LEAs should share investigation information with PIAs because they have access to many databases and resources that PIAs do not have access to. PIs acknowledge that LEAs' intervention in any criminal investigation is crucial. Only LEAs have the legal powers to arrest crime perpetrators, even if sometimes PIs can make citizen's arrests. LEAs have the power of the law and the authorization to use lethal force.

4.2. Obstacles to PIA–LEA Partnership

Collaboration between PIAs and LEAs does not often occur without obstacles. In many cases, LEAs tend to solicit investigation information from PIAs, but they cannot or will not reciprocate and help PIAs. Interestingly, it was found that when LEAs decide to share information with PIAs, they tend to provide misleading information. Due to issues of police culture, ego, distrust, and selfishness, law enforcement officers dislike working with PIs because they want to avoid advice from outsiders about how they should conduct investigations [27,38]. Law enforcement's lack of familiarity with the private security sector's policing roles [36,38] appears to contribute to their distrust of PIs. Young law enforcement officers often make mistakes in investigations, but it would be an outrage to take any advice from PIs about an investigation. Even within their corporation, LEAs do not regularly communicate and do not share intelligence data [7]. Thus, it should not be surprising that LEAs dislike collaborating with PIAs. A feeling of power entitlement and legitimacy among LEAs could partly explain why they tend to disregard what PIAs could potentially contribute to investigations [24,27].

Nevertheless, as the findings show, sometimes, it is against the law for LEAs to share information with anyone outside the law enforcement circle regarding any investigations. Some respondents pointed out that most jurisdictions in the U.S. restrict access to most law enforcement databases. Thus, beyond selfishness, distrust, and condescension reported about law enforcement in interaction with PIAs, a major barrier to information sharing by LEAs has a lot to do with laws that regulate information LEAs can share with private citizens.

4.3. Improving Partnerships for Investigations of Human Trafficking

The themes from the interviews provide important information about the ways law enforcement can value PIs' input in efforts of prevention, protection, and prosecution of human trafficking. Law enforcement should give due regard to PIA's capacity to investigate crimes such as human trafficking. Consideration should be given to PIAs' capacity to complement LEAs in investigations of human trafficking. It is possible that cooperating with PIAs could be highly beneficial for some investigations for which LEAs lack time, human resources, and advanced skills in areas such as surveillance, interviews, locating missing persons, etc. The information in the present study provides a ground-breaking exploration of how PIAs' skills could make them key partners, instead of adversaries, to LEAs.

As suggested by several participants, through opportunities for workshops and conferences, LEAs and PIAs can develop connections and share information about strategies to deal with human trafficking. LEAs could lead the way by establishing human trafficking investigations teams that would include PIs with expertise in this service area. Creating directories of specialists in trafficking investigations should be an initial, important step to get LEAs and PIAs to get to know and connect with each other. Such directories should

be shared with associations of PIAs and LEAs at the city and state levels. LEAs should consider vetting and contracting with those proven to have expertise in human trafficking investigations. One strategy to help PIAs have access to some databases exclusively accessible to law enforcement would be by making entities such as the state police responsible for PI licensing, as it is currently carried out in New Jersey, according to a respondent. It would be good if other states followed this model of getting the state police to play a central role in licensing PIs and allowing them access to databases only accessible to LEAs. PIAs could circumvent the difficulty of collaborating with LEAs by reaching out to state attorneys and prosecutors and volunteering to build connections they could capitalize on later for assistance with human trafficking investigations. The participants concurred that PIAs should do their best to seek the assistance of LEAs regarding investigations of human trafficking whenever possible. However, it is important that information sharing be mutual.

5. Implications and Limitations

5.1. Implications for Practice

Law enforcement's limitations in investigating human trafficking could be compensated by potential strengths that PIs could bring to such investigations, including time, surveillance, advanced interviewing, skip tracing, a victim-centered investigation approach, infiltrating criminal organizations, etc. Thus, it would be helpful if both sides of investigations—public and private—could develop initiatives to enhance efforts of addressing the fight against human trafficking and recovering victims. LEAs should view PIAs as potential complementary forces to improve efforts to investigate crimes in general and particularly human trafficking. They should look outside their box and reach out to PIs they feel could be key partners in their work in human trafficking investigations. LEAs should consider developing strategies for partnership with associations of PIAs in their jurisdictions or states, especially PIs with expertise on human trafficking whom LEAs could contract for investigations they have limited leads on. Information sharing should work both ways for more effective strategies for human trafficking investigations.

PIs with experience in human trafficking investigations should reach out and be willing to share information with LEAs about investigations of human trafficking they conduct or plan to do. As one of the interview participants said, "When human trafficking information comes to PIs, they need to be a conduit and pass that information on to law enforcement, or maybe they need to start the conversation, so maybe ask law enforcement to come in." Yet, information sharing should be carried out with, first, a commitment of law enforcement not to treat rescued victims as criminals. Then, it should be carried out with the understanding that PIs obtain consent to do so from potential victims' families that hire them. In addition to law enforcement, PIs should make themselves known to the various criminal justice stakeholders involved in human trafficking, such as state attorneys and prosecutors. In every state, human trafficking task forces should reach out to PIAs.

5.2. Implications for Policy

Policymakers at the state and federal levels should consider sponsoring studies that will be used to decide whether PIs could be legitimate partners to contribute to trafficking investigations. If so, efforts could be made to initiate combined training of PIAs and LEAs about how to collaborate on investigations of trafficking. Policymakers should adopt legislation to allow licensed PIs to access the same tools and national databases as LEAs for human trafficking investigations. States and foundations could create competitive funding opportunities for PIs to collaborate with LEAs and state attorneys on human trafficking investigations. Regulations should be established that call for the state police to facilitate licensing of PIs and establish conditions under which they can cooperate with LEAs on human trafficking investigations. Finally, it would be an important initiative for policymakers to create a state or national center to coordinate and fund collaborative investigations of human trafficking by LEAs and PIAs. This should be an independent

investigation-focused entity, a national center funded through public and private funds, where law enforcement and PIs could meet to exchange knowledge and network.

5.3. Implications for Research

Full-scale research should be conducted to get policymakers, law enforcement, and the overall criminal justice system to understand how PIs can contribute to the fight against human trafficking. Thus, research subsequent to this study should focus on the following topics: first, law enforcement's experiences of collaboration with PIs in criminal investigations, including human trafficking; second, comparing human trafficking investigation outcomes of LEAs collaborating with PIAs with LEAs without no similar partnerships; and third, an assessment of law enforcement's perceptions of PIs as potential partners in the fight against human trafficking, and challenges to address for formal collaboration.

5.4. Study Limitations

The findings of this study cannot be generalized to any other populations of PIs anywhere because, first, the study involved purposive sampling; second, the sample, which is a subsample of another study, is small, especially for the survey component; third, only descriptive statistics were used, and univariate and bivariate analyses were performed on the survey data. Third, since the discussion of the findings from the interview data analysis is limited to only the 28 participants whose organizations conducted human trafficking investigations, no claims could be made about the accuracy of the self-reports made about their perceptions and experiences about collaborating with LEAs. Fourth, another limitation is the participation of two respondents from two other countries than the United States (i.e., Canada and Australia) in the study. While they could be considered outliers in the survey data, their substantial input in the interviews shows that PIs in developed countries share many similarities in their challenges in partnering with law enforcement. The participant from Canada conducted investigations and collaborated with law enforcement in the United States for over a decade. Fifth, the analysis and interpretations of the interview data might have been influenced by the researchers' assumptions, values, and biases. Their interactions with the participants at the interview stage may be considered threats to credibility. However, using strategies such as member-checking and peer debriefing helped limit the potential threats to the credibility and confirmability of the findings in this study. Finally, the fact that this study explored only PIs' perceptions and experiences of collaboration with LEAs is a key limitation because it provides one side story. It would be constructive to examine law enforcement's perceptions and experiences of collaborating with PIAs in order to understand how such collaboration could be enhanced.

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Concept Paper

Conceptualizing Task Force Sustainability

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Abstract: In the anti-human trafficking movement, multi-disciplinary teams have emerged as a best practice for collaborating and coordinating efforts in combating human trafficking. Many multi-disciplinary teams are comprised of federal, state and local partners representing law enforcement, prosecutors and service providers. The concept of sustaining the multi-disciplinary teams is a relatively new area of discussion in the anti-human trafficking movement. This paper explores the Greater New Orleans Human Trafficking Task Force sustainability process as an illustrative example to shed light on the issues that arose during the process for this Task Force, and which may be salient for other Task Forces. This retrospective presentation of the comments and observations made by the Greater New Orleans Human Trafficking Task Force members suggest emerging themes that may help to clarify the concepts other Task Forces should consider and to predict the sustainability outcomes. The members' accounts incorporated in this article are presented as valid points of view for framing conclusions that may be applicable in other contexts and to further the conversation in this understudied area of sustainability. The key focal points related to sustainability explored in this conceptual paper include leadership, funding, collaboration, trust and relationship building, and change is constant.

Keywords: human trafficking; multi-disciplinary team; sustainability planning

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1. Introduction

Evidence of human trafficking in the Greater New Orleans—Metairie Metropolitan area [1], with the city of New Orleans at the center, was nationally recognized in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina [1]. At the 2006 National Conference on Human Trafficking in New Orleans, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzalez, announced additional Department of Justice (Department) funding for the establishment of Trafficking Task Forces to identify and assist victims of human trafficking and to apprehend and prosecute those engaged in trafficking offenses [2,3]. The Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement (LCLE) was one of the award recipients [4]. It received the funding as part of a larger effort by the Department to restore the criminal justice infrastructure in the city of New Orleans (coterminous with Orleans Parish) and to better equip the local law enforcement agencies [2,5]. The funding focused investigations on trafficking activity in the Hurricane [Katrina]-damaged areas of the state, including the Interstate Highway-10 (I-10) corridor in Louisiana, linking the city of New Orleans to Baton Rouge [3,6]. Through the Trafficking Task Force, the Department intended to "put a stop to the exploitation and abuse of laborers", estimated to be thousands of migrant and unskilled workers brought into the city of New Orleans by traffickers to work on the rebuilding efforts [3,6,7]. Authorities believed that these traffickers exploited victims by bringing in laborers, taking documents from them, not paying them and bringing in prostitutes to service the workers in the direct aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and leading into 2006 [6,8].

Under the Department funding period of 2006–2009, the LCLE established the multi-disciplinary Louisiana Human Trafficking Task Force (Louisiana Task Force), which included the Louisiana Sheriff's Association, Louisiana State Police, Metro Centers for Community Advocacy (formerly Metropolitan Center for Women and Children), the U.S. Attor-

ney's Office and the Federal Bureau of Investigation [6]. Under the grant, the Louisiana State Police was involved in a number of collaborations with other law enforcement agencies. This included information sharing meetings with "representatives from the United States (U.S.) Attorney's Office, sheriffs from all over Louisiana, the state police, and citizens" as well as providers [6]. Concurrently, the state of Louisiana passed legislation criminalizing human trafficking and directing law enforcement agencies to adopt training programs to enhance the identification and interdictions efforts [8].

In the anti-human trafficking movement, multi-disciplinary teams have emerged as a best practice for collaborating and coordinating efforts in combating human trafficking. Many multi-disciplinary teams are comprised of federal, state and local partners, representing law enforcement, prosecutors and service providers. The concept of sustaining the multi-disciplinary teams is a relatively new area of discussion in the anti-human trafficking movement. Ref. [9] This paper explores the Greater New Orleans Human Trafficking Task Force sustainability process as an illustrative example to shed light on the issues that arose during the process for this Task Force, and which may be salient for other Task Forces. Ref. [10] This retrospective presentation of the comments and observations made by the Greater New Orleans Human Trafficking Task Force members suggest the emerging themes that may help clarify the concepts other Task Forces should consider and predicts the sustainability outcomes. The members' accounts incorporated in this article, as valid points of view for framing conclusions, may be applicable in other contexts and to further the conversation in this understudied area of sustainability. Ref. [11] The concepts formed out of these conversations shape the scope of this paper and provide insights into how the collaboration sustained its leadership, relationships and trust under constant change.

2. History of the Task Force

By 2008, many aspects of law enforcement in the city of New Orleans remained in a state of crisis. Almost every aspect of the local criminal justice system was damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, and the rebuilding was slow [12–14]. Despite this, law enforcement and victim service providers in the Greater New Orleans—Metairie Metropolitan area formed a multi-disciplinary Task Force under the leadership of the U.S. Attorney's Office Eastern District of Louisiana (USAO) [15,16]. The local partners that collaborated under the Task Force included the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office, New Orleans Police Department, Covenant House New Orleans, Catholic Charities of New Orleans and New Orleans Family Justice Center [15]. The Federal partner was the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

During this period, the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office expanded its role and joined the statewide anti-human trafficking efforts along the I-10 corridor, led by the LCLE in partnership with the Louisiana's Sherriff's Association [15]. At this time, one of the most identifiable problems regarding human trafficking, especially sex trafficking, relates to the number of hotels and motels within the Greater New Orleans-Metairie area unincorporated jurisdiction [15]. The Jefferson Parish, adjacent to the Orleans Parish, recorded over eighty hotel and motel establishments, which many traffickers preferred for conducting sex trafficking activities, as the nightly rates were cheaper. In response to this activity, the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office formed a partnership with the Greater New Orleans Hotel and Lodging Association, which resulted in the Jefferson Parish, Ordinance Chapter 17.5 Lodging Accommodations, which penalized hotel and motel owners for financially benefitting from a sex trafficking venture [17–19]. The adoption of the Ordinance brought awareness of the issue to the city of New Orleans, and subsequently, new law enforcement investigations were designed to identify hotel and motel owners who were financially benefiting from sex trafficking ventures. The investigations led to a criminal prosecution under the USAO and became the first case in the country in which a hotel owner was indicted under this theory [15].

Over the next six years, the awareness about human trafficking grew among state legislatures, who passed laws such as House Bill 49 in 2012 and Senate Bill 88 in 2013,

establishing Louisiana's improvements in criminalizing child sex trafficking, strengthening criminal penalties and adding protection and services for victims [20–23]. Act 564 of the 2014 Legislature was passed, requiring the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services to compile and publish an annual statistical report on human trafficking in Louisiana [24]. The 2015 Department of Children and Families Annual Report published activities for the 2014 calendar year, reporting the Orleans Parish as the overall lead in the number of trafficking cases for juveniles and adults [25]. Of the 206 confirmed and prospective victims reported in the state, 172 (84%) were sex trafficking victims, 23 (11%) labor trafficking victims, and two were victims of both labor and sexual trafficking [25]. The Orleans Parish reported 96 victims, of which 46 were juveniles, 48 were adults and two were unknown [25] [2].

During the same year, Covenant House New Orleans collaborated with the Modern Slavery Research Project at Loyola University New Orleans to talk to ninety-nine homeless youth about their experiences of labor exploitation [26]. The study produced a report that "focuses on the particular risks associated with homelessness in city of New Orleans and on recommendations provided by the youth for how the community can improve their response to trafficking" [26]. Of the 99 youth interviewed, 14% of the respondents were identified as victims of some form of trafficking, with 11% of the total population having been trafficked for sex and 5% for other forced labor [26]. The study concluded by estimating that approximately 86 residents per year at Covenant House New Orleans were likely to be victims of human trafficking [26].

The data reported by the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services for the subsequent reports, 2016–2021, delineates the activities in the Orleans Parish, which represents an average of 37% of the total combined juvenile and adult cases in the state [25]. For the same period, the state reported 91% sex trafficking victims, 3% labor trafficking victims, 3% sex and labor trafficking victims and 4% not reported [25] [3].

A 2016 study provided more insight into the prevalence, by estimating a range of between 650 and 1600 trafficked persons in the Greater New Orleans—Metairie Metropolitan area [27]. Highlighting the significance of this estimation by concluding that the Greater New Orleans—Metairie Metropolitan area is likely to have, proportionally, the highest rate of trafficking as the most populous urban area in the state [27,28].

Between 2016 and 2022, the Greater New Orleans Human Trafficking Task Force (Task Force) reports providing client services to over 700 trafficked persons and conducting over 670 investigations, which resulted in over 250 related arrests and the identification of more than 290 confirmed victims [29]. Of the clients served, 69% were victims of sex trafficking, 16% were victims of sex and labor trafficking, 9% were labor trafficking victims and 2% were reported as unknown [30].

The relative increase in labor trafficking cases under the Task Force are partially the result of law enforcement, including the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office's collaboration with the Federal law enforcement partners and local ordinance enforcement agencies, conducting a coordinated long-term investigation that implemented new strategies shared through training, technical assistance and cross-agency planning. The investigations into industries such as massage establishments were productive, with one multi-agency coordinated investigation resulting in arrests, the recovery of eight Foreign National victims and the seizure of over 170,000 USD [31]. The lessons learned after Hurricane Katrina led human trafficking investigators to become more engaged in trying to locate any signs of human trafficking conducted through the shelters and to identify any labor trafficking through the numerous amounts of contractors that arrived in the area to assist after Hurricane Ida, which made landfall on the sixteenth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina [32].

The most common countries of Foreign National citizenship of trafficking victims receiving services through the Task Force in the last seven years were Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico, the Philippines, Guatemala and Saint Lucia. The immigration status of the trafficking victim clients upon entry into the US for all trafficking types was no documentation [30]. The types of exploitation experienced by the clients include prostitution, stripping/exotic

dancing, pornography, construction/landscaping, other, drug trafficking/dealing, domestic servitude, escort service, panhandling, hotel/hospitality services, cleaning services, field labor, restaurant/food services, child care/day care, servile marriage, retail sales and transportation services [30].

3. Sustainability Process

Commencing in 2015, the multi-disciplinary Task Force, led by the USAO, was awarded funding under the Department's Office for Victims of Crimes, FY 2015 Enhanced Collaborative Model to Combat Human Trafficking (Enhanced Collaborative Model) solicitation until September 2018 [32]. The Task Force restructured to a co-leadership model as the Greater New Orleans Human Trafficking Task Force with the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office as the lead law enforcement agency and Covenant House New Orleans as the lead victim service provider [15]. The co-leadership formed the Task Force Core Team (Core Team) with Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the USAO and the FBI. Case management funding was awarded to three victim service provider sub-recipients, and a network of twenty service providers was established under a memorandum of understanding. The collaboration and coordination case management efforts led to the identification of victims and survivors referred to the comprehensive services network through a "No Wrong Door" policy. The strategic partners that participated in the memorandum of understanding include local, state, and Federal law enforcement; judicial district and Federal prosecutors; local and regional direct service and housing providers; health system providers; health department; regional child advocacy center(s); culturally specific organizations; legal service providers; workforce services, as well as mentoring and youth advocacy support programs. The Task Force continued to function under the Department's Enhanced Collaborative Model when it received its second round of funding from the Office for Victim of Crime in October 2018 and continued until January 2022 [33].

The success under the Enhanced Collaborative Model informed the Core Team leadership decision to sanction evaluations, group conversations, qualitative interviews and a self-assessment survey to be conducted for developing a Task Force sustainability plan. The purpose of the sustainability plan was to formalize a path for achieving the long-term goals and to document the strategies that support the Task Force activities and partnerships.

The sustainability process, conducted during COVID-19 over a twenty-two month period (August 2020–May 2022), commenced under the direction of the Task Force evaluator consultant, who guided Task Force discussions around sustainability by conducting qualitative interviews with members of the Core Team leadership, law enforcement, direct service providers and other members of the Task Force network [34]. The Task Force evaluator reported: "There is much to suggest that the Task Force has a high level of sustainability" [34].

As shared through the qualitative interviews, members reported that strong collaboration was the most frequently cited strength of the Task Force [34]. An increase in trust through networking and protocol implementation between service providers and law enforcement, as well as a growing reliability on one another to diversify the services offered to clients, are indicators that the Task Force exhibits the Department outcome criteria for Task Force sustainability [34].

The Task Force evaluator consultant recommended that the Task Force devise and monitor a strategic plan that focuses on sustainability to ensure the continuation of the operations for the Task Force [34]. In response, the Task Force consulted a number of models endorsed by the Department to qualify the scope of sustainability and planning process under the Department's enhanced collaborative model approach and to establish the best practices for conducting its sustainability planning process [35–37]. For instance, the Task Force utilized the "Sustainably Toolkit as a model for the Sustainability Plan: Enhancing Community Reponses to the Opioid/America's Addiction Crisis: Serving our Youngest Crime Victim" (Toolkit) published by JBS International [35]. The Task Force implemented the Toolkit's sustainability planning process, including the assembling of

a planning team, conducting a sustainability assessment, reviewing and discussing the findings, summarizing and prioritizing the findings and developing an action plan through objectives and goals, monitored through bi-annual updating of the plan and reporting to the Department [35].

The Task Force also participated in the Department's self-assessment survey for multi-disciplinary teams to measure their success and to assess its performance through the stages of group development [36]. The results of the Task Force's self-assessment revealed that the multi-disciplinary team was poised for sustainable growth based on the Department stages of group development [38].

Feeling encouraged, the Core Team contracted a second consultant, who challenged the Core Team and members to ask what would happen if the Task Force ceased to exist. By shifting the questions towards the loss of the Task Force through open-ended questions, the sustainability of the Task Force emerged as a personal question of how one would be impacted in their work if the Task Force no longer existed. The analysis of the responses also revealed that relationships are important to the Task Force. In addition, the different levels of engagement at different times by the Task Force members was also learned. This shifted the expectations for involvement and led to the understanding that the Task Force's strength is measured across its whole, with its varying degrees of membership participation [39].

One weakness identified through this process was the potential loss of funding for the Coordinator position because the Task Force activities and administration were conducted by a full-time paid position. "The coordinator is the sustainer. If there is not one person whose job it is to arrange all of the moving parts, then the Task Force is going to fall apart. That person needs to be there to keep it going. We all have so much on our plate that we can't add anything to it" [34].

Assessments of the key issues were also incorporated. In many instances, the assessments were conducted by partners who shared documentation that could be analyzed as part of the sustainability plan process. The partners who conducted these assessments with the Task Force members included UNITY, of Greater New Orleans [40], the Freedom Network [41] and Polaris [42]. The state of Louisiana study on its challenges and gaps in addressing human trafficking was applicable to the assessment because the reported findings were due, in part, to the interviews conducted with Task Force members [23]. An environmental scan on publications related to anti-human trafficking activities in the Greater New Orleans—Metairie Metropolitan area was conducted for historical context. National guidance was also provided through the Human Trafficking Capacity Building Center [43].

The shared feedback, assessments and subsequent analyzes along with the findings from the ongoing conversations and efforts, were synthesized through a strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis, and informed the development of the priority areas [35]. The findings were used to develop the sustainability plans priority areas, goals and action items. In addition, to ensure the sustainability plan was reflective of the Task Force membership, a draft was presented at a public meeting and circulated to the Task Force membership and interested community members for comment [44]. The membership comments about the Task Force's effectiveness and function were compiled and incorporated as valid points of view into the finalized draft submitted to the Office of Victims of Crime for final review and approval [44].

4. Self-Assessment

The history of the Task Force, starting with its origins up to is current leadership, exhibits how the response to human trafficking in the Greater New Orleans—Metairie Metropolitan area and the state of Louisiana is connected through a dynamic flow of members and community champions, who have emerged at critical moments. This history reinforces to the Task Force that change is constant. Observations made by Campbell and Fehler-Cabral [11] reinforce this predictor of "change is constant" as a characteristic of multi-disciplinary collaboration (para.25). Further emphasizing this point, Campbell

and Fehler-Cabral suggests [11] that implementing an inter-agency multi-disciplinary response is a" long-term endeavor", and there is an expectation that there will be staff turnover, shifts in leadership and agency priorities, as well as uneven resource capacities among the participating law enforcement agencies and nonprofit organizations over the duration of the initiative (para 3). Compounding this is the impact of COVID-19, which has contributed to an unexpected staffing attrition caused by local workforce shortages and over-extended staff and personnel. In the case of the Task Force, the law enforcement and victim service provider leadership that started the Task Force seven years ago have moved on. The agency relationships established by the original leadership have maintained through memorandums of understanding, but with law enforcement turnover and staff shortages, it is difficult to sustain these relationships without the connecting element of the Task Force (anonymous survey response). As a member observed, "the victim service provider relationship to law enforcement, such as the FBI, would likely cease or be greatly reduced without the Task Force. There won't be as many opportunities to have multiple agencies together, in person, to discuss trafficking".

During COVID-19, this became harder to achieve due to the difficulty of not having everyone present for meetings, which limited face-to-face interaction and created a loss of connections, resulting in a shift in the interpersonal relationships within the Task Force (anonymous survey response). This was challenging to achieve through the virtual platforms because many law enforcement agencies did not have the resources to provide personnel with the equipment and access to virtual platforms. This changed the nature of the interactions at meetings, which experienced limited attendance, contributing to the loss of direct lines of communication with key partners. The value of direct interaction is expressed by a Task Force member, "open communication is the purpose for coming together to share ideas, bring expertise to the table; and, the collaboration helps put the pieces together during operations and investigations".

The Task Force has been successful at sustaining the ebb and flows caused by funding, and the lack of funding, throughout its history. Its evolution has been situated in the anti-human trafficking movement, which tends to focus on the Department's law enforcement and criminal justice approaches, which is commonly referred to as a top down movement, compared to the domestic violence and sexual assault movements, which started at the grass root level [45]. The goal of the multidisciplinary approach is to utilize the information and resources across law enforcement agencies to activate investigations and prosecutions and to operationalize the trauma-informed, victim-centered response by incorporating victim service providers into the investigative strategy that refers recovered victims to stabilization and safety [11].

Federal law enforcement investment in the multidisciplinary team approach in its respective agencies has built capacity and staff in national, regional and field offices [46–48], such as the FBI Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Task Forces that operate within nearly every FBI field office [49]. The interface between the internal multidisciplinary team and the collaboration across agency jurisdictions through inter-agency multidisciplinary teams is integrated into the Federal strategies. As the FBI states on its public website, part of its national strategy is to effectively "investigate human trafficking through a collaborative, multi-agency approach with our federal, state, local, and tribal partners" [49]. This support from the national infrastructure has had a direct impact on the local Task Force, which bolsters the local field office leadership's capacity to dedicate the staff and align their priorities and goals to support the local, community-coordinated responses [50–52].

At the local level, a transition emerged with its legacy nonprofit organizations. During COVID-19, and through the subsequent years, the local nonprofit leadership who took the position in the era before and after Hurricane Katrina began to retire. The nonprofit boards sought out new leadership to address the long-term vulnerabilities and risks affecting the community because of Katrina, and at the direction of exiting executive directors, invested in emerging local community leaders who had direct experience in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The emerging leadership recognizes that:

These approaches take time to really integrate into systems and agencies. It would require training and policy change, not simply written agreements. It would necessitate a values clarification and collective reflection on the nature of trafficking as part of broader oppressions [53].

The differing approaches between the law enforcement and victim service providers emerge in the context of addressing the broader oppressions and material hardships in New Orleans. As law enforcement focuses on the recovery of victims, victim service providers lean into the core issues that cause human trafficking:

Because human trafficking often persists out of material hardship in New Orleans, I would like to see the funded Task Force use some funds to address those hardships. Whether that is for emergency housing funds, relocation expenses, or other direct assistance, I think some shared funds would bring the agencies together to really consider the barrier that material needs present for victims trying to leave [53].

Victim service providers continue to advocate to policy-makers and decision-makers for broader changes in the region (i.e., raise minimum wage, receive set-aside HANO vouchers, etc.) as being helpful in addressing some of the material conditions of the New Orleans community (anonymous survey response). This sentiment suggests that the focus of the Task Force is its sustainable integration into the community systems. As one member stated: "ultimately, we should clarify the 'task' of the 'Task Force' and add value to the community as an entity, rather than just be a place of coordination between agencies".

Victim service providers affirm that revisiting the interagency agreements and a clarification of the values across the Task Force would generate internal policy changes within the organizations based on agreed shared values, and this will increase the likelihood of sustained development (anonymous survey response). Law enforcement frames this as an "opportunity to revisit and talk through roles and responsibilities through frank conversations to help focus the Task Force and understand mutual goals of partners", as one member explained.

The common ground is provided by the Department's enhanced collaborative model for a multi-disciplinary team, which is the implementation of the program through a trauma-informed, victim-centered approach. The trauma-informed, victim-centered approach is the core principle that defines and informs the Task Force partners on how to implement the model and achieve its objectives through deliverables and performance measures. The self-assessment revealed that both the law enforcement and victim service providers embraced the victim-centered, trauma-informed approach as a mutual foundational value. As one member observed, "the Task Force provides ongoing training, including law enforcement, and if law enforcement wasn't trained or connected to victims service providers through the Task Force, the victims would come to the victim service providers more traumatized".

The Task Force members' responses to the self-assessment agree that the overall anti-human trafficking work of law enforcement would not change if the Task Force ceased to exist because human trafficking, including the dismantling of criminal organizations, are part of the agencies' ongoing work and mission. Conversely, the members also agreed that the collaboration among law enforcement under the Task Force is important and that there would be a loss in certain law enforcement areas when working cases that benefit from coordinated efforts, such as criminal networks, with a nexus between local, state and Federal jurisdictions (anonymous survey response). Emphasizing the successful integration of the Task Force into the daily activities of the partner agencies, one member stated: "professionally all of the collaboration and open communication would change, which is the purpose for coming together to share ideas, bring expertise to the table, and the collaboration, that helps put the pieces together during operations and investigations". The loss of the Task Force would mean law enforcement would not have the direct line of communication with key partners and would lose the avenues for developing new contacts and communicating with victim service providers (anonymous survey response).

The dynamic of the different levels of funding among the Federal agencies and local partners, particularly the local nonprofits, emerged as a significant discussion point during

the sustainability process. Both sectors acknowledged that the Federal agencies had the sustainable capacity to participate in the Task Force, while the loss of funding for nonprofit partners would directly impact the nonprofits' capacity to provide services to victims and survivors. The loss for law enforcement would be professional, while the loss for victim service providers would be infrastructural. This is because the federally funded Task Force closes the gaps in services through the partner nonprofit victim service providers, which maintains a network for referrals that supports services and provides access to the appropriate care that victims and survivors of trafficking require. Here, the successful integration of the partner agencies through the Task Force has created an unintended dependency on the Federal funding, as one member observed:

Law enforcement isn't relying on the funding, while the nonprofits, especially the lead, is tasked with securing sustainable funding for the network of direct services. There is a need to bring other nonprofit providers through a collaborative commitment for the purpose of raising funds to keep the system [53].

The conversations brought about the realization that the potential loss of funding for the nonprofit partners posed limitations to the Federal agencies as well, which relied on the service providers' network of support and services for victims and survivors of trafficking to bolster their trauma-informed, victim-centered approach. This further expresses the value of the integration achieved by the Task Force as it identifies its mutual reliance on partners, as expressed by a member:

Federal collaboration with local service providers is important, and the current network of referrals may be impacted if the Task Force no longer exists. The indirect outcome is that this could limit the Federal agencies' ability to make referrals when assisting victims/survivors potentially re-traumatizing victims/survivors. A loss of funding would also impact the service provider's capacity to assist victims/survivors [53].

This tension disproportionately effects the lead victim service provider due to its central position in the flow of clients and key resources and its administrative function for the Task Force in the local human trafficking response (anonymous survey response). Under its leadership, those who serve in the anti-trafficking field have built a community network of providers, services and resources available to trafficking victims and survivors, which has added to the quality of care received by clients. The leadership has proven effective at creating access with victim service providers through training and outreach, which has brought the awareness and expansion of services, such as the hiring of staff with expertise in the mental health field. The expanded services give clients access to multiple service providers, with many clients seeing two or more of the Task Force member organizations when needed.

During the sustainability process, a call to other local providers was made to collectively identify and apply for the funds needed to keep the system alive, including the domestic violence and sexual assault nonprofit providers that have provided support services to human trafficking victims and survivors under the Task Force. This is significant because the loss of funds for some partner service providers drastically changed the way the organizations were able to serve human trafficking victims. It was no longer sustainable for some to continue providing services to this population if there was no funding (anonymous survey response). Amplifying these concerns, as one member explained, is the understanding that human trafficking is a difficult crime to investigate because it is not a victimless crime and thus requires significant resources to support the investigations and the specialized services needed for victims and survivors.

Concerns about the mission and the loss in traditional funding from other Federal agencies weakened the collaborative philanthropic strategies as most organizations were struggling to reinforce the core programs and as a result of unplanned staffing losses. Historical silos between the domestic violence, sexual assault and anti-human trafficking movements resurfaced as a result of the increase in client violence locally for domestic violence and sexual assault victims during COVID-19 and the perception that the Task

Force's efforts overshadowed the long-standing services established through grass roots efforts [12,45].

In light of these barriers, the members agreed that the Task Force is the backbone entity that receives the funding to support its administrative activities through the lead organizations that take on the Task Force's responsibilities in the community [54]. The responses also revealed that the Task Force is not a true governance structure because the burden of administration falls on the two lead organizations. The interactions within the Task Force illustrated that its network functions through a structure qualified by Provan and Kenis [55] as "operational links that are often dyad" and based in a referral network, the sharing of information, the participation in joint programming and case management and the collaborative and coordinated investigative activities and prosecutorial actions (para 4).

The Task Force members assessing the Task Force's common agenda were able to articulate its effectiveness [55]. This effort resulted in the re-establishment of its boundaries for the Task Force's network, including the affirmation of key roles and discussion about the foundational elements that framed the members' shared values. The affirmation of the leadership by the two lead organizations was upheld because the Task Force's purpose closely aligned to their respective organizations' mission statements. This contributes to its success in effectively closing the gaps in services and ongoing efforts to provide clients access to the appropriate care. The consensus among the members agreed that the Task Force needed to remain centralized under the lead organizations for collecting and reporting data and for enabling the coordination of services through the maintaining of the service provider network. As noted by the members, the Task Force is instrumental in disseminating information and in identifying funding opportunities for the participating agencies in order to build capacity and sustain community engagement.

5. Filling the Gaps

The Greater New Orleans Human Trafficking Task Force Sustainability Plan 2022 (Plan) establishes the priorities, goals, objectives and strategies to fill in the gaps identified through the self-assessment (The download link of The Greater New Orleans Human Trafficking Task Force Sustainability Plan 2022 in Supplementary Materials). The Plan's priority areas are collaboration and partnership; coordinated care and investigations; public engagement and advocacy; and a sustainable Task Force. The crosscutting issue throughout the Plan is that relationships are important to the Task Force. In each priority area, strategies are established for building and sustaining interpersonal relationships within the Task Force because, as one member observed, it "Is not due to any individual person but rather a system that is not set up to put those values first".

In response to this, the Task Force established a course for open-communication and thriving relationships to build capacity around cases and investigations and to help address issues and explore solutions [55]. A strategy for achieving this is by conducting multi-sector collaboration exercises and activities for the Core Team, members and community at large [52]. Promoting the collective impact and the role of the Task Force in the Greater New Orleans-Metairie Metropolitan area affirms the collaborative value that emerged as a reoccurring core principle that has sustained the Task Force over the last seven years. The strategic advancement of the Task Force's trauma-informed, victim-centered approach by promoting the Task Force expertise, assets and best practices through outreach and speaking engagements by members reinforces the agency's shared values and recognizes the individual achievements that have contributed to the Task Force's success [44]. Increasing the data availability and accessibility by reviewing the current data collection and data sharing protocols promotes research into local trafficking prevalence and discussions around improving service provisions, access to supportive services and successful investigative strategies [44]. Sharing the data trends and law enforcement roles through coordinated outreach to encourage the community reporting of tips and other suspected activities advances law enforcement's long-term investigations [44]. As a member explains,

ongoing public outreach in the community helps by providing tips to law enforcement because their current information flow is just scratching the surface [44]. Strategies for developing and implementing standardized and coordinated case efforts across disciplines, through the sharing of best practices and lessons learned, also advances law enforcement's long-term investigations [44].

The involvement of victim service providers in ongoing cases will increase through the development and implementation of a coordinated adult human trafficking multi-disciplinary team for case review and care coordination that strengthens the comprehensive care model's support of human trafficking victims' and survivors' specialized immediate and long-term needs [44]. Strategies for integrating law enforcement and the district attorney's office, in coordination with the locally established sexual assault response teams and domestic violence multidisciplinary teams, will expand the case reviews. [44].

The Task Force client demographics reveal that the local material hardships particularly impact African-American females, the most served clients through the Task Force, who find themselves coerced into sex trafficking but identify as domestic violence victims [30]. The Task Force data also report an awareness of vulnerabilities within the Foreign National population, representing 13% of the clients served over the past seven years [30]. The numbers shared by the Task Force partners, such as the Louisiana Office for Refugees, support the Task Force reporting and reveal that more Foreign Nationals are seeking support and services for violent crimes, such as human trafficking, in the state, impacting the Greater New Orleans-Metairie Metropolitan area with its relatively large Foreign National population [56]. Hondurans make up the majority of the Central American population in New Orleans and constitute the largest Honduran community in the United States; Mexicans, Nicaraguans, Guatemalans, Salvadorans, and Cubans are other significant groups that make up the Latino/a community [56,57].

Covenant House New Orleans applied for a third round of funding under the Department's Office for Victims of Crimes Enhanced Collaborative Model Task Force to Combat Human Trafficking in 2022 as one of the goals established under the Plan. During this effort, the lead law enforcement agency, the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office, experienced the retirement of the long-standing Vice Unit Commander who had led many of the Task Force local law enforcement operations. This led to an unplanned dismantling of the Sheriff's Office human trafficking team. As a result of the established Task Force's long-standing goals to establish a formal partnership with the city of New Orleans law enforcement and District Attorney's Office, the lead victim service provider and Core Team developed a joint application with the Orleans Parish District Attorney's Office. The awarding of the new grant, which commenced on 1 October 2022 [58], reinforced the Task Force's history, which demonstrates that its sustainability is due, in part, to the connected dynamic flow of members and community champions who have emerged at critical moments.

6. Discussion

The approach to sustainability planning presented here reflects the process undertaken by anti-trafficking professionals in the Greater New Orleans-Metairie Metropolitan area. The issues they engaged in during this process and the focal concepts that emerged have the potential for guiding conversations amongst multi-disciplinary teams in other regions. The focal concepts revealed the Task Force's values. The values expressed by the members during the sustainability planning process include relationship building, collaboration, information sharing, open communication, facilitated resource sharing, attendance at regularly scheduled meetings, trauma-informed and victim-centered approaches and coordination through the multidisciplinary approach. The underlying foundation to these values is the commitment by its partner organizations and individual members to sustain the Task Force.

This long-term commitment is possible due to the increased trust among the service providers and law enforcement through the Task Force's ongoing networking, mediations and protocol development and implementation [38]. As noted by one Task Force member,

trust is a direct result of strengthening relationships and it is difficult to formally document, but it is an important goal that has a significant impact on the Task Force and the maintaining of its strength, such as building capacity around cases.

Maintaining this level of trust in the Task Force between the law enforcement, prosecutors and service providers, is difficult. Individuals are more comfortable seeking advice and sharing information within their respective fields. To address this effectively, the members supported the goals and objectives established in the Plan that included strategies for building trust and the agreement that revisiting the roles and responsibilities of the multi-disciplinary team members through the implementation of the Plan would help focus the Task Force's activities and understand the mutual goals of its collaborative partners [52,55]. Establishing opportunities for open communication across sectors through in-person meetings and conversations is also a solution because it sets the stage for bringing expertise to the table and helps build trust in the collaborative efforts through the coordinated work of putting the pieces together during investigations while providing comprehensive services to clients [52,59].

This paper's focal points, such as trust, establish the key findings from the Task Force's sustainability planning process. The implications of the focal points are that leadership, funding, collaboration, trust and relationship-building in a landscape of constant change are the tenants needed for a multi-disciplinary team's sustainability. These elements are crosscutting and understood as they interrelate in the multi-disciplinary team's dynamics. The implication of this is that sustainability requires the ongoing and intentional investment in these elements in order for the inter-agency collaboration to be sustained. The methods presented here reflect the current position of the Greater New Orleans- Metairie Metropolitan area professionals in the anti-trafficking field and have the potential for guiding conversations amongst multi-disciplinary teams in other regions.

A review of similar studies in the sexual assault field suggests that these key findings reflect the characteristics identified for multi-disciplinary teams in both fields [11,59,60]. One commonality is the dynamic between law enforcement, prosecutors and victim service providers. In the case of the Greater New Orleans-Metairie Metropolitan area, this holds true. Many of the law enforcement, prosecutor and victim service providers who participate in the Task Force are also members of the sexual assault response team and the domestic violence multi-disciplinary team. A more in-depth study, that was too broad to undertake in this study, is research on how the multi-disciplinary team characteristics carry over from sexual assault to domestic violence and to human trafficking responses in local communities.

The ability to fund the Task Force outside of the Department grant program has eluded its partners. The discussion section reviews the funding dynamics and presents the success and challenges faced by the Task Force's lead nonprofit. For instance, competing for local funds that are historically awarded to Task Force partner organizations that provide domestic violence and sexual assault support and services. Research of private foundations and philanthropic collaborations are promising for supporting collaborative efforts across domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking, and require further research [61,62].

7. Conclusions

The Task Force has been the driving force behind the collaborative response to human trafficking in the Greater New Orleans—Metairie Metropolitan area. If the Task Force ceased to exist, there would be a gap in the leadership, historical knowledge, communication, quality of programming and services and collaborative networks [55]. The Task Force's decision to develop the Plan through self-assessment provided an opportunity to revisit its history, shared values, relationships, roles and its collective impact on the community [55]. The key findings defined the Task Force's priority areas for framing the Plan, which are collaboration and partnership; coordinated care and investigations; public engagement and advocacy; and a sustainable Task Force [55]. The priority areas' actionable goals,

objectives and strategies are intended as a map for working through the challenges and gaps identified by the Task Force. Noting that not every participating member will have the same scale of impact, but by virtue of involvement by the members at varying degrees and at different times, all members are contributing in a meaningful way to the sustainable anti-human trafficking response in the Greater New Orleans—Metairie Metropolitan area for the purpose of combating human trafficking, providing survivor services and to support the well-being of our community's survivors [55].

Supplementary Materials: The Greater New Orleans Human Trafficking Task Force Sustainability Plan 2022 can be downloaded at http://www.nolatrafficking.org/sustainability-plan (accessed on 2 February 2023).

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Notes

[1] The Greater New Orleans-Metairie Metropolitan area is inclusive of the Orleans Parish (coterminous with the city of New Orleans) Jefferson Parish, Plaquemines Parish, St. Bernard Parish, St. Charles Parish, St. James Parish, St. John the Baptist Parish and St. Tammany Parish.

[2] The Louisiana Department of Children and Families 2015 Human Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes, and Commercial Sexual Exploitation Annual Report Pursuant to Act 564 2014 Regular Session does not provide the type of trafficking victimization by Parish.

[3] The Louisiana Department of Children and Families 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 Human Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes, and Commercial Sexual Exploitation Annual Report Pursuant to Act 564 2014 Regular Session does not provide the type of trafficking victimization by Parish.

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Article

Lessons Learned from the Colorado Project to Comprehensively Combat Human Trafficking

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Abstract: Countering human trafficking at a statewide level requires a combination of knowledge from lived experience, inter-sector collaborations, and evidence-based tools to measure progress. Since 2010, the nonprofit Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking (LCHT) has collected and analyzed the data on how partners and organizations across the state work toward ending human trafficking. LCHT uses Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) to measure and illuminate promising paths toward ending human trafficking. Through CBPR, many collaborative working documents and activities have been created: Colorado Action Plans, Policy Recommendations, a Partnership Toolkit, and Partnership Convenings. This paper provides a single case study analysis of the Colorado Project, from 2013 through 2023, and offers a glimpse into the goals for the Colorado Project 2028. The ideas, strengths, and challenges presented here can guide other local efforts to support data-informed responses to trafficking. The CBPR methodology sheds light on the changes in Colorado's anti-trafficking movement and the actions taken on behalf of partnerships (task forces and coalitions) across the state of Colorado. This paper offers a roadmap for collaborative design and decision-making among academic, nonprofit, and public sector partners seeking to conduct research on social movements utilizing a community-engaged process.

Keywords: nonprofit engagement; community-based participatory research (CBPR); human trafficking

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Introduction

Reducing human trafficking requires partnerships between government and non-government organizations to bring together diverse experiences, perspectives, skills, and knowledge [1]. To best amplify the messages of how to end human trafficking, and to leverage resources, more can be achieved together than one entity or sector alone [1]. Anti-trafficking coalitions are key in coordinating effective institutional, systemic, and governmental response [2]. While coalitions stem from a myriad of backgrounds, including criminal justice, religious sectors, state and federal institutions, human rights organizations, non-profits, and feminist organizations, partnerships between coalitions have successfully coordinated the state and federal-level efforts to reduce human trafficking [2].

However, collaboration requires an investment of time and energy to realize the co-created goals [3,4]. Sustaining collaborations can also prove to be elusive, as funding, leadership, and system priorities may shift [3,4]. Nevertheless, efforts to facilitate collaborative partnerships between coalitions are increasing [5]. The possible dissonance in the core values between coalitions can add complexity to maintaining inter-coalition partnerships. For instance, the nature of each coalition's organizational structure may differ in terms of hierarchical power, employment status, or resources [3]. This dissimilarity can foster discord during the linkage of coalitions, and effective communication may be threatened without the creation of structures to facilitate multi-coalition partnerships [3].

This paper offers a developmental case study, designed to guide readers through the development of the Colorado Project, the aims and scope of the research design, the data collection mechanisms, and, finally, provide commentary on the opportunities and challenges for communities to consider when utilizing community-based knowledge development and sharing techniques. Through sharing our efforts in this descriptive case study format, the authors seek to spark research efforts beyond the measures of incidence and prevalence. Instead, the Colorado Project may be viewed as an example of how to coach, support, and develop capacity, in concert with practitioners and survivors, around the metrics and techniques that capture *how* trafficking occurs in different communities and settings (contextualizing experiences of trafficking), while also *sharing and disseminating tools for action* that communities are currently piloting to address local forms of trafficking. The very explicit goal of this publication is to invite readers to join us as colleagues in collecting data, alongside our community partners, who are diligently serving in efforts aimed at increasing prevention, addressing root causes, supporting survivors, and engaging with law enforcement and the legal system to end human trafficking[1].

Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking as Nonprofit Research Partner

The Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking (LCHT) is a Denver-based nonprofit whose mission is to inform social change to eliminate human exploitation. As a member of the larger Colorado anti-trafficking response, LCHT conducts research in close collaboration with community, academic, nonprofit, and public sector partners. The mix of multi-disciplinary sectors and perspectives necessary to effect social change are reflected in the name of the organization, the "lab", as a community space designed to catalyze more effective responses to curb human trafficking. The organization seeks to inform social change by providing data-driven insights that have the power to support decision-making with evidence, reduce uncertainty, enhance the collective capacity to collaborate, and build upon the strength and resilience of communities. By building bridges to conversation and learning, these data-driven insights can provide guidance for community and systemic action to consider changes they can be made from within. Guided by its human rights, social justice, and survivor-centered values, the organization strives for the authentic inclusion and representation of diverse community voices and identities, toward its overall goal to increase an equitable, comprehensive response to human trafficking in Colorado.

LCHT's positioning as a nonprofit organization that conducts research is particularly noteworthy because LCHT is *part of* the community responding to human trafficking (not an external research observer). As a nonprofit that exists to pursue a mission, rather than part of a federal, state, or local government system mandate, LCHT has access to different communities that tend to work with or on the periphery of government systems. More specifically, LCHT co-operates the statewide reporting and service provision hotline, conducts training for first responders and a range of professional sectors, manages a leadership development program, and hosts stakeholder convenings to increase their capacity and share promising practices. This positionality presents both opportunities and challenges—LCHT is generally able to convene partners who are unreachable or unwilling to participate with unknown entities, as well as gather deeply nuanced data, but the engagement also requires intensive sensitivity to who the respondents are and what role they play in the Colorado movement.

The Colorado Project as Illustrative Process Case Study

This case study highlights an example of a collaborative research project, LCHT's Colorado Project to Comprehensively Combat Human Trafficking (the Colorado Project). Using community-based participatory research (CBPR) methodologies, the execution of the Colorado Project is itself a process of consensus building to empower survivors, professionals, and activists with knowledge, resources, and empathy in order to sustain and increase the efforts to end human trafficking. By presenting this piece as an in-depth case study on utilizing CBPR to guide decision-making in the statewide efforts to support work

against trafficking, we are able to demonstrate the promise of catalyzing interventions from a community-driven perspective. As George and Bennett (2005) [6] argue, case studies are effective in illuminating hypothesis formation toward theory development, and in this case specifically, we move toward proposing an alternative, collaborative hypothesis for how to end human trafficking. As a developmental case analysis of a multi-prong initiative to end human trafficking across the state of Colorado, this article provides a set of methodologies designed to ensure the inclusion of community voices beyond most of the "traditional" methodologies seen most often in the literature [7,8]. The use of case study approaches is established across disciplines [9–12] and affords the opportunity to answer the questions of how anti-trafficking efforts can proceed across a geographically diverse state [13]. The Colorado Projects call attention to important and challenging community response problems, allowing survivors and practitioners to share their experiences, ideas, and data concerning community responses to human trafficking. In the broader field, early anti-trafficking case studies have focused primarily upon the lived experiences of individual survivors, legal cases, and intervention methods; most with very small sample sizes [7,8]. With this statewide case study, we can track the changes in the field over three distinct timepoints and illustrate the development of a statewide-level approach to curb human trafficking.

LCHT intentionally seeks diverse research participation among academics, survivors, activists, community service providers, law enforcement, and marginalized communities. These stakeholders collectively contribute rich knowledge that directly informs a more robust response to human trafficking in the state. LCHT values the contributions of all the authors over these many iterations of the Colorado Project. In order to provide context and give voice to that labor, this paper does not adopt the formal academic process of direct in-text and end of statement citations related to the Colorado Project; instead, in order to best serve the philosophy and complexity of the CBPR work, Appendix A outlines the contributions of most of the authors and co-creators of the knowledge[2] in this work. LCHT suggests organizational citations for each iteration of the project, as detailed in Appendix A.

In service of the broader Colorado anti-trafficking movement, the Colorado Project endeavors to address human trafficking by: (1) Providing support for evidence-based practices and decision-making; (2) Enhancing the capacity to collaborate in order to reduce incidences and prevalence; and (3) Reducing uncertainty and conflict. The following sections detail the key decisions and lessons learned across multiple iterations of the Colorado Project; specifically, the paper highlights the choices related to the research design, method selections, participant and respondent recruitment, dissemination and action plan building, as well as ideas for the future.

Aims and Scopes of the Colorado Project

Colorado Project Research Questions, Methodology, and Methods

The guiding and overarching research question across all iterations of the Colorado Project is: "**What would it take to end human trafficking in Colorado?**" When the Colorado Project was first designed in 2010, the Colorado anti-trafficking landscape consisted of scattered efforts, with frustrated communities cobbling together resources to serve survivors and combat this human rights abuse. Consequently, survivors fell through system cracks and perpetrators went unpunished.

Methodology: Community-Based Participatory Research

Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) is a methodology designed to produce knowledge and insight in partnership with community-based organizations and individuals [4,14,15]. In many disciplines, the outcomes of CBPR include evidence-based practices [16], behavioral nudges toward pro-social health programs [17], or opportunities for students to engage with communities to honor various forms of knowledge [18–20]. These practices often become funding priorities for philanthropic entities, programmatic adoptions by nonprofit organizations, or central to memorandums of understanding be-

tween nonprofit organizations and academic institutions. Community-based participatory research practices have evolved from numerous scientific disciplines [20] and are particularly salient in the anti-human trafficking movement. The use of the CBPR methodology in the context of human trafficking is that personal and lived experience is held as being equal (or arguably, more important) to traditionally academic knowledge. Stoecker (2003) [18] argues that community-based research must include a goal of social change aiming to achieve social justice; LCHT attempts to practice this with each Colorado Project. CBPR focuses researchers to engage in research that moves beyond causal mechanism identification [21]. Thus, utilizing CBPR is a natural fit for nonprofits engaged in human rights protections, seeking justice for ongoing exploitation, and particularly for organizations seeking to provide power and a voice to individuals with lived experience.

Nonprofit organizations are typically familiar with the increasing demands for evidence and rigorous evaluation in order to justify planning, decision-making, funding, and program sustainability. However, many nonprofit organizations fail to understand or make distinctions between evaluation research, needs assessments research, and empirical research. Further, a growing body of evidence supports the accountability demands on nonprofits to demonstrate their worth through logic models, program evaluations, and more replicable forms of measurement [22–25].

The aim of the Colorado Project, as it was initially conceived, was to overcome the boundedness of knowledge occurring in pockets across the state. The fundamental challenge to mobilizing a movement to measure social change is in decreasing the barriers that enhance knowledge transfer across geographic, sectoral, and provider boundaries. Boundaries to knowledge transfer tend to occur where specialization creates blockades [26]. Knowledge is sometimes localized, embedded, and invested in one particular way in a specific community or sector, and it may not be possible to transfer it to other communities [27]. These pockets are both locationally and professionally bound. For instance, in Colorado, the rural and frontier communities have stronger and more salient resource constraints, while the urban communities focus upon the concerns of the prevalence estimates of trafficking. Professional boundaries result from the specialized practices developed in law enforcement, prosecution, human services, shelters, private sectors (construction, agriculture, tourism, etc.), prevention, and numerous types of other industries that intersect in this movement.

The Colorado Project is a unique example of collaborative design and decision-making among academic, nonprofit, and public sector partners seeking to conduct empirical research on social movements by utilizing a community-engaged process. The nature of the CBPR approach to building community coalitions has included: (1) Respectfully centralizing survivor voices and leadership through a trauma-informed approach; (2) Mindful political engagement of multi-sector participation; and (3) Conducting CBPR by gathering data to support coalition strategies and guide policy recommendations [4]. Community-based research integrates research and action with the following core values: individual and family wellness, a sense of community, respect for human diversity, social justice, citizen participation, collaboration and community strengths, and empirical grounding [20]. Further, the CBPR social justice frameworks enable researchers to identify how systems of power and oppression fuel the trafficking of persons, and how the intersections of multiple identities (e.g., gender, race, class, sexual orientation, etc.) create vulnerability within communities [28]. These guiding principles of the Colorado Project shape the methodology and iterative nature of the work.

At several points during the initial design and revision of the Colorado Project questions and methodology, LCHT's research team made critical choices, carefully balancing theory and practice throughout the design process. As a guide for nonprofit-led research teams, each section below details the goals, choices, and decisions made during the first three iterations of the Colorado Project. Table 1. details the research questions, methods, and sampling designs for each project; following the table are descriptions and commentary related to the changes adopted in each iteration of the projects.

Table 1. Illustrative Case Study: The Colorado Projects.

Colorado Project Research	Methods	Participants (Sample Frame Selection)
The Colorado Project 2013		
1-3 Key questions designed to understand the complex nature of community response to human trafficking: (1) What is the nature of Human Trafficking in Colorado? (2) What is being done to address human trafficking in Colorado? (3) How is the work being conducted in the areas of Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, and Partnership (the 4Ps)?	Survey. Survey questions were developed from an extensive international review of academic, governmental, and nongovernmental (NGO) agency literature to identify initiatives and activities reflective of prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership (the 4 Ps). With the guidance of the Colorado Project National Advisory Board (comprised of leading U.S. researchers and practitioners in the anti-trafficking field), the survey was designed to encompass a comprehensive set of promising practices focused upon the nature of the 4P response [6].	The study employed a convenience sampling strategy by collecting information on various anti-human trafficking agencies as well as other organizations, not specific to human trafficking efforts, which may provide services or come into contact with survivors of human trafficking. Several strategies were adopted to identify as many agencies and organizations across the state involved in anti-human trafficking efforts as possible, including: ›› Use of membership lists of 42 Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA)/Office of Victims of Crime (OVC) Task Forces ›› Use of Rescue and Restore Coalitions membership listings ›› Use of National Human Trafficking Hotline referrals for each state ›› Searching for anti-human trafficking organizations on social media pages such as Twitter and Facebook 132 organizations responded to the survey
	Focus Groups. Focus group interviews with community participants from mental health services, legal services, immigration lawyers, immigrant rights organizations, advocacy organizations, those working with populations experiencing homelessness and interpersonal violence, and law enforcement agencies complemented the survey data. Participants were asked to describe the issue of human trafficking, the types of cases within their community, how cases are handled in the community, and specific factors they believed contribute to human trafficking.	The population of existing task forces (partnerships or collaborations) seeking to end human trafficking who are active in the state of Colorado was the starting point for determining the focus groups. 10 Focus Groups were conducted—half in communities with task forces and half in oversample regions
The Colorado Project 2019		
Key questions designed to understand the nature of Colorado's community responses to human trafficking: 1. What is the nature of Human Trafficking in CO? 2. What is being done to address human trafficking in CO? 3. How do we **work together** to comprehensively end human trafficking in Colorado?	Survey. The length of the 2013 survey was edited for shorter length, efficiency of items and updated language, retaining the structure of sections organized by promising practices within the realms of prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership.	Similar to 2013, the sample examines stakeholders from Colorado. Purposive and convenience sampling strategies to identify as many agencies and organizations across Colorado involved in anti-human trafficking efforts as possible. Staff leveraged existing partnerships to further disseminate the survey to underrepresented parts of the state, building off of participant lists from Colorado Project 2013. The sample frame gave an extensive opportunity to examine perspectives coming from groups, organizations, and individuals across the state. In all relevant settings, the team advertised Colorado Project 2019 in order to increase participation. As the team identified the population of individuals working in anti-trafficking efforts in Colorado as the sample, 33% of potential respondents participated for a total of 183 surveys.

Table 1. *Cont.*

Colorado Project Research	Methods	Participants (Sample Frame Selection)
	The Colorado Project 2019	
	Focus Groups: Colorado Project 2019 further studied partnership to investigate changes in Colorado's anti-trafficking movement and actions taken on behalf of partnerships and task forces. Focus groups inquired about how each partnership worked together, communicated, collected data, shared promising practices, and managed conflict. Improvements in focus group methodology enabled the researchers to delve deeper into the ways in which coalitions work together comprehensively.	The population of existing task forces (partnerships or collaborations) seeking to end human trafficking who are active in the state of Colorado was the starting point for determining the focus groups. Twenty-four communities were identified for focus groups within the 24 target communities. Twenty-nine focus groups were completed (some partnerships had grown so large that researchers broke them into smaller groups to encourage participation from all members) with four of those focus groups taking place in communities where partnerships did not form in order to ensure our sample of focus groups accountable systemic bias and to ensure longitudinal representation of the original focus group locations.
	Organizational Interviews: A third type of protocol was implemented to more effectively interpret the rise of partnerships working against trafficking and to more fully answer how partners and organizations work comprehensively and collaboratively to end trafficking. Organizational interviews were intended to capture the interactions, shared goals, conflict, trust, and successes of partnerships. These interviews also yielded data that distinguished between individual providers or community members completing surveys and organizations that work in the anti-trafficking field.	Two degrees of snowball sample design were utilized so new participants could also recommend other participants. Three organizations from each of the 24 communities completed an organizational interview. Participants were recruited to ensure representation in the areas of prevention, protection and prosecution, resulting in 69 organizational interviews.
	The Colorado Project 2023	
Key questions designed to understand the nature of Colorado's community responses to human trafficking: 1. What is the nature of Human Trafficking in CO? 2. What is being done to address human trafficking in CO? 3. How do trust, equity, and effectiveness influence efforts to comprehensively end human trafficking in Colorado?	General Survey. The general survey retains many of the items from the prior iterations of the project, and was further reduced. Network Survey A second survey adopts an additional networked (directional data) tool for survey data collection. Structuring the data collection in this way provides leverage on understanding reputation effects, similarities and differences in the structures of networks across communities, and centrality of organizations in these efforts.	Participants: Sample Frame Selection As in 2013 and 2019, the sample examines stakeholders from Colorado. Purposive and convenience sampling strategies helped to identify as many agencies and organizations across Colorado involved in anti-human trafficking efforts as possible.
	Focus Groups. Focus group questions were reduced and additional questions aimed at understanding trust, equity and effectiveness	The same sampling techniques were replicated for this iteration. Twenty-nine focus groups completed as of January 2023.
	Informational Interviews. Organizational interview questions were reduced and refined to accommodate questions regarding trust, equity and effectiveness.	Two degrees of snowball sample design were utilized so new participants could also recommend other participants; 65 organizational interviews conducted as of January 2023.

The 2013 Colorado Project

In order to better understand the complex nature of the community response to human trafficking, the first iteration of the Colorado Project 2013 posed the following baseline research questions: (1) What is the nature of Human Trafficking in Colorado? (2) What is

being done to address human trafficking in Colorado? (3) How is the work being conducted in the areas of Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, and Partnership (the 4Ps)?

Survey. Participants answered questions about the services available for people who have experienced human trafficking, the ways in which anti-human trafficking efforts are approached by the criminal justice system, the various prevention efforts for human trafficking, and the partnerships that exist in the anti-human trafficking movement[3]. All of the participants were sent a survey electronically, through their email, in which they received an explanation of the study and an invitation to participate. The participants took only the relevant survey sections appropriate to their sector (e.g., service providers took the protection survey, and prevention educators took the prevention survey).

Focus Groups. Focus group interviews with community participants from mental health services, legal services, immigration lawyers, immigrant rights organizations, advocacy organizations, those working with populations experiencing homelessness and interpersonal violence, and law enforcement agencies complemented the survey data. The Colorado Project 2013 focus group participants were asked to describe the issue of human trafficking, the types of cases within their community, how cases are handled in the community, and the specific factors they believe contribute to human trafficking.

The 2019 Colorado Project

The second iteration, the Colorado Project 2019, included purposive and convenience sampling strategies to identify as many agencies and organizations across Colorado involved in anti-human trafficking efforts as possible. In addition to replicating the two original questions —What is the nature of Human Trafficking in Colorado? and What is being done to address human trafficking in Colorado?—a third sub question in the 2019 iteration asked: How do we work together to comprehensively end Human Trafficking in Colorado? In order to address this additional research question, a third type of protocol was implemented to more effectively interpret the rise of partnerships working against trafficking.

Sample frame selection. Selecting the population of task forces active in Colorado as the sample was driven by the goal to track the changes that had occurred over the last five years as a result of legislation passed, community will, public awareness, rules and regulatory guidelines for state and local agencies, and grants providing support for the issue. However, the researchers recognize that this particular decision point led to a need for a significant number of trained interviewers, staff time, project management resources, and calling in personal requests to have participants attend the focus groups, organizational interviews, or complete the survey. Two important trade-offs should be noted as they relate to this methodology: first, by allowing the local focus group leader to select the participants for the organizational interviews and the convenience sample of the willing organizations, the resulting data may reflect opinions of either the task force leader or organizations more ideologically aligned with LCHT. Second, by selecting the original Colorado Project 2013 communities, places where task forces had not formed, left many types of organizations out of the sample frame. Organizations in communities that lack a task force, rural areas, and places where the original Colorado Project did not reach remain beyond the sample frame. To find organizational participants in communities where there were no task forces or partnerships, the research team contacted the Colorado Project 2013 participants and, through snowball sampling, identified additional participants (oversample communities). When there were not enough participants available to host the focus groups in the oversample communities, we added these participants as organizational interviewees.

Organizational Interviews. The research team added a new protocol to the Colorado Project in 2019 to answer more completely how partners and organizations work comprehensively and collaboratively to end trafficking. The focus group participants may have been reluctant to share their perceptions about their community partners in open forums, so these organizational interviews were intended to capture the interactions, shared goals, conflict, trust, and successes of the partnerships. These interviews also yielded data that distinguished between individual providers or community members completing surveys

and organizations that work in the anti-trafficking field. Two degrees of a snowball sample design were utilized so new participants could also recommend other participants.

The Colorado Project 2023

Data collection for the Colorado Project 2023 is currently underway; as in the prior iteration, the team will collect the survey, focus group, and interview data. One significant methodological change will occur in this iteration of the project and the research team will implement a new protocol for the years in between the five year intervals of the Colorado Project. The discussion section will describe the launch of the root causes protocol to complement the Colorado Project instruments.

Survey. While the survey will retain many of the items from the prior iteration of the project, LCHT opted to adopt a networked (directional data) tool for the survey data collection. Respondents will now be able to report directly about other organizations in their community on items related to trust, equity, effectiveness, service provision, and participation in the anti-trafficking movement. This approach should help to provide information of opportunities for deeper collaboration among organizations within the same communities and across the partnerships/state.

As the organization continues to refine our tools and processes for data collection and analysis, the information presented in the case study thus far provides details primarily on the *what* and *how* aspects of the project; the following sections provide a commentary and exploration into the *why* of the research products produced, the audiences, the future of these efforts, and the connections to advancing the collective efforts toward ending trafficking.

Implications and Impact of the Colorado Project

Colorado Project Outputs: Advancing and Sustaining Partnerships

Colorado Reports and Action Plans. The Colorado Project findings allow partners to see how their efforts exist within a larger statewide response to human trafficking. With each iteration of the Colorado Project, various outputs are produced alongside a full project report. Embodying the commitment of turning data into action, interdisciplinary committees of professionals representing each of the 4Ps were assembled to review the data and generate Action Plans.

This multi-sector approach was a departure from other state level plans dedicated to reducing human trafficking. The Colorado Project 2013 Action Plan was the first comprehensive, statewide plan in the country to be driven by data and directly informed by a total of 350 participants from the state of Colorado. The overarching recommendations and activities provided the support and structure for the development of tailored and detailed implementation plans that were community-owned and led. In this way, communities were empowered to organize with intention.

In the Colorado Project 2013, a Policy Recommendations document was created in response to a key finding that Colorado's human trafficking laws needed strengthening. Ultimately, these policy recommendations supported significant updates to Colorado statutes and helped create a Governor-appointed human trafficking council in 2014. One of the key takeaways from the Colorado Project 2019 was that addressing the root causes of trafficking would help to end human trafficking in Colorado (and beyond). LCHT took steps to investigate the existing literature to learn more about the known inequities and barriers to accessing resources for marginalized populations in Colorado. In 2022, LCHT supported allied communities to advocate for the establishment of an Office of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives and supported legislation to provide recourse for survivors of wage theft in Colorado communities.

The Colorado Project 2019 was built upon the foundational knowledge of what is already working in Colorado, as well as a deeper understanding of where gaps exist. In addition to the report and action plan, the outputs included regional community profiles and academic journal articles. Each output had a narrowly defined audience and sought to communicate the research findings (e.g., results and analyses) in ways intended to

lead to direct action. The first output, the Colorado Project 2019 Report [29], supported anti-trafficking practitioners and partnership leaders. The report reflected the state of the movement and defined actionable goals for subsequent years.

In order to validate and honor the ongoing inclusion of community voices, LCHT created three checkpoints for data analysis in the process of developing the Action Plan. In the first review, content reviewers examined representative and compelling quotes for inclusion in the report. The Colorado Project 2019 Advisory Committee completed the second review; the Advisory Committee comprised of fourteen professionals divided into their 4P respective areas to review the data and results from the draft 4P-relevant Action Plan recommendations. The Advisory Committee convened to discuss their recommendations to identify points of tension and/or overlap across the P areas. A team of survivors conducted the third review to answer two questions: Do the recommendations reflect trauma-informed and survivor-centered principles? How might these recommendations be implemented or achieved through a trauma-informed, survivor-centered approach? Their suggestions were incorporated into the final Action Plan, which contained ten recommendations alongside implementation suggestions.

Throughout the Action Plan development process, LCHT gave special consideration to creating trauma-informed and survivor-centered recommendations that honored: (1) the unique purpose, mission, vision, and goals of the diverse Colorado partnerships and the collaborative work across disciplines in all of the 4Ps; (2) the lived experiences of survivors and other groups and communities at risk of violence and/or exploitation; (3) the rich diversity of survivor experiences and their views on justice (e.g., for many, outside the criminal justice system); and (4) the vast and nuanced differences among Colorado communities, inclusive of urban, rural, and frontier designations, and their populations. This is one important way the products of the Colorado Project differ—in the Reports, LCHT follows practices and standards long established and practiced in academic circles, such as evaluating intercoder reliability, sampling design practices noted in the previous section, and hypothesis testing. The Action Plans err on the side of following the lead of community members, survivor leaders, Advisory Committee participants, partnership leaders and our other community-based partners. The findings from the Reports and the raw data collected in each iteration of the Colorado Project are the basis for the Action Plans, but the interpretation of that data occurs by allowing the community to drive and decide the priorities for the movement from that data.

Regional Profiles. As with many geographically expansive states, Colorado has significant differences in population density, socioeconomic profiles, ethnic and racial compositions, and local economies. These regional profiles, grouped by judicial district and county, provide specialized feedback on combating human trafficking in seven regions across the state. The profiles include summaries of the vulnerabilities in each region, including population demographics and physical landscape, which influence root causes, the local agencies trained in human trafficking awareness or response, and recommendations specific to the location. Further, the regional community profiles are focused on inviting new audiences and concerned community members to their local anti-trafficking initiatives. The regional community profiles were disseminated in community forums between May and September 2019.

Beyond One-Way Dissemination: Partnership Toolkit, Trainings and Convenings

After completing the report, action plan, regional profiles, and academic journal articles, LCHT set out to fulfill its commitment to CBPR by not only disseminating the outputs of the research to the participants in the research, but also to provide tools to carry out the outcome recommendations. In 2019, there were ten action plan recommendations and, while LCHT did not have the capacity (or the mandate) to carry out all of them, the organization did see three partnership recommendations and two prevention recommendations that LCHT could steward. The three partnership recommendations were:

1. Encourage the intentional and equitable inclusion of underrepresented and/or unrecognized stakeholders in partnerships.
2. Create a collaborative document that provides promising practices for Colorado partnerships.
3. Cultivate relationships between Colorado partnerships to increase each community's capacity to end human trafficking.

To address the first and second recommendations, LCHT created a Colorado-specific partnership toolkit. LCHT's Partnership Toolkit is a set of resources and tools designed to improve the coordination and collaboration between multiple stakeholders involved in the anti-trafficking response in Colorado. The toolkit draws from similar projects undertaken by the Anti-Slavery Partnership Toolkit [30] and the Human Trafficking Task Force e-guide [31].

In order to address both the first and third recommendations, LCHT began to host partnership convenings in 2020. The partnership leadership from the existing anti-trafficking partnerships, as well as the community leaders from regions without formal anti-trafficking partnerships, were invited to contribute and participate in quarterly meetings designed to: (1) Increase trust and information sharing between task forces; (2) Highlight promising practices and shared challenges; (3) Increase capacity with shared partnership tools and resources. These meetings were hosted virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic. In September 2021, one or two leaders from each task force gathered in person with survivors, advocates, tribal representatives, and LCHT researchers and staff for two days to further these goals. In 2022, the meetings focused on highlighting the challenges and innovations of specific partnerships across the state. The intended outcomes for the participants were to: (1) Leave with a bias to action; (2) Share the resources that they can bring back to their coalitions/partnerships; (3) Improve rapport between members. For both the partnership toolkit and the partnership convenings, LCHT incorporated the first partnership recommendation into the programming and resources provided to encourage the intentional inclusion of underrepresented stakeholders, particularly survivors, into partnerships.

The two prevention recommendations that LCHT opted to steward from the 2019 Action Plan were:

1. Deliver sector-specific training to a diverse range of Colorado communities.
2. Design comprehensive training.

As LCHT already had a robust training and education program, LCHT adjusted the strategy of the program to reflect these recommendations. Training for healthcare professionals, law enforcement, and professionals working with systems-involved youth were prioritized in 2019. New training curricula, to improve the comprehensiveness of LCHT's educational programs, were developed for young people and individuals experiencing homelessness and/or substance misuse. In 2019, LCHT trained 5355 individuals; in 2020, 5424 individuals; and in 2021, 6096 individuals. In 2022, LCHT will also train over 6000 individuals. LCHT also made their training and technical assistance tools more accessible by offering training in Spanish, or with Spanish interpretation, as well as creating documents in Spanish.

Discussion and Next Steps

Lessons Learned on the Path to Colorado Project 2023

Nonprofit-led CBPR. While the research team held a mutual agreement about the goals for conducting CBPR, three key lessons emerged: (1) The need for patience in building organizational learning; (2) Disrupting the identity role of a nonprofit; and (3) Reaching diverse and new audiences through engaged methodology. Building organizational learning was a key component and outcome of the CBPR model. LCHT grew from the process of the Colorado Project 2019, by allowing LCHT board members and staff opportunities to better understand their roles relative to LCHT and broadening their understanding of what form human trafficking takes in Colorado. The research team members shared reflections on what the organization as a whole learned through the research and recognized the impact of the time and energy spent on the project for the right-size planning of the Colorado Project 2023.

As a nonprofit that conducts research, LCHT finds itself constantly navigating identity. LCHT must simultaneously build credibility across organizations representing all of the 4Ps, with researchers in the academic sector, with survivors who hold multiple lived experiences and perspectives, and with citizens new to understanding how human trafficking occurs in their community; the interdisciplinary nature of the work requires diplomacy and careful trust-building. LCHT attempts to achieve this in a few key ways: (1) Respectful interactions in varied partnerships by attentively listening to stakeholders and being prepared to share, but not take a leading role in communities outside of its home community (Denver Metro Area); (2) Conducting joint trainings; and (3) Intentionally taking time to maintain and cultivate relationships.

The most significant challenge faced when leading research on human rights abuses while participating in the movement is that LCHT argues for metrics and targeted social change while actively being in partnership with the agencies doing work on the ground. However, LCHT does not evaluate the anti-trafficking movement and made this decision intentionally in order to ensure the organization is not perceived as passing judgment on the efforts of partners. For example, managing the statewide hotline put LCHT at the center of a key statewide partnership. This positionality can create friction, such as when the research findings challenge LCHT's position as an advocate and partner. LCHT must acknowledge that its reputation could be in jeopardy when conducting original CBPR work.

A central goal of the Colorado Projects is to amplify the voices of those involved in the movement and find opportunities to invite in new voices. The aim of reaching many audiences is to *invite in* additional partners as opposed to *calling out* problems in the field. Statewide evidence helps to educate those new to anti-trafficking response efforts and helps to educate those who may have blind spots.

The Colorado Project 2023 Innovations

The Colorado Project 2019 Action Plan identified several key areas to address and provided subsequent commentary on the movement itself [4,32]. The current framework of the 4Ps is often restrictive and misleading. For example, funding allocation largely depends on assumptions about the effectiveness of prevention programs. Furthermore, shifting resources to fund prosecution, for example, may not lead to a reduction in crime rates. Instead of aiming for an increased number of convictions, there are other strategies to limit the financial rewards of exploitation that may not fall under the 4Ps framework. However, LCHT acknowledges the limitations placed on the response efforts resulting from the 4P paradigm.

LCHT learned valuable lessons through conducting the Colorado Projects in 2013 and 2019, which support methodological and project management improvements for the third Colorado Project in 2023. In the years since the Colorado Project 2019, tremendous global and social shifts took place: the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing severity of climate change-related disasters, federal administration changes, racial justice protests, restrictions on women's reproductive health access, global migration in response to social unrest, and conflict. It became clear that additional questions were needed to enhance the basic questions of how to address human trafficking in Colorado.

Based on the feedback from the partners adopting the LCHT Action Plan, three major pillars for the Colorado Project 2023 emerged: Effectiveness, Equity, and Trust. Scholars across disciplines argue that a primary issue for combating human trafficking is that an immense amount of money, effort, and resources go into prevention and protection efforts, while there is scant evidence that such programs are effective [33,34]. Similarly, findings from the early iterations of the Colorado Project suggest that few survivors are leading partnerships to end trafficking and that some anti-trafficking efforts tokenize survivor engagement. Equity appears essential to understanding the effective mechanisms for reducing trafficking. In order to partner across disciplines and fields, trust must be earned and fostered over time. Trust, therefore, is an essential component of ending trafficking through partnership, shared goals, and service delivery. To understand the role of equity

and trust as they contribute to effectiveness, the Colorado Project 2023 will implement a social network analysis tool to allow the respondents to reflect on their relationships with key stakeholders and community partners.

Adding Network Analysis

Collaboration has excellent potential to increase access to new information, resources, and solutions. However, collaboration requires an investment of time to communicate and realize the shared mission, vision and goals. In a partnership, it is often difficult to see returns on investment from these critical activities. Social network analysis allows for the examination of partnerships by analyzing the structure, quality, and flow of information across a network, in order to help identify more efficient ways to collaborate and reach the shared goals. The network survey is distributed to each bounded network, and includes a core set of network relationship questions and measures developed and validated by the Program to Analyze, Record, and Track Networks to Enhance Relationships (PARTNER) Tool [35]. Task force members will complete the surveys about other members in their task force. There are currently 21 task forces/coalitions ready to participate across Colorado.

In Spring 2023, LCHT will initiate statewide community conversations to gather key stakeholders and individuals with lived experience in four root cause areas. The investigation of the first four root causes will lay the groundwork to support the efforts aimed at reducing vulnerabilities to experiencing trafficking. Two of these root cause focus groups are intended to determine how immigration and housing insecurity influence vulnerabilities to and perpetration of trafficking. Many community groups fighting trafficking suggest that specific groups of people are more vulnerable to trafficking; in order to explore these claims, two roundtables will be held with Native American/Indigenous and Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer (LGBTQ+) communities. Community conversations across Colorado will identify the risk and resilience factors for human trafficking. Another goal of these conversations is to invite in key stakeholders who may want to create questions and co-design research for the Colorado Project 2028.

Colorado Root Causes: Laying foundation for Colorado Project 2028

In the early years of the Colorado anti-trafficking response, as has been the case in so many countries and states, the adoption of global and federal 4P language helped to provide shared definitions for response and helped to illustrate the benefits of having comprehensive efforts coordinated at the community level. In the Colorado Project 2028, the LCHT team will attempt to test two competing hypotheses, outlined in Figure 1: Criminal Justice Mechanism, a primarily prosecution mechanism for ending trafficking and Figure 2: Hypothesized Collaboration Mechanism, a root causes through protection (collaborative and comprehensive) mechanism for ending trafficking (see Figure 2). The criminal justice mechanism follows this pathway: Increase awareness of human trafficking as a crime and human rights violation among citizens, law enforcement and prosecutors -> increase reporting of human trafficking to law enforcement -> Increase investigations and prosecutions -> Decrease perpetration of trafficking and exploitation -> Decrease in trafficking. This criminal justice mechanism, currently the underlying assumption for how to end trafficking in many communities, does not seem to be working. For example, prior to 2014, there were only two trafficking convictions in Colorado, and one of these was overturned. Since 2014, the majority of convictions are domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST), largely due to increased mandatory trainings of child welfare workers. With the political and social changes in recent years, there is a decrease in the willingness of refugees, as well as undocumented and documented immigrants, to report abuse and exploitation [36,37]. Additionally, the length of time from discovery to prosecution is, on average, two to four years [38].

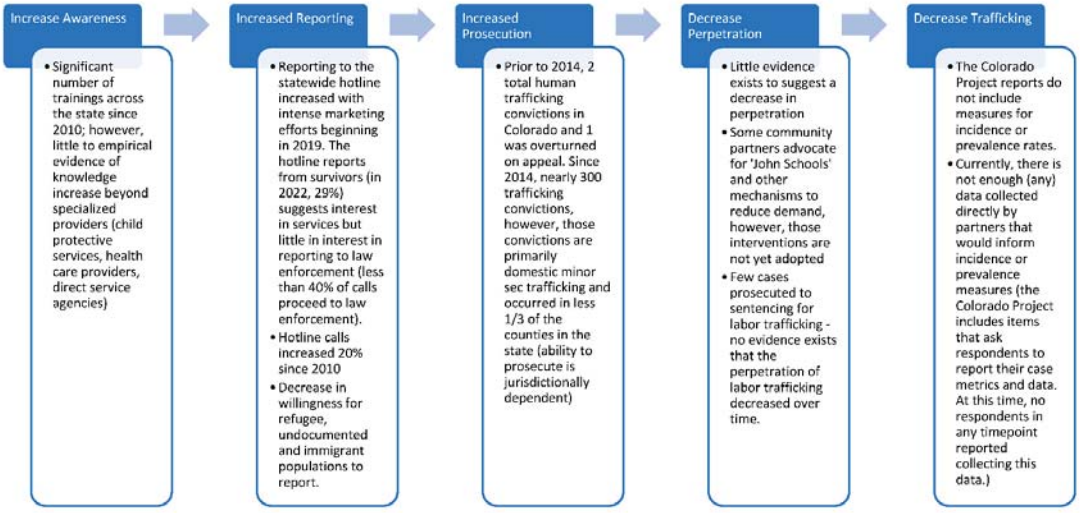

Figure 1. Criminal Justice Mechanism.

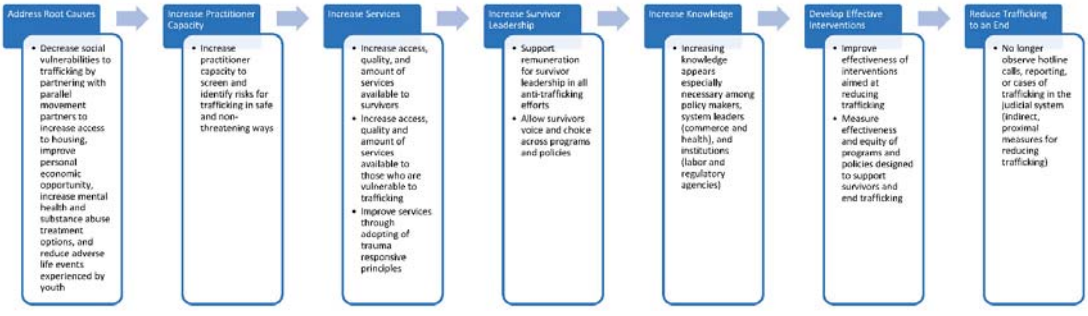

Figure 2. Hypothesized Collaborative Mechanism.

An alternative explanation for how trafficking ends is the root causes and collaboration comprehensive mechanism. This mechanism may follow this path: Decrease social vulnerabilities to trafficking by partnering with parallel movement partners to increase access to housing, improve personal economic opportunity, increase mental health and substance abuse treatment options, and reduce adverse life events experienced by youth -> decrease the root causes of trafficking -> increase practitioner capacity to screen and identify risks for trafficking in safe and non-threatening ways -> increase in services for survivors that address the specific needs of each individual -> increase survivor leadership and self-determination -> increase systemic and policy maker awareness of the impact of reducing root causes and vulnerabilities -> reduce trafficking prevalence while creating a positive feedback loop to continue decreasing vulnerabilities. In the first two Colorado Projects, LCHT identified key community factors that increase vulnerabilities to human trafficking. Political, economic and social factors, such as access to education, healthcare, affordable housing, work, and social protections for gender, culture, race, legal status, and minoritized identities [32,39], appear to be factors that contribute to experiencing trafficking. In order to test these mechanisms, new data sets and additional methods will be part of the Colorado Project 2028.

Sustaining the Colorado Statewide Movement: Ongoing Partnership Engagements

Ideally, the anti-trafficking movement will move beyond the need for basic human trafficking training for professional audiences by 2023. However, in Colorado, hundreds of thousands of professionals still do not understand the scope of the issue, how it affects their communities locally, or how their profession can play a role in prevention, protection, or prosecution efforts. In 2023, LCHT will create a new strategic plan to address this gap for both professional audiences and audiences including marginalized groups who may be vulnerable to exploitation based on the outputs of the Colorado Project. For the 2023 iteration of the Colorado Project, LCHT will collect prosecution data, supplementing those data with interviews from prosecutors to better understand the prosecution outcomes and make recommendations to improve those outcomes while adding to the knowledge base for the Colorado Project 2028.

LCHT learned from the Colorado Project 2019 that incorporating human trafficking into the purview of existing partnerships, particularly multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs), was an emerging promising practice in Colorado. Establishing regional and statewide MDTs to support survivors of human trafficking is key to their resilience [40]. In Colorado, the Governor's Human Trafficking Council secured federal funding to support MDTs. LCHT looks forward to hearing more about these emerging recommendations.

Conclusions

After more than a decade of designing, collecting data, and working toward filling gaps, each iteration of the Colorado Project adds to the knowledge base. Anecdotally, partnership members are using the information in a variety of ways: facilitating partnership meetings with a more inclusive representation of sectors, incorporating the data into funding applications, building on the questions to explore prosecution challenges more in-depth, organizing convenings of partnership leaders across the state to learn from and support each other.

In order to support researchers within the anti-trafficking field and across the parallel movements, this paper guides non-profit led researchers in utilizing CBPR, developing longitudinal protocols, and enhancing collaborative efforts to comprehensively end human trafficking. While there are many different outputs produced from the Colorado Project findings and recommendations, the Colorado Project process serves as a means for consensus building to empower survivors, professionals, and activists with knowledge, resources, and empathy. Stakeholders can collectively celebrate the strengths and see the challenges in the statewide response, ideally working to break down siloed efforts, and instead partnering to be more efficient and effective.

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Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: As noted in footnotes, this data is not publicly available as LCHT holds intellectual property copyright. However, if you would like to utilize the data, please contact the Research Director for LCHT.

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

LCHT Recommended Colorado Project Citations:

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Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking (2013). *Colorado Project Statewide Data Report*. Denver, CO, USA: Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking.

Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking (2013). *Colorado Project National Survey Report*. Denver, CO, USA: Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking.

Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking (2013). *Colorado Project Executive Summary*. Denver, CO, USA: Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking.

CBPR Authorship Criteria: Design and Writing

Colorado Project 2013: Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking (2013). Report Produced By: Alejano-Steele, Finger, Breslin, and Shaw (15 additional on Project Team).

Colorado Project 2019: Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking (2019). Report Produced By: Miller, Alejano-Steele, Finger, Napolitano, and Tull (33 additional contributors).

Regional Profiles 2019: Miller and Napolitano.

Action Plans 2013 and 2019: Colorado Project Advisories.

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Colorado Project Action Plan 2019: Eight survivor leaders; Kelsey Antun; Paula Bragg; Lori Darnel, J.D., MSW; Claude d'Estree, HTS, J.D.; Janet Drake, Esq.; Melanie Gilbert, Esq.; Andrew Kline, Esq.; Elizabeth Ludwin King, Esq.; Debbie Manzanares; Patricia Medige, Esq.; Sara Nadelman; David Shaw, MA; Jennifer Stucka; Maria Trujillo, MA.

Notes

[1] While the Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking protects their intellectual property investments by not openly publishing instruments utilized in collecting the Colorado Project data, we welcome the opportunity to connect with you if you would like additional details about the contents of those instruments.

[2] Some participants and all of the respondents were granted confidentiality and/or anonymity.

[3] Please note that LCHT views their anti-trafficking work as part of social movement. There are many conversations across anti-trafficking coalitions and partners who suggest that this work does not constitute a social movement.

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