

THE ROLE OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN DRIVING SEX TRAFFICKING IN
LOUISIANA

by

Marissa L. Jordan
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Dedication

I dedicated this research to the anti-trafficking service providers of Louisiana.

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List of Abbreviations

Adverse Childhood Experiences	ACEs
Black, Indigenous, and people of color	BIPOC
Climate Initiative Task Force	CITF
Department of Children and Family Services	DCFS
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	EPA
Federal Emergency Management Agency	FEMA
General Education Development	GED
Governor’s Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness	GOHSEP
Governor’s Office of Human Trafficking Prevention	OHTP
International Organization for Migration	IOM
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Questioning, Intersex, Asexual ...	
LGBTQIA+	
Louisiana Child and Youth Trafficking Collaborative	LCYTC
Multi-Disciplinary Team	MDT
National Aeronautics and Space Administration	NASA
National Determined Contributions	NDCs
The National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center ...	NHTTAC
New Orleans Police Department	NOPD
Non-Governmental Organization	NGO
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	PTSD
Sexual Trauma Awareness and Response	STAR
Trafficking in Persons	TIP
Trafficking Victims Protection Act	TVPA
United Nations	U.N.
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	UNFCCC
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	UNHCR
United Nations of Office on Drugs and Crime	UNODC
United States of America	U.S

Abstract

THE ROLE OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN DRIVING SEX TRAFFICKING IN LOUISIANA

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George Mason University, 2022

Thesis Director: Dr. Leslie Dwyer

This thesis examines how anti-trafficking service providers of East Baton Rouge Parish and Orleans Parish, Louisiana understand climate change's role in driving sex trafficking. In exploring their understanding, this project investigates whether climate change is a factor in sex trafficking patterns and whether anti-trafficking service providers see climate change as a factor. I argue that climate change is a factor in sex trafficking patterns as climate change exacerbates vulnerabilities to sex trafficking. By drawing on interviews done with two service providers of East Baton Rouge Parish, four service providers of Orleans Parish, and one with relations in both locales, this project uses narrative theory to draw out the perspectives of service providers on these issues and the reasoning for those perspectives. Including their perspectives will add to the limited knowledge of the climate change and sex trafficking nexus. Through localizing this knowledge, I hope to foster specific policy responses to this phenomenon.

Introduction

When I mentioned my thesis topic to others, I heard remarks like, “Oh, Marissa, that is so dark and serious, please take care of yourself.” People are correct. Sex trafficking is a dark and heavy reality for many people. But it is also a reality that needs exploring. Dark and heavy subjects must be dug into and broken apart for light to get in. That light reveals what and who we overlook and neglect.

No one understands this more than the people that work with victims and survivors of sex trafficking every day. Anti-trafficking service providers are the people who have dedicated their life to digging through that darkness to find and bring the people we neglect to the light. They may be the first people to show care for those who have been uncared for. This research focuses on two anti-trafficking service providers within East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana, four anti-trafficking service providers from Orleans Parish, Louisiana, and one provider with relations in both locales. With each of them, I have explored how they understand climate change’s role in driving sex trafficking. Climate change is at the forefront of many people’s minds these days. We have seen it used as a ploy in the political divide.¹ We have seen it be a catalyst for global

¹ Williamson Grassle, “The Politicization and Polarization of Climate Change” (CMC Senior Theses, Claremont Colleges, 2021), 10–11.

protest.² It has even been the foundation for international diplomacy.³ Climate change collides with several different issues. I argue that sex trafficking is one issue it is negatively impacting.

Anti-trafficking service providers within Louisiana are uniquely situated in being impacted by both issues. They are affected by climate change, given their personal experience with Louisiana's natural disasters. Their work in anti-trafficking places them in the middle of the issue. Their understanding of the relationship between climate change and sex trafficking is crucial to understanding the problem and formulating responses. Personal narratives were the primary methodology for exploring their understanding of this phenomenon. Personal narratives help understand how service providers make sense of their experiences with climate change and anti-trafficking work. Their narratives can help us learn how they contextualize their position within these issues in relation to the population they serve.

Anti-trafficking service providers are more than their profession and do not exist in a vacuum. They are shaped by their politics and culture, which can drive how they see the phenomenon. It can also drive the way they frame it. Personal narratives help us understand why service providers frame the issues the way they do. Recognizing the causes for such framing helps us to situate their narratives within the broader debate around the issues of climate change and sex trafficking.

² Angela Dewan et al., "Young People Rally at Climate Protests around the World," CNN, September 28, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/world/live-news/live-updates-climate-protests-unga-intl/index.html>.

³ Brianna Craft, "Climate Diplomacy: A Beginner's Guide," International Institute for Environment and Development, October 13, 2015, <https://www.iied.org/climate-diplomacy-beginners-guide>.

This project seeks to add to the limited knowledge about the relationship between climate change and sex trafficking. Anti-trafficking service providers are crucial in the intersection between climate change and sex trafficking and the solutions we create for that intersection. I hope that by localizing these issues and learning how they affect individuals and their work, we can develop better-informed solutions for climate change, sex trafficking, and their relationship.

Structure of Thesis

The chapters of this project give the readers a chronology of my education of this phenomenon. They tease out the many complex layers of both climate change and sex trafficking and their interaction together both from a general landscape and individual perspective, like those of the anti-trafficking service providers. This introduction outlines the research problem and the importance of studying the relationship between climate change and sex trafficking. Chapter one delves into the current understanding of climate change and sex trafficking both separately and together. Chapter one seeks to explain what is known as the climate change and sex trafficking nexus. Chapter two describes the methodology used within this research and how narrative theory was used to explore the service provider's experience and understanding of and with this relationship between climate change and sex trafficking. Chapter three introduces each of the anti-trafficking service provider organizations and the role they play in combatting sex trafficking. Chapter four describes causal stories and how the service providers used them in their narratives. Chapter five describes service providers' overarching understanding about

climate change's role in driving sex trafficking. Chapter six describes the narratives services providers used to describe this overarching understanding and the remedies they believe could address it. This chapter also introduces a bonus interview done with a disaster relief organization and delved into how they understand this relationship. Disaster relief organizations play a vital role in connecting disaster-affected populations to resources and services. Given this, they could play an important role in identifying populations vulnerable to sex trafficking and connecting them to preventative and intervening resources during disaster situations. Chapter seven describes the different positions service providers took or were situated in telling their narratives. This chapter adds greater context to the narratives they told. The conclusion offers limitations of this research and suggestions for further research. It also summarizes what I learned and its contribution to the field.

Research Problem

Human-induced climate change is detrimental to the world in various ways. Human-induced climate change is caused by activities such as burning fossil fuels like coal and oil.⁴ These human activities are increasing the concentration of greenhouse gasses in the Earth's atmosphere.⁵ This increase in greenhouse gasses is warming the planet. The warming of the planet is causing more frequent and intense weather events, like temperature increases on land and in oceans, drought and wildfires, and extreme

⁴ "The Causes of Climate Change," Climate Change: Vital Signs of the Planet, accessed March 20, 2022, <https://climate.nasa.gov/causes>.

⁵ Ibid.

precipitation events.⁶ These intense and frequent weather events are both creating and exacerbating existing vulnerabilities on Earth. For humans, extreme weather events affect water scarcity, agricultural/crop production, fishery yields, infectious diseases, malnutrition, mental health, displacement, infrastructure, and key economic sectors.⁷ For populations that are facing unequal access to water and food, health and wellbeing services, and economic and housing security, climate change's effects can compound these inequalities. It can also make it more difficult to obtain such securities. The effects of climate change are increasing the gaps between the haves and the have-nots.⁸

The dimension of the climate change crisis that this research explores is its impact on sex trafficking patterns, specifically in communities of East Baton Rouge Parish and Orleans Parish in Louisiana. This project investigates whether climate change is a factor in sex trafficking patterns and whether people who work with survivors and victims of sex trafficking see climate change as a factor. Similar to how climate change disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, sex trafficking is also an issue to which these disadvantaged populations are vulnerable. Furthermore, the impact of climate change on vulnerability levels may increase a person's susceptibility to crimes like sex trafficking.

⁶ Hans-Otto Pörtner and Debra C. Roberts, "Climate Change 2022 Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability," Summary for Policymakers (Switzerland: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, March 2022), https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGII_SummaryForPolicymakers.pdf, 11.

⁷ Pörtner and Roberts, "Climate Change 2022 Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability," 12.

⁸ Céline Guivarch, Nicolas Taconet, and Aurélie Méjean, "Linking Climate and Inequality," IMF, accessed April 4, 2022, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2021/09/climate-change-and-inequality-guivarch-mejean-taconet>.

Both victims of climate change and victims of sex trafficking can be from various backgrounds. But an overwhelming number of victims face inequalities and social factors that make them more vulnerable to the effects of climate change and sex trafficking. According to Polaris, an organization that serves victims and survivors through its National Human Trafficking Hotline, factors that potentially amplify vulnerability to sex trafficking include “histories of trauma and abuse, addiction, chronic mental health issues, and economic hardship such as homelessness or unstable housing.”⁹ In addition to these factors, they found that women and girls of color, runaway youth, and LGBTQIA+ youth are especially vulnerable to sex trafficking.¹⁰ Many of these identities and circumstances that make one vulnerable to sex trafficking also are factors that make one more vulnerable to the effects of climate change outlined above.¹¹

In addition to the effects of extreme weather, structural inequalities can create vulnerable conditions. Structural inequalities make certain populations not only more prone to the effects of extreme weather patterns but also more vulnerable to failures of infrastructure, like levees and proper housing, that are supposed to protect them from extreme weather caused by climate change. The effects of climate change combined with structural inequalities could make a person vulnerable to sex trafficking. So, while climate change may not be affecting sex trafficking rates directly, this research explores

⁹ “The Typology of Modern Slavery: Defining Sex and Labor Trafficking in the United States” (Polaris Project, March 2017), <https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Polaris-Typology-of-Modern-Slavery-1.pdf>, 16.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ “EPA Report Shows Disproportionate Impacts of Climate Change on Socially Vulnerable Populations in the United States,” News Release, United States Environmental Protection Agency, September 2, 2021, <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-report-shows-disproportionate-impacts-climate-change-socially-vulnerable>.

climate change as another factor that needs considering when it comes to preventing and stopping sex trafficking. It is also another reason why climate change needs to be taken seriously as something to prevent.

Some foundational research for this project came from what scholars call the climate change and sex trafficking nexus. Scholars like Mikaila Smith have described this nexus as the “multicausal and multidirectional intersection between environmental phenomena spurred by global warming and developments in global and regional patterns of trafficking in persons.”¹² To learn more about this interplay, I sought the perspective of anti-trafficking service providers in how they understand this relationship between climate change and sex trafficking. Anti-trafficking service providers connect victims of human trafficking, including sex trafficking, to resources that can assist victims in escaping their trafficker. They can also assist victims in seeking prosecution of their trafficker.¹³ Service providers often organize, advocate, and implement prevention methods for trafficking through education and training programs for schools, hospitals, and law enforcement. Due to their direct assistance with victims and survivors of sex trafficking, they have a grounded perspective on what drives sex trafficking and prevents them from being able to service its victims. Anti-trafficking service providers offer a unique view of anti-trafficking systems and how climate change affects those systems. There is little research about their perspective on the climate change and sex trafficking

¹² Mikaila V. Smith, “Applying the United Nations Trafficking Protocol in the Context of Climate Change Comments,” *Chicago Journal of International Law* 22, no. 1 (2021): 301.

¹³ “Service Providers,” National Human Trafficking Hotline, accessed July 17, 2022, <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/audience/service-providers>.

nexus. Given where they are situated in this issue and their essential role in anti-trafficking work, their perspective is vital to learning about the nexus and appropriate responses to it.

Importance of Studying Climate Change's Role in Sex Trafficking in Louisiana

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) cited Louisiana as particularly vulnerable to climate change effects like severe droughts and floods.¹⁴ Every few years, Louisiana is thrust into the spotlight due to its susceptibility to hurricanes, sometimes severe ones like most notoriously, Hurricane Katrina.¹⁵ While some of these hurricanes occur as a result of the standard climate in the Gulf during the summer and early fall months, scientists are finding the warmer waters and amount of moisture in the air are increasing the intensity of hurricanes in the Gulf.¹⁶

Alongside its susceptibility to extreme weather events, Louisiana also suffers from severe poverty, ranking number two in the U.S. for states with the highest poverty.¹⁷ The consequences of poverty can increase a person's vulnerability to sex trafficking. Poverty can lead to family problems, mental and physical illness, and homelessness.¹⁸

¹⁴ "What Climate Change Means for Louisiana" (Environmental Protection Agency, August 2016), <https://19january2017snapshot.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-09/documents/climate-change-la.pdf>, 1.

¹⁵ Sarah Gibbins, "Hurricane Katrina Facts and Information," *National Geographic*, January 16, 2019, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/hurricane-katrina>.

¹⁶ Sarah Kaplan, "How Climate Change Helped Make Hurricane Ida One of Louisiana's Worst," *Washington Post*, August 30, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2021/08/29/how-climate-change-helped-make-hurricane-ida-one-louisianas-worst/>.

¹⁷ Andrew DePietro, "U.S. Poverty Rate By State In 2021," *Forbes*, November 4, 2021, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewdepietro/2021/11/04/us-poverty-rate-by-state-in-2021/>.

¹⁸ Author removed at request of original, "2.4 The Consequences of Poverty," *University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing*, Social Problems: Continuity and Change, March 25, 2016, <https://open.lib.umn.edu/socialproblems/chapter/2-4-the-consequences-of-poverty/>.

This does not mean that someone in poverty will be sex trafficked or that a victim or survivor of sex trafficking must come from poverty. As found within this project, many other variables affect sex trafficking rates.

In addition to Louisiana's susceptibility to severe weather and its high poverty rates, Louisiana ranks 13th for human trafficking in the United States.¹⁹ It is important to note that this statistic is based on reported cases of human trafficking. Human trafficking is widely under-reported.²⁰ Additionally, sex trafficking is only one type of human trafficking to which this statistic refers. Sex trafficking is the most reported type of trafficking in Louisiana, which is one of the primary reasons this thesis will focus solely on sex trafficking.²¹ It is important to emphasize the point that sex trafficking is the most reported form of human trafficking and often given more attention.²² Given this, a lot of human trafficked victims that are, for example, labor trafficked, could be falling through the cracks.²³ It may appear that there are fewer cases of labor trafficking. However, it is just a very underreported form of human trafficking. For this project's scope, I am falling into the same pattern of only focusing on sex trafficking, which could reinforce the problem of overlooking labor trafficking. In the concluding chapter of paths forward, I emphasize the need for further research to focus on labor trafficking.

¹⁹ "Human Trafficking Statistics by State 2022," World Population Review, accessed March 21, 2022, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/human-trafficking-statistics-by-state>.

²⁰ "Gaps in Reporting Human Trafficking Incidents Result in Significant Undercounting," National Institute of Justice, August 4, 2020, <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/gaps-reporting-human-trafficking-incidents-result-significant-undercounting>.

²¹ "Louisiana," National Human Trafficking Hotline, accessed March 21, 2022, <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/state/louisiana>.

²² Leila Miller, "Why Labor Trafficking Is So Hard to Track," FRONTLINE, April 14, 2018, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/why-labor-trafficking-is-so-hard-to-track/>.

²³ Ibid.

The distinction between sex trafficking and human trafficking is discussed in chapter two. However, to briefly outline, human trafficking involves the recruiting, transporting, or receiving of a person through forms of threat, fraud, or coercion with the aim of exploiting that person. Sex trafficking falls within the same definition, but the form of exploitation is specifically sexual exploitation.²⁴

Louisiana has made a serious effort to combat sex trafficking through multiple state-wide coalitions and task forces, including a Human Trafficking Prevention Resource Center.^{25 26} Despite these efforts, as emphasized by the anti-trafficking service providers, sex trafficking is still an issue that needs more concerted prevention efforts. This research highlighted the multiple factors that make a person or community vulnerable to the effects of climate change and sex trafficking. Considering climate change as a factor in sex trafficking could initiate further sex trafficking preventative strategies and measures in response to climate change risks.

Climate change and sex trafficking are issues that disproportionately affect vulnerable populations. Climate change serves as a risk to increasing levels of vulnerability. Increased levels of vulnerability can put people at risk of being exploited through sex trafficking, for example. Studying this phenomenon through the perspective of people who have seen how climate change affects themselves, their work, and the

²⁴ “H.R. 3244 Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000,” Pub. L. No. 106–386, 22 USC 7101 (2000), <https://www.congress.gov/106/plaws/publ386/PLAW-106publ386.pdf>, 8.

²⁵ “Louisiana: Efforts to Combat Human Trafficking,” *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Region VI*, January 9, 2018, https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/otip/louisiana_profile_efforts_to_combat_human_trafficking.pdf

²⁶ About the Office of Human Trafficking Prevention Resource Center of Louisiana, accessed April 4, 2022, <https://humantrafficking.la.gov/>.

populations they serve, I hope informs efforts that address this phenomenon. I also hope this research sheds light on the understudied perspective of anti-trafficking service providers. They are crucial in anti-trafficking efforts; therefore, their understanding of issues surrounding sex trafficking needs concerted attention. This next chapter explores the current understanding of climate change, sex trafficking, and the climate change and sex trafficking nexus.

Chapter 1

The Climate Change and Sex Trafficking Nexus

This chapter is meant to give an overview of the current literature on climate change, sex trafficking, and the climate change and sex trafficking nexus. Learning about the current understandings around these topics helps with setting up the information that will be learned from the service providers' narratives. Much of the understandings within this chapter mirror the understandings the service providers provide in subsequent chapters.

Current Understanding of Climate Change

Sex trafficking and climate change are widely researched as separate subjects. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has conducted research and contributed to the current understanding of climate change. They have shown that the Earth's climate is currently warming at a rate that is ten times faster than the average rate that occurred during ice-age-recovery warming. Most of this warming has occurred in the last 40 years, with the years 2016 and 2020 recording the warmest-ever temperatures.²⁷

The Earth is currently 1.1 degrees Celsius warmer than it was 150 years ago, and unless emissions that contribute to global warming are not rapidly reduced the world will

²⁷ "Climate Change Evidence: How Do We Know?" Climate Change: Vital Signs of the Planet, accessed March 31, 2022, <https://climate.nasa.gov/evidence>.

exceed a temperature of 1.5 degrees Celsius warmer (or 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit). If the Earth exceeds this temperature, the severe weather patterns mentioned in the research problem section could occur and exacerbate existing inequalities and insecurities - like those previously mentioned. Scientists warn that the Earth reaching 2 degrees Celsius (or 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) would be a “tipping point” at which irreversible damage to the Earth’s ecosystem will occur.²⁸

In 1995, the United Nations (U.N.) made an effort to take action against climate change by building on their 1992 international treaty, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and adopting the Kyoto Protocol which legally bound country Parties to reduce emissions. Currently, there are 192 Parties to the Kyoto Protocol.²⁹ Most recently, in 2015, parties adopted what is known as the Paris Agreement. This treaty was adopted by 196 Parties and set a worldwide goal of limiting global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius. This agreement was the first time all nations came together to create ambitious goals to limit climate change’s progression. The agreement requires all Parties to submit and commit to what they call “nationally determined contributions” (NDCs) to the efforts combating climate change. Through this, Parties must regularly report these NDC efforts and emission levels. The agreement also outlines a framework that aims to capacity-build and financially assist developing

²⁸ “How a 2 C Temperature Increase Could Change the Planet,” CBC News, accessed April 4, 2022, <http://cbcnews.ca/2degrees>.

²⁹ “History of the Convention | UNFCCC,” United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, accessed April 4, 2022, <https://unfccc.int/process/the-convention/history-of-the-convention#eq-1>.

countries in meeting their NDC commitments. Parties agreed to meet every five years to assess global warming reduction efforts and adapt efforts accordingly.³⁰

The U.S. based much of its own climate goals on its commitments to the UN's climate conventions, Protocols, and agreements. One exception, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), created in 1970 before the U.N.'s focus on climate, developed and enforced standards for national pollution control. Through the EPA, various bills were passed regarding, for example, clean air and water, waste disposal, energy efficiency, and pesticide control.³¹ Recently, Congress introduced a budget deal that would give a tax credit to parties that invested in low-carbon technologies. Additionally, the House of Representatives and Senate established committees and caucuses focused on the climate change crisis and climate solutions.³²

Louisiana is a top producer of oil and gas in the U.S. Nevertheless, it has recently committed to the international Race to Zero campaign, where there is a global goal for net carbon emissions to be reduced to zero by 2050.³³ In 2020, Governor John Bel Edwards formally created a Climate Initiative Task Force (CITF) to make recommendations on how Louisiana can reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and present

³⁰ "Key Aspects of the Paris Agreement | UNFCCC," United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, accessed April 4, 2022, <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement/key-aspects-of-the-paris-agreement>.

³¹ "Environmental Protection Agency | United States Government Agency," Britannica, accessed April 4, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Environmental-Protection-Agency>.

³² "Congress Climate History," *Center for Climate and Energy Solutions* (blog), January 5, 2021, <https://www.c2es.org/content/congress-climate-history/>.

³³ "Louisiana Has Joined International Climate Change Campaign," *Associated Press*, October 6, 2021, sec. Climate change, <https://apnews.com/article/climate-change-john-bel-edwards-louisiana-europe-environment-and-nature-665ba8bcf0b6507f8b9a357c45b23f4f>.

those recommendations through the newly established Louisiana Climate Action Plan.³⁴ These initiatives build on Louisiana's 2007 Coastal Master Plan, which sought to create coastal restoration and protection projects. Despite a \$50 billion investment in its implementation, experts predict a significant amount of coastline will submerge due to the rise in sea levels.³⁵ The government of Louisiana is acutely aware of the direct impact climate change has on the lives of Louisianans. They have experienced the effects of both "too much and too little water,"³⁶ greater frequency and rapid intensification of hurricanes, intense rainfall, frequent flooding, extreme heat, drought, and other extreme climate change-related weather.³⁷ The government of Louisiana also recognizes that extreme climate and weather patterns disproportionately affect Louisiana's "low-income communities, communities of color, Indigenous people, and other marginalized residents."³⁸

Scholars like Min Hee Go provide context that helps us to understand why climate change disproportionately affects these communities. Their work on community civic structure and spatial inequality found that post-Hurricane Katrina community civic structure led to unequal recovery patterns between higher ground neighborhoods and low-lying communities comprised of many Black residents.³⁹ Additionally, they found

³⁴ "Louisiana Climate Action Plan," Climate Initiatives Task Force Recommendations to the Governor (Climate Initiatives Task Force, February 1, 2022), 1.

³⁵ "Louisiana Climate Action Plan," 26-27.

³⁶ "Louisiana Climate Action Plan," 28.

³⁷ "Louisiana Climate Action Plan," 15, 20, 27-28, 54.

³⁸ "Louisiana Climate Action Plan," <https://gov.louisiana.gov/assets/docs/CCI-Task-force/CAP/ClimateActionPlanFinal.pdf> 15.

³⁹ Min Hee Go, "The Tale of a Two-Tiered City: Community Civic Structure and Spatial Inequality in Post-Katrina New Orleans," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 40, no. 8 (2018), 1107.

Katrina widened the gap in social vulnerability: higher ground neighborhoods decreased in poverty and low-lying neighborhoods increased in poverty.⁴⁰ Civic structures tasked with slowing down poverty rates found the speed of poverty reduction was much faster in higher ground neighborhoods.⁴¹ Despite civic activism happening in both high and low-lying neighborhoods, people who returned to the low-lying areas still were burdened with growing poverty and the deterioration of their community.⁴² Lastly, Go found that community civic structure contributed more to repopulating higher ground than low-lying neighborhoods despite the high density of repopulation efforts in low-lying neighborhoods.⁴³ Part of that repopulation included community civic structures contributing to the increase of White populations in New Orleans' safe areas while being associated with a Black population decrease in those same areas. The change in racial demographics in the higher ground areas contributes to the widening gap between White people in safe areas and Black people in less safe areas.⁴⁴ Their conclusion suggests that unless the city addresses fundamental vulnerabilities in low-lying communities, community civic structures will be less effective in those neighborhoods.⁴⁵ Such efforts to repopulate low-lying areas may actually put residents at risk as the lack of

⁴⁰ Go, "The Tale of a Two-Tiered City: Community Civic Structure and Spatial Inequality in Post-Katrina New Orleans," 1102-1103.

⁴¹ Go, "The Tale of a Two-Tiered City: Community Civic Structure and Spatial Inequality in Post-Katrina New Orleans," 1104.

⁴² Go, "The Tale of a Two-Tiered City: Community Civic Structure and Spatial Inequality in Post-Katrina New Orleans," 1105.

⁴³ Go, "The Tale of a Two-Tiered City: Community Civic Structure and Spatial Inequality in Post-Katrina New Orleans," 1094.

⁴⁴ Go, "The Tale of a Two-Tiered City: Community Civic Structure and Spatial Inequality in Post-Katrina New Orleans," 1107.

⁴⁵ Go, "The Tale of a Two-Tiered City: Community Civic Structure and Spatial Inequality in Post-Katrina New Orleans," 1106.

socioeconomic infrastructure in low-lying areas makes them less able to manage future disaster effects.

Amnesty International released a report in 2010 that supported Go's findings that recovery efforts do not produce equal results. In fact, in their report, they argued that recovery efforts excluded low-income communities and communities of color.⁴⁶ Both of these reports, among many others produced since Hurricane Katrina, highlight how vulnerabilities are not created on their own. They are continuously recreated and reinforced by systemic oppressive policies and practices. Combating climate change will not be enough to alleviate pressure on these communities. Combating climate change needs to happen simultaneously with efforts to address social inequalities.

A person's house may be safer from floods when the sea levels decrease or soil sediment is restored. However, that does not mean that person will continue to afford that house if income inequality continues to grow in Louisiana.⁴⁷ I will outline in the next section how the same communities that are stated to be vulnerable to climate change effects are also said to be vulnerable to sex trafficking. Similar to climate change, discriminatory policies and practices compound one's vulnerability to sex trafficking, and this is outlined and addressed below.

⁴⁶ "USA: Amnesty International Releases Report on Human Rights Violations in Gulf Coast Recovery Efforts," Amnesty International USA, March 27, 2011, <https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/usa-amnesty-international-releases-report-on-human-rights-violations-in-gulf-coast-recovery-efforts/>.

⁴⁷ "Income Inequality Has Grown In Louisiana," Pulling Apart (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, n.d.), <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Louisiana.pdf>.

Current Understanding of Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking is one form of many forms of human trafficking. Human trafficking can include forced labor or labor trafficking, debt bondage, domestic servitude, forced marriage, sex trafficking, child sex trafficking, organ trafficking, recruitment of child soldiers, and adoption trafficking.⁴⁸ While this research does not explore the legality around sex trafficking, it is important to discuss sex trafficking's legal history. It seems to have motivated many efforts in combatting trafficking. Almost all of the participants emphasized the importance of the law in their struggle against sex trafficking, both as a barrier and avenue towards healing and restoration.

On an international scale, over the last two decades, various groups and organizations, including the U.N., have turned their attention toward human trafficking. In 2000, the U.N.'s General Assembly adopted the first and primary international legal framework used to address human trafficking, called the U.N. Trafficking Protocol. There are 178 parties to the U.N. Trafficking Protocol, and the Protocol is housed in the U.N.'s Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC).⁴⁹ While the climate and trafficking Protocols constitute great steps forward by both acknowledging the gravity of each issue and initiating international cooperation in combating climate change and human trafficking, the U.N. has failed to fully implement and enforce the expectations laid out in

⁴⁸ "Types of Trafficking," Human Trafficking Search, August 3, 2017, <https://humantraffickingsearch.org/types-of-trafficking/>.

⁴⁹ "The Protocol for Human Trafficking," United Nations: Office on Drugs and Crime, accessed March 25, 2022, <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/protocol.html>. - there are 193 countries part of the UN

the Protocols.^{50 51} For example, how each signing State Party chooses to enforce the objectives laid out in the Trafficking Protocol is up to the individual States, mostly due to the debate around the role of consent. There is disagreement around whether trafficking should be permitted if the individual consents to being trafficked.⁵² The Trafficking Protocol defines the crime of “trafficking in persons” as:

*the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. . . .*⁵³

Article 3 of the Protocol explicitly outlines the role of consent as being irrelevant if one or more of the above means was used to traffick the individual(s).

While the Protocol explicitly references consent, the U.S.’s own domestic trafficking laws fail to explicitly reference consent.⁵⁴ Consent is addressed indirectly in

⁵⁰ Taylor Kilduff, “The Difficulties of Enforcing Global Environmental Law,” *Georgetown Law* (blog), February 1, 2019, <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/environmental-law-review/blog/214/>.

⁵¹ Smith, “Applying the United Nations Trafficking Protocol in the Context of Climate Change Comments,” 308.

⁵² Smith, “Applying the United Nations Trafficking Protocol in the Context of Climate Change Comments,” 310.

⁵³ “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime,” OHCHR, accessed March 26, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons>.

⁵⁴ “The Role of ‘Consent’ in the Trafficking in Persons Protocol,” Issue Paper (Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014), https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/2014/UNODC_2014_Issue_Paper_Consent.pdf, 63.

the U.S.'s emphasis on a trafficker's intent to use force, fraud, and coercion to traffick victim(s). This indirect mention of consent remains an obstacle to the successful prosecution of traffickers. Cases in which consent is present may not be pursued due to this obstacle.⁵⁵

In 2000, following the passing of the U.N. Trafficking Protocol, the U.S. passed its own Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), the first legislation that sought to “combat trafficking in persons, a contemporary manifestation of slavery whose victims are predominantly women and children, to ensure just and effective punishment of traffickers, and to protect their victims.”⁵⁶ This act created new federal crimes to target human trafficking and allocated federal funds to combat trafficking globally. TVPA defined sex trafficking as, “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act.”⁵⁷ They defined “severe forms” of trafficking as, “sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age.”⁵⁸ Special attention is paid to “severe forms” of trafficking in the TVPA and, like the U.N. Protocol, the TVPA seeks to protect trafficked victims, prosecute traffickers, and prevent trafficking from occurring.⁵⁹ Within this prevention effort, the U.S. pledged to assist foreign countries in combating trafficking in addition to

⁵⁵ “The Role of ‘Consent’ in the Trafficking in Persons Protocol,” 64-65.

⁵⁶ “H.R. 3244 Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000,” 4.

⁵⁷ “H.R. 3244 Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000,” 8.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ “Summary of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) and Reauthorizations FY 2017,” Alliance To End Slavery & Trafficking, January 11, 2017, <https://endslaveryandtrafficking.org/summary-trafficking-victims-protection-act-tvpa-reauthorizations-fy-2017-2/>.

addressing domestic trafficking through research and awareness-raising. Much of the foreign assistance focuses on helping countries bolster their criminal prosecutions of traffickers and establish programs for trafficked victims.⁶⁰

Louisiana has set up its own effort to combat human trafficking in the state and now has some of the toughest laws on human trafficking in the United States. Legislation seeking to criminalize human trafficking and provide services to survivors passed in the early 2000s. It has since been updated as the state learned more about the dynamics of human trafficking in Louisiana.⁶¹ Louisiana has continued to criminalize sex work, claiming that decriminalized sex work could exacerbate the problem of human trafficking.⁶²

In 2017, the Louisiana Legislature passed a bill to create the Human Trafficking Prevention Commission and Advisory Board. This Commission reviews current anti-trafficking efforts, identifies prevention and service gaps, and raises public awareness about trafficking.⁶³ In 2021, the Commission began working within the newly established Governor's Office of Human Trafficking Prevention (OHTP). Through this partnership, the office hoped to better coordinate Louisiana's handling of human trafficking cases. The Governor's Office of Human Trafficking Prevention conducts state-wide programs

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ "Human Trafficking," RS 14:46.2 § 46.2. (2014), <https://law.justia.com/codes/louisiana/2014/code-revisedstatutes/title-14/rs-14-46.2/>.

⁶² Blake Paterson, "Proposed Laws to Decriminalize Prostitution in Louisiana Shelved over Concerns; Here's Why," *The Advocate*, May 4, 2021, https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/politics/legislature/article_2a3df976-ad06-11eb-9479-5b7056da0292.html.

⁶³ "About the Office of Human Trafficking Prevention," Human Trafficking Prevention Resource Center of Louisiana, accessed April 1, 2022, <https://humantrafficking.la.gov/about/>.

for addressing and preventing human trafficking.⁶⁴ They bring together private and public partnerships to ensure that responses are implemented at every level of the state. In addition, they coordinate training, awareness, and campaigns.

Along with the creation of OHTP, the Governor's Office also secured a federal fund of almost \$2.7 million to address juvenile trafficking and with that created the Louisiana Child and Youth Trafficking Collaborative (LCYTC).⁶⁵ LCYTC intends to improve outcomes for child and youth victims of sex and labor trafficking. LCYTC has regional coordinators that serve as focal points for partnership and coordination between different anti-trafficking services across their respective regions.⁶⁶

Despite the creation of state-wide and regionally focused prevention and service efforts, an audit in 2021 found that Louisiana falls short in caring for human trafficked victims.⁶⁷ The audit found that there is no designated state agency to manage human trafficking cases and provide services to survivors. OHTP does the work of providing state-wide support to service providers and undertaking state-wide prevention and education efforts. However, there is still no central agency to serve as a "go-to" place for survivors of all ages to turn to for support.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ "Louisiana Annual Human Trafficking Data Report," Pursuant to Act 352 - Louisiana Regular Session (Governor's Office of Program and Planning: The Office of Human Trafficking Prevention, June 2022), 4.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ "LACAC," LACAC, accessed September 19, 2022, <https://lacacs.org>.

⁶⁷ Emily Lane, "Audit Finds Shortfalls in Louisiana's Handling of Sex and Labor Trafficking," WDSU News, November 23, 2021, <https://www.wdsu.com/article/audit-finds-shortfalls-in-louisianas-handling-of-sex-and-labor-trafficking/38321294>.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

In June 2022, the Governor’s Office of Human Trafficking Prevention took over state-wide data collection on trafficking from the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Service providers submitted data that showed 782 victims of sex trafficking were serviced in 2021. These 782 victims are out of a total of 932 victims serviced, making victims of sex trafficking 84% of serviced victims.⁶⁹ This number of serviced victims of sex trafficking is an increase from the 590 sex trafficking victims served in 2017.⁷⁰ However, these stats do not capture the full measure of sex trafficking cases: only 40 out of 60 victims service agencies in the state provided their victim services data.⁷¹ Additionally, this report is only about serviced victims. It does not reflect the actual number of sex trafficking cases in Louisiana which is most likely way more as many cases go unreported and therefore unable to serve.⁷²

The increase in victims services from 2017 to 2021 could be a positive sign that accessibility and knowledge of services increased, or it could be a negative sign showing an increased number of victims. It is difficult to tell, given the factor of underreporting. The annual report from 2021 also noted that many trafficking cases go unreported and emphasized this as a reality exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on availability and access to services.⁷³ The factor of COVID-19 was not a note made in the 2022 report but could be a factor as COVID-19 continued throughout 2021.

⁶⁹ “Louisiana Annual Human Trafficking Data Report,” 10–11.

⁷⁰ “Louisiana Annual Human Trafficking Data Report,” 31.

⁷¹ “Louisiana Annual Human Trafficking Data Report,” 7.

⁷² “Louisiana Annual Human Trafficking Data Report,” 8.

⁷³ “Human Trafficking, Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes, and Commercial Sexual Exploitation,” Annual Report (Louisiana: Department of Children & Family Services, January 2021), <http://www.dcfslouisiana.gov/assets/docs/searchable/Newsroom/2021/Human-Trafficking-Report-2021.pdf>, 3.

In addition to these efforts, in early 2022, Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards and first lady Donna Edwards announced a new campaign to combat trafficking. They highlighted that two corridors, I-20 and I-10, and large events like sporting events were hotspots for trafficking. They said efforts would include promoting awareness, addressing social media as an avenue for trafficking, and using education as a tool for prevention.⁷⁴ While education can come in many forms, it is worth noting Louisiana ranks 48th in the U.S. for education.⁷⁵

This project's geographical focus area, East Baton Rouge Parish and Orleans Parish, have reports of adult and juvenile victims of trafficking.⁷⁶ Both parishes also had some of the highest rates of trafficking in 2021 out of all parishes.⁷⁷ Victim profiles were similar in both parishes. While the 2021 report does not go into much depth about the different victim profiles, a report by the Governor's Office in 2018 does. For the Baton Rouge area, victims who were children often came from foster care situations where they were either still in foster care or aging out. They also found that LGBTQIA+ youth and adults are particularly vulnerable, especially transgender youth. Additionally, it is common for victims of sex trafficking or their families to have a history of substance use disorder and addiction.⁷⁸ Juvenile victims from families with substance use disorder and

⁷⁴ Kellie Sanchez, "Louisiana Launches New Campaign to Prevent Human Trafficking," WAFB, January 25, 2022, <https://www.wafb.com/2022/01/25/louisiana-launches-new-campaign-prevent-human-trafficking/>.

⁷⁵ "Where Louisiana Places in the U.S. News Best States Rankings," U.S. News, accessed April 5, 2022, <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/louisiana>.

⁷⁶ "Human Trafficking, Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes, and Commercial Sexual Exploitation," <http://www.dcf.louisiana.gov/assets/docs/searchable/Newsroom/2021/Human-Trafficking-Report-2021.pdf>, 9.

⁷⁷ "Louisiana Annual Human Trafficking Data Report," 25–29.

⁷⁸ Cathy Delapaz, "State of Louisiana Child Sex Trafficking Project Report" (National Criminal Justice Training Center, n.d.), <https://gov.louisiana.gov/assets/docs/Issues/La-HT-Summit-Project-Report.pdf>, 10.

addiction issues cited that their families trafficked them to obtain money for substance use. The homeless population - both juveniles and adults - is also vulnerable.

Heterosexual males were also identified as victims engaging in “survival sex” meaning they trade sex for food, a place to sleep, or other basic needs.⁷⁹

For Orleans Parish, child victims were often from physically or sexually abusive homes, runaways, within or aging out of foster care, or dealing with mental health issues or a developmental disability. Many were also facing criminal charges unrelated to trafficking, engaging in “survival sex,” suffering from trauma related to Hurricane Katrina, or forced out of the home for being LGBTQIA+. Similar to Baton Rouge, substance use disorder and addiction - specifically related to the opioid crisis - were also often factors in the victims’ trafficking. Adult victims in Orleans Parish faced homelessness, substance use disorder and addiction issues, domestic violence, and mental health issues.⁸⁰ Adults also face marginalization in the fight against human trafficking in Louisiana as many resources focus on child trafficking. For both adults and children, identities subjected to systemic discrimination like LGBTQIA+ and Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) are particularly vulnerable to trafficking.⁸¹

The report also noted that both children and adult victims engaging in “survival sex” said they did so because of their living circumstances and the only way to get money was through “prostitution.”⁸² The term “prostitution” is often considered derogatory. This

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Delapaz, “State of Louisiana Child Sex Trafficking Project Report,” 38-39.

⁸¹ Delapaz, “State of Louisiana Child Sex Trafficking Project Report,” 39.

⁸² Delapaz, “State of Louisiana Child Sex Trafficking Project Report,” 38.

section will address the nuance of language around sex trafficking and sex work below. In terms of a child engaging in “prostitution,” a minor cannot legally be a “prostitute” as any commercial sex work done by a minor is sexual exploitation, and federal laws consider them a victim of sex trafficking.⁸³

Both parishes mentioned that a gap in addressing human trafficking was a lack of training. They requested more training for foster care, teachers and school administrators, law enforcement, and the medical community. They also requested initiatives geared toward raising public awareness and training around social media use, as many survivors saw social media as an avenue for them to connect with traffickers. Additionally, they asked for more assistance in gaining access to legal services. Adult and juvenile victims emphasized the need for greater focus on at-risk youth and addressing economic needs to help get victims out and prevent them from participating in “survival sex.”⁸⁴

Human trafficking, in general, and sex trafficking are pervasive across the globe, the U.S., and Louisiana. Over the years, sex trafficking has gained notoriety due to famous figures such as authors, journalists, and celebrities bringing awareness to the issue. While this notoriety helps raise awareness around sex trafficking, gender scholars have raised concern over the particular emphasis on sex trafficking as a deserving focus over other forms of trafficking, like labor trafficking. The terms sex trafficking and human trafficking are often incorrectly used interchangeably because the sex trafficking

⁸³ Jay Albanese, “Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: What Do We Know and What Do We Do About It?” (National Institute of Justice, December 2007), 9, <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/commercial-sexual-exploitation-children-what-do-we-know-and-what-do>.

⁸⁴ Delapaz, “State of Louisiana Child Sex Trafficking Project Report,” 11, 42.

of women and girls is the most reported kind of trafficking.⁸⁵ This focus on women and girls often marginalizes male victims and victims who do not fall within the cisgender and heteronormative binary. It excludes them from anti-trafficking work.⁸⁶

Some scholars like Kamala Kempadoo believe sex trafficking has been pushed to the forefront of the anti-trafficking agenda in part due to the concern religious—mostly Christian—communities have with conservative sexual morality.⁸⁷ Their concern over the violation of specifically women and girls is not baseless, but the reason why for such concern is problematic. The reasoning reinforces patriarchal, racist, colonialist, and conservative ideas about masculinist protection and the preservation of women's and girls' sexual purity. Feminist scholar Iris Marion Young frames masculinist protections as a phenomenon that perpetuates the idea that women and girls need to be protected from the danger that lurks outside the home, and men should provide such protection. Women and girls should be grateful for such protections and submit to the will and guidance of the man providing them that protection. Women and girls who seek autonomy from such protections are depicted as “fair game” for men to dominate because these women have no protection.⁸⁸ As Young explains, “the logic of masculinist protection works to elevate the protector to a position of superior authority and to demote the rest of us to a position

⁸⁵ Alison Siskin and Liana Sun Wyler, “Trafficking in Persons: U.S. Policy and Issues for Congress,” *Congressional Research Service*, December 23, 2010, 5–6.

⁸⁶ Kamala Kempadoo, Jyoti Sanghera, and Bandana Pattanaik, eds., *Trafficking and Prostitution Reconsidered: New Perspectives on Migration, Sex Work, and Human Rights* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2005), ix.

⁸⁷ Kempadoo, Sanghera, and Pattanaik, *Trafficking and Prostitution Reconsidered: New Perspectives on Migration, Sex Work, and Human Rights*, 28.

⁸⁸ Iris Marion Young, “The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State,” *The University of Chicago* 29, no. 1 (2003), <https://doi.org/10.1086/375708>, 14.

of grateful dependency.”⁸⁹ Masculinist protection for sex trafficking pushes not only heteronormative ideas about victimhood but also perpetuates harmful ideas about women’s and girls’ equality, agency, and autonomy.

While anti-trafficking service providers often intervene in a victim’s exploitation, there is a history of anti-trafficking advocates further exploiting or marginalizing victims. In another common criticism, activists and scholars have accused anti-trafficking agencies of mirroring the work of colonialists. Throughout colonialism, White, Christian, and wealthy communities have traveled to places that Western and imperialist powers have colonized - often places home to BIPOC communities. The mission was to “civilize” local populations by introducing them to Christianity and “moral behavior.”

While women were deemed “inherently inferior” to men, White women from the bourgeois class were considered superior to poor women, both within their own countries and the countries they colonized, as they had a “natural” level of advancement for reflecting on morality that “primitive” women were incapable of due to there “backwardness.”⁹⁰ This work of spreading “morality” and “purity” gave women an excuse to work outside the home and travel to new places with a vocation of “lifting up the poor” and “uncivilized.”⁹¹ People generally accepted that domestic White women knew what was best for everyone. Rather than contradicting the ideas of masculinist

⁸⁹ Young, “The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State,” 13.

⁹⁰ Laura María Agustín, *Sex at the Margins: Migration, Labour Markets and the Rescue Industry* (London: Zed Books, 2007), 116.

⁹¹ Agustín, *Sex at the Margins: Migration, Labour Markets and the Rescue Industry*, 117.

protectionism, the women's work encouraged acceptance of masculinist protectionism, specifically imperialist masculinist protections.

Coinciding with this increase of middle-class and high-class women travelers spreading "morality" were new waves of migration in the 19th century within poor and working-class communities - both men and women (and possibly anyone outside that gender binary) - who sought new labor opportunities. Some of the women who migrated did so through "organized channels," where they served as sexual or domestic partners, or they moved independently and gained new freedoms "through non-marital sexual relations that could include prostitution."⁹² Eventually, ignoring the influences of colonialism, patriarchy, and racialized capitalism, stereotypes about the connection between "loose" sexual relations and immorality were attached to migrant women and men. During this time, narratives portrayed women as being "coerced or deceived" into participating in sex work due to the "natural' sexual depravity and uncivilized character of (im)migrant communities."⁹³ This casting of women as victims of their own "immorality" justified several colonial laws that sought to limit the movements of colonized women - again enacting forms of masculine protections.⁹⁴

This concern with the loss of sexual purity influenced efforts to pass more restrictive laws on prostitution and sex work. As mentioned previously, the terms "sex work" and "prostitution" are often debated. Each term is either endorsed or contested,

⁹² Kempadoo, Sanghera, and Pattanaik, *Trafficking and Prostitution Reconsidered: New Perspectives on Migration, Sex Work, and Human Rights*, x.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

depending on whom one talks to. “Sex work” and “sex worker” are terms that sex workers coined themselves. The aim is to reframe such work as a valid form of employment that requires the same level of protection from exploitation and harassment that other workplaces are afforded.⁹⁵ Some feminist scholars criticize the term “sex worker” for masking the gendered violence, coercion, and social oppression that pushes women into such work.⁹⁶ Melissa Farley argues that the distinction between trafficking and prostitution is harmful because sex industry promoters have used the word trafficking to “separate ‘innocent’ victims of trafficking from women who choose prostitution.” Such a distinction ignores the links between prostitution and sex trafficking.⁹⁷ Former and current advocates for more restrictive laws around prostitution often use this argument as a reason why sex work should remain or become criminalized depending on the location. Critiques of viewing trafficking and sex work in such black-and-white terms argue that choice and consent fall on a continuum and there are many grey areas between the lines of sex worker and sex trafficked victim/survivor.⁹⁸

The conflation of sex trafficking and sex work has led many faith-based organizations to spearhead initiatives that echo colonist-era aims of “rescuing” and

⁹⁵ Jo Bindman, “Redefining Prostitution as Sex Work on the International Agenda,” Anti-Slavery International, October 13, 1997, <https://www.walnet.org/csis/papers/redefining.html#2>.

⁹⁶ Melissa Farley, “Prostitution, Trafficking, and Cultural Amnesia: What We Must Not Know in Order To Keep the Business of Sexual Exploitation Running Smoothly,” *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism* 18, no. 109 (206AD): 131.

⁹⁷ “Prostitution, Trafficking, and Cultural Amnesia: What We Must Not Know in Order To Keep the Business of Sexual Exploitation Running Smoothly,” 141-142.

⁹⁸ Manpreet Kalra, “Anti-Trafficking, Christian Supremacy and the Rescue Industry,” Art of Citizenry, accessed April 2, 2022, <https://www.artofcitizenry.com/podcast/episode-15-rescue-industry>.

“freeing” women and girls from what they term “sexual slavery.”⁹⁹ Endorsements of various faith-based and non-governmental organization (NGO) missions to tackle sex trafficking and “prostitution” in developing nations, predominantly made up of people of color, use rhetoric reminiscent of this concern with women and girls’ sexual impurity and oppression. Some scholars, like Laura Connelly, have reshaped the preservation of sexual purity argument to fit the current context and argued instead that currently, Western women are more widely regarded as “sexually liberated” compared to non-Western women, who are considered oppressed. Therefore, Western women have taken on the responsibility of liberating “the Other” from oppression through “rescue missions.”¹⁰⁰ It could be argued that the idea of “sexual liberation” is a continuum. For some, sexual liberation comes in the form of marriage and being granted newfound freedoms by being in such a union. For others, sexual liberation means not being bound to the institution of marriage and wielding one's autonomy outside of a union. Either way, Western power continues to impose Western ideas of morality in non-Western nations while ignoring the role colonialism and toxic Christian masculinity have played in many countries’ understanding of gender.

Western nations' assumption that non-Western nations are prone to sex trafficking and prostitution turns attention away from the fact that this problem is also pervasive in the Western world. The history of Western states going into developing countries –

⁹⁹ Laura Connelly, “The ‘Rescue Industry’: The Blurred Line between Help and Hindrance,” *Graduate Journal of Social Science* 11, no. 2 (n.d.): 155.

¹⁰⁰ Connelly, “The ‘Rescue Industry’: The Blurred Line between Help and Hindrance,” 156.

particularly former colonies - and claiming that they can fix the issue of sex trafficking ignores the fact that the West is facing sex trafficking issues in its own backyard. Works like the famous book, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, by renowned journalists Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, have popularized the idea of Westerners traveling to countries in the Global South to “liberate” women and girls from brothels and sex trafficking. While perhaps written and researched with good intentions, it perpetuated homogenization and stereotypes about women and girls in the Global South suffering from sex trafficking while failing to acknowledge the U.S.’s own struggle to address sex trafficking. It also failed to address how sex trafficking affects LGBTQIA+ communities - of which transgender people are overwhelmingly represented. It also exemplified some problematic paternalistic solutions to trafficking and sex work/prostitution, like purchasing “slave girls’ freedom.”¹⁰¹

Apart from sex trafficking being an egregious crime, the influences of colonialism and religious patriarchy help explain why sex trafficking receives disproportionate focus compared to other forms of human trafficking. As outlined, many NGOs and faith-based communities have focused their anti-trafficking initiatives on sex trafficking. While in good faith, no pun intended, the focus solely on sex trafficking implies that sexual exploitation is inherently worse than other types of exploitation. This assumed hierarchy ignores the fact that one form of exploitation often leads to being subjected to other forms of exploitation. Exploitation typically does not start at the human trafficking level but

¹⁰¹ Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* (Random House, Inc., 2009), 35-39.

before a person even enters or is forced into that work. Exploitation starts at the basic level of structural inequality, where some people in this world hold and yield power while others are subject to that power. Exploitation can take advantage of a person's need for a job and pay them unfair wages while placing them in positions with unsafe conditions and limited access to safe and high-quality social and health services. Exploiters will expect a person to engage in harmful work and uphold unsafe working conditions because fixing them would mean cutting into the profit. Exploitation can also segregate certain people to unsafe locations where crime or severe climate conditions are rampant, and provide few options for upward mobility. Systemic oppression underpins these exploitative practices and makes people vulnerable to further exploitation by the trafficking industry. Addressing one form of exploitation will not solve the problem of sex trafficking because exploitation is interconnected and must be approached holistically.

While this project focused on sex trafficking within Louisiana, I recognize the history hypervigilance for both sex work and sex trafficking. My aim is not to replicate the harm caused by that hypervigilance. There are many forms of human trafficking taking place in the state of Louisiana. The intention of this research is not to focus on just sex trafficking as it is but to reveal the structural inequalities either caused or exacerbated by climate change that make people susceptible to sexual exploitation. I hope that exposing the root causes of sexual exploitation will shed light on similar underlying factors contributing to other forms of exploitation.

Current Understanding of the Climate Change and Sex Trafficking Nexus

While some international research has explored the climate change and sex trafficking nexus, less of that research has been conducted in the United States. Much of the current research leaves out the voices of people affected by this nexus. Of the limited research done in the U.S., conclusions assert that those who face the most negative effects of extreme weather in Louisiana are already in a position in society that makes them vulnerable to such effects. Studies worldwide about those vulnerable to sex trafficking after climate disasters found similar conclusions. Vulnerability was a key element of the dynamics of sex trafficking and the effects of climate disasters. To reiterate, vulnerability can take the form of poverty, social discrimination, gender-based violence, family dysfunction or instability, lack of educational or economic opportunity, poor social infrastructure, family rejection due to LGBTQIA+ identity, cultural practices that tolerate trafficking, drug or alcohol addiction, mental health issues or disorders, and homelessness.^{102 103}

Some scholars argue that our current international legal frameworks for climate change and sex trafficking are inadequate to address the issues separately, let alone the interrelationship between the two. For example, despite the fact that the number of people forcibly displaced by climate disasters, conflict, and violence continues to rise - 82.4 million people by the end of 2020 and 84 million people by June 2021 - people displaced

¹⁰² “Human Trafficking in America’s Schools: Risk Factors,” National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, January 2021, <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/human-trafficking-americas-schools/risk-factors>.

¹⁰³ “Socially Vulnerable Groups Sensitive to Climate Impacts,” Climate Just, accessed April 3, 2022, <https://www.climatejust.org.uk/socially-vulnerable-groups-sensitive-climate-impacts>.

from their homes due to climate disasters do not qualify for refugee status under the U.N.'s 1951 Refugee Convention within the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).¹⁰⁴ To qualify as a refugee, a person needs to have crossed an international border because of a “well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.”¹⁰⁵ People fleeing from climate disasters are considered, “persons displaced in the context of disasters and climate change.” The only way a person who has faced adverse climate effects can claim refugee status is if they have also experienced the effects of armed conflict and violence.

While most people displaced by climate disasters are internally displaced within their country's borders, some are externally displaced. Partly due to the insufficient international legal framework, there is no organized data collection tracking externally displaced climate migrants.¹⁰⁶ International laws thus fail to protect climate migrants. John Podesta from the Brookings Institution explains that without such a framework, climate migrants “go where they can, not necessarily where they should.”¹⁰⁷ People hesitant to give refugee status to climate migrants point out that there are few cases where climate change is the sole factor for migration and that oftentimes it is an exacerbating

¹⁰⁴ “Climate Change and Disaster Displacement,” United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, accessed April 3, 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/climate-change-and-disasters.html>.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Joanna Apap, “The Concept of ‘Climate Refugee’” (European Parliamentary Research Service, October 2021), [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/698753/EPRS_BRI\(2021\)698753_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/698753/EPRS_BRI(2021)698753_EN.pdf), 2.

¹⁰⁷ John Podesta, “The Climate Crisis, Migration, and Refugees” (Brookings Institution, July 25, 2019), <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-climate-crisis-migration-and-refugees/>.

factor of other migration reasons, like conflict.¹⁰⁸ Some argue that the absence of legal protections pushes climate migrants into being vulnerable to exploitation.¹⁰⁹ With no legally binding international frameworks to protect climate migrants, countries have made individual commitments to support climate migrants.¹¹⁰ The UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM), the leading intergovernmental agency tasked with initiating and promoting research, policy, and advocacy efforts around the intersection in collaboration with the Member States, has facilitated these commitments.¹¹¹ The UNHCR and IOM work in partnership with the UNODC to address human trafficking as an issue for refugees and migrants. Yet, while the UNODC works with both agencies on human trafficking within migrant and refugee populations, it pays little attention to climate change's relationship with human trafficking. Likewise, the UNFCCC pays little attention to climate change's impact on human trafficking.¹¹² The IOM is one of the few UN agencies to discuss the intersection between climate change and human trafficking.

The IOM has taken the initiative to address the nexus between climate change and migration and how both affect human trafficking patterns. The agency cites the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami as the first time the issue of human trafficking during natural disasters came to light. After the tsunami, child protection agencies noticed increased child abductions for “adoption” in Indonesia. Since then, counter-trafficking efforts have

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Abdurahman Seid, “The Legal Status and Protection of Climate Migrants under International Law” (Mizan Teppi University School of Law, September 12, 2021), <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4217129>, 2.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ “Migration, Environment and Climate Change,” International Organization for Migration, accessed April 3, 2022, <https://www.iom.int/migration-environment-and-climate-change>.

¹¹² Smith, “Applying the United Nations Trafficking Protocol in the Context of Climate Change Comments,” 306.

integrated with emergency responses to natural disasters. Although, this integration is not always successful as human trafficking still occurs in disaster-affected regions.¹¹³ IOM found that in these disaster-affected regions, traffickers and other criminal networks often come in and take advantage of both the existing vulnerabilities people had before the climate disaster and the newly created vulnerabilities from the climate disaster.¹¹⁴ For example, Nicole Molinari found after climate change-intensified disasters hit the Indian Sundarbans, labor recruiters and contractors exploited the insecurities of people by falsely promising work or, for women, marriage. Subsequently, many women and girls were trafficked into domestic work, the sex industry, and forced marriage, while boys were trafficked into various forced labor industries.¹¹⁵ In India, the Sundarbans region of West Bengal is known to be highly vulnerable to climate change-related disasters and trafficking.

Molinari is one of several scholars focused on the climate change and human trafficking nexus. Like others, she has critiqued the lack of attention anti-trafficking agencies, scholars, and activists have paid to climate change, and the lack of attention scholarship on climate change has paid to human trafficking. Molinari's work is significant because she deepens the idea that human trafficking is contingent on the relationship between push and pull factors. Push factors refer to something (e.g., climate disaster) that motivates or forces someone to leave their home in search of better and

¹¹³ Sabira Coelho, "The Climate Change-Human Trafficking Nexus" (International Organization for Migration, 2016), https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/mecc_infosheet_climate_change_nexus.pdf, 6.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Nicole Molinari, "Intensifying Insecurities: The Impact of Climate Change on Vulnerability to Human Trafficking in the Indian Sundarbans," *Anti - Trafficking Review*, no. 8 (April 2017): 50–69.65.

safer prospects; pull factors create the demand for exploitation. Push and pull factors introduce the presence of underlying drivers that make someone vulnerable to trafficking, as well as opportunities for exploitation to occur. Molinari discusses how climate change-related disasters exacerbate the same underlying drivers that make someone vulnerable to human trafficking.

Key contributors to vulnerabilities for people in the Sundarbans were “a lack of social or educational infrastructure; inequities based on gender, caste, class, religion, and indigeneity; high rates of gender-based violence; major disruptions within households; landlessness and lack or loss of livelihoods; food insecurity and hunger; severe poverty and indebtedness; natural disasters and environmental degradation; and displacement or forced out-migration.”¹¹⁶ Molinari emphasizes the importance of anti-trafficking organizations’ efforts to implement intervention programs and capacity building as well as raise trafficking awareness in law enforcement, government, and the community. However, these steps still fail to address the underlying drivers of vulnerability. Laws, policies, and programs need to be geared toward correcting these drivers. However, so far, such laws have been “ineffective and unimplemented.”¹¹⁷ The lack of political will on the part of the government to make a genuine effort to address both the drivers and the vulnerabilities shifts the burden of implementing such programs to under-resourced

¹¹⁶ Molinari, “Intensifying Insecurities: The Impact of Climate Change on Vulnerability to Human Trafficking in the Indian Sundarbans,” 60.

¹¹⁷ Molinari, “Intensifying Insecurities: The Impact of Climate Change on Vulnerability to Human Trafficking in the Indian Sundarbans,” 67.

groups and community organizations.¹¹⁸ Efforts to tackle climate change and human trafficking need to shift focus toward addressing drivers, like structural inequality. These drivers are what makes people vulnerable to each phenomenon.

Some scholars believe the legal frameworks we have for human trafficking, like the U.N.'s Human Trafficking Protocol, could be applied to problems related to the climate change and sex trafficking nexus. Currently, the Protocol does not address the climate change-human trafficking nexus, but scholars like Mikaila Smith think it has the potential. Though Smith is vocal about the difficulty of standardizing and implementing the Protocol's objectives, she argues that protections within the Trafficking Protocol should extend to people who are trafficked due to climate change vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities would fall within the Protocol's definition of "trafficking in persons" because traffickers will have engaged in "abuse of a position of vulnerability."¹¹⁹

Smith suggests criminal justice systems should consider "climate-induced vulnerability" as a factor when analyzing trafficking cases.¹²⁰ While this is the main argument of their research, the most significant point for our purposes acknowledges that while the Protocol's purpose is to prosecute traffickers, protect people who are trafficked, and prevent trafficking, the first of the three, prosecuting traffickers, gets the most attention and resources from State Parties.¹²¹ Prosecution serves as a highly visible

¹¹⁸ Molinari, "Intensifying Insecurities: The Impact of Climate Change on Vulnerability to Human Trafficking in the Indian Sundarbans," 67.

¹¹⁹ Smith, "Applying the United Nations Trafficking Protocol in the Context of Climate Change Comments," 329.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Smith, "Applying the United Nations Trafficking Protocol in the Context of Climate Change Comments," 334.

account that states are defining the bad actor and taking action against that bad actor, no matter how sporadic that action tends to be. When states define the bad actor as the trafficker, they absolve their own contribution to the vulnerabilities that put a trafficked person in the position of being trafficked. These contributions can take the form of underlying social, economic, political, and environmental inequalities. Without the acknowledgment of or response to such drivers of vulnerability to trafficking, states can overlook the “material conditions and power relations that contribute to that vulnerability.”¹²² Even if countries were to add climate-induced vulnerability as a factor for criminal cases, the risk is that it would merely serve as a mask for underlying issues that cause human trafficking. Smith also acknowledges that this tension causes both states and nongovernmental agencies to avoid taking more preemptive action to stop trafficking - such as addressing those vulnerabilities.

Similar to the case of climate migrants, many people displaced through climate change-related disasters in the United States are internally displaced. In 2021, 573,078 people were internally displaced in the U.S. due to climate disasters.¹²³ In 2005, Hurricane Katrina caused 1.5 million people to leave their homes in Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. 40% of the people who left, mostly those in Louisiana, were not able to return to their pre-Katrina homes.¹²⁴ In 2021, Hurricane Ida displaced 14,000

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ “United States,” Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, accessed April 6, 2022, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/united-states>.

¹²⁴ Danielle Baussan, “When You Cannot Go Home,” *Center for American Progress* (blog), August 18, 2015, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/when-you-cant-go-home/>.

people in just one Parish.¹²⁵ As outlined above, displacement increases a person's vulnerability to being trafficked.

Very little research in the United States directly discusses the nexus between climate change and sex trafficking as an issue for the U.S. However, the U.S. recognizes that such a nexus exists for sex trafficking and human trafficking in general. The U.S.'s 2021 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report referred to climate change as a factor that exacerbates "economic hardships" for people in rural Cambodia.¹²⁶ This exacerbation put Cambodians at higher risk for forced labor and labor trafficking. This report also discussed Nigeria as another place where people are vulnerable to trafficking due to climate change-related pressures.¹²⁷ In another example, the report highlighted that Palau experiences climate-induced displacement, which increases vulnerabilities to trafficking. The U.S. acknowledged this vulnerability is partly created by the "loss of livelihood, shelter, or family stability" to climate disasters.¹²⁸ The report also found that people of Vanuatu were also at risk for trafficking due to climate-induced displacement.

Climate disasters were not mentioned as a factor in trafficking in the United States.¹²⁹ The report did mention that the U.S. decreased prevention efforts for human trafficking, specifically housing regulations that were meant "to correct discriminatory

¹²⁵ Madeline Holcombe, Eric Levenson, and Jenn Selva, "About 14,000 People Displaced When Ida Battered One Louisiana Parish, Official Says," CNN, September 6, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/06/weather/hurricane-ida-recovery-monday/index.html>.

¹²⁶ "2021 Trafficking in Persons Report" (U.S. Department of State, June 2021), <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/TIPR-GPA-upload-07222021.pdf>, 161.

¹²⁷ "2021 Trafficking in Persons Report," 428.

¹²⁸ "2021 Trafficking in Persons Report," 443.

¹²⁹ "2021 Trafficking in Persons Report," 584-595.

housing practices and past harm” legal protections for LGBTQIA+ individuals, and the ability to oversee and enforce worker protections in nonimmigrant visa and labor recruiting programs. The government recognized that these cutbacks in prevention services disproportionately increased historically marginalized communities’ risk of human trafficking. They also acknowledged that their prevention efforts need to better address how “systemic exploitation” increases Black and Brown communities’ vulnerability to human trafficking.¹³⁰

While the TIP report does not acknowledge the nexus in the U.S., a 2018 literature review from The National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center (NHTTAC) discussed the nexus between trafficking and natural disasters. It used Hurricane Katrina as a case study. The review acknowledged the uptick in natural disaster incidents.¹³¹ Like the international studies on the nexus, they cited displacement as raising the risk for trafficking. Additionally, they cited reconstruction after Katrina as opening doors for undocumented individuals who had less access to amenities, were low income, younger, and less educated to be at risk for labor exploitation. There was a significant increase in labor trafficking after Katrina due to rebuilding efforts. Labor trafficking also increased in hospitality and hotel maid services, where there was an increased need for staff to serve displaced residents.¹³² NHTTAC also cited that the loss of jobs from natural disasters created economic constraints for disaster

¹³⁰ “2021 Trafficking in Persons Report,” 591.

¹³¹ Morgan Stahl, Stephanie Parenteau, and Keya Chilka, “Trafficking Prevention and Disaster Response,” Literature Review (National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center (NHTTAC), February 1, 2018), 6.

¹³² Stahl, Parenteau, and Chilka, 8.

victims. For example, during Hurricane Katrina, 128,000 jobs were lost due to damage.

¹³³ Like Molinari's point on pull factors, NHTTAC also noted the pull factor of economic constraints and the heightened risk it poses for people to either be approached by or approach a trafficker.¹³⁴ These economic constraints mixed with displacement created advantageous situations for traffickers to deceive people into sex trafficking, especially for minors seeking shelter and basic needs.¹³⁵ Service providers in Baton Rouge estimated they served more than 100 minor victims of domestic sex trafficking.

When Hurricane Harvey hit Houston, Texas, city officials noted Louisiana's uptick in human trafficking following Katrina and developed an Emergency Disaster Response Toolkit. The toolkit included outreach materials with trafficking awareness information and contact numbers for assistance, information on displacement and vulnerability, and trafficking awareness social media campaigns. The materials were offered in multiple languages.¹³⁶ Despite this, since Hurricane Harvey, officials of Houston, Texas, observed an increase in commercial sex traffickers and online sex ads.¹³⁷ Nonetheless, NHTTAC noted this to be a proactive local model for cities who have experienced severe natural disasters.

Some work is coming out of Louisiana on the relationship between climate change and sex trafficking. However, it is still limited. Neither Louisiana's Climate Action Plan nor its Human Trafficking Report mentions the other in its report. Sex

¹³³ Stahl, Parenteau, and Chilka, 7.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Stahl, Parenteau, and Chilka, 7, 9.

¹³⁶ Stahl, Parenteau, and Chilka, 15.

¹³⁷ Stahl, Parenteau, and Chilka, 9.

trafficking was not mentioned within the Climate Action Plan, and extreme weather was not mentioned in the 2021 Human Trafficking Report. The only references to climate change effects as a factor in sex trafficking were the acknowledgments in a 2018 report. It mentioned cases of child sex trafficking after the children relocated out of New Orleans after “the hurricane.” It also noted that some victim profiles were teenagers suffering from trauma from Hurricane Katrina in Orleans Parish.¹³⁸ Despite the limited references to each other within those state-wide reports, Louisiana has recognized the intersection between natural disasters and sex trafficking by promoting the integration of human trafficking prevention in disaster response.

Recently, the Governor’s Office of Human Trafficking Prevention, in collaboration with the Human Trafficking Prevention Commission’s Natural Disasters Working Group, created a “Louisiana Natural Disasters and Human Trafficking Outreach Toolkit.”¹³⁹ OHTP recognizes the risk natural disasters pose to vulnerable communities and how natural disasters open windows for exploitation. The toolkit was created with encouragement for agencies and organizations “to integrate human trafficking response into their disaster protocols, and to raise awareness of the free, quality services that are available after a disaster.”¹⁴⁰ OHTP worked with various partners like FEMA, the Governor’s Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP), Louisiana Alliance of Children’s Advocacy Centers, immigration legal clinics, and other

¹³⁸ Delapaz, “State of Louisiana Child Sex Trafficking Project Report,” 27, 38.

¹³⁹ “Disaster Outreach Toolkit – The Human Trafficking Prevention Resource Center of Louisiana,” accessed November 23, 2022, <https://humantrafficking.la.gov/resources/disasters/>.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

direct victim-service agencies to develop the awareness materials.¹⁴¹ The development of this toolkit included the creation of fliers with the intention of not sensationalizing the dangers of human trafficking but giving more realistic awareness about human trafficking.¹⁴²

OHTP emphasized the need for more awareness materials in congregate settings, like shelters and disaster recovery centers, where people tend to be most vulnerable to trafficking.¹⁴³ The services providers I spoke with mentioned shelters as a hotspot for sex and labor trafficking recruitment. To prepare for that, OHTP created awareness fliers and posters to put up in key disaster recovery locations and handout during disaster recovery.¹⁴⁴ They also put together social media graphics of the fliers for key partners to post on social media for better awareness about the dangers of trafficking during disasters. Each flyer shares reputable resources for people to turn to.¹⁴⁵ Below are some flier examples within the toolkit. The flier on the right is representative of labor trafficking recruitment, while the two others are representative of sex trafficking recruitment. The recruitment language from John and the New Employer mirrors the actual language traffickers use for initial contact or recruitment. There is a sense of urgency around the language and looking to fill the need of the potential victim.

¹⁴¹ “Louisiana Natural Disasters & Human Trafficking Outreach Toolkit” (Lou: The Office of Human Trafficking Prevention, September 2022), <https://humantrafficking.la.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Guide-to-the-Disaster-Outreach-Toolkit.pdf>, 1.

¹⁴² “Louisiana Natural Disasters & Human Trafficking Outreach Toolkit,” 3.

¹⁴³ “Louisiana Natural Disasters & Human Trafficking Outreach Toolkit,” 5.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

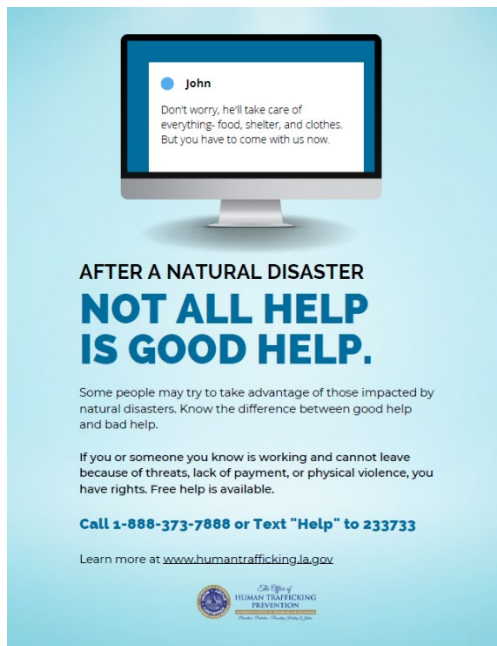


Figure 1 Trafficking Recruitment

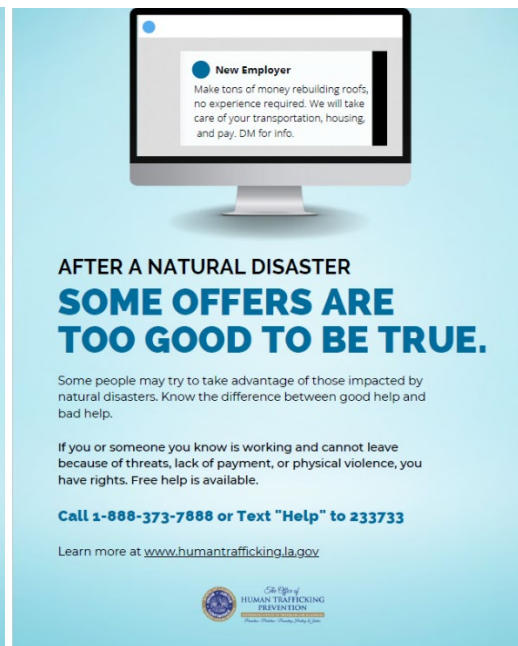


Figure 2 Labor Trafficking Recruitment



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Figure 3 Texting Trafficking Recruitment

¹⁴⁶ “Disaster Outreach Toolkit – The Human Trafficking Prevention Resource Center of Louisiana.”

The creation of this toolkit serves as a sign that Louisianans are cognizant of how natural disasters can create volatile environments for vulnerable populations. They may not term it as being climate change per se. However, they see it in the form of natural disasters, given their personal experience with Katrina and more recent natural disasters like Hurricane Ida, Hurricane Laura, and flooding from heavy rainfall. A recent article by Michalene Perry of Sexual Trauma and Response (STAR) – an organization I interviewed – discussed what she calls “double victims.” She cited the uptick in sexual violence in disaster-affected communities after Hurricane Katrina. Researchers found that “95% of sexual assault victims in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina were also disaster victims.”¹⁴⁷ These “double victims” are both survivors of natural disasters and sexual violence. Their traumatization and re-traumatization from both assaults make them at greater risk of experiencing depression, fear, hopelessness, and suicide.

Perry also cited The National Sexual Violence Resource Center’s findings on why sexual violence increases during natural disasters. People already vulnerable due to being houseless, disabled, and mentally ill may be left behind in evacuation and safety efforts and put in vulnerable positions for sexual violence. Overcrowding in safety shelters, like that of the Superdome during Katrina, is a concern as windows open for predators to attack vulnerable people, given being in close quarters with little security. Tension and stress can take away people’s feelings of power and control, leaving them vulnerable to sexual assaults. The chaos of natural disasters caters to perpetrators’ ability to take

¹⁴⁷ Michalene Perry, “Natural Disasters, Sexual Violence Create Terrifying Storm with Double Victims,” *Louisiana Illuminator*, September 22, 2022, <https://lailluminator.com/2022/09/22/natural-disasters-sexual-violence-create-terrifying-storm-with-double-victims/>.

advantage of law enforcement's focus on disaster response and lack of focus on sexual violence crimes. Lastly, depleted resources from natural disasters were cited as harshly affecting victims of sexual violence as they may not be able to access the care and services they need, leaving them vulnerable. Perry urged community partners to include safety and regulation measures for preventing sexual violence in their disaster preparedness plans.¹⁴⁸

In 2008, closer to when Katrina happened, Shared Hope International conducted a report on domestic minor sex trafficking in Baton Rouge and New Orleans. The report concluded that the influx of people who fled New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina affected Baton Rouge, while the devastation had transformed New Orleans into a "unique environment."¹⁴⁹ Similar to the NHTTAC's literature review, the report cited that New Orleans received an influx of undocumented migrant workers "recruited to rebuild the Gulf Coast."¹⁵⁰ The undocumented factor translated to their vulnerability to both labor and sexual exploitation. In addition, law enforcement found sex workers from out of state working in New Orleans. Law enforcement arrested the women they referred to as "prostitutes." However, in hindsight, they wondered whether the women were actually trafficked into New Orleans to "serve the demand of a male workforce rebuilding a destroyed city."¹⁵¹ The report also discussed how Louisiana was an easy place for traffickers to operate because it "provides easy movement of victims on its extensive

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Clair Bayhi-Gennaro, "Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking Baton Rouge/New Orleans Louisiana" (Shared Hope International, April 2008), 1.

¹⁵⁰ Bayhi-Gennaro, "Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking Baton Rouge/New Orleans Louisiana," 12.

¹⁵¹ Bayhi-Gennaro, "Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking Baton Rouge/New Orleans Louisiana," 12.

interstate systems, as well as its proximity to other destinations, such as Florida, Georgia, Texas, and Mexico.” In addition, New Orleans’s tolerance for “sexual entertainment” made it easier for traffickers to operate in the region.¹⁵² Lastly, the report emphasized the disruptive effect Hurricane Katrina had on agencies tasked with identifying and reaching out to victims of domestic minor sex trafficking.

In this chapter, I have summarized the current literature on climate change, sex trafficking, and their nexus. Overall, more work needs to be done on both issues separately and together. In the current understanding of climate change, we learned how climate change disproportionately affects marginalized populations. These populations include people who are low-income, houseless, and part of BIPOC communities.¹⁵³ As climate change worsens, and climate disasters intensify as a result, a key concern is how disasters will negatively affect the current socioeconomic situations of these populations.¹⁵⁴ Louisiana is particularly vulnerable to climate change effects, such as hurricanes, and recognizes the disproportionate effects it has on its vulnerable populations.¹⁵⁵ Likewise, those same populations that are disproportionately affected by climate change effects are also vulnerable to sex trafficking. Additionally, LGBTQIA+ communities and juveniles from foster care are particularly vulnerable to sex trafficking within East Baton Rouge Parish and Orleans Parish.¹⁵⁶ Efforts have been made in Louisiana, particularly by the Governor’s Office, to prevent and combat human

¹⁵² Bayhi-Gennaro, “Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking Baton Rouge/New Orleans Louisiana,” 41.

¹⁵³ “Louisiana Climate Action Plan,” 15.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Delapaz, “State of Louisiana Child Sex Trafficking Project Report,” 10.

trafficking generally. Yet, the high rates of poverty and poor educational outcomes serve as barriers on the prevention front.

Research on the climate change and sex trafficking nexus emphasizes how little attention is paid to each other. The lack of attention ignores how they intersect, particularly in how climate disasters create and exacerbate vulnerabilities to human trafficking. Climate disasters can be the “push” factor to the “pull” factor of demand for exploitation through labor or commercial sexual exploitation.¹⁵⁷ Louisiana has begun to recognize and work on the nexus. Their experience with Hurricane Katrina highlighted how displacement caused by climate disasters heightens a person’s vulnerability to sex trafficking and sexual violence, generally.¹⁵⁸ Additionally, the economic constraints of climate disaster victims, along with the demand for rebuilding, creates opportunities for labor trafficking.¹⁵⁹

This chapter summarizes the current literature about climate change, sex trafficking, and the sex trafficking nexus. The following chapters intend to give insights into how anti-trafficking service providers in East Baton Rouge Parish and Orleans Parish, vocal advocates for victims and survivors of sex trafficking, understand the climate change and sex trafficking nexus. While there is a contentious history of anti-trafficking work, they are often some of the fiercest advocates for prevention and intervention. As a result, anti-trafficking service providers of these regions have a unique insight into how something like a climate disaster affects their work and the populations

¹⁵⁷ Molinari, “Intensifying Insecurities,” 60.

¹⁵⁸ Stahl, Parenteau, and Chilka, “Trafficking Prevention and Disaster Response,” 7, 9.

¹⁵⁹ Stahl, Parenteau, and Chilka, 8.

they work with. The following chapters give us a peek into their experience with climate change effects and anti-trafficking work.

Chapter 2

Methodology

Narrative Theory

Since this research focused on the specific community of anti-trafficking service providers within East Baton Rouge Parish or Orleans Parish, narrative theory serves as a helpful base for this research on the realities they experience and how they interact with those realities. Put simply, narrative theory describes “how stories help people make sense of the world, while also studying how people make sense of stories.”¹⁶⁰ Narratives, different from stories, contextualize stories’ events with the goal of making a point.¹⁶¹ The stories I heard were first-hand accounts of anti-trafficking service providers’ experiences both within and outside of the context of climate disaster. Service providers told second-hand account stories about climate disasters impacting survivors and victims of sex trafficking and other vulnerable populations. Within these first-hand and second-hand stories, I pulled out narratives highlighting their understanding of climate change, sex trafficking, and their relationship. Narrative theory was a useful tool with which to analyze their stories.

¹⁶⁰ “What Is Narrative Theory?” Project Narrative | The Ohio State University (blog), accessed April 5, 2022, <https://projectnarrative.osu.edu/about/what-is-narrative-theory>.

¹⁶¹ Sara Cobb, “Speaking of Violence,” in *Speaking of Violence: The Politics and Poetics of Narrative in Conflict Resolution* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 26.

Narratives are never individually created. In part, cultural, social, familial, organizational, and governmental structures create the narratives about our lives.¹⁶² Structures shape how anti-trafficking agencies narrate the stories of others alongside their own stories. In this way, we do not make our narratives alone. Sara Cobb emphasizes this when saying, “we ‘arrive’ at narratives we did not make—we may tell the narratives, but we do not author them because they are, in many ways, provided to, if not forced on us. From this perspective, we live in narratives that we tell but that we do not make (by ourselves).”¹⁶³ Stories are useful tools for analyzing the connections between a person’s life and the institutions that operate beyond the individual’s agency.¹⁶⁴ This is not to say that individuals have absolutely no agency within their narratives.

Within narratives are also causal stories. Individuals are deliberate in the way they portray their stories. Within their stories are calculations to gain support for their side. These calculations could be what some may see as a precursor to agenda-setting. Deborah A. Stone discusses these causal stories in her research on political actors and policy agenda.¹⁶⁵ On some level, service providers act as political actors in that their stories try to control the interpretations of what and who is causing harm and how that harm can be remedied.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² Maynes, Laslett, and Pierce, *Telling Stories: The Use of Personal Narratives in the Social Sciences and History*, 1.

¹⁶³ Cobb, “Speaking of Violence,” 23.

¹⁶⁴ Maynes, Laslett, and Pierce, *Telling Stories: The Use of Personal Narratives in the Social Sciences and History*, 3.

¹⁶⁵ Deborah A. Stone, “Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agendas,” *Political Science Quarterly* 104, no. 4 (Summer 1989): 281–300.

¹⁶⁶ Stone, 282–83.

I do not mean to use this framework to say there is maliciousness behind the way service providers frame their stories. This also is not to discount the truths in their stories. A person can have causal stories that are also a reflection of the reality they live. Nevertheless, service providers, again, are individuals influenced by the cultural, political, and social environments in which they live and work. These environments inform how they talk about their work. Narrative theory is a helpful framework for exploring how people make sense of their role within these issues. Further discussion on causal stories will take place in chapter four.

Using narrative theory, I learned a new perspective on the broadly talked about issue of the climate change and sex trafficking nexus. Through viewing the service provider's interviews with this framework, we can learn how individual service providers in a specific location contextualize these issues in their professional and personal lives. In this way, narrative theory is a bottom-up approach that explores the individual accounts of how they believe this phenomenon of the climate change and sex trafficking nexus affects specific people and communities. The narratives around this phenomenon at the local level can hopefully inform the broader discussion of the nexus as well as localize policy responses to the nexus.

In thinking about its usefulness in localizing issues, narrative theory was an important tool to this research because it helped bridge the gap between subjective personal experiences and objective causal dynamics between climate change and sex trafficking. Climate change and sex trafficking can be objective phenomena on their own. However, by using narrative theory, I learned about how people describe their

experiences of it on a personal level. Reaching that personal level was something I could only do through interviewing these service providers and using this framework to understand their perspectives. In using narrative theory to understand the perspective of service providers, I was able to pull out narratives from their interviews that described their recommendations for addressing the climate change and sex trafficking nexus within their communities. Their narratives described remedies to issues that they believe prevent them from successfully providing services in the context of natural disasters. Narrative theory was unique in helping pull out those descriptions of remedies. These descriptions could help fuel efforts that could make service providers more successful in addressing climate change and sex trafficking. Using narrative theory and causal stories, I could pull out the service providers' unique perspectives from their interviews. The following section discusses the interview process.

Interviews

The accounts of each anti-trafficking service provider took place through semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured format allowed me to ask predetermined questions while allowing room for me and the interviewee to explore other questions beyond what I had prepared. Follow-up questions also provided an opportunity to clarify specific points made. The questions included generally asking about what they do, their perceptions of the current sex trafficking trends in their region, and their experience with natural disasters and how it has affected their work. We also discussed what they see as possible solutions for sex trafficking in their region and what would help enhance their ability to support victims and survivors of sex trafficking whom climate disasters have

also impacted. Because I was based in Arlington, Virginia, and they were in Louisiana, we carried out these interviews via Zoom. A benefit of conducting interviews over Zoom was that the recorded interviews produced a transcription. The zoom-created transcriptions were only partially accurate, but they made it easier when listening to the interviews and cleaning up the transcription. Only one interview was not recorded, and I took notes both during and after the interview to capture what that person said. Recording the interviews improved my ability to capture what the interviewee said accurately, but it may also have been a barrier to “off-the-cuff” commentary.

I identified some anti-trafficking service providers by doing general research on anti-trafficking organizations in New Orleans and Baton Rouge; others I connected with, thanks to the gracious help of a couple of anti-trafficking service providers. One particularly useful resource was the recently created Human Trafficking Prevention Resource Center of Louisiana.¹⁶⁷ On the resource page is a map of Louisiana, split up by region. When selecting one region, like the Orleans region, for example, a list of human trafficking victim specialized programs, direct services, legal assistance/advocacy services, housing services, domestic violence and sexual assault services, and child advocacy centers within that region appeared.¹⁶⁸ Each service includes links to their website, phone numbers, and emails. It was an excellent resource not only for my purposes but also for learning what is available within a region in which a victim or survivor may be located.

¹⁶⁷ “Resources,” accessed September 21, 2022, <https://humantrafficking.la.gov/resources/>.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

Since I reached out to the service providers via their respective organizations, many spoke as representatives of their organizations. At some points, they may have been careful about certain statements they made because they did not want their individual opinions to reflect their organization. Nonetheless, representing their organization did not completely prevent them from giving their personal perspective on both sex trafficking and climate change and the relationship between the two. Luckily many of them appeared to work for organizations aligned with their personal opinions on sex trafficking and climate change. Hence, there was little gap between their representation of themselves and their respective organization. Some worked for organizations that provide direct services to survivors and victims of sex trafficking. These direct services included housing, legal advocacy, professional development, and therapy. Other organizations focused on intervention and connecting survivors to direct services. Others worked to connect and improve anti-trafficking service provider efforts across the state. Almost every organization contained a community education component on human trafficking and efforts for prevention. While some participants did not mind having their real names used in the thesis, others preferred anonymity. Ultimately, I decided to use aliases for each person I interviewed. Below in Table 1 is a chart of the service providers I interviewed, their respective organizations, location, and the type of work their organization does.

Table 1 List of Service Providers and Organizations

Participant	Participant's Organization	Location	Type of work
Sophia	Family Justice Center	New Orleans	Crisis services, counseling, case management, legal services, forensic and health services, prevention, education/training
Andy	Eden House	New Orleans	Residential program, direct services
Mary	Free NOLA, Inc.	New Orleans	Intervention/outreach, education/training
Noah	Louisiana Youth Child Trafficking Collaborative (LYCTC)	New Orleans	Statewide intervention, supporting and improving multi-disciplinary responses, outreach, education/training
Arika	Sexual Trauma Awareness and Response (STAR)	Baton Rouge	Direct services, counseling, prevention, outreach, legal services, education/training
Clair	The Dragonfly Harbor, Inc.	North Louisiana/New Orleans	Case management, counseling, outreach, education/training
Participant X	Anonymous	East Baton Rouge Parish	Previous service provider, prevention, coalition building, education/training

Doing Fieldwork

I had the privilege of traveling to New Orleans in mid-August 2022 to meet with a few anti-trafficking service providers. I stayed only three short days, but while there, I saw where some of them worked and explored the city that symbolizes resilience and devastation. Due to scheduling constraints, I was unable to travel to Baton Rouge. The biggest challenge was that I could only be there for three days, so I had limited time to explore and learn about the city and meet with service providers. Another challenge was

that I was traveling to New Orleans during peak hurricane season. Luckily, no hurricane or other major storm made landfall, but it was a concern when planning travel. I was lucky to experience only sunny weather while there. Service providers had told me that prior to my arrival, it had been raining non-stop. I looked at the forecast in New Orleans for the days following my trip, and it was showing continual rain. I do not know if there is such a thing as a “weather god,” but if there is, they were certainly looking out for me - especially since most of my travel was by foot or the local tram system.

The fieldwork allowed me to see and briefly experience the environment in which anti-trafficking service providers work and live. I met with some of the anti-trafficking service providers I interviewed, as well as two service providers I was never able to interview via zoom. I met with six service providers (the two I never was able to interview were from the same agency). Four service providers allowed me to visit them at their offices, two of which also served as residential centers for victims and survivors of sex trafficking. One gave me a tour of the residence. I met with the other two service providers outside their offices over a meal. This allowed me to have an opportunity to get to know them not only within their service provider role but also just as residents of New Orleans. My hotel was in downtown New Orleans where my exploring included the infamous French Quarter, which includes Bourbon Street. My travels to different agencies took me to different parts of New Orleans, so I could see the juxtaposition of the wealthy Garden District and the more rowdy and unruly downtown parts.

The service providers were gracious and welcoming. Some of them suggested their favorite food and coffee spots, and a couple met up with me at their spot to talk

about my topic over a meal - one of which consisted of alligator sausage. Overall, it was a trip that felt too short but served as an essential foundation for my understanding of the context and environment in which service providers work.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the interviews provided by the anti-trafficking services providers thematically. First, I coded the interviews, which required organizing the raw data into categories and themes. I then clustered the categories and themes into significant themes. After identifying these central themes, I created sub-themes by selecting the data that would best illustrate the significant themes and assist with making comparisons and connections. Sub-themes, in my mind, are the foundations of the overarching theme. By thinking about this data collection and analysis through narrative theory, we learn that these realities are informed by the particular time and place of when, where, and how they were spoken. Therefore, they do not contain the whole story or truth of the service providers' experiences but only a particular sliver of that story and truth.

This chapter described the primary methodology that framed this research and the way this research was analyzed. Using narrative theory as a framework for analyzing the interviews of the anti-trafficking service providers offers a unique view into how service providers talk about their experiences as service providers in the context of climate change. Narrative theory also helped bridge their professional experience with climate change with their personal experience. In the next chapter, I will introduce each service provider I interviewed and some primary takeaways I received from their interview.

Chapter 3

Meet the Anti-Trafficking Service Providers

When contacting different anti-trafficking organizations, I strived to contact various service providers. Some people offered direct services to survivors, some connected survivors to services, and some focused on providing prevention training and education to different communities in Louisiana. Four anti-trafficking service providers were in New Orleans, and two were in East Baton Rouge Parish. Another was in North Louisiana, but she had experience in Orleans Parish and grew up in south Louisiana. In the following section, we will meet each service provider I interviewed. I discuss them in the chronological order in which I interviewed them. By introducing each of them, I hope to offer insight into their specific anti-trafficking work and where they do it. This introduction will highlight what each of them focused on within their interview. For example, some focused more on the climate change question, while others focused on the strategies they use for intervention and prevention. Each had unique takeaways within their interview, which are highlighted in their introduction.

Sophia of Family Justice Center

Sophia, the first person I interviewed, was instrumental in connecting me with other organizations and people. Sophia was also one of the service providers I met while in New Orleans, where she introduced me to alligator sausage. She is a Human

Trafficking Children’s Counselor at the New Orleans Family Justice Center. The Family Justice Center is a partnership of agencies that provide client-centered empowerment services for people facing family violence, child abuse, sexual assault, stalking, and human trafficking. In addition, they offer crisis services, counseling, advocacy and case management, legal services, forensic and health services, and prevention and education services.¹⁶⁹ On their website, they provide learning resources, a 24-hour crisis hotline, and information about Hurricane Ida Resources and Recovery.¹⁷⁰

Sophia was familiar with the city due to completing her undergraduate and graduate degrees in New Orleans. She had a particular focus on teenage and adult victims of trafficking as well as those who face vulnerabilities to trafficking. Sophia also works with Spanish-speaking and immigrant populations. When we first spoke, she had just started the job in December 2021. Sophia responded honestly that she did not know about how her organization handled natural disasters because she had not experienced one while working there. Toward the end of our conversation, she acknowledged that she lacked knowledge regarding particular questions, given her limited time at the Family Justice Center. She encouraged me to speak with more experienced people.

The beautiful thing about this type of research is that her perspective as someone new to the job is just as valuable as someone who has been there for several years. Her knowledge about certain things and lack of knowledge about others reveals what is

¹⁶⁹ “Our Services,” New Orleans Family Justice Center, accessed September 22, 2022, <https://www.nofjc.org/our-services>.

¹⁷⁰ “Hurricane Ida Recovery,” New Orleans Family Justice Center, accessed September 22, 2022, <https://www.nofjc.org/hurricane-ida-recovery>.

prioritized in her field and within her organization. It also illuminates her organization's capacity to address intersectional issues related to sex trafficking, as well as the issues where there is more or less knowledge and awareness. The fact that the Family Justice Center has a resource page about Hurricane Ida recovery indicates that they recognize that something like a hurricane intersects with the other vulnerabilities of the people they serve.

Another interesting note is that The Family Justice Center shifted its focus toward human trafficking due to Hurricane Katrina. Before Katrina, they were a shelter for victims of domestic violence. After Katrina, the state of Louisiana cut Family Justice Center's funding because funding was redirected elsewhere, and there appeared to be less of a need. Because many people evacuated or migrated from New Orleans due to Katrina, there were fewer people in the city, and thus, fewer who required their services. As a result, the Family Justice Center director went out to search for survivors of not only domestic violence but also human trafficking. She did this first to intervene and get services to people in need. However, doing this also showed the state that there was a need and, thus, a reason for funding. The director must have found a need for human trafficking services because the Family Justice Center expanded its services to survivors of human trafficking and is still running today. Through that, they proved there to be a need for funding.

A significant theme for Sophia was her concern with the general lack of awareness and knowledge about human trafficking in Louisiana. For example, there is a large misconception that trafficking is strictly smuggling. As she puts it, trafficking is

everywhere, and it is not just the smuggling of foreigners but people within your community. Addressing Sophia's concern requires acknowledging the intersectionality of vulnerability. More than one thing can make someone vulnerable. For example, a person could be impoverished but also disabled, and those two factors together can make someone vulnerable to being taken advantage of. As Sophia puts it, anti-trafficking services need to adapt to that intersectionality to be more accessible to all vulnerable populations.

Andy of Eden House

The second person I interviewed is a licensed clinical social worker who has been in practice for over 30 years. They are native New Orleanian and have worked in various settings. When we first connected over the phone, they remarked that the primary reason they called me back was because of the Maine area code in my number—Maine, they told me, has a special place in their heart. Andy has worked in schools and the state office, where they managed some statewide programs. Shortly after they retired from the state office, they started working at Eden House.

Eden House is a two-year residential program established in 2011 for self-identified women victims of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. They also provide services to self-identified men but they only house self-identified women for safety and trauma-related reasons. In 2012 they opened a second house, allowing them to host sixteen women. In addition, they are in the process of opening an Emergency Center with nine beds. The emergency center is a low-barrier housing-first model for people victims and survivors of human trafficking. Some shelters require a person to produce an

ID or pay \$5 a night, which many people may not have. The low-barrier model means they can accept anyone into the shelter regardless of money or ID. There will still be rules in the shelter, but low barriers help alleviate hesitation in one's decision to seek shelter.

The goal within Eden House is to have their residents “graduate” within two years. Graduation can occur after the survivor has met certain milestones. Many survivors have goals they are working towards while in the program, such as attaining a General Education Development (GED), pursuing higher education, or—the primary goal—getting a job. Another major goal for survivors is securing their own housing. For survivors of human trafficking, a huge barrier to getting out of “the life,” as many in the anti-trafficking community describe sexual commercial exploitation, is the ability to secure affordable housing. Eden House's housing-first component removes that barrier by giving the survivors a safe and free place to live, allowing them time to get on their feet financially and mentally.

Eden House provides survivors comprehensive recovery services, including internal and external trauma therapy, recovery programs for substance use disorders, and behavioral and physical health services. They also provide programs on budgeting and financial management, and daily living skills, like cooking. Some survivors only stay for a short time, while others stay for two years. The interviewee described the population as very transient. Eden House also conducts training and prevention programs with schools, and they are currently trying to prepare a program with the New Orleans Police Department and jail.

A significant takeaway from my conversation with Andy was that both themselves and Eden House expand the legal definition of human and sex trafficking. Force, fraud, or coercion into commercial sexual exploitation is necessary for the exploitation to be legally considered sex trafficking. Under Eden House's expanded definition, if someone is without food or shelter or does not have money for drugs and they resort to sex work to get money for those things, Eden House would consider them eligible for admission as a victim of sex trafficking. Although such cases do not involve coercion by another person, this victim's circumstances coerced them to participate in sex work. As stated before, sex work and sex trafficking are different. Sex work is a profession when a person consents to trading sex for money. However, if the person feels trade sex for money is their only choice for survival or a particular need, is it actually consensual? This is a question Eden House poses and adopts within its own definition. However, it does not fit into the federal legal definition of sex trafficking.

You are coerced by your circumstances. Maybe you have other choices. I am not trying to get into free will or choices. But we would consider an 18- or 19-year-old Who is been on the street turning tricks, for whatever reason, to be eligible for admission if they choose they do not want to do that anymore. Because usually, they are using sex, and they are being paid for sex, and they are sort of forced into it for survival. A lot of times, however, there can be a partner, and I do not want to say all pimps are male. But you can have a partner of whatever gender Who is saying to you got to go out and earn the rent money this month. Now I do

not know if that falls into the official legal definition. But when I said poverty, I think what I meant was survival.

Andy and I met while I was in New Orleans, and they gave me a residence tour. A lot of what we discussed was restating what we talked about in the interview. Nevertheless, seeing the residence brought a whole new perspective. The houses were next to one another, so I could see both. In the house, there was a large community kitchen and living room. Each bedroom housed two people. When going from one house to the other, there is a large fence between both houses. The fence was damaged, and we slid through the damaged part to get to the other house. Andy told me the fence damage happened during Hurricane Ida in August 2021. They were still going back and forth with the insurance company, trying to get their fence claim processed. While the fence is not a critical need for Eden House to keep its operations going, it is an example of how natural disasters resulting from climate change can create prolonged damage. In the case that the insurance companies do not pay for the fence, that is another expense Eden House will probably have to consider budgeting for, and the funds spent on that are funds that could be used for other necessities.

Relatedly, when we were touring the house, Andy showed me some of the rooms the women stayed in. In one of the rooms, there was a bucket placed in the middle, and construction was taking place. The roof was leaking in that room, so it was getting repaired. Andy pointed this out as another issue created by the heavy rains. The nonstop heavy rain can be too much for a roof to handle, so it leaks. Heavy rain could be from the general tropical climate of New Orleans, but some participants in this research chalked it

up as something related to climate change. When the roof leaks in one of the rooms, that not only disturbs the residents and tacks on an additional repair expense for Eden House, but it also has the potential to shut down a room. If that room shuts down, Eden House will not throw the residents out, but it does interrupt their routine and feelings of safety.

I expect many people reading this can relate to their bedroom being a place of safety and solace. Imagine not having that feeling before coming to Eden House and then getting those feelings of safety and solace when given a bedroom. If rain damage interrupts that, I can imagine that could bring on feelings of apprehension. Andy continuously emphasized the importance of the residents keeping to their routines when we were together. Routines are necessary for working towards their goals. Climate disasters, they described, interrupt that routine and seriously obstruct residents' progress.

Mary of Free NOLA, Inc.

Mary is a native Californian who runs a faith-based anti-trafficking organization in New Orleans called Free NOLA. She was another service provider I met in New Orleans who invited me to her office space. I felt fortunate that both she and Andy invited me to their spaces. Like many of the other service providers, they must be careful with whom they share their locations. If the location of their residence/office is shared with the wrong person, it could put themselves and the people they serve in danger. I still feel a deep sense of gratitude that they issued me that level of trust. When we spoke, Mary discussed how Free NOLA formed in 2013 in response to the Super Bowl coming to New Orleans. The Super Bowl is considered a significant event that drives human trafficking. The influx of people, primarily men, to one area causes people to assume that

the demand for sex increases. Therefore pimps, or as Mary appropriately calls them, perpetrators, meet that demand with the supply of sex-trafficked victims.¹⁷¹ There are debates in the anti-trafficking community about whether sex trafficking actually increases during the Super Bowl. Studies have found that sex trafficking is something that is already present but sensationalized by the media because of the Super Bowl.¹⁷² Regardless, through the creation of Free NOLA, Mary and her team trained around 53,000 people on indicators of human trafficking and how to intervene. They primarily help victims of sex trafficking but also labor trafficking too. Free NOLA has continued to train and educate people about one's susceptibility to human trafficking and how to spot indicators of human trafficking. They bring these education courses to schools, churches, motel housekeeping and hospitality staff, social workers, restaurant and business personnel, health care and medical staff, and the trucking industry. All these people are vital intervenors in human trafficking.

I think one of the key components of what we do, regardless of what service, what industry you are in, or what service provider organization you are in, is education. Health care workers, motel staff, educators, you name it, everybody, churches... everybody can take part. And if your city is known to help victims of sex trafficking, guess what, we will have more women that want to come out. And more women that will be able to be helped.

¹⁷¹ Eleanor Goldberg, "Attorney General: Super Bowl Is Largest Human Trafficking Incident In U.S.," HuffPost, February 3, 2013, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/super-bowl-sex-trafficking_n_2607871.

¹⁷² Lauren Martin and Annie Hill, "Debunking the Myth of 'Super Bowl Sex Trafficking': Media Hype or Evidenced-Based Coverage," *Anti-Trafficking Review*, no. 13 (September 26, 2019): 13–29, <https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.201219132>.

Another primary intervention strategy that Free NOLA participates in is outreach. Mary and her team go out into New Orleans and intersect their lives with workers in strip clubs, massage parlors, motels, and brothels. On Friday or Saturday nights, 3-8 women volunteers go to Bourbon Street with a male escort and bring gifts to the women working in the clubs. New Orleans is known for its open-containers laws, meaning people can walk around the city and drink alcohol in the open. Bourbon Street has many bars and clubs, and the open-container laws often bring people looking to party to that street. The Free NOLA team brings de-thorned roses and cards to the women in hopes that the gift will begin a relationship with the women and let them know someone is there for them. As Mary puts it, they do not condemn or shame the women for the work they do, they just want to offer the women love. The cards say, “We hope this small gift brightens your day. It is our simple way of saying we love you, no strings attached. Let us know if we can help you.”¹⁷³ Their contact number is listed on the back of the card. The hope is that if they are being exploited, these people now know someone who cares about them and can turn to them for help.

Mary and her team also approach streetwalkers and participate in this same outreach. Streetwalkers are sex workers that search for customers on the street. Streetwalking, as Mary described it, has gone up since Hurricane Ida. Doing sex work out in the open heightens the risk that the person will be arrested for prostitution. Many places described above where sex work takes place closed during the COVID-19

¹⁷³ “Outreaches & Intervention - Free Nola,” June 30, 2021, <https://freenola.org/outreaches-intervention/>.

pandemic. The closing of these establishments drove many people to either find other income streams or move their sex work online.

As restrictions around the pandemic eased and clubs and other businesses started to open, some women returned to clubs. However, Mary said they were not finding as many women as they had previously in the clubs and on the street. Once Hurricane Ida hit, there were even fewer women in the club, but many more women were on the street. When I asked why Mary gave two reasons, one is that walking the street is easier than dancing in the club. There are more requirements for working in the club. Another major contributor to people moving to the street is that there is just less of a focus on the women by law enforcement. Like many cities in the U.S., New Orleans is also experiencing spikes in violent crime.¹⁷⁴

I just met with one of the law enforcement officers yesterday that was in an area where they do have streetwalkers. Because of the crime element here in the city in the South their focus is not on the women. Their focus is on how do we protect our citizens, not let us help the women. So, in other words, it is up to organizations such as what I oversee to help the women. And you know, we have churches that go out and do prayer walks...well if you are not going to offer any services to the women that are walking the street, all you are doing is causing law enforcement to add a patrol car and not making any benefit for the women, I mean if everybody would take one of these women and actually mentor them, walk with

¹⁷⁴ Erika Ferrando, "Violent Crime Continues to Spike in New Orleans," wwltv.com, April 6, 2022, <https://www.wwltv.com/article/news/crime/77-homicides-114-carjackings-so-far-in-2022-in-new-orleans/289-ff79511c-035a-47a1-af56-fa6867ac0784>.

them. If they need drug rehab, take them to a rehab center, but also connect with them... every individual needs somebody in their corner. They need somebody that says, you can do this, and I would say that probably none of them have that.

When I asked Mary what the pimps did when she and her team approached streetwalkers, as the pimps are often right by the women, she said the pimps do not realize what they are doing and call them “church ladies.”

Mary and Free NOLA think that the sex work industry and sex trafficking often intersect and, in some cases, can be the same. Like Andy, Mary posed the question that if these women were in circumstances where sex work did not have to be their mode of survival for themselves and their families, would they still choose to do it? Mary thinks not. To be clear, Andy did not believe sex work and sex trafficking was the same thing in the way Mary seemed to believe, but they did also raise the question of how sex work can morph into sex trafficking. That seems to be the primary stance Mary takes: she sees the two as highly intertwined. Thus, she brings her intervention efforts to where she thinks that intersection is occurring.

Noah of Louisiana Youth Child Trafficking Collaborative (LYCTC)

Noah is the regional child human trafficking coordinator for the Orleans region. The Orleans region includes the Orleans, Jefferson, St. Bernard, and Plaquemines parishes. He is one of nine coordinators in the state. As mentioned previously, LYCTC is part of a state-wide intervention model that was started by the Governor’s office in

collaboration with the Louisiana Alliance of Children's Advocacy Center.¹⁷⁵ The LCYTC seeks to improve outcomes for child and youth victims of both sex and labor trafficking by using the multi-disciplinary team (MDT) model. The MDTs are a group of professionals from different disciplines that coordinate intervention practices to prevent trauma for children and families and improve general services. The idea is that through the MDT model, anti-trafficking service providers can better coordinate trafficking cases and thereby improve communication across different agencies.¹⁷⁶

Several anti-trafficking service providers referenced this MDT model and how much easier it makes managing cases. The role of Noah's position as regional coordinator is to be the central contact for and work between different partners involved in an anti-trafficking case. These partners could be law enforcement, judicial, victim services, and victims themselves within that coordinator's regional area. They are also responsible for supporting and improving the multi-disciplinary responses to child and youth trafficking. The idea is that through these central points of contact and coordination of system responses to trafficking cases will improve and be more effective.¹⁷⁷ The LCYTC also conducts community outreach for human trafficking training. This training, like others, educate community members and those who work with vulnerable community members on identifying human trafficking and interventions for human trafficking. Like many anti-trafficking service agencies, they have implemented trauma-informed care into their services and training. Trauma-informed care seeks to realize the impact of trauma on a

¹⁷⁵ "LACAC."

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

person and, through that, better understand the paths to recovery. Another part of trauma-informed care is actively avoiding re-traumatization.¹⁷⁸

Noah grew up in New Orleans. He previously worked for another major anti-trafficking organization within New Orleans called Covenant House before coming to the LCYTC. One central theme that came across during my visit with Noah in New Orleans over food at a local joint called Fatma's Cozy Corner was the concern with outsiders of New Orleans. This concern came across in two ways. First, New Orleans is a destination city for tourists. With its open-container laws, Noah described out-of-towners as feeling "liberated" because they could do things they probably could not do at home, like drink openly. That reality, along with New Orleans's sex work industry history and its tourist attraction events like Mardi Gras and Jazz Fest, ingrains that feeling of liberation for people visiting New Orleans. Additionally, tourists have money. Noah describes this below:

There are places you can just drive up, get daiquiri alcoholic beverages, and drive off. So, a lot of people come here and they can drink alcohol and walk down the street and they feel very liberated. So that along with a plethora of strip clubs and stuff like that. And for residents here the minimum wage in Louisiana is very low. I think it is like \$7.25, which is one of the lowest in the country. I think it is Tennessee and us with the two lowest in the country. And then you have people who come from New York and California with excessive amounts of money, and

¹⁷⁸ "Trauma-Informed Care," accessed September 24, 2022, <https://www.traumapolicy.org/topics/trauma-informed-care>.

you got people here who need money so that is kind of how the relationship builds. New Orleanians serve out-of-towners in one way or another for money.

The entry of outsiders with money mixed with the need for money from New Orleans residents can create an exploitable circumstance for those in need.

The second issue that Noah brought up with those not native to New Orleans is the mass exodus of service providers when something like a hurricane hits. Anti-trafficking organizations sometimes are made up of young people who graduate from the universities and colleges in the area, like Tulane, LSU, and Loyola and stay to work with an anti-trafficking organization upon graduating. A lot of these young people are not native to New Orleans, so when a hurricane hits, they leave to go home to be with their families. Besides their job, they have no deep ties to the city, so it is easier for them to leave. Unfortunately, that leaves massive holes in providing services to people within New Orleans. There are not enough service providers to cover the ground that needs covering with helping survivors and victims of sex and other forms of trafficking. As Noah describes, their hearts and minds were in the right place to provide services to marginalized groups, but when a hurricane comes, they leave because they have another place to go.

Arika of Sexual Trauma Awareness and Response (STAR)

Arika is a native Louisianan who is the Vice President of Social Change and Communications at STAR. When I first reached out to her, she shared that she taught a college class that overlapped with my topic. This fact signaled to me her awareness in already thinking about these issues. Her organization is rooted in Baton Rouge but has

New Orleans and Alexandria hubs. They started as a Stop Rape Crisis Center division of the East Baton Rouge District Attorney's Office in 1975. In 2012, the agency became a separate, non-governmental nonprofit and adopted the name STAR. With this transition, STAR expanded its services and increased education and outreach efforts. They serve children who have been sexually abused, adults who have been sexually abused as children, and those who have faced sexual harassment, sexual battery and assault, rape, and attempted rape. Within those populations, they also serve survivors of sex trafficking. As Arika describes it, sexual violence on a continuum starts as verbal harassment or unwanted touching and ends with rape, assault, or sex trafficking. Sex trafficking is an extreme side of sexual violence.

A central philosophy of STAR is treating sexual violence as a public health problem rather than just a concern of the individual who experiences the trauma. Underneath the umbrella of this philosophy, they conduct education and training programs with the primary goal of prevention. These education programs seek to challenge "attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in our culture that normalize, excuse, condone, and perpetuate violence and oppression."¹⁷⁹ These attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of oppression are foundations for sexual violence and, within that, sex trafficking. Along with STAR's outreach and prevention programs, they also offer survivor support services. These services include free advocacy, counseling, and legal services.

¹⁷⁹ "Our Story | STAR," accessed September 24, 2022, <https://star.ngo/our-story/>.

A significant narrative within Arika's interview is frustration around the different cultural arms that interact with sex trafficking and climate change. When we spoke, one of the first things Arika said was that the first barrier to my project is convincing the people of Louisiana that climate change exists. She sees responding to climate change as a prevention strategy for sex trafficking. However, the first obstacle is convincing a politically red state like Louisiana to collectively focus more on responding to climate change as a prevention strategy. Climate change is too politically contentious of a topic for there to be any traction. Along with that, another barrier she sees to addressing sex trafficking and climate change is siloed thinking in Louisiana around both topics.

You have climate change people who are only concerned with the science side of it. And then you have people in sex trafficking thinking only about the victim after the victims become the victims. And There is literally no connection between the two things, and I do not know why because, to me, it is so obvious and glaring. It is an overall lack of critical thinking across the state. Or, just a refusal.... so sex trafficking is the Governor of Louisiana's wife's pet project. When somebody at such a high rank in the state is not making that connection to climate change, it is only because There is just like this refusal to accept climate change. Because otherwise it is very obvious and it is nothing new. I would say for Louisiana, yes, we have more and more hurricanes now, so this is an increasing risk, but we have always had hurricanes. Louisiana has always been a place where people are vulnerable to sex trafficking. And the two have always collided. It should be an urgent concern right now, but it is not.

Climate disasters and sex trafficking have always been things that have existed in Louisiana. Climate change is making climate disasters worse, and Arika sees this as something that should be paid more attention to as it increases the risk to vulnerable populations.

Arika also brought up an interesting point about something I termed the “nonprofit dilemma.” To discuss the dilemma, she referenced a book called, *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*, by INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence.¹⁸⁰ A major barrier to seeing the relationship between sex trafficking and climate change is exploring nexus is not being funded. Nonprofits work off donations and grants and, as they see it, not many grants are being given to them to work on such a relationship. As Arika puts it:

the biggest flaw...the tragic flaw of the nonprofit industry is that you have to really pull at someone's emotions to get them to give you money. They have to feel guilty. And people do not feel guilty about something that has not happened yet. So, having this conversation, you are in between. You are reacting because it is already happening, but you have to change the system. You have to change some systems and some processes to address the intersection of climate change and sex trafficking. And that is a proactive response so getting somebody to pay for something proactively is just not the American mindset.

¹⁸⁰ INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex* (Duke University Press, 2017), <https://www.dukeupress.edu/the-revolution-will-not-be-funded>.

A lot of what Arika talks about and strives for is changing communities to be more proactive in preventing bad things from happening in the first place. For example, hurricanes will happen no matter what, but if there are prevention measures that can be taken to curb them from becoming more intense and deadly, should we not be taking those measures? Likewise, with sex trafficking, rather than waiting for trafficking to occur and then responding to address that person's trauma, should we not take steps to prevent that trauma from occurring in the first place? Should we not address the cultural norms that allow such trauma to occur? These are questions that Arika is primarily concerned with and why she is in the job of prevention. When I asked her one of my questions, "what would enhance your ability to support survivors of sex trafficking who have also been impacted by climate change," part of her response was, "I would say we need to prevent that from happening in the first place."

Clair of The Dragonfly Harbor, Inc.

Clair is a co-founder, Vice President, and Clinician at The Dragonfly Harbor, Inc. They offer similar services to other anti-trafficking service providers, like case management and connection to community resources, trauma-informed counseling, and community outreach and training.¹⁸¹ They serve adult and child victims of human trafficking. Clair started our discussion by pointing out the symbolism behind their organization's name. They wanted something that felt relatable to the community they serve. When figuring out names, they were toying with the idea of something to do with

¹⁸¹ "Our Services," The Dragonfly Harbor, Inc., accessed September 24, 2022, <https://www.thedragonflyharbor.org/general-6>.

butterflies. However, they felt their client base might not be able to relate to feeling like a butterfly because butterflies start in the safety of a cocoon. Unfortunately, much of their client base does not relate to that. Many have yet to feel safe or be launched from a safe place. Clair and her co-founder learned that, unlike butterflies, dragonflies do not have a warm and wonderful start. Dragonflies begin their life in dirty, nasty, stagnant water, and eventually, as they develop, they get a chance to fly. As Clair puts it, they wove that into their treatment program. Despite many of their clients not having the best start, and they may feel as if their start was “nasty and gross” or “embarrassing and shameful,” it does not have to end that way. They are dragonflies and have the right to fly. The “Harbor” portion of the name represents the two different sides of the program. One side is trauma-based and meeting people where they are, no matter what stage. The second side is assisting survivors with going back into the community and helping them find a safe harbor somewhere.

As mentioned previously, The Dragonfly Harbor is an outlier in this research as it is not based in Orleans Parish or East Baton Rouge Parish. However, Clair is an anti-trafficking service provider from Southern Louisiana with experience in both parishes, and her perspective of being from there but working in North Louisiana is valuable. Given the partnership between organizations across the state, she works closely with other organizations in East Baton Rouge and Orleans, and climate disasters are often when that partnership is highly utilized.

When a climate disaster, like a hurricane, strikes another part of the state, it is hard to find service providers within that area. Those service providers have themselves

and their own families to take care of. So, places like Dragonfly Harbor that are less affected by the hurricane will get mass requests to see clients from that disaster-affected area or requests for them to volunteer to help. Some people are evacuated up near them, so there ends up being a new population with potential survivors to serve. Additionally, emergency services are often transferred down to those affected areas. Hence, there are fewer law enforcers and emergency services than usual in their region, therefore, fewer eyes on crimes like sex trafficking. So, while a climate disaster in Louisiana may not directly impact Clair and Dragonfly Harbor, she discussed how she feels the effects since she is often asked to fill in the service gaps left by providers in South Louisiana taking care of themselves. Like I said in the beginning, anti-trafficking service providers do not exist in a vacuum; they are more than just their job and passion. They have to take care of themselves, and sometimes a climate disaster can make that fact a reality.

A major theme in Clair's interview is the lack of attention paid to rural parts of Louisiana. By rural parts, she does not mean just around herself up in the north, but also rural parts surrounding the city areas of Baton Rouge and New Orleans. With most of the anti-trafficking service providers being in the city and with such a need within those cities, the outskirts are often left behind. Clair described what they call the Florida Parishes to talk about this dynamic. The Florida Parishes are eight parishes in Southeast Louisiana. They are the parishes of East and West Feliciana, East Baton Rouge, Livingston, St. Helena, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, and Washington.

If you look the Florida Parishes up, you will see we get a lot of trafficking cases from there because There is really nothing there. It is a very impoverished area;

many hurricanes hit it, and they do not get a lot of aid or support because they are not in the New Orleans area directly. They are kind of in this limbo between New Orleans and Baton Rouge. And there is just nothing there. There are no jobs, there is a very poor education system, and there are no resources. I had a social worker reach out to us from there saying that she had one counselor willing to see people for trauma, and there is a waitlist a mile long because they cannot get service providers in that area, and she was willing to do telehealth because she was like the fact is I cannot encourage someone to move here, because most of the people cannot support or sustain anything because it is just so impoverished.

When talking about the Florida Parishes, Clair also discussed how Louisiana generally does not have enough services, especially mental health services. Providers in the cities are already overwhelmed, so when it comes to these rural parts, they fall through the cracks. As Clair alluded to, those cracks grow wider every time a natural disaster hits as they receive less disaster recovery and relief services and are pushed into further vulnerable situations.

Participant X – Past anti-trafficking service provider

Participant X was the last person I interviewed. Participant X was a past anti-trafficking service provider who did direct service. However, they still work in anti-trafficking, mainly focusing on prevention and education. Participant X chose not to share their name or where they provide services. Nevertheless, they are passionate about informing prevention programs through holistic means and ensuring that they target system-level responses.

Similar to Arika, Participant X pointed out that the political nature of discussing climate change often informs the lens through which people view climate change issues in Louisiana. Outside of political leanings when talking about climate change, they said service providers primarily talk about natural disasters and the increased rates of those natural disasters because that is how climate change affects them the most. They may not use the term “climate change” to talk about its effects on sex trafficking, but they definitely notice the effect natural disasters have on their clients and the victims of sex trafficking.

I think climate change is perceived in Louisiana through the lens of natural disasters because that is what we see the most tangibly. And I definitely think that service providers see disasters as, if not a driver of trafficking, something that causes a lot of vulnerability.

From Participant X's perspective, service providers and general Louisianans may not use the exact term “climate change” to describe its effects on vulnerable populations.

Participant X also mentioned that they think New Orleans has a better understanding of climate change due to its blue political leanings, meaning Democrat leaning, and harsher experiences with natural disasters. For example, East Baton Rouge Parish has more of a red culture, meaning Republican-leaning, and does not experience natural disasters like New Orleans does. Thus, they may not understand or view climate change in the same way New Orleans does.

This chapter introduced the seven anti-trafficking service providers and six organizations I interviewed for this research. Each offers similar services but shapes their

responses to sex trafficking differently. Some are more on the preventative side, others are more on the response and direct services side, and some are tasked with coordinating service providers and ensuring service providers can give the best possible care to survivors of sex trafficking. Each person provided nuance to the story of sex trafficking and climate change, and each had their own message they were trying to get across about this story. While this chapter gave a little taste of how anti-trafficking service providers view climate change's role in sex trafficking, the following chapters reveal the narratives from my interviews with them and how they understand climate change's role in driving sex trafficking. The next chapter introduces how service providers used causal stories within their narratives. It also describes how service providers defined vulnerabilities.

Chapter 4

Causal Stories and Vulnerability

Causal Stories

When I began this project, I was nervous about what the anti-trafficking service providers would think of me, an outsider, coming in to collect their narratives and learn about their experiences. I was not from Louisiana, in fact, quite the opposite, I am from Maine, and I had only just begun institutionalized work in anti-trafficking efforts. As mentioned, exploring sex trafficking can be misguided with sensationalist and exploitative practices. Given that, I could see how a service provider may be apprehensive about speaking to an outsider about their line of work. However, my surprise, most of them were open. The impression I got is that the interview allowed them to consider a phenomenon they do not always have time to consider and advocate for initiatives they want Louisiana to adopt and invest in.

Clair and I wound up on the topic of my not being from Louisiana, and she remarked:

It is kind of neat that somebody from the outside is actually giving attention to what's happening here. The problem that we have always had is that not a lot of people give attention to this because they focus on other hotspots in the country. People are like yeah, Louisiana always gets hurricanes, but they do not really

understand what it entails or what it is like. And so, to actually have someone from an outside perspective saying there are gaps here, there are things that have to be done. And Louisiana is a weird state in the sense that the people can say it over and over again, and they typically won't do something until they get embarrassed about it. Somebody else starts calling them out, then sometimes something will get done. Again, kind of why we always follow Texas, because once Texas kind of embarrasses us in an area, then we do something about it for whatever reason. Only Texas has more resources and better education than we do.

From her perspective, it is not just the populations she serves being marginalized but Louisianans in general. They can advocate around specific issues, but until people from the outside home in on the issues Louisianans are trying to bring attention to, their pleas will be ignored. Of course, Clair is also speaking from her own political and social perspective, so it could be that she perceives her political and social groups as not being listened to. The service providers discussed how the populations they serve are both victims and survivors of structures and social conditions surrounding them. They also framed themselves as being victims of them too. With this, they are victims in their personal and professional lives.

In her book, *Speaking of Violence*, Sara Cobb points to the roles of victim and victimizer as important to conflict dynamics. Conflict narrative speakers will “punctuate the action or employ their narrative so that they formulate themselves as victims; their suffering, independent of their wealth or power, is real in that they are not heard by their

Others.”¹⁸² When they are not heard by their Others people become “victimized by their inability to alter the conditions in which they speak.”¹⁸³ Clair’s remarks of being ignored situate her in this victim role. But who is the victimizer? Who are the Others? Service providers describe what they do as an “uphill battle” because they are coming against politics, lack of funding and resources, lack of knowledge and awareness, and intersecting social concerns, which they see as reinforced by these Others. Narrating their experience like this reveals why they believe it is challenging to move their initiatives forward. In this case, they are victims of the story they are telling. This is not to say Clair feels as if she has no agency, as the act of telling the story she is a victim of is a form of agency.

As mentioned in chapter two, many of the narratives they told were shaped by their causal stories. In telling their narrative, they identified harms and struggles and, in part, attributed them to the actions (or inactions) of others.¹⁸⁴ In using Barbara Stone’s typology for causal stories, some of the service providers framed their stories with what she called “inadvertent cause.” This type of cause is a purposeful action with unintended consequence, like neglect.¹⁸⁵ For example, a lack of investment in vulnerable communities is a purposeful action that has unintended consequences, like the increased vulnerability to sex trafficking. In telling these causal stories, harm can be situated in the parties that take the purposeful action.

¹⁸² Sara Cobb, “Chapter 2: Conflict Narrative Structure and Relational Dynamics,” in *Speaking of Violence: The Politics and Poetics of Narrative in Conflict Resolution* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 58-59.

¹⁸³ Cobb, 58.

¹⁸⁴ Stone, “Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agendas,” 282.

¹⁸⁵ Stone, 285.

Many service providers' stories had similarities and agreements about causes of harm. They reinforced their stories separately without knowing what the other said. To maintain causal stories, they need to be continuously fought for and sustained.¹⁸⁶

Working in the same industry and having similar goals and agendas seemed to reproduce similar narratives about the cause of harm. Cobb noted, "coherence is itself a narrative that positions persons as victims of the conflict stories they tell; it permits analysts and practitioners to see how persons are not 'free' to tell any story of their choosing, but are, at some level, chosen by the stories they tell."¹⁸⁷

I do not think the service providers want to have to tell these narratives of caused harm. However, these are not narratives they have entirely chosen. In telling these causal stories of harm, they hope it will change the causes of harm by highlighting the causes of harm that need fixing. Through causal stories, service providers can challenge the existing social structures and order that may serve as causal agents. By identifying the causal agents, they can also assign responsibility to a person (or entity). By assigning responsibility, the hope is forcing entities to either stop an activity or do it differently, compensate their victims, or face punishment for the harm. Service providers, through telling causal stories also legitimize and empower their role in being the "fixers" of the problem. Lastly, through telling causal stories, they can create alliances with people who have experienced the same victimization at the hand of the causal agent.¹⁸⁸ In telling causal stories, service providers could describe the problems outlined in their narratives

¹⁸⁶ Stone, 293.

¹⁸⁷ Cobb, "Chapter 2: Conflict Narrative Structure and Relational Dynamics," 67.

¹⁸⁸ Stone, "Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agendas," 295.

as not just accidental, but something that is human-caused and controlled. In assigning responsibility, they can hopefully assign where the reform needs to occur.¹⁸⁹

In the following chapters, I identify several primary narratives from our discussions about climate change and sex trafficking. The anti-trafficking service providers pulled on many threads about the broader phenomenon of sex trafficking. They also addressed different debates around climate change. For them, this question around understanding climate change's role in driving sex trafficking highlighted an overarching narrative about how natural disasters create conditions for sex trafficking.

Service Providers' Understanding of Vulnerability

Before addressing each narrative pulled out of the interviews and the causal stories that came out of each narrative, it is important to discuss how the service providers understand vulnerability. We talked a lot about vulnerability in chapter one. To understand how service providers narrate their perspective of climate change and sex trafficking, we need the frame of how they understand vulnerability and how vulnerability feeds into those perspectives. In my interviews with each anti-trafficking services provider, they mentioned conditions that make a person vulnerable to sex trafficking. While sex trafficking can happen across any social economic sector, certain socioeconomic conditions make people more vulnerable to sex trafficking. Much like the vulnerabilities mentioned in chapter one, they described conditions of poverty making a person vulnerable to being sex trafficked. Conditions of poverty can cause housing

¹⁸⁹ Stone, 299.

insecurity. Not having a safe and secure place to call home can make a person reliable on poor-intentioned people for shelter. A trauma history can also make someone vulnerable to being taken advantage of. That trauma is often linked to a familial trauma history like child abuse, child trafficking, neglect, ostracization, or parental or guardian substance use disorder. Some of these conditions are adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Service providers use the ACEs scale to determine a person's risk for victimization and perpetration. A higher score, meaning more adverse childhood experiences, the higher risk they are for chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance use disorder.¹⁹⁰

Mirroring what was noted in chapter one, service providers identified people with substance use disorders and mental health issues as being vulnerable to being sex trafficked. Historically marginalized and disenfranchised populations, including people who are Black, Asian, LGBTQIA+, undocumented, non-English speaking, disabled, and Cajun, were identified by service providers as being vulnerable. People with little or no education are also at risk. People located in rural areas, where intervention and prevention services are scarce, were also identified as vulnerable. All these vulnerabilities often intersect and exacerbate each other. For example, Noah described:

a lot of youth who are LGBTQ from those more rural, more quote unquote country parts of Louisiana where they are very conservative. It is definitely the Bible belt. They may feel that they are not getting enough support from their family. Their family might be Christian or Catholic or Southern Baptist, so they

¹⁹⁰ “Risk and Protective Factors | Violence Prevention | Injury Center | CDC,” January 5, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/riskprotectivefactors.html>.

come to New Orleans, and they come to New Orleans looking for a community. They look for a place to stay and a place to live, so they come here in a very vulnerable place. When I was working at Covenant House, I would see a lot of youth who are LGBTQ would just catch the greyhound bus and come to New Orleans and have no place to stay, so they would stay at the Covenant House. And that was kind of like a transition period because Covenant House is across the street from the French Quarter. They would just cross the street, go to the French Quarter, and try to look for communities, for people that could help them out, and that is how to get into the life.

Noah identified multiple vulnerabilities here. A person who is LGBTQIA+ and ostracized and rejected by their family for their identity can be vulnerable to sex trafficking if they lack community and relationships because of that ostracization. If they are from a rural part of the state, they may have less access to services that can help them with this family rejection. They might have been kicked out of their house or chosen to leave in hopes of finding a community elsewhere. This could cause them to become houseless and in need of shelter. They may find shelter with something like the Covenant House. This person may stay there and choose to receive help from the Covenant House, or they may leave and search for community elsewhere. A trafficker could see these needs for shelter, acceptance, and community. The trafficker will fill that need but at a cost. That cost can be sexual exploitation.

Vulnerabilities create a need. Needs need to be met for survival, and traffickers know this. As all the service providers mentioned, traffickers know what to look for when

picking out a person they can take advantage of. Identifying a vulnerable person is the first step in “grooming” steps. Andy described it:

I do not know what to call it is like some sixth sense. Although it is really not that hard. You probably would have it, I have it. If you are looking at a group of people, who is the vulnerable one? There is sort of this sixth sense of knowing that person looks vulnerable for whatever reason. So, I am going to befriend that person or, if I have an established stable, girls in my group, I am going to get one of my girls to befriend this person and we are going to have a good time. We are going to be friendly.... There is a grooming period that goes on. And a lot of times, that morphs into a trauma bond. And everything is great and lovely, and we are having fun. Oh, he bought me a purse or an outfit. And then maybe if this person is already on drugs, there are drugs or maybe they are not and are getting introduced... So, there is this period of grooming for someone who is vulnerable and maybe has this trauma history where he or she was never paid attention to or was abused. It is very skillful. So, then you are in there and then the idea of “hey this is what we do” and then they are introduced to turning tricks for money. And then it often gets to be what they would call an intermittent reward-punishment system. Like we are having a good day and oh you did not bring in enough money, so I am going to hit you. It is the cycle of abuse.

“Trauma bonding” is a term coined by Patrick Carnes that describes a deep connection between a victim and their abuser. It is the “misuse of fear, excitement, and sexual

feelings” to entangle another person.¹⁹¹ These intense feelings can cause a person to feel bonded to their abuser. A sense of loyalty to the abuser builds despite the abuse, which can compel the victim to continue the relationship.¹⁹² This bond is often created and maintained, despite the abuse, with what is called the “honeymoon phase.” This phase happens both at the beginning of the relationship and in between bouts of abuse where the abuser shows acts of kindness. These acts of kindness, in the beginning, create that loyalty and bond with the abuser. These acts of kindness between cycles of abuse can make a victim feel that all is well again, and abuse will secede. However, the abuse does not secede and begins again and, so goes on the cycle.¹⁹³ Needs open the window for this cycle of abuse to occur. Fulfilling the need can begin that honeymoon phase and lead to a path of abuse that can take the form of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking.

With this understanding of some of the ways the service providers understand vulnerability, we can view the following sections with this vulnerability frame. Each section will continue to discuss each service provider’s understanding of vulnerability and deepen the discussion on how vulnerability relates to sex trafficking and climate change.

¹⁹¹ Shirley Davis, “Recognizing and Breaking a Trauma Bond,” PACEsConnection, April 24, 2020, <https://www.pacesconnection.com/blog/recognizing-and-breaking-a-trauma-bond>.

¹⁹² Parents Against Child Exploitation (PACE), “What Is Trauma Bonding?,” accessed September 28, 2022, <https://paceuk.info/child-sexual-exploitation/what-is-trauma-bonding/>.

¹⁹³ “Cycle Of Abuse,” *Envision* (blog), accessed September 28, 2022, <https://www.envisioncounsellingcentre.com/innerpage/resources/partner-abuse/cycle-of-abuse/>.

Chapter 5

Natural Disasters Creating Conditions for Sex Trafficking

An overarching frame that service providers' narratives fed into was the way natural disasters, like hurricanes, create conditions for sex trafficking. In their interviews, the service providers' understandings of climate change's role in driving sex trafficking rested on how they see natural disasters creating conditions for sex trafficking. This chapter serves as a baseline for how service providers observe the effects of natural disasters on sex trafficking. Much of it supports the literature in chapter one. However, their specific understanding of these issues provides an opportunity to learn how they work with and think about them. Learning about how they view the way natural disasters affect sex trafficking helps set up the following chapter on issues they come up against in anti-trafficking work in the context of natural disasters (and climate change). This chapter pulls out a few threads that service providers touched on in how natural disasters create conditions for sex trafficking. The first thread is about how vulnerabilities to trafficking can be created and exacerbated by evacuations and displacements. The second thread has to do with how natural disasters interrupt services. Service providers' inability to continue intervention and prevention services because of a natural disaster creates conditions for exploitative parties to step in to fill the needs that service providers could

provide. The last thread is about the issues of outsiders coming in to fill those service gaps and assist with disaster response and rebuilding.

Vulnerabilities, Evacuation, and Displacement

The way the anti-trafficking service providers describe natural disasters' role in the before-mentioned vulnerabilities is that much of those vulnerabilities already exist outside of climate disasters. The issue is that natural disasters, which we discussed, can be intensified by climate change and exacerbate vulnerabilities. Noah gave an account of this:

They come from unstable households, mostly single-parent households that already have government intervention in some way, shape, or form. You might have child protective services or DCFS (Department of Children and Family Services) involvement. They are literally barely keeping their nose above water. So, if a hurricane comes and disrupts that and the power is out for two days, all the food industry is gone, there are no grocery stores you can get food from, and you are living in New Orleans East, which is a very bad part of town, and you meet this guy who is giving you money, you build trust. We know from the grooming process the way pimps create a trauma bond with these people is by giving them what they need while also abusing them. So, they do become extremely more vulnerable, especially those coming from the foster care system and those who do not have a supportive community or family members.

Noah here describes a situation where a person's situation is already extremely volatile, increasing their vulnerability to sex trafficking. When a natural disaster crashes into that volatile situation, it can almost act as the straw that breaks the camel's back. Those existing vulnerabilities, like an unstable home life, are exacerbated. The lack of stability and inability to fulfill their basic needs during and after a natural disaster can open the door for ill-intentioned people to fulfill those needs.

Other service providers pointed out that natural disasters not only exacerbate vulnerabilities but can also create them. For example, Arika described a common situation of people experiencing a natural disaster:

A common thing to happen, and you will see this a lot, I mean I have done it, is you might need to evacuate because your powers out, but your family friend is not so you have 30 people piling up into a house for a week. And you have multiple families coming together and multiple mental health backgrounds coming together, and so you can obviously, see the spike in sexual violence in those moments. The sex trafficking comes higher into play when you start getting into the shelters.

As Arika describes it, natural disasters often force people into congregate settings. These congregate settings contain different people with different intentions. The congregate settings, like shelters, can serve as recruitment spaces and can also serve as trauma-inducing environments. Trauma was identified as a vulnerability to being trafficked as it creates a need. That need could be validation or someone to "heal" the trauma. In this instance, a natural disaster can lead them into a situation that could create trauma,

especially for minors. Many service providers mentioned what I termed “natural disaster trauma.” This trauma can manifest in a lot of different ways, as there are a lot of points during a natural disaster where trauma can occur.

Similar to what Arika described, this type of natural disaster trauma can occur through displacement. Depending on the hurricane's strength, residents may be forced or choose to evacuate. For example, they may evacuate to a different city or state. They may evacuate their home to a main shelter point if they cannot evacuate New Orleans. Most of the service providers discussed how the Louisiana Superdome, which was a central point of shelter during Katrina, was also a place that created trauma.

The possibility of child abuse certainly can increase. Although that may not lead directly to a sex trafficking situation, it is certainly part of what we were talking about in terms of the preconditions that make somebody vulnerable that can, down the road, lead to trafficking. The other thing is, for example, during Katrina, people were in a couple of different places in town. There was a Superdome, and there was the Convention Center. And I am not sure we could say this was sex trafficking. But it was sexual exploitation. I mean, women were getting raped. It was just awful. There were thousands of people, there was very little security. There were not a lot of provisions, and if there were some, they were depleted very quickly. It was almost like a survival of the fittest kind of situation. At one point, the toilets were not working because they were overflowing. I mean it was just awful. Then I think at some point some random individuals would just prey on other people, and I think at one point there was

sort of gangs. I remember one story about how there were a group of people, and the men formed a circle and put the women and children in the middle so they could avoid getting attacked. So, it kind of descended into savagery. And I hate to say this because I love my city....

Andy, in this story, described the situation during Katrina, where around 30,000 people were housed in the Superdome. After five days of being there, these people evacuated the Superdome due to it sustaining damage that put those people at risk. In the five days people were sheltered there, they had experienced and witnessed much of what this participant described. Resources like food, water, and baby formula, were slim. Sanitation had failed, and some people were sleeping in their urine. People, including a child, were raped.¹⁹⁴ Like Arika, Andy here described situations where natural disasters can create vulnerabilities to sex trafficking.

Further on displacement and evacuation, Andy also described how they affect existing survivors of sex trafficking and how that can retraumatize survivors. Hurricane Ida served as an unfortunate example of that for them:

For Ida, the storm itself had a lot of wind damage. But we were just coming off of trying to keep everybody safe from COVID, and that had loosened up, but we had eight women in a House and even though we had a little generator, we had to evacuate them to Mobile, Alabama. So that meant that staff had to bring them there, and we had to find a place that could accommodate eight women. We were

¹⁹⁴ Scott Gold, "Trapped in the Superdome: Refuge Becomes a Hellhole," The Seattle Times, September 1, 2005, <https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/trapped-in-the-superdome-refuge-becomes-a-hellhole/>.

very fortunate; we found a faith-based group that was able to help. But it meant that staff had to go there, and we had to figure out how to provide for them. I can tell you that it was really traumatic for those women. They were out of their routine; we had a lot of trouble. So, we were gone for two weeks before the electricity came back on here. Got back and three of the women decided they were leaving the program, another one or two stayed for a while, and then one that was having a lot of mental health problems while we were there had to leave to go get services. So, that is really not about trafficking, that is just about anyone with any kind of mental health problem, especially if you have been traumatized by a storm before in your life and a lot of people in New Orleans who lived through Katrina have that kind of trauma.

Andy's description of Hurricane Ida exemplifies how displacement from their sense of safety can be a retraumatizing point for survivors. While this situation does not necessarily directly lead to someone being trafficked, displacement and evacuation do interrupt the intervention services that are supposed to restore survivors.

According to Andy, keeping a routine and schedule is essential to the survivor's progress. At one point, they could not keep up with the daily activities they planned for the women, so many stayed in their rooms for long periods. I mentioned how a room could be a haven but using that room for isolation makes it impossible for service providers to provide rehabilitative and restorative services like therapy, exercise, and life-skill-building programs. If the service providers cannot effectively offer those services because they are not at their home base with the tools and time to do so, there is not a lot

of reason for the women to come out of their rooms. When the restoration services are interrupted, the survivor's progress can take a hit, and they can be at risk of going back to the life.

Participant X, in their interview, described a similar situation but, on the flip side, where current survivors do not have the resources or capacity to evacuate or even prepare for a natural disaster which can put them back into the life. A survivor may be on the path of restoration by getting housing, a job, or going to school. As a direct service provider, Participant X has reached out to survivors to ensure they are aware of resources and evacuation efforts and prepared before something like a major hurricane makes landfall. Even with that outreach, though, when a natural disaster is approaching, survivors are already struggling to build their lives and heal from the trauma of being trafficked. Because of this, survivors may not be in a place of privilege to be able to prepare for a disaster the way others might. They may not have the mental space, time, or money to stock up on food and water or to leave their job and home to evacuate. Survivors may also lack access to working Wi-Fi to research resources that can assist them during a natural disaster.

On top of that, even if a survivor tries to access anti-trafficking service providers' services, natural disasters often disrupt those services. Because the power is out and phone lines may be inoperable because towers are down, survivors cannot access services, and service providers cannot track down survivors to ensure their safety. Survivors' susceptibility to returning to the life can increase if they lack access to resources and re-experience trauma via a natural disaster. A natural disaster that disrupts

security and stability may cause survivors to return to their trafficker because they met that need for security and stability.

This is not to say that because someone is a survivor and they experience further trauma from something like a hurricane, they will go back into the life, but it certainly is a risk. Whether a person chooses to evacuate or not (or is forced to stay for various reasons), either situation poses a risk. Arika described a running joke in South Louisiana, “if you evacuate five times a year, only the one time is going to mean you really needed to.” It is a risk to evacuate because a person may evacuate for no reason, and that is time taken away from their job and income. Additionally, kids’ schooling is interrupted, so their educational progress can take a hit.

Within this conversation on evacuation and displacement, service providers also raised the issue of people being forced to or choosing to evacuate. Evacuation can create vulnerabilities. Service providers mentioned issues around the chaos of evacuation and how children can be separated from their families. In addition, there are issues around people being sent to a new city that is unknown to them. People lose their networks and community, and someone’s community can be what keeps them safe. If they do not have anyone looking out for them and are a person of little means, the vulnerability to being propositioned or taken advantage of can increase.

Andy mentioned that historically many of their major hurricanes hit at the end of August. Both Hurricane Ida and Hurricane Katrina hit on August 29th.¹⁹⁵ Hurricane Laura

¹⁹⁵ “2021 Hurricane Ida: Facts, FAQs, and How to Help,” *World Vision* (blog), September 22, 2021, <https://www.worldvision.org/disaster-relief-news-stories/2021-hurricane-ida-facts>.

made landfall in Louisiana on August 27th.¹⁹⁶ People who are on government assistance may be running out of money at the end of the month, so if they evacuate, they are often doing it with the limited funds they have left over. Andy talked about the fuel of that economic situation being added to the fire of being an unknown place with no network. That volatile environment can cause people to be more easily taken advantage of due to their desperation:

What I am saying is if you are asking what the effects of climate are, then to me, this migration, no money, no place to go really, you do not know where you are going - for the people who were just loaded onto buses they may have wound up in Oklahoma. Not that just because you are in Oklahoma, you are going to become a victim of sex trafficking. But you could if you did not have the means not to do it or if someone comes along and befriends you, helps you, and provides for you, and then suddenly you have to do something to repay them.

When people are forced to travel to an unfamiliar location with limited resources, traffickers have an increased opportunity to exploit that vulnerable situation. Participant X emphasized this point by saying:

Disasters increase vulnerability and increase displacement, which is itself a vulnerability. Both of those can contribute to an entrance into trafficking. Traffickers know this. They target those populations.

¹⁹⁶ “2020 Hurricane Laura: Facts and How to Help,” *World Vision* (blog), August 27, 2020, <https://www.worldvision.org/disaster-relief-news-stories/2020-hurricane-laura-facts-how-help>.

Evacuation and displacement from a natural disaster drive many vulnerabilities.

Traffickers will harp on those vulnerabilities for their benefit.

Clair also mentioned that even when the government steps in to help, that help can still push people into vulnerable and desperate situations:

When Hurricane Laura happened, and it devastated all of Lake Charles, they moved people into hotels, especially people that were dependent on welfare and Medicaid. Several of the hotels were in New Orleans, and the state was paying because FEMA always takes a long time and getting disaster assistance from the federal government takes a long time. So, the state was actually putting these people in hotels and paying their hotel bills, and we were seeing some very interesting things going on because they did not necessarily have access to money or things were not being given quickly enough. They were being housed, but they needed food and to pay their bills so, we saw lots of drug use, trafficking, and other things like people selling dogs. I mean, it was getting desperate because the money just does not come quickly in disaster recovery.

In this case, the government provided shelter for people in need, but like the Superdome during Katrina, other basic needs were not being met. Hence, people made choices to fulfill those basic needs. Trafficking is a way to make money. In these situations where traffickers also need money, they target vulnerable people who also need money and fill that need by commercially sexually exploiting them.

Disruption in Services

With all these issues with displacement and evacuation also comes an issue that almost every service provider mentioned in their interview: natural disasters also affect the lives of service providers and their services. During non-natural disaster times, anti-trafficking service providers intervene in vulnerable situations to prevent or stop sex trafficking. They are a resource that people who are being exploited can turn to for help or shelter. They go into communities and train people to detect and prevent trafficking. Service providers also go into communities and try to change the norms and mentality that condone sexual exploitation. They connect survivors to legal services and frequently spearhead accountability efforts for traffickers. Through those accountability efforts, survivors may receive some semblance of justice.

When a natural disaster hits, many of these anti-trafficking efforts are interrupted or stopped at a time when their efforts are often most needed. S Service providers also lose power and the ability to communicate. That makes it difficult to reach the people who are in need. In addition, service providers must worry about their staff and their own safety during a disaster, so they may not have the time to reach out to those in need. Even if they could reach out, many in need may be unreachable. Further, many service providers may also be unreachable due to power outages. As Arika puts it, their “hands are very much tied.” Noah remarked:

When a hurricane comes it is really hard to provide services to people because a lot of people are unstable, you cannot drive on a lot of the roads, it is not like you can just get around the city, it is not like there is power... If a hurricane comes

magnitude of category 4 or higher only the National Guard is activated, all the other government services stop... trying to get ahold of a DCFS (Department of Child and Family Services) worker during that time is a struggle.

The effect natural disasters have on the road, and power infrastructure prevents critical services, like DCFS, from providing vital services for intervening in abusive and exploitative situations. Mary remarked that outreach efforts are disrupted, and therefore intervention takes a pause:

I mean we are still doing our outreach. Until there is a hurricane, we will continue doing what we are doing. But you will not find as many women in the club's massage parlors motels or even street walking.

When a severe hurricane occurs, Mary's ability to access potentially trafficked people is limited. The limits on her ability to access victims prevent her from being able to connect them to services. Further on this point and the points on displacement and evacuation, Mary and Clair remarked that the displacement and evacuations from hurricanes also make it difficult to track and find people who need services. Mary reflected:

when you stop and think about what has happened and you reflect on pre-pandemic and pandemic. Then you have a hurricane right on top of it and, in the midst of all that, you also have a tornado, you do not always reflect on it, but you realize you see with your own eyes who are missing from the city. Who are the ones that we are not able to get to right now? Who did I know yesterday that I do not know today?

Natural disasters move people and can move them from services and the intervention that anti-trafficking services provide.

While Mary highlighted the loss of people to help after a natural disaster, Arika remarked that they are inundated with calls and reports in the aftermath. There is very little they can do at the moment, but after things settle, they see a spike in sex trafficking and sexual violence reports. They have actually added a hurricane and extreme weather spike on their calendar where they know reports of sexual violence will increase:

we know that there are certain times of the year when there are lulls. There is a huge lull between Thanksgiving and Christmas, people get pulled into their families. Because people get pulled into their families, things happen, so we have a spike in late January. Then we have a bit of a lull because it gets into party season in New Orleans. But after Mardi Gras, we have a spike. Then it goes down again, and towards the end of the school year, there is another spike. Then we have a hurricane spike just like we have in those other cases. And I do not know if it is fair to call it a hurricanes spike because sometimes it is related to extreme rain and heavy flooding, flash flooding... I think that is almost the worst, which we are seeing more and more. It is on our calendar, that this is a spike in our year.

The inability to assist victims due to service pauses during a natural disaster, combined with the volatile situations created by natural disasters, drives these spikes in need once services resume. Arika and Mary could be seeing this from different vantage points since Mary's intervention services often happen in places where sexual exploitation occurs,

like clubs and motels. Hurricanes can close those businesses and make finding people who need help difficult. As she mentioned about COVID-19 closing businesses, just because it is not seen does not mean it is not happening, as it can often move to a different state or online.

Further on the issues with tracking people, Clair commented:

you will see a lot of people on the ground giving immediate help to the people there, but you do not see a lot of people actually getting the help to the people that left, so they are running out of money, they are running out of resources, they do not have a way back, and then you get this desperation and no one is tracking them, no one is making sure these kids go back to school, no one is making sure they are okay. So, what we tend to see here is the familial trafficking, where they start selling themselves or their children.

When service providers lose track of those vulnerable populations, it is difficult to intervene and create awareness around and provide services. Less access to help and services can be catalysts to sex trafficking.

The last point to make about services being interrupted by natural disasters is that many service providers mentioned that while their services are interrupted, so are other services. Priorities shift when a disaster hits. People shift gears into providing immediate life-saving services. Law enforcement cannot pay attention to the crimes, like sex trafficking, occurring as their eyes are elsewhere. DCFS also shifts its gears and provides other services like getting people food stamps, shelter, and water. As Clair put it:

Disaster is busy. The police are busy. They cannot come. People are trying to be rescuers and provide immediate assistance to people in lethal and immediate danger, so they are not going to come when you call them and say hey so and so was mistreating me. We have not quite figured out how you get that to work.

When the system is overwhelmed dealing with a disaster, and someone does reach out, how do you make sure that they get help and how do you make sure they can connect to the right people?

When natural disasters hit, many moving parts can make someone vulnerable to being sex trafficked (and labor trafficked). Pre-existing vulnerabilities can be exacerbated and open further windows of need. They can put people in traumatic situations. They can remove people from their community and safety networks. They can interrupt the services that both intervene and prevent sex trafficking. It creates a volatile situation from the anti-trafficking service providers' perspective. This volatile situation can derail many efforts these providers have undertaken. I will conclude this section with a note Clair made:

That is where I think climate kind of comes in. Every time you get something built up, especially in South Louisiana, you get hurricanes and disasters and flooding, and then we are kind of back at square one because all those things get squashed because then we go into disaster assistance.

Disaster Response and Rebuilding

To conclude this chapter, I want to briefly bring in one last point that service providers had about natural disasters creating conditions for trafficking. Natural disasters

create conditions where services are paused, and people leave their homes, community, and security. In the way natural disasters can empty a place, they also give reason to fill a place with outsiders to fill in service gaps. As we know, not everyone evacuates, and when services are disrupted, other entities need to fill in where there are those service gaps. After a disaster, disaster relief and response organizations come in to rebuild and provide services to people. Service providers emphasized that while this outside help can be pivotal in filling in service gaps, it can also contribute to how natural disasters create trauma.

A few community-based disaster relief organizations assist in their community recoveries, like the Cajun Navy and the Cajun Army.¹⁹⁷ ¹⁹⁸ Anti-trafficking service providers hailed the Cajun Navy as a group that is pivotal to disaster relief, recovery, and community assistance. Both groups contain people who are local to the area and therefore trusted by community members. They also are usually the first people on site due to their locality. The issue with non-community-based disaster relief organizations is that it is difficult to tell who is well-intentioned and who is not. Arika pointed this out:

And immediately, you have an influx of people here to help, and those people are not always best-intentioned. So, after every hurricane, if you go to the airport about two weeks later, you will see a bunch of people with like red or orange hats, either working for Red Cross or some organization. So, you have this influx of people coming into the city to supposedly rescue it. But they do not necessarily

¹⁹⁷ “Home,” Cajun Navy Foundation, accessed September 30, 2022, <https://cajunrelief.org/>.

¹⁹⁸ “The Cajun Army | Volunteer Disaster Recovery,” accessed September 30, 2022, <http://www.thecajunarmy.com/>.

have a relationship with the city. There is a lack of accountability suddenly with all of these people, and they almost have authority over all of the humans that are in a shelter or that are in need of food and water. And so, this weird power dynamic comes into play. You have really young people who have all of these new random adults around them, and so there is like, oh, I am supposed to trust them, they are wearing an orange shirt or a red hat, and therefore they are working with that organization. There are just so many opportunities to poach the community.

Outsiders coming into the cities posed as disaster relief can open doors for trauma. As Arika puts it, new power dynamics come into play with unknown people and entities overseeing services that survivors of disasters need. It can be difficult to tell who is genuine in their services and who could be taking advantage of an insecure moment. Another issue with outsiders coming into the city is that they also serve as new clientele for traffickers. Service providers mentioned that when a natural disaster occurs, there is a need to rebuild and repair what was damaged. With new people coming into the city to help with that rebuilding, there is new demand and clientele, and traffickers will meet that demand by targeting vulnerable populations. We saw this point made in chapter one with the literature about natural disasters and trafficking in Louisiana. The need for rebuilding is also where labor trafficking becomes a major issue with natural disasters. A need for people to rebuild the city, rebuild homes, and rebuild businesses must be met. Traffickers will meet that demand by labor trafficking people to do that work of rebuilding while

they reap the profits. Natural disasters across the board create environments for exploitation.

This chapter overviewed how service providers see natural disasters as creating conditions for sex trafficking. They see natural disasters as creators of vulnerabilities and exacerbators of existing vulnerabilities. Both can contribute to individuals' increased vulnerability to sex trafficking in disaster situations. One way that service providers see natural disasters as creating and exacerbating vulnerabilities is through displacement and evacuation. On one side, displacement and evacuation remove a person from their home, job, school, safety networks, and local resources. On the other side of displacement and evacuation is the issue of people being unable to evacuate and left in a place where they are in danger because of the natural disaster, but also because they have no access to resources and services. The lack of access to resources and services brings in the subsequent concern service providers brought up about their services being interrupted because of natural disasters. When they cannot provide services, they cannot do the intervention and prevention work needed to stop and prevent sex trafficking. They cannot act as a resource for filling vulnerable populations' needs. This creates opportunities for traffickers to step in and fill those needs and begin the process of grooming and recruitment. Lastly, with this idea of being unable to provide services during a natural disaster, service providers briefly mentioned that non-local disaster relief and response organizations often come in to fill those service gaps. While mostly well-intentioned, some ill-intentioned entities may take advantage of vulnerable situations.

In the following chapter, I lay out the primary narratives that came out of discussing this overarching issue of natural disasters creating conditions for sex trafficking. Within each narrative were causal stories about how the issue — whether it be barriers to providing services, gaps in prevention, or shortcomings in knowledge and awareness — can be remedied. These narratives highlight their reality, which is informed by their work with each other and the survivors of sex trafficking. Their values as individual people also inform these realities. Their own agendas, like within causal stories, characterize their narratives. In these causal stories, service providers emphasize where improvement is needed in these issues. For them, these improvements would not only allow them to serve populations better but also help prevent sex trafficking generally and in the context of natural disasters.

Chapter 6

Narratives of Addressing Service Barriers, Prevention, Awareness, and Existing Responses

Service providers want to succeed in their job and the communities they serve. They want to live in a world where being successful in this work is not an “uphill battle.” For that to happen, points of harm need to be remedied. On a smaller scale, resource allocation needs to change, law enforcement cooperation needs to change, and the level of awareness and prevention needs to change. For success to happen on a broader scale, the service providers discuss culture and how dimensions of culture could change to feed into those “small scale” changes. This chapter discusses service providers' narratives about addressing these issues, as well as how these narratives feed into how natural disasters create conditions for sex trafficking.

Barriers to Providing Service

The narratives of service providers about how natural disasters create conditions for sex trafficking and the strain they place on service providers' responses were, in part, framed with causal stories about service gaps. These gaps are barriers to providing effective services within and outside of the context of natural disasters. The causal stories within this narrative emphasized capacity and resource constraints as the cause for barriers in responding to the needs of survivors generally and their needs during disaster

situations. To break down these barriers, service providers highlighted needs that ranged from more general funding to specific needs, such as a generator to keep residential services afloat to needs from community partners in holding traffickers accountable. For them, the inaction of different entities in focusing attention and investment on these needs contributes to the barriers to providing services.

Service providers generally noted the need for more funding to provide better services. The lack of funding caused barriers to service. Specifically, service providers emphasized the need for more funding for safe housing options for survivors of sex trafficking and people impacted by climate disasters. In general, the lack of safe spaces prevents current victims of sex trafficking from having a safe place to go, access services, and begin the path to restoration. In the context of climate disasters, the lack of safe spaces after a disaster opens the possibility of needing a safe space and lends itself to the before mentioned way that displacement creates conditions where sex trafficking can take place. The inability to access safe housing options after a natural disaster and therefore causing displacement, could also move victims of sex trafficking farther from accessing local community services. Noah noted, in general:

The state needs more funding to give to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, which provides houses to people. We need to give more funding to programs like Covenant House and Family Justice Center, which provide these services. We need more resources.

With further funding for safe spaces, service providers can better serve the communities who need those safe spaces. Safe spaces give service providers greater access to people

who need their services. If survivors have a safe place to go, they can receive other services that lead to restoration paths. Clair also emphasized the need for more safe space:

I definitely think as far as immediate needs, we immediately need more safe spaces. We have got to have funding for more safe places to go to.

When I asked Mary what would help enhance her ability to support or help survivors of sex trafficking who have also been impacted by climate disasters, she also emphasized the need for safe housing:

I think the one thing is finding them a place to be able to stay and not have to pay for. In other words, where's the safe location where you can go, take your children, and be safe and know that nobody is going to ask anything of you.

In this way, these causal stories describe the lack of investment in safe housing options creating the unintended consequence of people being unable to access services (and for service providers being unable to access people who need their services). Having a safe place to go where “nobody is going to ask anything of you” serves as a bridge for getting people to services.

Participant X elaborated on this point of needing more safe housing options by saying there is a need for more housing and more safe housing options for different populations. Both within and outside of the disaster context, the housing options do not adequately serve people with disabilities, severe mental health issues, or substance use issues:

We do not have a lot of housing options, diverse housing options. We have to improve our services around survivors with disabilities, with severe mental health, who have a history of substance abuse. So, there are key intersections. We have to do a better job of providing services for them, so they are not going back to the life.

Participant X's interview also emphasized the need for more funding, but within this quote, they framed this issue as something service providers need to improve. Service providers need to be more intersectional in the way they provide services. Of course, as service providers frame it, they need further funding to be intersectional. Nevertheless, Participant X's point is important because while it is up to governmental structures, at the federal and state level, and other funders to invest in safe housing options, service providers are also responsible. They must ensure the housing options they create and offer are intersectional within and outside natural disaster contexts.

While not in the scope of this project, but nonetheless a significant finding, Participant X's point on the lack of intersectionality relates to the service providers' emphasis on the little attention given to victims of labor trafficking. The less attention given to these victims and survivors serves as a barrier to them receiving services as services are not as readily available to them. Labor trafficking is a highly under-reported form of trafficking, as we have seen, but as we have learned, just because it is not reported does not mean it is not happening. Climate disasters create many opportunities for labor trafficking to occur with the rebuilding process, as mentioned previously. The service providers emphasized the need for more concerted attention to victims of labor

trafficking as well as more prevention mechanisms for vulnerable populations. On this point, service providers recognize the harm their industry causes by not giving more attention to victims of labor trafficking. While service providers often situate harm on entities outside of themselves, their narratives were also sprinkled with an acknowledgment that their industry needs to do better in contributing to harm through inaction.

Returning to the issue of funding, in terms of preparing for natural disasters, from Noah's perspective, if there was more funding, then they could better prepare when a disaster hits. They could prepare the resources that they know will be needed when a natural disaster hits:

Every time a natural disaster hits, we are always talking about what we can do better next time. We just need more funding; we just need more resources. That is the bottom line. There need to be resources in place.... with more funding we could hire more staff members. With more funding, we could buy more transportation materials, buy more generators, you can set aside money for food, clothes, and even stuff like baby formulas.

Noah here pulled on a similar thread that Arika mentioned in the following quote with there simply not being enough staff to meet the demand, especially after a natural disaster where there are those spikes in calls to them:

When we get service back up and running, I would say the main impact on our organization is the impact on our staff. With every one of those spikes, it is our staff that really takes the brunt of it.... they are working more than 40 hours a

week; they are trying to locate resources to help people. All the resources are scarce at that point, so that becomes an issue. The hospitals are inundated, so going in for rape kits can be a problem.

From Noah's and Arika's point of view, barriers to providing services in the natural disaster context link to the fundamental needs they have in general for providing services. In a climate disaster context, they need more funding to access the resources and staff necessary to meet the demand after a natural disaster hits. Currently, they do not have adequate resources and staff to meet that demand. The lack of resource allocation and funding harms the community in a way that service providers cannot meet the needs of the people they serve. Being unable to meet their needs place people in vulnerable situations where they have needs that are not being met and could be met by a trafficker.

Andy mentioned that it is easy to simply say they need more funding because that is a given. However, in the context of providing adequate services during natural disasters, Eden House's lack of a built-in generator served as a significant barrier to their continuing services. That was their answer when I asked what would help enhance their ability to support survivors of sex trafficking who also were impacted by a climate disaster:

This is a very strange but practical answer and we are trying to get money for this right now, a built-in generator. Then you would not have to be moving people or not as much or not as often. So, if the electricity goes out, and they are already talking about that right now because it is hurricane season, and our energy company has already said that if there is a hurricane, you have to expect and

prepare for at least two weeks with no electricity. Practical that if we had a generator for each of our houses and we did not have to pack those women up and take them someplace and disrupt their whole routine.

From Andy's perspective, a built-in generator would help service providers, and their clients avoid evacuating. By evading evacuation, they can prevent the retraumatizing evacuation conditions mentioned in the previous section. The restoration progress of survivors of sex trafficking largely depends on avoiding the harm of re-traumatization.

Another point within the service providers' narratives around barriers to services in the context of natural disasters was the breakdown in communication systems. Clair to this point mentioned the need for better communication systems:

I wish there was some kind of better awareness or networking. This is something we have talked about, but we have not quite figured out how you do it whenever Internet and systems are down. How do you put out there that if this is going on and you need assistance, these are the people to reach out to? Because we put it out as much as we can, but it seems like it does not get through to the people that need it. And then how do you get them access when phone lines are down? Because literally during disasters, you will go to use your cell phone and it will say emergency calls only and shut off. So, how do you get help to them or have them actually access the help when they do not have a way? And that is the part where we have not quite figured out a solution.

When a disaster happens, communication systems break down both between service providers and between victims and service providers. When that communication is interrupted, reaching out to get or provide services is difficult. To continue providing

services, service providers emphasized their need for improved communication systems and a communication strategy during disaster situations. The current lack of both serves as a barrier to their ability to continue services.

The last point that came out of the service providers' narratives around barriers to providing services that service providers brought up relates to the intersection of law enforcement, the law more generally, survivors of sex trafficking, and service providers. The anti-trafficking service providers recognized law enforcement's important role in identifying victims and connecting them to services. Sex trafficking is a crime that falls under a police officer's purview. Some service providers discussed working very closely with law enforcement to identify victims and get them help. As noted in Mary's intro, she recognized the capacity constraints of law enforcement. Despite working with law enforcement and understanding capacity constraints, some of the service providers I interviewed discussed a deep frustration with law enforcement cooperation in identifying survivors and connecting them to services. Clair described frustration with law enforcement charging trafficking cases as something else and these charges following survivors well into adulthood:

Most of our victims are charged, and we do not have expungement yet. So, they still keep them, and that has been a huge barrier. And we have been trying to push for expungement, and they will say without a charge we cannot do an investigation which is a lie, but that is what they say. Victims still hold the charges. I have victims I worked with that have now been out of the life for years. They are thankfully established and functioning well, but they still have to hold on

to their charges and explain that every time they go for a job interview....They will charge them with something like delinquency, or they will find some way to charge them, and a lot of times they will say oh, without a charge, we cannot confirm they are a victim. Yes, you can. There is still a lot of stigma around it, and often it is seen that these are just bad kids.... So, that is another layer of Louisiana you may want to look into. There is this legal issues that we face fighting trafficking. How do you help someone rehabilitate effectively if you then cannot find them employment because they have charges that happened while they were in the life. The charges may not necessarily be prostitution-related, but maybe they have other felonies that they were forced to commit. But now, they cannot get them expunged.

Within Clair's story about the lack of cooperation from law enforcement are narratives of barriers to services. Service providers discussed the desire to get survivors the mental health care they need and deserve and other services that lead them to the path of restoration, like employment. When time needs to be taken out to fight charges they received while being sex trafficked, that takes away from the time they could spend on restoration and is a barrier to those services provided. The harm perpetuated by the action of charging victims of sex trafficking for crimes creates consequences for restoration progress. Without restoration, the possibility of victims reentering the life increases. Thus, the harm of sex trafficking will continue.

This point on law enforcement acting as barriers to services was often related to the larger issue of laws around sex trafficking and the failures in prosecution, which,

again, they believe can serve as barriers to restoration. There are different viewpoints on laws around sex trafficking and sex work. As we know, sex work is illegal. A few providers seemed to be supportive of creating something like the Nordic Model.¹⁹⁹ This model would decriminalize sex work, so both sex workers and survivors of sex trafficking would stop catching charges for the situations they choose or do not choose. But the law would criminalize the pimp and purchaser of sex (the John). Andy was the only person to mention the Nordic Model specifically, but the others did mention the stipulations it contains. Clair noted that Texas enacted something worth replicating:

We have tried for a while, and it looks like it may happen in the next year to get a John program in place so that the buyers are being held accountable to try to stop this. Texas actually got one passed recently, and the first offense is no longer just a slap on the wrist or ignored. First offense, you are put in the buyer program and have to go through a diversion program. We are trying to get one in Louisiana. Now that Texas has one, maybe. Because sometimes, they will follow whatever Texas does, but it is had a lot of pushback. We have had people in high places say things like, why should we prosecute somebody that just wanted a blow job. And it is that lack of acknowledgment of what is really occurring.

Failure of law enforcement to charge sex trafficking for what it is and cooperate with getting survivors services and failure of the state to prosecute people that exploit

¹⁹⁹ Women's Coalition For the Abolition of Prostitution, "What We Know About The Nordic Model," May 22, 2014, <https://nwac.ca/assets-knowledge-centre/CLES-What-We-Know-About-the-Nordic-Model.pdf>.

survivors for their benefit were noted as causal factors for barriers to survivors getting services and restoration. Participant X noted:

We have to prosecute cases. We have to see it all the way through so that victims who want justice want that accountability can get accountability. And then those traffickers and perpetrators can be held accountable.

Accountability for sex trafficking and sex crimes is a major sticking point for service providers. They found their ability to restore survivors of sex trafficking sometimes hinged on this factor of whether a case was prosecuted or not, which often seemed to fall in the “not” category. In the context of climate disaster, service providers brought in this point to narrate the need for accountability metrics after a disaster when there is a lacking rule of law, as seen after Hurricane Katrina. In addition, service providers mentioned the increase in sexual assaults after disasters and cases where law enforcement contributed to the abuse of victims. An essential part of healing for victims is having truth and accountability for the people that harmed them.

In this narrative of barriers to service, the causal story of harm is situated within law enforcement and prosecutors. Their inaction in identifying victims of sex trafficking and prosecuting the individuals that exploited them perpetuates harm. Failure to arrest and prosecute traffickers and Johns gives the nod to them that they can continue exploiting people without consequence. Thus, they will, and prevention will become harder to pursue by anti-trafficking service providers. The lack of attention given to the crime of trafficking also speaks to cultural norms that condone the commercial sexual exploitation of particular people. These people are often overlooked in society.

In this section, the service providers described how the inaction of investing in safe and diverse housing, disaster preparation and response resources, better communication systems, and accountability measures serve as barriers to providing adequate services both in the context of natural disasters and outside of that context. These barriers to providing service contribute to the way natural disasters create conditions for sex trafficking. From the service providers' perspective, addressing these barriers outside the natural disaster context would make it easier to break them down within the natural disaster context. The cause of harm seems to begin with the lack of action taken before natural disasters by governmental entities, funders, service providers, and law enforcement. Natural disasters exacerbate this inaction. The causal stories in the following section on gaps in prevention echo the ones about inaction told here.

Gaps in Prevention

Prevention is a crucial part of anti-trafficking efforts and is the focus of more and more anti-trafficking organizations. Preventing sex trafficking in the first place can prevent the harm caused by it. Given this increased attention to prevention, narratives about prevention came from interviews with service providers. All their service agencies had a service arm of prevention. Every provider emphasized the need for improved efforts from all corners in prevention. Much like addressing the barriers to providing service requires addressing the causes of those barriers, taking up prevention requires focusing on gaps that make prevention unattainable. From the service providers' perspectives, these prevention gaps contribute to ways natural disasters create conditions for sex trafficking. As service providers understand, the baseline for those gaps can be

characterized by unaddressed vulnerabilities like the ones mentioned previously. Within their causal stories around gaps in prevention, service providers specifically brought up frustrations with the state's lack of investment in vulnerable communities. The causal stories told by service providers emphasized that the failure to address vulnerabilities perpetuates the harm caused by these vulnerabilities, like the increased potential for falling victim to sex trafficking. In other words, there are consequences of purposefully not taking action to address vulnerabilities.

Andy described unaddressed vulnerabilities as “upstream causes.” Upstream causes include early-childhood trauma, poverty, insecure housing, ostracization, unaddressed mental health issues, and poor education. The same factors were mentioned in chapter four's vulnerability section. Unaddressed upstream causes are a gap in prevention. Andy describes this below:

Why are we not looking more at early childhood education? Why are we not embedding better behavioral health programs and schools at a very early age? Why are we not able to assist families who are struggling with mental health and addiction? I mean, the upstream causes to me are the early trauma, the social conditions that lead to force, fraud, and coercion, like poverty... I think it is political and, again, going back to capitalism. I do not know why it is such a hard sell to get people to want to put money into early childhood education in a way that is not punitive and judgmental. Some people, not all people, but some people who do not have children do not know why their tax money should go to support early childhood education. I do not understand. And this is getting quasi-political

because it seems as though some sense of civic duty or the common good does not seem to be very valued anymore. I think it is political issues, I do. And everybody has the right to their political viewpoint and what they think matters, but it does not make sense to me. I think for people who are really worried about the financial aspects of this, it would behoove them to know it would be cheaper for them and for all of us to be throwing money at that than throwing money at a drug crisis or prisons. We are throwing money after it is too late. Why are we not throwing money down there? I do not get it. Put the money where the long-term benefit is. It is a cost-benefit analysis. Put some money where in the long run, you are going to get more bang for your buck. That is capitalism too.

Within this causal story around gaps in prevention, Andy points to the harm caused by not addressing upstream causes. Andy here commented that, in part, the failure could be because taxpayers without children do not want their tax dollars to go to something that does not affect them. In this case, the harm is in the hands of the state and childless communities. In reality, I do not think Andy solely believes childless communities are the reason for less investment in upstream causes. However, this is undoubtedly a representation of how service providers' causal stories situate harm in particular camps.

Andy does emphasize the point here on how communities are not giving enough concerted attention to these upstream causes and how this lack of attention can perpetuate harm. Andy commented that such actions to address upstream causes could be considered “grandiose.” By not taking grandiose action, the prevention of sex trafficking is difficult

to achieve. Prevention from any exploitation or further traumatization is difficult to achieve.

In addition to long-term prevention needs, service providers' frame their narratives around gaps in prevention in the context of natural disasters. For example, in the previous chapter, Andy discussed how major hurricanes harshly impact many people who receive government assistance as they occur at the end of the month when money is running out. This, to them, signals a need for safety net services that can aid in prevention. For example, Andy emphasized:

If people had a way before the hurricane to be able to get a little extra money so they could get in their cars and leave.

Andy again describes the inaction of having financial safety net services available as contributing to potential harm. If a person does not have money to put fuel in their car and leave, their lives are not only in immediate danger from the natural disaster but their need for relying on other parties for safety increases. This latter point opens doors for exploitation. According to service providers, failure to address the lack of safety net services causes harm.

Further on safety net measures, similar to barriers in providing services, providers' narratives around gaps in prevention touched on the need for safe and secure housing. Arika provided nuance to the housing issue in terms of climate change and natural disasters by pointing out the widespread energy insecurity Louisianans face:

Another driving force that affects people's housing security, and I think this is in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and central Louisiana, is that there is energy scarcity

and energy insecurity pretty much throughout hurricane season. So, you are looking at June 1 till November 30. That becomes a huge issue, and I think that also increases someone's likelihood of being vulnerable to sex trafficking....

Entergy and energy insecurity is a growing issue that really needs to be watched, especially by someone in what you are looking at, because this directly impacts the home. And anything that directly impacts the home in that way and in an already poverty-stricken area will increase sex trafficking and sexual violence.

Entergy is the sole provider of energy in Louisiana. Some may remember the name from the February 2021 freeze in the southern U.S. in Texas and Louisiana. The freeze caused blackouts in Texas, leaving people without power and, therefore, without heat amidst cold temperatures.²⁰⁰ As a result of the February 2021 freeze, Louisianans saw an increase in their energy bills. The increase was meant to compensate for the storm's damage and strengthen its grid which sustained damage from the February 2021 storm and various hurricanes.²⁰¹ Arika references this increase when also mentioning that people cannot afford the energy bills. Arika references this increase when also mentioning that people cannot afford their energy bills. Arika here narrates how energy insecurity can create housing insecurity which we have learned creates vulnerability to sex trafficking. In the context of climate change, a lack of safety net services for energy security serves as a barrier to prevention.

²⁰⁰ Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, "Final Report on February 2021 Freeze Underscores Winterization Recommendations," November 16, 2021, <https://www.ferc.gov/news-events/news/final-report-february-2021-freeze-underscores-winterization-recommendations>.

²⁰¹ Kellie Sanchez and Nick Gremillion, "Entergy Louisiana Customers to See \$8 Increase Due to 2021 Weather Events," <https://www.wafb.com>, February 23, 2022, <https://www.wafb.com/2022/02/23/entergy-louisiana-customers-see-8-increase-due-2021-weather-events-lpsc-says/>.

Enveloping the lack of safety net services in a natural disaster context, service providers' narratives about gaps in prevention addressed the broader issue of ineffective disaster preparedness. Ineffective disaster preparedness serves as a gap in prevention. Service providers told causal stories that situate the responsibility for disaster preparedness and safety net services that aid in prevention in governmental structures. For example, participant X described the shortcomings in federal disaster preparedness for undocumented victims of sex trafficking. They described the need for safety net services for people who need T visas. T visas give non-U.S. victims of human trafficking who are identified in the U.S. the ability to stay in the U.S. and work for up to four years if they complied with assisting the investigation and prosecution of their perpetrator(s).

²⁰² They mentioned that there is an issue with people who are undocumented or undocumented but in the process of receiving a T visa being ineligible for FEMA services. The process of receiving a T visa can take 17.5 to 36.5 months. ²⁰³ Given that amount of time, there is a good chance that undocumented trafficking victims in southern Louisiana who have yet to receive a T visa will be affected by a disaster and unable to receive FEMA services. Therefore, safety net measures need to improve so those victims are not put in a vulnerable situation where there is a possibility of being trafficked again.

The service providers emphasized the need for federal and local governments to better prepare their disaster response services for victims of sex trafficking. A better-

²⁰² "Victims of Human Trafficking: T Nonimmigrant Status | USCIS," October 20, 2021, <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/victims-of-human-trafficking-and-other-crimes/victims-of-human-trafficking-t-nonimmigrant-status>.

²⁰³ "Human Trafficking Prevention Engagement: Pre-Submitted Questions" (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, January 27, 2022), https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/questions-and-answers/National_Human_Trafficking_Prevention_Month_Webinar-Q%26A.pdf, 1.

prepared response can aid in trafficking prevention. However, they also told stories emphasizing service providers' responsibility in thinking about natural disasters and how they can prepare their services for them. Within these stories about themselves, a couple of the service providers discussed ways their agencies think about disaster preparation and how to integrate it into their services. Other service providers admitted this is a new concept they are just starting to think about. I will touch on this point a few more times in future sections.

In the causal stories service providers told, their lack of attention to this concept is not due to an inability to see how natural disasters impact their clients or potential clients. On the contrary, they recognize the responsibility they have for these issues. However, their inability to give concerted attention to these issues stems from needing more bandwidth and funding to think further about this idea and act on it. Arika elaborated on this with the idea of prevention:

I will say, and this is no one's fault, STAR, like many other agencies in Louisiana, is reacting to the constant inundation of survivors. My team, we do think about it (climate change). Yeah, we think about this all the time and we are writing articles about it for the month of August. It is a priority issue for us because we are on the prevention side. We are trying to be proactive and really educate people on these two things. So, I think, yes, everyone at STAR recognizes it. I would say only three out of thirty people, though, are invested and have the resources to invest in doing something about it, and we are very actively trying to.

As discussed in the previous section, capacity and resources are stretched thin for service providers, so only limited attention can be given. The way service providers frame this issue, where their attention lies, is mainly based on funding, as they are often grant and donor funded. Unfortunately, they do not see much funding in this arena of preparing for natural disasters. Clair mentioned this:

There is definitely a connection there that has to be addressed or needs to have some kind of permanent funding for these things that is not going to be taken if a disaster occurs or is going to be understood that maybe it needs to be expanded when a disaster occurs because now, we have more people that need that help and it is a big part of disaster recovery, not seen as an opposition to it.

Clair framed the issues of funding trafficking prevention efforts in disaster situations as differing in priority level during disaster events. As previously mentioned, priorities, including funding, shift when a disaster occurs. Service providers need their efforts to be recognized as an integral part of disaster recovery and, in that, permanently funded.

Arika also framed their ability to address these issues as hinging on funding. The lack of funding is a causal reason that prevents organizations from focusing on this relationship between climate change and sex trafficking and preparing for it:

Organizations like us are grant dependent, so if there is no grant out there willing to fund that or even thinking about it or invested in climate change it is not going to happen. Unless you have some really rich person that comes and says, I want to just give you that money to do it.

From the sounds of it, rich people are not running to fund this kind of work on a local scale (I hope this lands in the lap of the Melinda Gates and MacKenzie Scotts of the world). The issue with the lack of funding in this area is that anti-trafficking service providers cannot prepare. Service providers cannot prepare to do outreach to those vulnerable populations so that they do not end up in a situation where they are taken advantage of or coerced into making a choice they do not want to make out of a need to survive.

Sophia discussed this issue by noting that it felt like the rallying happened after the disaster. With the idea of prevention, service providers in their narratives emphasize the need for rallying to happen before a disaster. Without funding, though, organizations can only do so much to prepare. However, this is not to say that no one is preparing for natural disasters, and this is not even on their radar. We learned in chapter one the efforts OHTP has taken up with its disaster awareness toolkit. Additionally, the last section of this chapter describes how disaster preparedness is a priority effort for some service providers. Nevertheless, from the service providers' perspective, the issue is that they need more support to focus on this phenomenon.

In this section, service providers described gaps in prevention within a natural disaster context stemming from failures in addressing upstream causes; inadequate safety net services, including energy and housing security; ineffective disaster preparedness; and limited funding to study and implement prevention methods in a natural disaster context. It should be noted that service providers emphasized that shortcomings in knowledge and awareness also served as gaps in prevention. The following section

explores the service provider narratives about shortcomings in knowledge and awareness about sex trafficking, climate change, and their nexus.

Shortcomings in Knowledge and Awareness

Service providers characterized shortcomings in knowledge and awareness about sex trafficking, climate change, and their relationship as an issue within the general public and the service provider community. The narratives about shortcomings in knowledge and awareness also emerged from the discussions about how natural disasters create conditions for sex trafficking. While these shortcomings are not a direct physical consequence of climate change, the current discussions, or lack thereof, about climate change and sex trafficking contribute to how the conditions natural disasters create continue to be allowed.

Sophia's narratives described the lack of awareness of human trafficking among adults, teenagers, and young kids. She believed this to be a significant factor driving sex trafficking and a major barrier to prevention. Without age-appropriate awareness of what human trafficking is and how to spot it, it is difficult to protect themselves from it. From Sophia's perspective, there needs to be more accessible and widespread education for both kids and parents about how a person can exploit another person and why it is wrong.

It is difficult for people to identify when sex trafficking is happening to them or when it is happening to others unless they know how someone can be vulnerable to sex trafficking, the signs of what sex trafficking is, and how it is a form of harm. In service providers' narratives about lack of knowledge and awareness for sex trafficking in general, many of the causal stories for this lack of understanding had to do with how

issues around sex and sexual violence are stigmatized. Clair discussed this stigmatization in the context of sex education. Certain parts of Louisiana, from her perspective, are quite conservative and religious and often push abstinence-only sex education. To her, this abstinence-only system contributes to the poor sex education in Louisiana. She has found that poor sex education can contribute to the lack of knowledge about the difference between a consensual sexual experience and violating experience. The inability to recognize or have the language to describe a violating sexual experience can also hinder prosecution. It is difficult to prosecute a case that a victim cannot accurately describe. As Clair frames it, the de-stigmatization of these notions around sexual violence could improve how we talk about violence and prosecute that violence. Better awareness and knowledge could contribute to de-stigmatization.

Along similar lines, Participant X pointed out, along with every service provider I interviewed, that furthering awareness and knowledge about sex trafficking requires breaking down the stigma around sex trafficking and other issues with which it intersects. They believe there needs to be a reframing of the conversations around sex trafficking. There is a tendency to judge people in just one way, as either a bad kid, drug addict, or prostitute. The reality is that they could be victims of human trafficking. Society often uses these labels to attach blame to the person they are labeling. Service providers mentioned that the issue with labeling victims in this way is that victims often internalize these labels. Because they internalize these labels of a bad kid, drug addict, or prostitute that society and their trafficker are telling them they are, they may not be able to see that what is happening to them is not a choice. They are, in fact, victims of a crime.

Participant X mentioned the need to break down such labels, which is a massive undertaking. The stigma around sex trafficking often intersects with other issues surrounding poverty, race, substance use disorders, mental health, disabilities, sexual violence, homelessness, and criminal justice reform. By breaking down such stigma, Participant X hopes doors will open for better identification and restoration practices.

The stigma and mentality around sexual violence have real consequences for its victims, especially in the context of sex trafficking. Many of them catch charges rather than receive services. Mary's narratives about lack of knowledge and awareness about sex trafficking contribute to the issues of victims being charged rather than receiving services. For this to change, Mary believes the mentality around sex trafficking needs to change:

T These people, I have to say, are not very keen on law enforcement. Our laws are changing, but not fast enough. Law enforcement will continue to arrest the victim for drugs and prostitution and put them in jail. What happens to the buyer? What happens to the seller? Like I said, the laws are changing a little bit, but the atmosphere is still in that context. I say you can pass all the laws you want, but until the mentality changes, we will continue to arrest women for prostitution and drugs..

Here Mary describes a causal story of harm perpetuated by key figures that could serve as interveners in the harm rather than contributors. Further awareness and knowledge around sex trafficking could assist with destigmatizing these issues and getting victims to services. While improving laws would help with combatting sex trafficking, service

providers emphasize mentality changes around sex trafficking need to happen at the same time. From the service providers' perspectives, both seem to feed into each other.

Further on Clair's narrative around stigma issues, she also described how the refusal to acknowledge sex trafficking for what it is because of the shortcomings in awareness and knowledge serve as a significant barrier for tracking and reporting sex trafficking cases in rural Louisiana:

I am not entirely sure that they (Baton Rouge and New Orleans) have the highest rates. I think they are just the ones that actually have people on board to track it. The biggest problem that we have is tracking it and cooperation, so we have struggled to get cooperation in rural areas from law enforcement. Louisiana politics are a little bit dirty. They do not like to label it what it is in these areas because they do not want it to be known for that. They would rather Baton Rouge and New Orleans have that label. So, there will be clear trafficking cases, but they will label it as something else. I have had trafficking cases that they have labeled as just run away or delinquency, or they will call it prostitution. They will try to find a different name for it to not have to acknowledge what it really is.

The refusal to charge sex trafficking for what it is serves as a barrier for victims in receiving services and prevents prosecution from successfully holding traffickers accountable. In addition, not recognizing this crime happens in many different locales makes it difficult for service providers to access victims and vice versa. Without this access, victims cannot start their path to restoration, and the cycles of trauma will continue.

Clair's narratives also touched on how this lack of knowledge and awareness bleeds into vulnerable populations accepting the harm of sex trafficking as "beneficial." She mentioned the Florida Parishes and the poverty in those areas previously. She found that poverty lends to acceptance of being exploited because it is a form of income:

I have had a lot of people from the area that were trafficked that we really had to work through things for them to acknowledge that what was happening to them was actually a crime, and it was actually wrong, and they were actually violated. Because they would say, well, in our culture, they say, all the time, as long as you have got the thing between your legs then you will make money and be okay. And they are like it is told to us by our grandparents and aunts, and that is just part of the "benefit" of being a woman, that you have this resource. And they do not necessarily even see it as a violation until they get into therapy and learn their feelings about it or about being violated are valid, and it is not normal. So, you have this strange culture that kind of encourages it because of the poverty.

This narrative is like Participant X's point on the internalization of stigma manifesting in communities not seeing what is happening to them as harmful. Alternatively, maybe they see it as harm, but the economic benefit of the harm outweighs the harm itself. Of course, this is not to say that because someone is in poverty, they will accept harm. However, the trauma can socialize particular individuals into internalizing the harm this way. The service providers' narratives about the general lack of knowledge and awareness about issues surrounding sex trafficking fed into their narratives about the general lack of awareness about the relationship between sex trafficking and climate

change. Taking knowledge and awareness to the next level necessitates people first to understand sex trafficking better in general.

Similarly, the service providers' narratives on this topic were also framed by the general shortcomings in knowledge and awareness around climate change. Arika and Participant X touched on the politics of naming climate change in their intros. Participant X mentioned how conversations around climate change historically happen at the national level. Only recently have conversations about climate policy become mainstreamed as an agenda item and localized. Despite the steps to localize conversations about climate change, there is still an overall lack of awareness about climate change and sometimes a refusal to name it since it has become such a politically contentious issue. Service providers acknowledged how dicey naming climate change is in Baton Rouge, which has a more conservative political culture than New Orleans, with both its blue culture and more tangible experience with climate change. Participant X noted that they think New Orleans may better understand climate change because they have experienced worse storms than Baton Rouge. They noted that Katrina is in the cultural fabric of New Orleans hence their heightened awareness. Arika's narrative around the shortcomings in knowledge and awareness featured this pushback against acknowledging climate change in a story she told me of work she is doing with scientists on climate:

I can give you an example of how bad the resistance is to it; I am working with a group of soil scientists. Now they need soil samples yearly because of how quickly things are changing because of the wetland situation and everything. And they cannot get the funding from the state, because they do not believe that things are

changing that fast and that if it is changing that fast it is God's will and that we do not need the soil samples to understand our entire infrastructure and the security of our infrastructure. I would think the only way you could talk about climate change in Louisiana is if you change the words climate change to something else and trick them into actually talking about it. At this point, it would be the language because half the people here who hear climate change are mad or upset. They do not want to have it. You are a crazy communist liberal.

Arika tells a causal story where she situated the harm in the state and people who do not believe in climate change. Their neglect to address these issues causes harm. When climate change is not acknowledged as a factor that harms vulnerable populations, measures like studying the soil are not taken to gain more knowledge about how to curb that harm.

Arika's narratives also acknowledged how these shortcomings require specific communities to shoulder climate change's effects. The way she puts it, New Orleans specifically has an expectation to continually be resilient in the face of natural disasters. Severe natural disasters have struck New Orleans. There is this expected resiliency in the people of New Orleans to pick themselves back up after a natural disaster and carry on with normal living. Arika notes that expectation causes harm. The poor neighborhoods that experience the most failures in infrastructure and are therefore required to bear the brunt of the trauma from climate disasters are continually expected to show resilience. Resiliency can only give way to so much.

New Orleans is a place that very much prides itself on its resiliency without looking at how having to constantly rebuild yourself weakens you. And not in a way that says anything about an individual or community, but that is the reality of New Orleans. It is constantly in a state of rebuilding and fixing because it is constantly being hit by flooding. Some of the flooding is manmade in the sense that there is poor infrastructure. When does the infrastructure become a problem? Increasingly, more and more, because of climate change, so your research question comes in at that point right there. So, when you have poor infrastructure, poor law enforcement, and a weakened community that is constantly being cut off at the knees you cannot handle something like 15 flooding/hurricane moments in the year.

From Arika's perspective, the lack of acknowledgment of climate change lends itself to the lack of acknowledgment of how climate change is consistently affecting specific populations. Because these events are not acknowledged, people can ignore the emotional and physical trauma they cause in communities. Furthermore, not acknowledging climate change and its unequal effect contributes to the lack of safety net and infrastructure measures that could cushion these populations from being "cut off at the knees" and "weakened" when a natural disaster occurs.

To double down on this point, within the service providers' narratives around shortcomings in knowledge and awareness about climate change, they told stories about climate change's unequal effect on certain populations. For example, they pointed to how many poor and disenfranchised people of color, primarily Black people, in Baton Rouge

and New Orleans are situated in low-lying areas of the cities. As discussed in chapter one, these areas often experience the most flooding and have the least investment infrastructure-wise. The service providers pointed out the common knowledge there that New Orleans, specifically, is a bowl, with the poorest and most disenfranchised lying at the bottom of the bowl.

Participant X highlighted this issue in their interview by mentioning Louisiana's large underserved Black population. These communities often have poor infrastructure, like road infrastructure, and therefore experience increased rates of flooding. Service providers of Baton Rouge mentioned North Baton Rouge as a high-poverty area with poor road infrastructure where some of these underserved communities are located. They mentioned that when it rains heavily, it is difficult to drive as soon as they enter North Baton Rouge because those roads flood and they flood quickly. Given this poor infrastructure, service providers find that when hurricanes and natural disasters occur, those tend to be the areas within the city centers that are the most affected. Those communities often do not have the financial resources, for many different reasons, to cope with disasters or adequately prepare for disasters. Given their susceptibility to climate effects, Participant X also mentioned that those communities are also the most likely to need to evacuate. Yet, they are also the least likely to have the resources to evacuate. So, it is a double-edged sword for them when it comes to climate disasters and their vulnerability.

Within these narratives were causal stories about the harm lack of knowledge and awareness about climate change's effect causes to populations it disproportionately

impacts. The lack of acknowledgment among state entities, people in power, and community members about climate change and its unequal effects contributes to the lack of existing safety net measures geared toward protecting these populations when a natural disaster occurs. Harm continues to be caused when there is inaction because of this lack of knowledge and awareness. Without safety net measures, vulnerable populations will continue to be put in vulnerable positions during climate disaster situations. Those vulnerable positions can lead to sex trafficking.

It is worth noting that this is not to say that everyone who does not accept climate change cannot recognize the unequal impact natural disasters have on certain populations. As service providers alluded to in their narratives, people do not always frame their experience with natural disasters with climate change. However, the service providers find that the politics of naming climate change and its role in the frequency and intensity of natural disasters stalls efforts to mitigate climate change. When there are pushbacks on efforts to prevent climate change, it indirectly hinders efforts to prevent sex trafficking. The providers' narratives show their acknowledgment of how climate disasters worsened by climate change hurt the populations they serve and increase this population's vulnerability to sex trafficking and other forms of exploitation. Of course, as mentioned previously, climate change prevention efforts will not solve the issue of sex trafficking solely. They need to happen in conjunction with other prevention efforts in sex trafficking.

The service providers' narratives about lack of knowledge and awareness about sex trafficking and climate change as separate issues shape their narratives about why it is

difficult for people to acknowledge their intersection. Within these narratives, natural disasters create conditions for sex trafficking through the lack of knowledge and awareness that natural disasters can create those conditions. As previously mentioned, this can affect funding streams into researching and looking further into how these issues interact and ways service providers, community members, and governmental entities should respond. Much of the service providers' narratives about this topic contained causal stories that situated harm in the parties resistant to gaining knowledge and awareness about these topics. At the same time, in these narratives about shortcomings in knowledge and awareness, specifically about the intersection of climate change and sex trafficking, service providers also recognized their lack of knowledge and awareness.

As the service providers alluded to, they come up against so much in raising awareness on human trafficking that they are often at capacity with just doing that. They do not really get the time or funding to think about how it intersects with climate change. Previously, Arika remarked how her organization is starting to think about the relationship, especially within their purview of prevention. Meanwhile, other service providers like Andy, Clair, and Mary are not necessarily having direct conversations about it. However, they have encountered the relationship in their inability to provide their services or quality services when a hurricane occurs. In Clair's case, she experiences requests to fill in service gaps when a hurricane hits. At the time of our conversation, Sophia was unaware of any conversations about the relationship in her organization. However, she also recognized that her inexperience in experiencing a hurricane while in her position could prevent her from knowing about or having those conversations.

Ultimately, Sophia wanted more resources to learn about the relationship before commenting. From her perspective, without information on it, she, as a service provider, cannot shape prevention and intervention strategies around it. As she put it, more knowledge about the relationship would inform how service providers can be more purposeful in trafficking prevention before a climate disaster or in preparation for a hurricane evacuation. You are not worried about it if you do not know about it.

When thinking through how natural disasters create conditions for sex trafficking, service providers provided narratives that included this issue of the shortcomings in knowledge and awareness. They believe that the lack of knowledge and awareness about both issues prevents the knowledge that natural disasters can create conditions for sex trafficking. Without knowledge of this cause and effect, people cannot shape their prevention and response strategies to address these issues. However, despite highlighting the significant lack of awareness, their interviews also contained narratives about ways their organizations are beginning to think about and respond to the intersections of natural disasters and sex trafficking. The following section explores those narratives.

Existing Response and Prevention Efforts

While there is a general lack of awareness and knowledge, efforts are changing that. Service providers were eager to share the initiatives they are taking to respond to how natural disasters create conditions for sex trafficking. While they are under a lot of constraints and pressure, many service providers are already thinking about issues surrounding climate change and sex trafficking. In telling these narratives, service

providers highlighted efforts that could be replicated and built upon to respond to the way natural disasters create conditions for sex trafficking.

In their narratives about their existing response and prevention efforts, service providers emphasized efforts that can lend themselves to aiding their responses during climate disasters, like working with their community partners. This could be through the existing MDTs model or other ways of partnership. For example, while Mary remarked that she had not thought about climate change and sex trafficking as conjoining issues, in thinking about it in our interview, Mary's narrative emphasized the importance of her collaboration with law enforcement in responding to human trafficking:

There is little that we can do about the climate. There is little we can do about the hurricanes. I think the most important element is to have the victims be aware that there is help for them. That is one of the main components that we want to do. It is called partnership and collaboration. And I do have a lot of law enforcement that I work with and all the way from federal on down to local, and if they would only take the time. And we do not have that ability here because we have less than 1000 police officers, and the crime here is very high. But if there was a collaboration.... we did this pre-pandemic when we had a particular organization agency of the law enforcement that was charged with eliminating human trafficking. We would work together, they would do stings, and we would go with them as advocates for the women, and if there was somebody that was prostituting themselves or with drugs on them, we would ask them do you want to go to jail or

do you want to go to a safe house. It is called working together to find a better solution.

Mary's narrative raised a point that many service providers also discussed. While there is frustration with law enforcement and how they handle trafficking cases, providers recognize they serve as important partners that they must continue to train and work with in combatting trafficking. This point holds both within and outside of the climate disaster context.

Clair's narrative about existing response and prevention efforts also rested on the importance of partnership and collaboration and how it aids in their efforts to cover more ground:

We kind of have that network where people are like, hey, we have these services, but Empower 225 is swamped or Free NOLA cannot get there. Can you guys help? So, for us, I think it is more of we all help each other, we stay in communication, we work together, and we move referrals back and forth when it is like, hey, we have got more than we can handle. There are times when we need resources for someone, and as a small nonprofit, we just do not have the funds at the moment. And they have stepped in and taken care of it. So we kind of work hand in hand, back and forth. We do not see it as competition. We see it as we do not have enough resources so we have got to work together and cover it all.

For Clair collaboration and partnership with other service providers are crucial to keeping services effective. Service providers across the board seem to agree with this. Combatting sex trafficking, as they frame it, cannot be achieved alone.

In terms of outreach, we know outreach during climate disasters is difficult. Thus many service providers do outreach before a disaster hits. Participant X described doing this in the first section by reaching out to survivors and trying to connect them to resources and evacuation efforts. Noah's narrative about existing response and prevention efforts also emphasized taking the month of August to connect with the community he serves to prepare them:

Outreach is not a thing during a disaster. So, I try to do outreach and let people know before it happens. I have been doing a lot of outreach this month because this month, historically, we get the worst hurricanes. I have been letting people know before that these are the mutual aid groups you can go to, these are the drop centers, these are the food banks because when the hurricane hits, there is no power, no internet, no phone, no nothing.

Noah recognizes the effect natural disasters can have on his ability to provide service. Therefore, he tries to be proactive in connecting clients to resources. In doing this, he can curb points of vulnerability that natural disasters create.

I In speaking about existing response and prevention efforts during a disaster to help victims and vulnerable groups, Noah's narrative again brought up the importance of partnership. First, he discussed FEMA's role in connecting survivors to services and then his role in identifying what those services should be based on their partnership:

Anytime a victim is identified through FEMA they will contact us. We will help get services for that person, whether it is residential services, getting them into a residential facility like Eden House or Covenant House, or that person needs to

be sent to Odyssey House, which is an addiction recovery service or if that person needs mental health help, we have the Children's Bureau. I work very closely with the Center for Resilience and other nonprofits that focus on youth and adolescent health. I guess that is how we provide services.

In his narrative, he recognized how their existing response and prevention efforts during natural disasters depend on partnerships between other service providers and disaster relief services, like FEMA. In recognizing this, Noah shared how LCYTC has begun discussions about disaster preparedness with partners like FEMA:

We have a roundtable with the Governor's Office of Human Trafficking Prevention and FEMA talking about that stuff. Continued presence and eligibility for victims of human trafficking and how hurricane season is upon us, and how that might affect people who are not only sex trafficked but also labor trafficking.

In pointing out these conversations, Noah recognized the vital role major governmental entities play in bringing these issues to the forefront. The fact that the Governor's Office and FEMA are discussing these issues could be a promising sign that natural disasters' role in creating conditions for sex trafficking is gaining awareness. Greater awareness will hopefully lead to improved responses.

In chapter five, service providers discussed how non-local disaster response does pose a risk for trauma and abuse. In their narratives around existing response and prevention efforts, they highlighted the pivotal role community-based disaster response, like the before mentioned Cajun Navy and Cajun Army, play in servicing these vulnerable populations when these service providers cannot. Noah's narrative around

existing response and prevention efforts also pointed to this and, specifically, the critical work of mutual aid groups in stepping up to fill in the gaps of service needed:

It is community groups like mutual aid groups. When a hurricane hits, nonprofits are nowhere to be found. Or they are not found if the needs outweigh the resources they have. Mutual aid groups have been big in meeting people's immediate needs, even as far as generators, so that they can get energy and food.

Mutual aid groups are vital in the aftermath of a storm in meeting people's basic needs for shelter, food, water, and other necessities.

Arika's narratives around existing response and prevention efforts also were framed around partnership and the importance of locally sourced response teams:

There are a lot of community rescue response teams that are generated neighborhood by neighborhood. One is called the Cajun Navy, which they are really great, really wonderful people. You will have just out of survival mode a lot of community people helping people, and I think that kind of work, if it got funded more, would be safer for the local communities to have their own people be in charge of rescue and response, rather than spending all of these resources and having all these kinds of so-called strangers coming into your community.

Through this narrative, Arika emphasizes the need for funding for locally-sourced disaster relief organizations. Her previous narratives around how a natural disaster can create conditions for sex trafficking highlighted the danger of outside groups entering a community and having the power to service that community. A causal story can be brought out of this in that lack of funding for these groups can have unintended

consequences where ill-intentioned outsiders gain opportunities to “poach” vulnerable communities. Like many efforts around these issues, much of it rests on funding.

Participant X also noted the important work of community groups and how their passion for the communities they are involved in really lends to them taking up the charge to help after a disaster. Fostering strong community networks can serve as a bridge for servicing vulnerable populations during natural disasters. Service providers recognize this and tap into those communities when disaster hits. Sophia also mentioned how her agency coordinates with other anti-trafficking agencies to have hurricane evacuation meetings.

Through sharing their narratives about the existing response and prevention efforts their organizations are doing or other organizations are doing, service providers seem to hope this work will be fostered and better funded. Both outside and within the natural disaster context, they recognize the importance of partnership in combatting the conditions that natural disasters create for sex trafficking. There are many issues with the lack of response and awareness of the intersection between natural disasters and sex trafficking. Through sharing these narratives about promising conversations and efforts, hopefully, they will be replicated.

This chapter laid out the primary narratives from service providers’ thinking on how natural disasters create conditions for sex trafficking. Much of the narratives contained causal stories that laid out the points of harm in action, or often inaction, of entities that are pivotal to preventing or stopping the vulnerable conditions that lead to sex trafficking. In their narratives, service providers, while situating harm in often

funding and governmental structures, also recognized their shortcomings. As a result, they brought in narratives about how they could improve their services and responses both within and outside the context of natural disasters.

To conclude this chapter, there was one side of this discussion that I began to explore and that needs further research. Given the service providers' narratives about the importance of community-based relief organizations in this intersection between natural disasters and sex trafficking, I was interested in hearing these organizations' perspectives on these issues. In addition, I wanted to learn if they had ever thought about or seen the intersection in their work. The following section summarizes an interview I did with one of the community-based relief organizations in Louisiana.

Bonus Interview: David of Cajun Army

Within this project, I intended to talk to disaster relief organizations to get their perspective on the issue between climate change and sex trafficking. Like most things in life, that side of this project did not go as planned. I had difficulty connecting with disaster relief organizations. Luckily, there was one that did respond to me. David is the President and Co-founder of the Cajun Army. I am, again, using an alias for David's real name. Cajun Army is a nonprofit made up of over 19,000 volunteers who have come together to help people who have suffered from natural disasters. They do not solicit monetary donations and have no paid staff. As David described it, their staff is made of people who are called to serve. The organization was born out of what is called "The Thousand Year Flood" in 2016. This was a flooding incident that happened in Southern Louisiana that was not a result of a hurricane but because of continual rain. One-third of

the state ended up being underwater, according to David. The flood damaged 40,000 homes.²⁰⁴ Over 20,000 residents had to be rescued and at least seven people died.²⁰⁵ David continuously described it as a “war zone” with public services being halted and people’s inability to access security and basic needs like food, gas, and power. David described natural disasters like this one as creating a rich and vulnerable environment for anybody. In response to these events, David and his volunteers serve to be the boots on the ground by repairing houses and fulfilling basic needs like food, clothes, and water. They partner with organizations like the Cajun Navy, which handles boat rescues.²⁰⁶ As David put it, his organization will help anyone. However, they primarily focus their efforts on “the least, last, lost, and lonely.” These people are left out on the fringes during these events.

David had never encountered sex trafficking victims in his relief efforts, but as he described it, he feels he is pretty naïve when it comes to being able to spot that. In that same respect, he said he could see how something like a climate disaster could make people already vulnerable that much more vulnerable. When their little bit of security is taken away during a natural disaster or, as he calls it, “a war zone situation,” their vulnerabilities increase. He clarified his comments on war zones as being situations

²⁰⁴ Laura Lightbody and Forbes Tompkins, “After 1,000-Year Flood, Baton Rouge Moved Fast to Lower Risk,” May 14, 2018, 1, <https://pew.org/2IaArHn>.

²⁰⁵ Matthew Teague, “Louisiana Left Stunned by Damage from ‘1,000-Year’ Flood: ‘It Just Kept Coming,’” *The Guardian*, August 16, 2016, sec. US news, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/aug/16/louisiana-flood-damage-recovery>.

²⁰⁶ *Cajun Army: How a Displaced Community Fought Back after the Louisiana Floods* (The Guardian, 2017), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ta3H4xv6Fbc>.

where powerlines are down, no services are open, goods are scarce, traffic is at a standstill because red lights do not work, and there is looting and breaking and entering.

When it comes to thinking about Louisiana being in a climate crisis from climate change, David remarked that often you do not realize you are in a climate crisis because you are in it. He shared an analogy to give context (this is paraphrased as I did not record this conversation):

When you put a frog in a pot of water and turn the heat on low, that water gradually heats up, and that frog will not jump out of the water and will boil to death. The temperature rises so gradually, and the changes are so subtle that they do not even realize what is happening until eventually they catch up and are deadly.

Some service providers, like Participant X's comments about providers not framing the issue of natural disasters as climate change, alluded to a similar idea. It is hard to see something like a natural disaster in the frame of this bigger problem of climate change when it is quite normal in the lives of Louisianans. As David put it, he is a frog in boiling water because he does not even perceive a climate crisis in Louisiana. He understands the political discussions about climate change in the U.S. and some people's acceptance of it and others' unacceptance (for the record, he does believe in climate change). In that same regard, in thinking about this, he mentioned he also does see the rate of these types of storms increasing. He sees this through how often he and his team deploy, which seems to be a lot recently. He is unsure if there is a change or if he is more aware of them because of his work with the Cajun Army.

He concluded our conversation by wishing he had more to give on the trafficking and climate change relationship and commented that I should maybe speak to someone “smarter” about the climate change issue. I personally think the frog in boiling water analogy was genius, so I wholeheartedly disagree with him there.

This interview for me highlighted the need for further research to be done on the different parties who could interact with this intersection. For example, I think law enforcement and other disaster relief organizations' perspectives are vital to this conversation around climate change and sex trafficking. Further research on their perspective could add more knowledge to this phenomenon. In the last chapter of this thesis, before my conclusions, I discuss how service providers' narratives and causal stories are shaped by their positions within these issues.

Chapter 7

Positioning Narratives

The narratives each service provider told situated their work in the debate around climate change and sex trafficking. Narratives serve as a space where service providers can make sense of their work and the work of others within climate change and sex trafficking. In making sense of these narratives, service providers told causal stories highlighting how their work could be better supported to respond to sex trafficking issues in the context of natural disasters. Each narrative and causal story also highlighted how different entities could be more instrumental in the fight against sex trafficking.

Within these causal stories, service providers represented themselves and others with the hat of a service provider. With this service provider hat, they were not just individuals with personal stories to tell, but service providers with agendas in the stories they tell – though their personal stories were also often colored with agendas. Using causal stories, they were able to define the problems as they see them and frame their agendas around them.²⁰⁷ Their narratives highlighted what they wish would improve in preventing and responding to both sex trafficking and climate change, and within that, ways they think it could improve.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

As anti-trafficking service providers, their goal is to stop trafficking and also ease the process of serving their populations. Within their narratives, they highlighted the barriers they are up against. By highlighting these barriers and talking about their frustration with them, it is almost a form of protesting against them. By protesting what they are up against, there is hope in dismantling them. Additionally, when they discussed their frustrations over entities such as law enforcement, funding structures, and governmental structures, they did so to emphasize their desire for a smarter and stronger partnership with them. In this sense, my role as the listener and sharer of their narratives and desires within those narratives plays a big part in how they told their stories. They know what they have said will be shared in the form of this thesis. They also hope it will add to knowledge about sex trafficking. Given that, they laid out the stories that support this goal. They shared concerns about funding, resources, safety net services, capacity, upstream causes, laws, awareness, and current response and prevention efforts. All things from their perspective that, if improved, could ease harm.

One interesting takeaway was that a lot of their causal stories focused on the environment, which allows for or causes trafficking to occur. This focus could be due to my interview questions and how we explored a lot about vulnerabilities, which appear to be socially, culturally, and politically created. However, overall, their narratives placed less blame on the traffickers themselves for causing the harm. Service providers did mention traffickers/pimps/perpetrators, how they go about their work, and how we should have better practices for holding them accountable. Still, there was less conversation about them causing harm. The narratives instead primarily focused on the institutions that

allow traffickers to cause harm. It is almost like we have accepted that there will be bad people in the world, but are we going to allow those bad people to continue doing bad things? Or are we going to allow for environments where people can do bad things to others? The causes of harm come from those situations that allow the first cause of harm, vulnerability, to occur. The allowed or created vulnerability seems to be the first order of harm, and trafficking is the second order of harm.

In that same vein, though, this is where the arm on prevention could come in. Arika discusses how her organization tries to prevent the way violence is normalized:

So how can we work with our community which means universities, law enforcement, small businesses, and so on, to improve culture so that violence is not normalized in the first place.... A lot of times people will call us in after they have had a sexual harassment or Title IX case in their organization. We will come in and work with their employees and try to shift the culture and work on healing and figure out how the organization and the staff can build trust again or really how the organization can build trust with its staff. So many people at some point experience violence, sexual violence, in the workplace or a hospital or government. Really in a public place basically. Or in the prisons. And so, our job is to go into those particular organizations and just to work on shifting and thinking more through what a healthy workplace looks like, what do healthy relationships look like, how do we recognize something that is healthy versus something that is toxic and steeped in weird and sketchy power dynamics that just lend themselves so easily to sexual violence.

In this type of prevention work, Arika and her organization can hopefully intervene in the modes of thinking that contribute to violence. Moreover, by intervening in those modes of thinking, service providers may be able to intercept potential traffickers by educating them on healthy relationships and power dynamics.

When talking to the service providers, a few mentioned some positions they were situated in and why their personal experiences with these issues fueled the narratives they gave about them. A lot of the service providers mentioned the salience of climate change's harm not only in their professional life but also in their personal. Arika and Clair described Hurricane Katrina as causing them to leave the areas they knew as home. Arika said:

In relation to climate change things, like flooding and hurricanes, people have what I would call climate change PTSD, and they do not even know that is what it is. To give you some background on me, I left Louisiana after Katrina, and I did not come back, and the weekend I moved back was Hurricane Ida. I grew up here. Part of the reason for my leaving was the trauma from Katrina. It was horrible. And I went to a place [California] where it never rained, and I felt so liberated. It felt so good. So, people have these like physical and emotional responses to things that are directly a response to the climate change stuff.

For someone like Arika, her narratives about her frustration with the lack of efforts taken to curb climate change are situated not only in her professional capacity but also in her personal one. The trauma she experienced from Hurricane Katrina and the trauma she is seeing in her clients after climate disasters make this topic more relevant

for her. A lot of the service providers who had experienced Hurricane Katrina had narratives that were colored with this personal relevancy. Many of those narratives reinforced each other.

While there were many similarities in the narratives of the service providers, there were also varying perspectives that came out. For example, Arika was quite critical of her state's lack of work in combatting climate change. Given her personal experience with Hurricane Katrina, her work with scientists in studying climate change, and her work with sex trafficking, Arika's narratives often described frustrations about the political culture in Louisiana. She found that the politics around climate change and sex trafficking stop progress in both sex trafficking and climate change prevention, but mostly in climate change. Her personal experience with Hurricane Katrina could fuel why she holds more liberal values around climate change issues. Her experience, along with her position on the political spectrum due to that experience, could be one of several reasons her narratives frequently touched on politics. As previously mentioned, at the beginning of our conversation, she brought up the politics around climate change, preventing my project from getting traction in Louisiana. Her frustration with Louisiana's politics around climate change is captured in this statement:

I think Louisiana could have been a model for how to handle all this stuff for the nation, and it is not, so I think for there to be actual change, a blue state is going to have to set a tone, and it is going to have to be a federal problem.

From Arika's perspective, given its vulnerability, Louisiana had a real opportunity to be a model for combatting climate change. However, given the conservative politics within

Louisiana, she sees the difficulty in making climate change policy a serious state agenda item. The fact that my project is about climate change, from her perspective, immediately halts it from being something worth considering for many people who do not believe in climate change.

While she was critical of Louisiana's lack of effort in combatting climate change, other service providers hailed the Governor's office's work, for example, on climate change, compared to his predecessors. Some of that work, like the coastal projects, was highlighted in chapter one.²⁰⁸ Of course, a state is more than just its Governor, and many other powers come into play. While the Governor may be making efforts to initiate projects around climate change, other state legislatures may be working against those efforts.

Given Participant X's passion for system-wide responses, their narratives were probably the most sprinkled with ideas on how current services could improve for survivors both within and outside the natural disaster context. The service providers who provided direct services to survivors mentioned improving services as well, but mainly from the perspective of wanting more support to improve their services and system-wide services (like funding). Some service providers wished for better communication systems between services, as Clair highlighted regarding natural disasters and providing services. This is not to say Participant X, especially with their past in offering direct services, contradicted the other service providers' narratives about needing more support. They

²⁰⁸ "Louisiana Climate Action Plan," 1.

also mentioned the need for more funding, for example. Nevertheless, the differences in what was emphasized within Participant X's narrative reveal the different ways they understood the problem of climate change's role in sex trafficking.

Similarly, Noah and Clair emphasized different issues given where they were situated and positioned. For example, Noah, at one point, remarked how New Orleans is exceptionally under-resourced:

New Orleans is a very vulnerable city, and we are always at the tail end of resources. For instance, we only got about a thousand doses of the monkeypox vaccine. The whole city of New Orleans only got one thousand. So, when it comes to the poor and disenfranchised our state representatives, our elected leaders definitely need to push further.

In Noah's narrative about New Orleans, he sees his city has not received the adequate amount of resources it needs.

Clair is sitting in North Louisiana, where there are many rural parts. She remarked on there being even fewer resources in rural parts of Louisiana, like the Florida Parishes. She brought up an interesting factoid to emphasize this point. When choices need to be made in terms of climate disasters, often the rural parts will be flooded to save the cities:

If you look up the Morganza Spillway, you will see it is listed in the disaster relief for Louisiana. They will flood the rural, more impoverished areas without resources to save the cities. And I understand it is a cost analysis for them. It is very expensive to rebuild New Orleans and Baton Rouge. It is very expensive to rebuild established areas, but then what about farmers? What about impoverished

people that are living in rural areas where once you flood or destroy them, there is no help coming in for them? What happens then? ²⁰⁹ ²¹⁰

What Clair describes here is a situation where the rural population is specifically chosen to bear the brunt of natural disasters as an economic policy. In this way, rural parts of Louisiana are particularly vulnerable to feeling natural disasters' effects.

These different narratives, of course, do not imply an either-or situation, as both locales can lack resources and be vulnerable. Clair and Noah each acknowledge how resource-poor and vulnerable the “country parts” and city areas are. Both recognized that Louisiana, in general, is extremely resource poor. Nevertheless, considering where both are situated, they focused their narratives on climate change's role in sex trafficking around their locales. Both recognized how their under-resourced areas become more vulnerable to sex trafficking during a climate disaster.

Lastly, when it comes to thinking about this issue of climate change's role in sex trafficking, as mentioned previously, some remarked that their organization was beginning to seriously think about and work on the relationship. In contrast, others have not really considered it. Noah noted how his offices, in conjunction with OHTP, are having direct conversations about how a natural disaster could impact victims and survivors of sex trafficking and other vulnerable people within their cities. On the other side of this, though, a couple of service providers commented on this being a new

²⁰⁹ The Morganza Spillway has only been opened up twice, in 1973 and 2011. It is a structure that diverts water from the Mississippi River into the Atchafalaya Basin and into the Gulf when the flood water gets too high in Mississippi.

²¹⁰ Advocate Staff Report, “Morganza Spillway Q&A: What Is It? When Might It Open? Whom Does It Impact?,” The Advocate, May 23, 2019, https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/multimedia/photos/collection_e4e8c7a4-7d6c-11e9-8598-930d57b5dace.html.

concept. Though after our discussion, they remarked that within our discussion they began to think more about the role of climate change in sex trafficking. Mary remarked that when I first reached out to speak with her, she thought, “WHAT! This has nothing to do with the work I do.” However, during our conversation and thinking about it more, she saw the relationship. This again refers to earlier points about service providers needing the space to think about these intersecting issues.

Again, we see how different positions affect the conversations (or lack thereof) around the relationship and the narrative they give about it. Noah holds a state-wide and region-wide role that requires him to see the landscape across different locales. This could be how he sees different vulnerabilities exacerbated by different conditions, like natural disasters. Arika’s organization has offices in three different locations, which helps them see the different conditions in which they serve people. Additionally, Arika’s background in this topic and her work with climate experts give her a heightened awareness of these issues. Mary, Andy, and Clair primarily provide direct services. So, they see how something like a hurricane can directly impact their clients, but beyond that, there is not much attention on the overarching issue of climate change. This could be because their responsibility is to give attention to the individuals they serve. This larger conversation about climate change is not coming up because those individuals may not be bringing it up. As mentioned previously, Sophia’s inexperience with experiencing a hurricane while in her position at Family Justice Center could be why she is not having as many conversations about the relationship.

The service providers' narratives offer an account of their position in this phenomenon. Their positions often shaped the narratives and subsequent causal stories they told. While there was little difference in the narratives they told, where they are positioned did inform the topics each service provider focused on when sharing their understanding of climate change's role in sex trafficking. These narratives are just a tiny piece of the larger picture, but they are a vital piece. Service providers are consequential in how these issues are understood and responded to. Therefore, their accounts of this phenomenon should be taken with much consideration.

Conclusions

To conclude, I want to take the opportunity to acknowledge those whom I did not focus on in the scope of this project. Specifically, I would like to acknowledge labor trafficking victims and survivors. When I talked to service providers about this project's scope, it often opened doorways for critique. A few service providers remarked on my shortcoming in including labor trafficking in this study. One service provider alluded to this being a global issue of people focusing on just sex trafficking because of the obsession and glamorization of the word “sex.” While I do not believe this to be why I chose to explore sex trafficking, this critique is extremely justified and something I have reflected on, given my role in this space as a researcher. I also do not exist in a vacuum, and the issues I am interested in are informed by my social and cultural environment.

Service providers were quick to note that climate disasters are huge catalysts in labor trafficking, which I briefly discussed in chapters one and six. There is also, as Andy put it, a fine line between labor trafficking and sex trafficking. There are instances where a survivor of labor trafficking also is a survivor of sex trafficking. Exploitation often opens windows for more exploitation. Nonetheless, there is a distinct population of labor trafficking survivors impacted by natural disasters and placed in vulnerable situations due to natural disasters. More research needs to explore the vulnerabilities those populations experience that put them into those exploitative situations.

Additionally, further needs to be done with this research to include other important figures in the anti-trafficking landscape. The narratives I heard are absent of the competing narratives of those who they have determined are causal agents in harm. This does not mean the narratives of the service providers are not valid, but we are getting an incomplete picture that is absent of competing realities. Further study should be done in this area to account for these missing narratives. Specifically, continued research needs to include law enforcement and their perspectives on these issues. Their narratives are also important to this story. This research is intended to be one of the starting points that I hope will lead to further research and conversations about this topic.

This research gathered the perspectives of two anti-trafficking service providers from East Baton Rouge Parish, four from Orleans Parish, and one service provider with relations in both locales. With each of them, I wanted to learn about their understanding of climate change's role in driving sex trafficking and whether they saw it as a factor in sex trafficking patterns. To learn about their understanding of these two issues, I collected personal narratives from interviews I conducted with each of them. These narratives taught me how service providers connect this objective phenomenon of climate change and sex trafficking to their subjective experience of both. In addition, personal narratives helped me to localize the understanding of the climate change and sex trafficking relationship. To frame this relationship, I borrowed the term climate change and sex trafficking nexus from the limited research on this phenomenon.²¹¹ Similar to

²¹¹ Mikaila V. Smith, "Applying the United Nations Trafficking Protocol in the Context of Climate Change Comments," *Chicago Journal of International Law* 22, no. 1 (2021): 301.

much of the existing research about the nexus, my discussions with the service providers centered on the topic of vulnerabilities. Service providers mirrored the literature in describing vulnerabilities such as trauma and abuse histories, addiction, chronic mental health issues, houselessness, and economic hardship. These vulnerabilities were determined to increase a person's vulnerability to sex trafficking.²¹² They also identified women and girls of color, runaway youth, and LGBTQIA+ youth as vulnerable to sex trafficking.²¹³ The marginalization of these populations, according to the service providers, heightened their risk of being sex trafficked.

Likewise, the service providers described climate disasters as disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations. Communities that have these vulnerabilities are often the least likely to have the ability to prepare for natural disasters or have adequate access to services during a natural disaster. When it comes to natural disasters that require evacuation, they often lack the ability to evacuate. Yet, the areas where they are located are frequently the most severely affected by natural disasters. If they can evacuate, they frequently do so with limited resources and may be placed in vulnerable positions where they are exploited to survive.

The service providers framed the issue of climate change through their experience of natural disasters, mainly hurricanes. Service providers described the role of climate change in driving sex trafficking through the lens of natural disasters creating conditions

²¹² "The Typology of Modern Slavery: Defining Sex and Labor Trafficking in the United States" (Polaris Project, March 2017), <https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Polaris-Typology-of-Modern-Slavery-1.pdf>, 16.

²¹³ Ibid.

for sex trafficking. Natural disasters often exacerbate existing vulnerabilities. Exacerbating those vulnerabilities can put people in even more vulnerable situations where basic needs are unmet. Once again, this situation may expose them to being exploited to meet their needs. Compounding this increased vulnerability are issues with the disruption of service providers' services because of natural disasters. When their services are disrupted, they cannot provide the prevention and intervention services that curb sex trafficking.

In the service providers' narratives about the ways natural disasters create conditions for sex trafficking, they offered solutions to curbing the way natural disasters create those conditions. The suggested solutions around breaking down barriers to service included more funding for safe housing options; more funding for essential resources that service providers provide during and after disaster situations; improvement in communication systems; funding for generators so they can keep services afloat; and better cooperation from law enforcement in identifying victims and connecting them to services. Service providers also suggested solutions around gaps in prevention. These included addressing the "upstream causes" of vulnerabilities to sex trafficking, like poverty or poor mental health; increased financial safety net services; better home and energy security; improved disaster preparedness plans from service providers; and funding for exploring and addressing the relationship of climate change and natural disasters. The service providers also raised concerns over the shortcomings and awareness about climate change, sex trafficking, and their relationship. The overall lack of awareness about each issue separately stalls the knowledge of them together. Service

providers suggested awareness efforts such as improved and more widespread education on human trafficking; better educational programs that destigmatize sex trafficking; greater cooperation from law enforcement in destigmatizing sex trafficking; and greater acknowledgment of climate change. Lastly, service providers highlighted current response and prevention efforts that they feel should be replicated in responding to vulnerable conditions created by natural disasters. These efforts included community partnership and collaboration, proactive outreach before a natural disaster, and increased funding for community-based disaster relief efforts.

Increasingly their efforts as anti-trafficking service providers are focused on the prevention side of trafficking. In suggesting these solutions, service providers hope they can be more successful in their work as anti-trafficking service providers. From their perspective, if many of these solutions were implemented in the first place, trafficking could be prevented. The service providers graciously offered their insights and experiences with sex trafficking and climate change. I hope this project will add to the limited literature about the climate change and sex trafficking nexus. It is meant to highlight the importance of scholars, policymakers, and activists concerned with the effects of climate change to consider sex trafficking as a risk of climate change. Likewise, I hope this research reveals the risks climate change poses to potential survivors and victims of sex trafficking to professionals working within social services and sex trafficking preventative services.

In my conversations with one service provider, they insisted that we all have a role to play in fighting human trafficking. Teachers, healthcare staff, law enforcement,

politicians, scientists, hospitality workers, community leaders, and community members all have a role in taking care of their fellow community members. We can aid in the prevention of sex trafficking by advocating for and implementing more equitable social outcomes for our vulnerable community members. Along with these efforts, advocating for and implementing policy measures to adapt to and limit climate change can help mitigate climate change's disproportionate effects on vulnerable populations. We all have a role to play in making our communities better.

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Biography

Marissa Jordan is the second oldest of five kids and is from Whitefield, Maine. After graduating from Stonehill College with her undergraduate degree in Political Science & International Studies and Communication, she moved to the D.C. area for work. For the past four years, Marissa worked as a senior program administrator for the Democracy, Conflict, and Governance program, Europe Program, and Global Order and Institutions program at a D.C.-based think tank, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. While working full time, she spent the past two and half years pursuing her master's in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University's Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution. Marissa is passionate about contributing to anti-trafficking and anti-violence efforts. Because of this passion, she has served as a helpline volunteer at Maine-based anti-domestic violence and an anti-trafficking organization called Safe Voices. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her family, spending time with her dog (Obe), spending time in nature, and cooking and eating delicious food.