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An Exploration of Youth Vulnerability, Risk Factors, and Changes in the Commercial Sexual Exploitation Environment in Georgia

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An abstract of
A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the
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Abstract

An Exploration of Youth Vulnerability, Risk Factors, and Changes in the Commercial Sexual Exploitation Environment in Georgia

By Dora Ducak

Introduction: Populations disproportionately affected by commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) include marginalized communities: Black and brown youth, LGBTQ youth, those with previous experiences of child and sexual abuse, foster care, and have run away from home and/or are experiencing homelessness. This study seeks to understand the CSEC environment in Georgia and the initiatives designed to prevent and respond to it.

Methods: Data were collected from six key informants through ~1-hour in-depth interviews conducted via Zoom and phone. Participants included individuals working in the juvenile court system, state and organizational positions, and local organizational leaders. Interviews were coded using deductive and inductive codes and analyzed thematically for emergent themes. Main limitation includes research and data limited to sample size of 6 interviews, did not reach saturation.

Results: Five themes emerged: (1) Environmental and social evolution of CSEC, for example the false "victim" stereotype of "the typical girl cowering in the corner" ; (2) Risk factors and changes in populations including changes through recruitment through social network, and exploitation by peers; (3) Implementing systems and services for at-risk youth and gaps in services including manipulation and denial from youth; (4) The importance of aligned implementing partners and inter-agency "infighting"; and (5) Recommendations for improving programming.

Discussion: Stakeholders discussed successes and gaps of current initiatives, the changes in support due to global change in awareness, needs and challenges of youth, communities, and services, and the inter-agency dynamics of different stakeholders and implementing partners. All stakeholders regarded awareness and importance on Trauma-Informed Framework but referenced barriers to trauma-informed implementation. Stakeholder observed changes in on-ramps included increase in online recruitment, recruitment using trusted persons, and increased awareness of male and LGBTQ cases. Stakeholders mentioned needs and recommendations of services emphasizing survivor-led initiatives, community-based programming, preventative services, family and relationship focus, and individualized support for unrepresented populations (e.g., exploited youth recruiters, severe mental health disorders, substance abuse). The results of this study represent the need for further research and data expansion across stakeholders, and the need to target and resolve systemic issues disproportionately affecting marginalized communities.

Keywords: Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, Black and Brown youth, LGBTQ, Trauma-informed Care

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Table of Contents

Acronyms

CSEC	Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children
U.S.	United States
ILO	International Labor Organization
UN	United Nations
OHCHR	United Nations – Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning
TVPA	Trafficking Victims Protection Act
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
DSM-5	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
NCTSN	National Child Traumatic Stress Network
APA	American Psychological Association
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
OPHPR	CDC's Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response
SAMHSA	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services
NCTIC	National Center for Trauma-Informed Care
KII	Key Informant Interview
IDI	In-depth Interview
IRB	Institutional Review Board
DFCS	Division and Family and Children Services
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019

Definition of Terms

The following are definitions of key terms that are used throughout the thesis and are relevant in the field and literature of sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Human Trafficking
Human trafficking is the use of force, fraud, or coercion to receive a type of labor or commercial sex act and can stay within borders or cross borders including Globally and Nationally (Department of Homeland Security, 2013).

Labor Trafficking
"The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery (Trafficking Victims Protection Act, 2000)."

Commercial Sex Act
Any sex act on account of anything of value is given to or received by any person (*22 U.S. Code § 7102 - Definitions*, 2000).

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)
The term CSEC is used to describe the variation in crimes and activities associated with exploitation. "A range of crimes and activities involving the sexual abuse or exploitation of a child for the financial benefit of any person or in exchange for anything of value (including monetary and non-monetary benefits) given or received by any person (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, n.d.)."

Sex Trafficking
A term often used interchangeably or in support of CSEC defined as, "the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act (Trafficking Victims Protection Act, 2000)."

Trauma

"An emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster (American Psychological Association, n.d.)."

Trauma-informed Care
A patient centered care model that incorporates key principles of trauma and the interaction with individuals and patients who have experienced trauma. The four core principles of a trauma-informed care model include the knowledge and understanding of trauma, providing safety, autonomy of one's own decisions, cultural understanding, and empowerment (Hopper et al., 2010).

Pimp
Slang term used to define exploiter or trafficker that solicits customers for sex workers or CSEC. In this paper, pimp will be used to reference child sexual exploitation, therefore collects funds and goods youth receives, and sexually exploits youth to buyers or "Johns".

Buyer/John
Purchasers of sex and child exploitation from exploiter or "pimp" are often referred to as "Johns." Johns and buyers seek youth through exploiter across various forums both online and in person. Buyers are often educated, men of social and financial security, and can take roles in places and forms of power (Carpinteri et al., 2018; Hurst, 2015)."

Safe Harbor
A legal act to provide individuals from legal penalty when meeting specific criteria. In the case of this paper, Safe Harbor is only in reference to Safe Harbor laws created to protect youth from legal liability and penalties for forced criminal acts while exploited or trafficked by exploiter.

Victim/Survivor
Victim and survivor are terms to refer to an individual who was sexually exploited or trafficked. Some individuals who have experienced trafficking and/or exploitation prefer the term survivor. To refrain from derogatory language that might refer to exploited individuals as helpless or

defined by their trauma, this paper tries to refrain from the use of victim, but in case of legal provisions, literature, and system and service reference, the term "victim" is used in keeping with the respective legal or policy provision.

Mental Health
"emotional, psychological, and social well-being, and affects the way we think, feel, and act (*Learn About Mental Health - Mental Health - CDC*, 2018)"

Prostitution
"Engaging in, or agreeing to engage in, or offering to engage in a sexual act or contact, in return for a benefit to be received by the person engaging in the act/contact or a third-party person (*Title 17-A, §851: Definitions*, n.d.)."

Grooming/Manipulation
Either giving gifts, acts, or attention to build a relationship or trust of a minor or youth for use of exploitation or abuse. Grooming and manipulation are often used as a CSEC recruitment strategy by exploiters and although often received in gifts and monetary items, it can also be used by the exploiter providing romantic, or friendly attention to mentally manipulation the youth.

Trauma-Coerced Bonding
The bonding and emotional attachment of individuals to their abusers or exploiters as a direct outcome of abuse and the trauma undergone (Sanchez et al., 2019). Trauma-coerced bonding can often lead victims of abuse or exploitation to be in denial of their exploitation and support or have an attachment to their exploiters.

Jezebel
An originally biblical term negatively connotating a woman as a sexual deviant or a "bad girl." In the U.S. racial historical context, the term Jezebel was used after slave owners would rape and sexually abuse Black women and girls. Slave owners used the term Jezebel to blame Black women and stigmatize them as over sexual being (Anderson et al., 2018; *The Jezebel Stereotype - Anti-Black Imagery - Jim Crow Museum - Ferris State University*, n.d.). This term has now

carried context in the modern age to contribute to the over-sexualization of Black girls and women.

CHAPTER 1: Review of Literature

This chapter contains an expansive review of resources on the landscape of global and national commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). The literature explores the interplay of socio-economic factors that effect and contribute to sexual exploitation of at-risk youth, the mental health effects of exploitation, and the introductive of a trauma-informed care framework across services and systems.

Global and Domestic Burden of CSEC

History of Global CSEC

According to the Declaration of the First World Congress against CSEC, CSEC is defined as sexual abuse by an adult accompanied by renumeration in cash or in-kind to the child or third person(s) (McClain & Garrity, 2011). This can take the form of prostitution, pornography, trafficking of individuals and recruitment of other minors for sexual exploitation. CSEC is a widespread and global issue and according to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), falls within the category of modern-day slavery. "Human sex trafficking" previously only referred to the trafficking of women and young girls for the purpose of sexual exploitation but has recently been updated to acknowledge the trafficking of people of all genders for the purposes of sexual exploitation, prostitution, and/or forced labor or services. Although this can affect all populations, 79% of those experiencing sexual exploitation are young girls and women (Sarrica et al., n.d.). In the global economy, the International Labor Organization (ILO) reports an estimated 99 billion

Figure 1. *Share of Detected Trafficking Victims by form of Exploitation*, Received from (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020)

dollars in profit each year through forced sexual exploitation alone, making up 66% of all human trafficking profits globally including forced labor. (ILO, 2014).

The United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking was launched in 2007 between the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), ILO, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The initiative also included the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, which is currently ratified by 178 member states (*United Nations Treaty Collection*, n.d.). This pushed a global effort for countries to follow human trafficking prevention and protection protocols. In 2009, the UN conducted a monitoring review of 155 countries[1], going beyond only countries that ratified the protocol, to observe state-initiated acts, legal policies, or programs enacted to prevent and protect human sex trafficking victims. This report was only able to capture new laws and initiatives the state created, and therefore unable to review exactly how much trafficking has taken place. By 2008, 63% of the countries involved passed laws against trafficking, and 16% passed laws that only pertain to certain elements of the Protocol (Sarrica et al., n.d.).

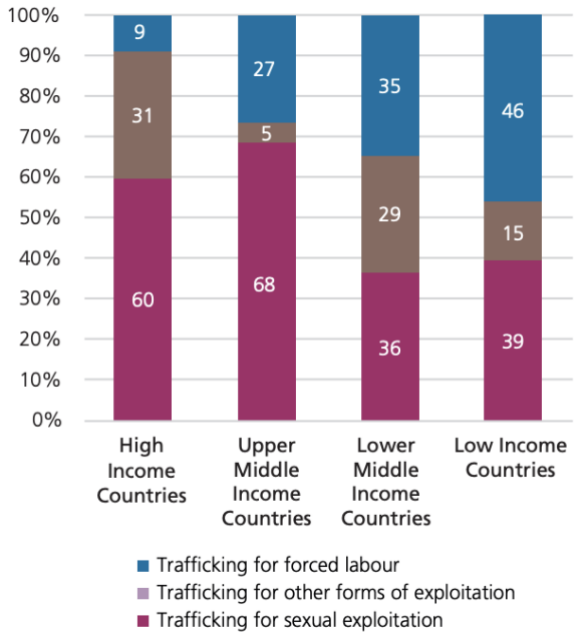

Figure 2. *Shares of Detected Child Victims of Trafficking, by form of Exploitation and national income*, Received from (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020)

[1] For more information on the countries reviewed, visit the report at: https://www.unodc.org/documents/Global_Report_on_TIP.pdf

Currently nearly 4.8 million people are estimated to be engaged in forced sexual labor, and 99% of all sexually exploited women and girls (International Labor Institute, 2017). Rates of sexual exploitation and trafficking vary across regions and countries worldwide. Globally, the identification, interventions, and litigation actions taken against sexual exploitation and trafficking cases are enforced and controlled by nation states individually. Increased rates and vulnerability of adolescent girls occurs in developing or underdeveloped countries with low socio-economic status, political unrest, and corruption (Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, United Nations (UN), 2008). This results in the weakening of countries' social structures and support originally set to protect and create more opportunities for protection against human sex trafficking. Regions with cultural and social beliefs encouraging early child forced marriage are also more likely to experience higher rates of sexual exploitation of youth (Nour, 2009).

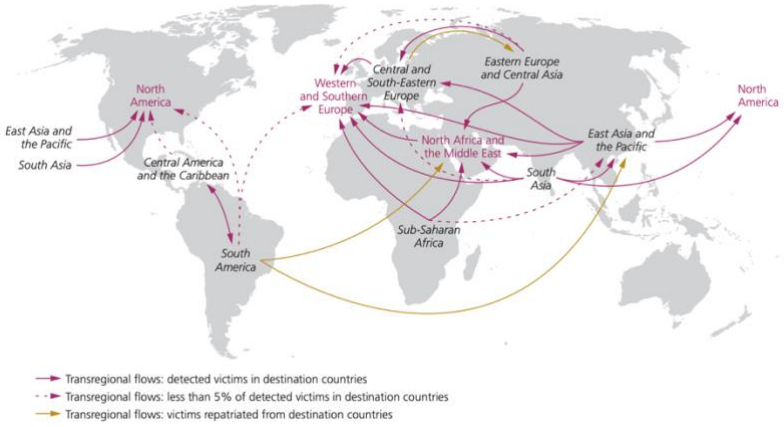

Figure 3. *Main Detected Transregional Flows, 2018 or most recent,* Received from (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020)

CSEC in the United States

According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, CSEC is defined as "a range of crimes and activities which involve the sexual abuse or exploitation of a child for the financial benefit of any person or in exchange for anything of value given or received by any person" (Development Services Group, Inc, 2014). Although CSEC is a vast global issue rooted in different global contexts, sexual exploitation and human sex trafficking is often misinterpreted

in the U.S. as being a global issue only crossing international borders into the U.S., when in fact human sex trafficking is still very common within and across the U.S. Although sex trafficking has been found in all 50 states, and the U.S. is rated as a profitable hotspot for importing victims of international sex trafficking, most exploited youth are U.S. citizens (Franchino-Olsen, 2019). One of the most prominent gaps in combatting sexual exploitation in the U.S., is the under-identification of exploited youth caused by the misinterpretation of who is being exploited or is at risk for exploitation. This is often caused by inaccurately stereotyping CSEC victims as Caucasian middle-class youth abducted for the purpose of sexual exploitation across international borders. Globally, it is estimated that about 1 to 2 million youth are annually sold into the sex trafficking industry (Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014). Victims of sexual exploitation in the U.S. are also often targeted vulnerable populations, specifically brown and Black girls, and LGBTQ youth (Fedina et al., 2019; Franchino-Olsen, 2019). This inherently creates a stigma of what a at-risk youth might look like, and therefore can cause a gap in identification of sexually exploited youth that fit this criterion. Many victims transiently fall through the gaps of the criminal justice system and courts.

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 was created to provide guidance and recommendations for states and countries combating national and global sexual exploitation of youth (Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, n.d.). The TVPA called for strengthening efforts and resources to further prosecute traffickers but did not increase awareness of vulnerable populations and awareness of victim identification among youth. In 2019, there were 8,248 situations and 14,597 individuals identified as being involved in sex trafficking, and 4,384 traffickers identified (Polaris Project, 2019). Also, in 2019, only 324 defendants of sex

trafficking were convicted in federal court, while only 575 sex trafficking cases were being processed within U.S. federal courts (Feehs & Alyssa, 2020).

Historical Racial Context in the U.S.

The vulnerability and sexualization of Black and brown girls susceptible to human sex trafficking in the United States is fueled by the racial historical context of slavery and colonization of Black and brown populations in the U.S. (Epstein et al., 2017). Within the historical context of slavery, the central purpose of enslaving Black individuals was to degrade, dehumanize, and control an entire population. Black women were characterized and constructed as overly sexual and fertile beings, therefore given the term "Jezebel," who in the bible was the wife of King Ahab and the constructed archetype of a wicked woman (Anderson et al., 2018). This constructed Black females as symbols of lust, lacking complete self-control over sexual desire, and therefore being wicked. The sexualization and Jezebel stereotype of Black females and enslaved people fueled acts of rape and sexual control by white men and slave owners, excusing their behavior by criminalizing and blaming the women of acts of seduction (Berry, 2007). Further enforcing the dehumanization of enslaved people, the use of weaponization of fear as a control over Black females, slaveowners also increased enslaved populations by using victims for procreation.

The sexualization of those oppressed doesn't only embed stereotypes formed by slavery, but also the colonization of Native Americans, Latino, and Asian populations. The sexualization of brown women and girls started during the colonization of Native Americans, and the sexual exploitation of young Native American girls initiated by American troops (Nelson-Butler, 2015). During World War II, The Korean War, and the Vietnam War, American troops also used the sexualization of Asian women and the rape and exploitation of Asian women as sexual servants. This was also practiced among Latina women, specifically Mexican women being sexually

abused and raped in migrant camps in the United States by American soldiers. Rape and sexual abuse initiated by American troops has become normalized and was used for women who resisted colonization or control.

This sexualization of Black and brown girls has translated to modern day sexualization of these populations. The portrayals of Black women as Jezebels, conversely created a notion that white women were "clean or innocent," and portrayed other populations as sexual deviants. This sexualization and sexual fetishization of girls of color is further fueled with modern day society with social media and the music industry. Rappers and modern-day musicians continue to sexualize Black women and women of color, as well as sexualizing minor and young girls of color. The glamorization of pimping and prostitution has fueled this notion including the production of merchandise, music, and movies that glorify pimping. Sexual fetishes of teens and minors of color has also increased and has been sensationalized by increasing pornography of young girls specifically Black and brown girls. This has not only put Black and brown minors more at risk for being sexually exploited and trafficked, but it has also created a hyper-sexualization of girls of color.

Recruitment

Most Vulnerable Victims

The stereotype of a victim of sexual exploitation is typically misconstrued as an image of a young girl being kidnapped and forced into the sex trafficking trade. Most vulnerable populations of youth for sexual exploitation include runaways, have experienced homelessness, sexual and physical abuse, come from a low socio-economic status, and identify as LGBTQ (Twigg, 2017; Tyler et al., 2004). Youth that are homeless, male, or LGBTQ are also more likely to engage in "survival sex" acts, which are sexual acts that are used in return for goods or money that are needed for survival (Tyler et al., 2004). In 2019, out of the 23,500-youth endangered of

running away, 1 in 6 were more likely to become victims of sex trafficking (*Child Sex Trafficking Overview*, 2021). Youth of color and those identifying as LGBTQ are disproportionately likely to be affected (Fedina et al., 2019; Tyler et al., 2004).

At-risk youth and youth coming from more vulnerable household or socioeconomic settings are then often led into the sex abuse to prison pipeline. This creates a cycle of returning to sex work that began as exploitation as a youth with unresolved trauma from sexual exploitation, and then ultimately leads to a trapped cycle. As adult sex workers, individuals don't often receive mental health counseling and the proper care needed to heal from the trauma of sexual exploitation, which exposes them to continue to go back to survival sex, and to the lifestyle of recruiting or sex work as adults. As adults, sex workers still often undergo negative stereotypes and even if still exploited by pimps as adults, those who work as sex workers as adults can still be charged for prostitution even if not by choice (Human Rights Watch, 2019).

Sexual exploitation and trafficking are often only categorized as being forced and kidnapped into the sex trafficking trade, but there are different forms of sexual exploitation. Many victims of sexual exploitation also do not self-recognize themselves as victims and are often manipulated into abusive relationships or lifestyles that lead to CSEC (Epstein & Edelman, 2014). Other youth at-risk, might also be recruited by other exploited youth into the human sex trafficking industry (Fedina et al., 2019). According to the 2018 National Hotline statistics, in a study analyzing 23,078 sex trafficking survivors, the top recruitment strategies in trafficking consist of 1,078 of those being recruited by intimate partner or marriage proposition; 893 by familial relations; 491 due to someone posing as a benefactor; 479 are recruited as replying to a job offer or advertisement; and 402 were responding to false promises or other forms of fraud (Polaris Project, 2018). This suggests the different pathways that youth might be exploited into

the sex trafficking industry, and therefore are not often explicitly kidnapped and entered the sex trade.

Socio-economic status and childhood upbringing are often correlated with various factors that lead to vulnerability. Coming from a low socio-economic status, coming from an unstable home, or encountering child protective services, puts children at more risk for experiencing child abuse. This includes youth of color specifically Black and brown youth, and youth coming from more urban societies. Youth who have experienced physical or sexual child abuse are seen as at risk for running away. Annually between 450,000 and 2.5 million youth are recorded as runaways, and most of these youth are likely to be sexually exploited (Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014). Due to their lifestyles, youth at-risk for exploitation are also more likely to come into contact with or be in the same environment as their perpetrators. This is also known as the principle of homogamy, noting that victims are perpetrators of sexual exploitation and are likely to come in contact with one another due to risk of engaging in more criminal activity (Tyler et al., 2004).

Currently, the most prominent challenge in battling sexual exploitation in the United States is the misidentification of victims. Due to the racial history and stigma against most vulnerable populations including LGBTQ youth and girls of color, victims of sexual exploitation are often identified as criminals and sometimes even charged for prostitution. Girls of color are disproportionally criminalized for sexual abuse, and therefore are often arrested, criminalized, and even charged for prostitution even as a minor. Currently, the rates of girls of color in the juvenile justice system is growing disproportionately, with African American girls accounting for 14% of the general population, but 33.2 % of the population of girls detained. For Native American girls, they are accounted for as 1% of the general population, but 3.5% of girls

detained (Saar et al., 2015). Nearly a third (31%) of all girls in the juvenile system have been sexually abused at least once in their life, and in certain states, these percentages rise alarmingly. The disproportionate criminalization and cycle of sexual abuse of youth of color reinforces the national sexual abuse to prison pipeline, therefore cycling victims into the criminal justice system, of which many are victims of sexual exploitation.

What is Being Done

In 2000, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act was created and amended by the U.S. State Department to provide tools and suggestions globally and nationally for combatting trafficking ("International and Domestic Law," n.d.). This act also initiated the collection of the TIP Office and the President's Interagency Task Force, that is designed to specifically combat trafficking of minors. In 2019, federal courts convicted 324 defendants in sex trafficking, which was an 18% increase from 2018 (Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, n.d.). Another initiative to try to prevent the criminalization of victims was the enactment of Safe Harbor laws across states. Safe Harbor laws are intended to try to prevent victims from becoming part of the criminal justice system as a result of their victimization. In 2016, 28 different states enacted 51 new bills to address the trafficking of minors (Williamson et al., 2008). Although these national acts and initiatives were created to prevent and protect sexually exploited youth, they do not reach or are not enforced with minority and vulnerable populations. Currently only 21 states have immunity laws for certain crimes pertaining to sexual exploitation, and only 32 states have diversion laws set out to prevent youth from collecting criminal records for forced criminal acts (D. R. Williams et al., 2016). These laws and protections are also in the hands of the local juvenile court, and many youths are arrested or charged for other minor misdemeanor charges, or for running away, and therefore might entered into the criminal justice system while experiencing sexual exploitation. This continues the cycle of the abuse to prison pipeline and

makes victims more likely to be involved as victims or recruiters in the commercial sex trade again.

State of Georgia Context

Georgia Background

The population of Georgia is 10,830,000 (World Population Review, 2021b). Georgia is made up of 51.3% females, and 48.7% males, and 31.61% of its population identifies as Black or African American. The third highest percentage of Black population in the U.S., the metro Atlanta area has a total population of 6,170,490, therefore making up more than 50% of Georgia's total population (World Population Review, 2021a). Atlanta's demographics include 50.95% being Black or African American, 40.90% White, 4.44% Asian, and the rest being two or more races, other, Native American or Hawaiian. Within Atlanta there is a poverty rate of 38.73% among Islanders, but 31.14% among Black, and 23.44% among Asian populations. Atlanta is also known for its diversity, having one of the highest LGBTQ populations per capita, and for being the 2nd largest metro area that is majority Black (World Population Review, 2021a). Atlanta's diversity and drastic population growth is also said to be greatly contributed to by the influx and traffic of Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, the busiest international airport in the world.

Due to a host of reasons, Atlanta is considered a "hub" for CSEC, and Georgia is said to be number four among the top 10 states in the United States with the highest rates of human trafficking, at a rate of 3.85 trafficked per every 100,000 documented by 2021 comparable to the average 2.83 per 100,000 (World Population Review, 2021c). According to the World Population Review, by 2021, there were a total of 417 reported human trafficking cases in Georgia. Although these data are collected through the National Human Trafficking Hotline by collecting cases from phone calls, texts, online chats, email, or tips reviewed of reported cases,

these are representative of reported and identified cases only, and it is known that human trafficking is underreported.

Characteristics for youth experiencing or at-risk for experiencing CSEC in Georgia are equally determined as other high risks such as LGBTQ youth, those that have previously experienced abuse, homelessness, or previous childhood systems or traumas. Although these risks aren't different in Atlanta and Georgia, they are more congregated in the Metro Atlanta area, therefore causing greater risk for CSEC. According to the Atlanta Youth Count, 2018, an Atlanta based study and needs assessment, among homeless youth in Atlanta that participated in the study, 54.1% had ever experienced human trafficking in their lifetime, 16.0% experienced CSEC at the hands of someone else while being homeless, and 19.9% experienced CSEC ever in their lifetime (Wright & LaBoy, 2018). In Atlanta specific CSEC reports, Black girls with an average age of 14 were considered the overwhelming majority of those experiencing or at-risk for experiencing CSEC in the metro Atlanta area (McCune, 2016). Therefore, Black and brown girls with a history of abuse, homelessness, or parental neglect appear to be the largest population recruited and entering into commercial sexual exploitation (Finn et al., 2009).

What is being done – Georgia

Georgia has comprehensive statewide and national laws and policies that are used for the prevention and ending of CSEC in the state of Georgia. These laws work to identify and incriminate traffickers and pimps, as well as to protect those at risk of or experiencing CSEC without being incriminated. In 2011, Georgia HB 200 provided funding focused for human trafficking prevention, training of law enforcement, stricter laws against traffickers and those in demand, and protective laws for those who have been trafficked even at the age of consent (16), with possible eligibility for victim compensation (Office of Attorney General, n.d.).

Criminal provisions for both "johns"/buyers and traffickers are a criminal offense punishable up to 20 – 30 years of imprisonment (Shared Hope International & Center for Law and Policy, 2017). Although, there are laws created to incriminate traffickers and those purchase sex, buyers of sex are often privileged white men, that are often not identified or not incriminated, and therefore continue the cycle of the demand of CSEC (Hurst, 2015).

On June 29, 2020, Georgia Governor Brian Kemp signed the Senate Bill 435 also known as "The Survivors Act." This bill became effective immediately and provided a possibility to clear criminal records for individuals who have been victims of human trafficking, coercion, or sexual exploitation, and their crimes were directly linked to their trauma. Georgia is also considered one of the states that hold Safe Harbor Laws in protection of victims of human trafficking and CSEC. Although these laws and bills are set to protect victims of human trafficking, there often needs to be proof of coercion, and acts being directly linked to this coercion. This is often very difficult, and the trauma of sexual exploitation can also lead to individuals not identifying as victims or re-entering the justice system due to the previous trauma experienced (Shared Hope International & Center for Law and Policy, 2017).

Abuse to Prison Pipeline

The abuse to prison pipeline is a phenomenon where minority girls of color endure sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, are criminalized for their acts, and charged as adults or other minor criminal acts. The cause of arrest for these girls are often misdemeanor and state offenses, outstanding warrants, and technical violations (Saar et al., 2015). Many victims of sexual abuse or exploitation respond to these traumatic incidents by misbehaving and avoiding school, running away, or even substance abuse. The psychological impact of sexual abuse and exploitation begets more stigmatized behavior. In a study conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 17% of homeless or runaway youth reported being forced into

unwanted sexual acts by a family or household member (Saar et al., 2015). These illegal acts in response to sexual abuse, lead victims into the criminal justice system, where they are not likely to receive Trauma-Informed care, or treatment.

Having experienced sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, victims are forced to live with untreated traumatic events. The average age of sexual exploitation of a minor is between 12-14 years old - formative years coinciding with puberty. This creates a lifetime risk of trauma and mental disorders from the traumatic events experienced during exploitation. Women and girls who are engaged in exploitation and the commercial sex trade are also at higher risk for physical and sexual violence, harassment, HIV/AIDS, STIs, and substance abuse. They are at risk of experiencing physical and emotional violence from pimps for refusal of activity, or for asking for their own money, etc. Youth who experience sexual exploitation can also face extreme mental health issues, especially when untreated, leading to depression, suicide, and sometimes Stockholm syndrome (Fedina et al., 2019). This creates a cycle of victimhood causing many victims and survivors to continue participation and even recruitment of future victims for commercial sexual exploitation.

Mental Health

Nearly 80% of all patients seeking mental health services have experienced at least one traumatic event in their life (Breslau & Kessler, 2001). The DSM-5 defines trauma as: “Exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in one (or more) of the following ways:

1. Directly experiencing the traumatic event(s).
2. Witnessing, in person, the event(s) as it occurred to others.

3. Learning that the traumatic event(s) occurred to a close family member or a close friend. In cases of actual or threatened death of a family member or friend, the event(s) must have been violent or accidental.
4. Experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event(s) (e.g., first responders collecting human remains; police officers repeatedly exposed to details of child abuse) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013)."

Victims of sexual exploitation undergo trauma, and suffer from PTSD, or other mental disorders, and are immediately in and out of the criminal justice system either for prostitution or other criminal acts stemming from the exploitation. Studies have shown that girls that are exposed to trauma are more likely to develop mental health disorders because of the trauma when compared to men who have undergone trauma. Victims of sex trafficking are more likely to experience anxiety, depression, panic attacks, obsessive compulsive disorder, and PTSD (Hossain et al., 2010). These girls are oftentimes placed in juvenile justice centers without adequate mental health care and can be re-exposed to more traumatic events or are released and then more likely to be re-recruited or re-entered into CSEC. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) noted a report in 2004, that among girls that have been in the criminal justice system, 70% have experienced trauma, and 65% have shown PTSD symptoms (Saar et al., 2015). With the lack of adequate care and resources, the abuse to the prison pipeline is further exacerbated.

Trauma-Informed Care

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), Trauma is defined as an emotional response to a horrible experience event such as an accident, rape, or natural disaster (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). These aftershock events can be short or long term and can include various effects on emotions, future relationships, and physical health. Responses to

traumatic events can manifest in various behavior or health conditions, and can affect youth or adult education, employment, or the juvenile justice system (Sanchez et al., 2019).

Trauma-Informed Care is a mental health care that provides a patient centered care model, and therefore guides practitioners to understand the trauma and mental health symptoms that the patient has undergone. Trauma-Informed care is a general model for approaching patients and is not a direct strategy for specific symptoms and disorders. The five most important long-term needs for sexual exploitation survivors include: safety, health access, mental health access, financial support, and social and familial support (Busch-Armendariz et al., 2011). In order to shift the focus of criminalization of youth and victims, focus must be turned to rehabilitation, healing, and future sustainability.

The core principles of a Trauma-Informed care model include the knowledge and understanding of trauma, providing safety, autonomy of one's own decisions, cultural understanding, and empowerment (Hopper et al., 2010). The CDC's Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response (OPHPR), and SAMHSA's National Center for Trauma-Informed Care (NCTIC), developed a trauma-informed care employee training framework in order to increase the awareness of trauma and its cohesion in community work. The framework includes 6 main principles that are trained to guide trauma-informed care knowledge (Center for Preparedness and Response, 2019).

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness & transparency
3. Peer Support
4. Collaboration & mutuality
5. Empowerment & Choice

6. Cultural, historical & gender issues

In order to use these six key principles, the CDC, and SAMHSA teamed together to create a trauma-informed approach framework that can be used by federal, and organizational systems to help minimize the trauma of survivors, staff, and help individuals move forward. In order for a program, organization, or system to be considered trauma-informed, they must abide to the four "R" key assumptions (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, 2014). Having basic *realization* of the trauma and events the individuals have gone through, and how that can affect those involved and those around. By realizing the trauma, it is understood that the trauma does not have to be recent to be traumatic, and can affect behavioral, mental, and substance use issues. Organizations and individuals in systems must train and prepare staff to *recognize* trauma and signs of trauma that can manifest in any individuals. These services include trauma screening assessments, and trainings of staff members to be able to accurately recognize trauma. Next, the system or organization must be able to *respond* to the traumatic manifestations with an understanding and respect for the trauma that was undergone. This includes trainings of staff and all members on how to approach and provide assistance to individuals with trauma, from respectful changes in language, to policy changes. Lastly, in order for an approach to be trauma-informed, it must *resist re-traumatization* of both clients as well as staff members. In order for there to be meaningful healing, there must be an overall Trauma-Informed environment focused on the well-being of staff and clients (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, 2014).

This care model can be adapted and used across various disorder specific models and approaches and can be adapted across all care facilities. Providing Trauma-Informed care

requires education, knowledge and understanding of trauma, awareness, and skills built for a patient focused approach.

Conclusion

Millions of youth are being sexually exploited worldwide each year. Vulnerable youth including Black and brown girls, and LGBTQ youth are disproportionately affected, and therefore are at higher risk for exploitation. Girls at risk are being sexually exploited and entering into the criminal justice system without Trauma-Informed mental health care, enabling the sexual abuse to prison pipeline. Although there is research, notions, and declarations in support of mental care and decriminalization of victims, these strategies are often focused on international sexual exploitation and do not have the proper research or evidence for vulnerable youth exploitation in the U.S. This thesis calls for further research on current Trauma-Informed care programs that exist within the U.S., their strategies, successes, and how that can be put into sustainable models for clinical and criminal justice services nationwide. A survivor focused care approach can help victims heal through traumatic experiences, and can prevent further vulnerable populations from being exploited, and entered into the criminal justice system.

CHAPTER 2: Manuscript

An Exploration of Youth Vulnerability, Risk Factors, and Changes in the Commercial Sexual Exploitation Environment in Georgia

By

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Student Contribution

The Qualitative study was conducted and reported by the student in the following manuscript. The student originally worked within the broader study of this sub-study was a part of, and then led each part of sub study including in-depth interview guide adaptation, recruiting participants, interview implementation, Qualitative thematic analysis, and wrote manuscript and thesis sections. The student further implemented an expansive literature review, identified study objective and aims, created tables, codebook, and annexes. All written sections were reviewed by corresponding author (Dr. Dabney P. Evans) and co-authors (Dr. Subasri Narasimhan & Carrie Ripkey), and all written feedback was incorporated and finalized.

Abstract

Introduction: Populations disproportionately affected by commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) include marginalized communities: Black and brown youth, LGBTQ youth, those with previous experiences of child and sexual abuse, foster care, and have run away from home and/or are experiencing homelessness. This study seeks to understand the CSEC environment in Georgia and the initiatives designed to prevent and respond to it.

Methods: Data were collected from six key informants through ~1-hour in-depth interviews conducted via Zoom and phone. Participants included individuals working in the juvenile court system, state and organizational positions, and local organizational leaders. Interviews were coded using deductive and inductive codes and analyzed thematically for emergent themes. Main limitation includes research and data limited to sample size of 6 interviews, and thus, did not reach saturation.

Results: Five themes emerged: (1) Environmental and social evolution of CSEC, for example the false "victim" stereotype of "the typical girl cowering in the corner" ; (2) Risk factors and changes in populations including changes through recruitment through social network, and exploitation by peers; (3) Implementing systems and services for at-risk youth and gaps in services including manipulation and denial from youth; (4) The importance of aligned implementing partners and challenges of inter-agency "infighting" and (5) Recommendations for improving programming.

Discussion: Stakeholders discussed successes and gaps of current initiatives, the changes in support due to global change in awareness, needs and challenges of youth, communities, and services, and the inter-agency dynamics of different stakeholders and implementing partners. All stakeholders regarded awareness and importance of trauma-informed framework but referenced barriers to Trauma-Informed implementation. Stakeholder observed changes in on-ramps included increase in online recruitment, recruitment using trusted persons, and increased awareness of male and LGBTQ cases. Stakeholders mentioned needs and recommendations of services emphasizing survivor-led initiatives, community-based programming, preventative services, family and relationship focus, and individualized support for unrepresented populations (e.g., exploited youth recruiters, severe mental health disorders, substance abuse). The results of this study represent the need for further research and data expansion across stakeholders, and the need to target and resolve systemic issues disproportionately affecting marginalized communities.

Keywords: Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, Black and Brown youth, LGBTQ, Trauma-Informed Care

Introduction

Human trafficking, child sexual exploitation, and forced labor are considered forms of modern-day slavery (Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, n.d.). According to the International Labor Institute, sexual exploitation accounts for 66% of all human trafficking profits worldwide (International Labor Institute, 2017). Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) is referred to as "a range of crimes and activities involving the sexual abuse or exploitation of a child for the financial benefit of any person or in exchange for anything of value (including monetary and non-monetary benefits) given or received by any person" (Development Services Group, Inc, 2014; Institute and National Research Council, 2013; Office of Juvenile justice and Delinquency Prevention, n.d.).

Globally and nationally, there is a gap in data and research regarding CSEC and sex trafficking. This perpetually creates false stigmas and misinformation among those who are not well versed in the field. This includes the misinterpretation that sex trafficking and CSEC in the U.S. only involve individuals and victims brought in from across borders. In fact, sexual exploitation and trafficking are found and practiced across all 50 states, and the majority of victims are U.S. citizens (Franchino-Olsen, 2019). Due to the gap in research, CSEC rates are underreported. The Polaris Project identified a 19% increase in contact and reporting from victims and survivors between 2015-2019, reporting 22,326 human trafficking victims and survivors in 2019 (Polaris Project, 2019). Of those known, 23% are U.S. citizens or permanent residents, 83% female, and 79% were minors at the time trafficking began (Polaris Project, 2019).

Mainstream Hollywood movies and shows propagate a false image of human trafficking and sexual exploitation (*Human Trafficking in the Movies*, 2020). Specifically, in the movie "Taken," victims of trafficking are white young women, abruptly kidnapped in a foreign country,

and held against their will internationally. This creates a false perception of CSEC and pushes individuals to believe trafficking only occurs in movies, extreme rare events, and abrupt kidnapping. Most CSEC and human trafficking victims are not abruptly kidnapped. Exploiters often target vulnerable youth and recruit through manipulation and/or grooming techniques (Franchino-Olsen, 2019). Risk factors associated with higher rates of CSEC includes youth with previous abuse or maltreatment, low socio-economic background, history of engagement in foster care or child welfare system, homelessness, substance abuse, or those who identify as LGBTQ (Polaris Project, 2019; Twigg, 2017; Tyler et al., 2004). In the U.S., marginalized populations such as Black and brown populations are more likely to experience multi-dimensional poverty including low socio-economic status (SES), limited education, no proper healthcare, and unemployment (Reeves et al., 2016). Because youth in these populations are affected by social, economic, and health disparities, and because LGBTQ youth are still greatly stigmatized against and more likely to be homeless; this puts Black and brown girls, and LGBTQ youth at a greater risk for commercial sexual exploitation (Fedina et al., 2019; Franchino-Olsen, 2019; Tyler et al., 2004).

Due to the racial historical context of slavery in the U.S., girls of color are disproportionately susceptible to criminalization, incarceration, and sexual exploitation (Epstein et al., 2017). During slavery, Black women were often used as sexual pawns for control by slave owners (Nelson-Butler, 2015). This created an archetype of Black and African American women as “sexual deviants,” and coined the term “Jezebel” (Anderson et al., 2018). This archetype and sexualization of Black women later translated to modern times in the music and movie industry, and now portrays Black and brown youth as a sexual fetish across pornography and media (Epstein et al., 2017). Black and brown girls are also often negatively stereotyped as “troubled,”

and disproportionately targeted against across the Juvenile justice System. Amongst girls detained in residential facilities, Black and African American girls, are more likely to be detained at a rate of 123 per 100,00 vs. 37 per 100,000 for non-Hispanic white girls (Saar et al., 2015).

Georgia has the fourth highest rate of human trafficking statewide with a rate of 3.85 cases per 100K (World Population Review, 2021c). Atlanta is the largest city in Georgia and has a 2020 population of 524,067, but the metro Atlanta area including surrounding metro areas has a population of 6,170,490 (World Population Review, 2021b). As the second largest Black metro city in the country, 50.95% of the population is Black or African American, 40.90% White, 4.44% Asian, 2.42% two or more races, and 1.29% is Native American, Hawaiian, or other (World Population Review, 2021a). Because of a host of reasons, including the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, the busiest international airport in the world, Atlanta is coined as a "hub" for CSEC and trafficking.

Across the U.S. and Georgia, there are policies and interventions set in place to support victims of CSEC. The U.S. government initiated the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) in 2000 (Gies et al., 2018). This enacted a nationwide initiative against sexual exploitation and human trafficking. In 2011, Georgia HB 200 provided funding focused for human trafficking prevention, training of law enforcement, stricter laws against traffickers and those in demand, and protective laws for those who have been trafficked even at the age of consent (16), with possible eligibility for victim compensation (Office of Attorney General, n.d.). To further protect exploited youth, Safe Harbor laws first introduced in 2019, intended to prevent victims from compiling criminal records as a result of their exploiters and forced criminal acts. Safe Harbor laws were approved and amended in February 2015, and in 2020, Governor Brian Kemp signed the Senate Bill 435, known as the "Survivors Act" to provide the possibility of cleared criminal

records for victims of sexual exploitation, coercion, or human trafficking. These laws and protections are also in the hands of the local juvenile court and are not often well enforced. Often, youth are arrested or charged for other minor misdemeanor charges such as running away or violating probation or might need to show proof of exploitation to not be charged for prostitution (R. Williams, 2017).

Youth vulnerable to or having experienced exploitation are more likely to suffer from mental health effects. Abuse and torture experienced previously and during exploitation can have extreme mental health effects including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety (Hossain et al., 2010; D. R. Williams et al., 2016). Responses to traumatic events can have long-term effects which manifest in various behavioral or health conditions, and can affect youth or adult education, employment, or engagement in the juvenile justice system (Sanchez et al., 2019). Manipulation and grooming are often used as a strategy to recruit youth by creating false perceptions of romantic relationships, which can have traumatic mental health effects, but also cause individuals to commit crimes when forced by exploiters. When detained or incarcerated, youth are not provided adequate mental health care and facilities and face terrible living conditions across detainment facilities (Saar et al., 2015). This makes it more likely for girls to re-enter sexual exploitation once released from the detainment, and without proper mental health or medical attention, continues a cycle of repeated trauma. This cycle is also known as the Sex Abuse to Prison Pipeline (Saar et al., 2015).

Systems and services interacting with exploited youth are often not trained in or able to provide necessary mental health and trauma attention and care which causes individuals to not trust systems, re-enter sexual exploitation, or refuse care (Laser-Maira et al., 2019). There is a need for a uniform victim and trauma focused care model across different agencies and systems

responding to sexually exploited youth, and youth with previous trauma. The Trauma-Informed Care model is a mental health framework that provides patient centered care, and guides practitioners and stakeholders to understand the trauma that the patient or youth has undergone. The core principles of a Trauma-Informed care model include the knowledge and understanding of trauma, providing safety, autonomy of one's own decisions, cultural understanding, and empowerment (Hopper et al., 2010). The Center for Disease Control's (CDC) Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response (OPHPR), and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) National Center for Trauma-Informed Care (NCTIC), developed a trauma-informed care employee training framework to increase the awareness of trauma and its cohesion in community work. The framework includes 6 main principles that are trained to guide trauma-informed care knowledge (Center for Preparedness and Response, 2019).

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To use these six key principles, the CDC, and SAMHSA teamed together to create a trauma-informed approach framework that can be used by federal, and organizational systems to help minimize the trauma of survivors, staff, and help individuals move forward. In order for a program, organization, or system to be considered trauma-informed, they must abide to the four "R" key assumptions (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, 2014). Having basic *realization* of the trauma and events the individuals have gone through, and how that can affect

those involved and those around. Organizations and individuals in systems must train and prepare staff to *recognize* trauma and signs of trauma that can manifest in any individuals. These services include trauma screening assessments, and trainings of staff members to be able to accurately recognize trauma. Next, the system or organization must be able to *respond* to the traumatic manifestations with an understanding and respect for the trauma that was undergone. This includes trainings of staff and all members on how to approach and aid individuals with trauma, from respectful changes in language, to policy changes. Lastly, for an approach to be trauma-informed, it must *resist re-traumatization* of both clients as well as staff members. In order for there to be meaningful healing, there must be an overall trauma-informed environment focused on the well-being of staff and clients (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, 2014).

Using a Trauma-Informed care model can be used not only among physicians and health facilities, but also across the juvenile justice system, housing facilities, organizations, and educational environments to encourage and support individuals who have experienced sexual exploitation and traumatic events. With widespread Trauma-Informed care models, there can also be an expansion of mental health care and prevention focused support systems that work to prevent future sexual exploitation of children.

To understand how the systems and services, work, and support CSEC youth, and interact with Trauma-Informed model in Georgia and the metro Atlanta, this study aims to dig deeper into the landscape of CSEC from the perspective of stakeholders working in the field of CSEC.

Methods

This was a qualitative study of individual stakeholders working in the current CSEC environment in Georgia with a focus on the metro Atlanta area; this project was a sub-study of the Sparking Systemic Change Project Evaluation whose goal is to address the immediate needs

of those at risk for or experiencing CSEC in Fulton County, Georgia. The purpose of the sub-study was to understand the changes in the landscape of CSEC youth in Atlanta and through a stakeholder lens, understand the systems and services that respond to CSEC, how they interact with the Trauma-Informed Care Framework, and future needs for increased prevention and response to CSEC in Atlanta, Georgia.

Participants included individuals working in the juvenile court system, state response positions, as well as local CSEC response organizations. The inclusion criteria for this study included adults over the age of 18, with current or prior experience working with youth at risk of or having experienced CSEC in the state of Georgia. All participants were native English speakers and were identified through snowball sampling recommendations by other professionals in the field of youth development and sexual exploitation prevention and mitigation in Georgia. Exclusion criteria included anyone under the age of 18, non-native English speakers, and those without experience in the field of CSEC. Survivors of sexual exploitation were excluded to avoid re-traumatization.

The key informant interview (KII) guide was adapted from the original KII guide for Sparking Systemic Change Evaluation. The original guide explored two major domains: (1) the current CSEC environment in Georgia; and (2) successes and gaps in programs and policies. The adapted instrument included these original domains and one additional domain: (3) Future opportunities and Trauma-Informed Care.

Participants were asked to participate in a single, remote, in-depth interview lasting about one hour.

Interviews were conducted in three phases. The first phase consisted of KIIs with SSC project partners: youthSpark, the Barton Child Policy and Law Center, LGBTQ Institute, and the

International Human Trafficking Institute. Phase 1 participants were contacted in March 2020 and asked to participate in the KII. In April 2020, four key stakeholder interviews were conducted as the first round of interviews. Using respondent-driven sampling, participants from the initial group were asked to identify additional individuals that they believed were important contributors and had important perspectives of the CSEC environment. Leaders from two additional in CSEC organizations participated in two additional interviews in April 2020. In the third phase additional respondent derived from the respondent driven sampling were recruited. 6 participants were interviewed from December 2020 to March 2021.

Verbal consent was obtained prior to each interview. All information was kept confidential, and interviews were deidentified prior to analysis. Due to potential risks of triggering participants who had prior experiences of personal or secondary trauma, language was carefully chosen to avoid victimizing language, and participants were informed of the freedom to refuse a response or end the conversation at any time.

All interviews were conducted remotely over Zoom and were recorded. Recordings were uploaded in a private password protected OneDrive folder with access available only to direct research team. All recordings were transcribed verbatim in English using HappyScribe technology for secure and reliable transcription. Transcriptions were reviewed against original audio files to ensure accuracy of transcription, and then were uploaded into the same OneDrive folder for storage. All transcriptions were duplicated, keeping one raw copy of each in order to allow the second copy for analysis purposes.

Prior to analysis, a deductive codebook was developed by the author based on a review of the literature. Transcripts were analyzed using MAXQDA2020.3 for analysis. Transcripts were closely read and noted for the purpose of developing inductive codes. New inductive codes

included: e.g., Family and Relationship Focused, Targeted Care. All transcripts were then coded with finalized codebook and were analyzed for overarching themes across all participants.

The Sparking Systemic Change Program Evaluation was reviewed by the Emory University IRB and deemed exempt on the basis of its nature as a public health program evaluation.

When asked about the CSEC landscape in Georgia, participants described: 1) risk factors and changes in overall exploited populations, 2) changes in environmental and social factors, 3) implementing systems and services, 4) the importance of implementing Partners, and 5.) Overall needs and recommendations to improve programming for exploited youth.

Stakeholders each varied in exposure to youth, limiting observations of risk factors and demographics of youth only to stakeholders with direct youth support experience. Stakeholders were also limited to ability to speak openly, due to having worked and been exposed to the same CSEC field in Georgia. The de-identification and confidentiality of participants was emphasized during and after interviews.

Results

Demographics

The stakeholders (n=6) worked in the field of CSEC from 2-26 years in a wide range of organizational, judicial, or educational fields. All work with youth who have histories of or present experience of sexual exploitation in commercial or transactional situations. Participants' CSEC work experience took place in Georgia with most having field experience in Atlanta.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Participant ID	**Gender**	**Age range**	**Sector**	**# of Years Working in CSEC**
Participant 1	Female	45-55	Organizational	8 years
Participant 2	Female	35-45	State employee	10 years

Participant 3	Female	25-35	Organizational	6 years
Participant 4	Female	55-65	Organizational	2 years
Participant 5	Male	45-55	State employee	27 years
Participant 6	Female	35-45	State employee	19 years

Risk Factors and Changes in the Populations of Trafficked Youth

Stakeholders expressed observed characteristics, demographics, recruitment, and risk factors of youth that have been exploited or are vulnerable to exploitation. During their time working with youth, participants noticed changes either due to specific reasons such as COVID-19, technology, or just more available data of specific populations. This section emphasizes the overall determinants and descriptions of the important and emphasized characteristics, and the changes within these characteristics and effects on youth.

Risk Factors of At-Risk Youth

Eighty percent (80%, n=4) of participants noted that the majority of CSEC youth targeted are from marginalized communities, racial minorities, lower socio-economic status, and/or have a history in the welfare system, foster care, and homelessness.

> "I think a huge challenge is also the feeders that go into trafficking. If we don't look at the marginalized community. Um I think we're missing the mark because we're never going to be able to really fill the gap, if we don't work with poverty, if we don't work on homelessness, if we don't work on generational provision." (Participant 4)

Across youth the participants worked and interacted with, most youth came from disadvantaged backgrounds where they previously experienced adverse events like trauma, unstable relationships, and emotional and mental distress occurred and affected them mentally.

> "I think they often get labeled as being bad children. And that's not the case at all. You know, they're victims of this horrible situation and not only victims of CSEC, but also

> victims of potentially past trauma that they're dealing with and struggling with. And so I think there needs to be some change around and learning a learning curve around these youth that they're not bad children." (Participant 3)

Some of these adverse events included just coming from and being involved in the child welfare system, and this disproportionately affected people of color and individuals from lower socioeconomic status.

> "You typically are talking about young people who have been involved in the child welfare system. So, they either been in foster care, they've had multiple DFCS cases, even if they haven't been in foster care. You're talking often times about young people who are lower income or who are coming from lower income families. You're also talking about young people who overwhelmingly are people of color." (Participant 2)

Changes in Demographics of At-Risk Youth

While describing risk factors of youth at risk and exploited, participants emphasized changes in the demographics they observed either over their entire work period and experience or due to specific time effects such as COVID-19 lockdown closures. Although most data mentioned emphasizes female youth being disproportionately affected and targeted, two participants noticed increased awareness for male, LGBTQ, and specifically transgender youth targeted or being exploited. These participants emphasized that although these are some observed changes, these are just observations and have not been tested or verified, so they can either be due to increases in these populations or can just be easier to identify now that there is a clearer understanding of sexual exploitation of youth as a whole.

> "You know, some of the numbers that I've heard from some of the other victim serving organizations around the country are, you know, that male and trans youth are, especially male youth in particular, […] as many as like 50 percent of trafficking victims could

> potentially be male victims. But if you look pretty much at any statistics, any statistics, about that, you're going to see like five percent." (Participant 1)

It was also mentioned that there is oftentimes an ignorance for affected populations in the LGBTQ community, and there is an increase in awareness of LGBTQ youth because of the shift in accepting and understanding more about LGBTQ populations.

> "I've just seen a shift of understanding the very needs I've seen in acceptance of understanding the issues and the needs of LGBTQ youth and how they often are swept into this type of experience because of their of being ostracized for their for their identity." (Participant 2)

Some also noted they saw younger age children than had been previously described.

> "I: And what changes have you observed in terms of the populations that are being exploited?"
>
> "P: Well, I would say it's younger, definitely younger." (Participant 4)

Changes to Recruitment Methods into Commercial Sex

Participants reported numerous methods and strategies that are used to recruit youth into sex work. Further, all participants outlined different methods being emphasized over time especially during the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, and increased use of technology. Of the methods described participants pointed out recruitment occurred most through social networks, online media, gang activity, and manipulation through other youth or individuals who were exploited before.

Recruitment through social network: Exploitation by peers and trusted persons

33% (n=2) of the participants noticed increased knowledge and awareness of youth recruited or approached to be recruited by someone they have previously met or currently know.

This can include a close friend, family member, or community member, but most likely includes someone they feel comfortable with and might trust.

> "I would have to say that personal recruitment still takes place. Specifically, they'll sometimes send a child well, someone who's already been indoctrinated and is a victim, they'll send that person to school or something like that to bring other girls, their friends, that kind of thing." (Participant 5).

Friends of youth or people they know are used perpetuate the CSEC cycle by encouraging other youth to enter exploitation through known grooming strategies.

> "That's how these predators get to these kids is when they're all congregating together and associating together and then, you know, a girlfriend will say, hey, I have a friend who bought me X, Y and Z, And, you know, and she'll get you X, Y and Z, that kind of thing." (Participant 5)

One participant mentioned an increased awareness of familial trafficking, or the act of being recruited/exploited to others by a family member. They highlighted that due to the lack of data, there might not be an actual increase, but just a wider awareness of familial trafficking causing service providers to see more confirmed cases:

> "I don't know that it's increased in terms of actual numbers or percentages, I think we are now more aware of familial trafficking than we were before, so I can't say that it has specifically increased in terms of that that particular. Popular way of exploiting a child. I just think that we're now more aware of familial trafficking than we used to be." (Participant 1)

Grooming tactics included financial and non-financial attention, gifts, as well as emotional and romantic attention to gain trust from the youth and were emphasized across 50% (n=3) of

participants as a form of "incentive" traffickers use to manipulate youth into thinking they made the decision to be trafficked.

> "If they're under the influence of a pimp, they are not going to give that person up and specifically if they're being groomed, they're not going to tell anybody they're being groomed because they're receiving clothing, they're receiving nails, hair and everything else, and it doesn't come until this rude awakening comes for the child when the pimp decides that they're going to initiate them." (Participant 5)

The manipulation and grooming of exploiters cause youth to often not see themselves as being exploited or as "victims," which makes it more difficult to provide programming and assistance for youth because they often refuse the help or run the risk of running away and denying their experiences of exploitation to authorities.

> "Well, and what I can tell you is that this is what's presented to us when we receive the reports that they can't substantiate because the youth is indicating that he or she is not being trafficked. So, which, you know, is concerning in itself because I assume that that's not the only thing they look at, but, you know, I've certainly dealt with a lot of children that all the evidence, well, it may be circumstantial points to the fact that the child is being trafficked or at least groomed. And I'm not saying that the agencies don't necessarily provide, they provide some services, but they're not providing the panoply of services that are needed to deal with." (Participant 5)

When youth are more likely to run away or continuously go back to traffickers, organizations are less likely to have the capacity and ability to take these youth in. This also can cause judicial systems to press minor or misdemeanor related charges on youth just to keep them in custody. One participant mentioned this phenomenon in the re-worded field notes, and expressed that this

can be very difficult, because it also then creates a criminal record, which causes a greater risk of exploitation again for the youth.

> Youth cannot be kept into custody and are charged with juvenile charges and are often out. Sometimes will be put into custody because we're afraid of what will happen, and they can be pushed to go to [Organization], but then they have a record. (Participant 6)

Recruitment from online platforms

The increase in recruitment using the internet and online platforms was overwhelmingly mentioned by every participant. Participants observed an overall increase over time as technology and electronics have become more easily accessible and a more common form of socialization and expression amongst youth.

> "The reality is that we believe trafficking is happening even more because there's a lack of supervision, there's the internet, all the things. So, I think that's a big deal." (Participant 4)

Although online platforms became more common over time with the rise of technology, participants also observed a shorter spike in online platform recruitment through sources such as: social media, media platforms, websites, and video games during the COVID-19 pandemic and corresponding isolation.

> "[…] The COVID-19 pandemic has really driven a lot more business, if you will, to online platforms. So social media, every app that you can imagine, the other area where we have seen or become more aware of an increase is through gaming platforms. So even children's games. So even something like Minecraft or something like that, where people are using the chat feature and the direct messaging feature to recruit kids that way. So definitely the social media and online platforms, I think have increased." (Participant 1).

Gang Violence as a Route to Trafficking

Participants noticed a rise in more violent cases and recruitment of youth through gangs and gang violence, which can be more specific to the context of Georgia, and Atlanta specifically.

> "[…] We see so much more violence. Like we had a young […] early on, and she had just been sold for one gang, a lot of gang involvement has happened. […] This girl was sold from one gang to the next for fifty thousand dollars and in that process, she was so brutalized that she could barely walk. She came in the first two weeks, all we could do is get her comfortable, take care of this medical needs. It was awful. And we're seeing that not as brutal, but we've seen that more and more and more with our women as well as our youth and including boys. I mean, we had a boy that that had happened some pretty terrible things that happened to him. so much more brutal." (Participant 4)

Changes in the Environmental and Social Evolution of CSEC

The landscape of CSEC changes over time and is affected by different social and environmental contributions. This includes a change in awareness and knowledge of CSEC throughout society, communities, and individuals that do not directly work in the field of CSEC, and how this change in awareness has contributed to the success of interventions. There are also overall barriers that participants frequently mentioned as making it difficult to assist and provide support and interventions to youth.

Improvements in Awareness and Understanding of CSEC

The overall increase in awareness of the field of CSEC across not only individuals in the workspace, but everyday individuals has caused individuals to be more aware and open to speak about such a topic. Participants reported a greater recognition in "what commercial sexual exploitation is", but also changes in discussions of CSEC, once considered sensitive or taboo, are now popular and open and because of this awareness, there is more support in initiatives overall:

> "[…] I think there's a lot more increased awareness, I think that's been one of the biggest changes that I've seen is that there's a lot more involvement in addressing the issue, which I think is wonderful." (Participant 3)

Every participant mentioned *legislation changes* over the years both nationwide and Georgia specific have made the biggest strides. This code was mentioned by all participants. This was intertwined with the increase in awareness of CSEC and the "flashiness" of the issue after being mentioned by the U.S. First Lady. Some legislative examples and successes also include the creation of the Georgia statewide CSEC response team, an increase on prosecution of traffickers and buyers, increased federal grant funding, harbor laws, and an overall increased focus on the movement of ending sexual exploitation of children.

> "One of the big successes was the legislative successes early on, we started out with only one person in the Georgia dome that believed that this was a real issue to the point that now it is a major understanding. And with everyone on board, and the First Lady taking this on as her main project. […] That was a big help. Several of the legislation that changed the law that caused a child under the age of 18 not to be considered someone you had to prove that it happened. […] The fines and the penalty and the prosecution of traffickers has definitely changed. It was when we first started, it was a fifty-dollar fine if they were caught selling a child is that's not that's so different, now its 25 to life so that huge." (Participant 4)

The Georgia statewide CSEC-focused response team was mentioned by all participants and expressed great importance as a very rare and big legislative change that Georgia has taken to shift priorities on ending exploitation of youth.

> "There's a new statewide response team identified by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, which is housed under the governor's office, um and so that's a big one, is that there, there has been since 2009, there has been a statewide response team, but the important piece to note is that the statewide response team changed as of October 1st of 2020. So that's a big one um, that's a good one you know? it's good that we because not most states don't have a statewide response. So that's a huge win for Georgia." (Participant 1)

Barriers to Improvement of CSEC Landscape

The negative stereotype and stigma of exploited youth, and exploitation created by popular movies and media often portrays a negative "victim" narrative and falsely represents exploited youth and those at higher risk for exploitation. This also included the large barrier of exploitation caused by the power and wealth of exploitation as a business, and buyers that keep the demand for sexual exploitation in high growth.

This false stigma and image of victims was mentioned by participants (n=4) as a significant barrier to understanding and combatting CSEC. The conceptualizations of exploitation and CSEC youth were often based on stereotypes perpetuated by popular media and served to increase stigma around trafficked youth. One participant described *Taken*, a popular action-thriller which centers around the kidnapping and subsequent trafficking of a former military officer's daughter as pushing a false narrative of exploited youth,

> "[…] Everybody has the image in their head of the movie *Taken*, the typical young girl cowering in the corner… [in reality] you are dealing with kids who also were involved in systems: child welfare, juvenile justice, and mental and behavioral health." (Participant 2)

Stakeholders also mentioned the stigma that accompanies youth by the CSEC labels. Once a youth was suspected of or identified as being exploited, they are viewed through an adult

lens as sex workers or prostitutes. Often youth were portrayed as choosing to enter sex work or living a risky lifestyle.

> "I think there's still a stigma about youth that are involved in CSEC, I think a lot of times they get their label, and of course, you know, the typical term we hear is prostitute, I don't hear that quite as much now as maybe I did before, but I still think there's a long way to go." (Participant 3)

Participants referenced the overall high demand of children for sex as a global business. Further, they described how demand will continue as long as there are interested buyers, and the flow of demand relating to the characteristic of buyers who seek to exploit children. One particular participant in the field of State work, emphasized buyers as being "men of means," and therefore are often high in power which creates an "untouchable," effect.

> "…Those who are demanding and have an interest in having sex with children. And that's a little bit of a stickier conversation because now we're talking about pastors and people who can afford to pay for that type of an experience, you're talking about people with means." (Participant 2)

Current strategies to dissuade perpetrators from accessing children online do not actually get at the heart of demand which creates the need for stricter persecution against buyers.

> "…I do know that you take Backpage down and now there's something else. Perpetrators are always going to find a way to get their product out there because it's a business. I think we just need to know that we have to keep fighting it and we have to keep making people aware of how they can protect their children and put out legislation that can limit the opportunity for perpetrators to continue their illegal and inhumane business." (Participant 4)

Implementing Systems and Services for At-Risk Youth

Stakeholders each expressed different existing implementing systems and services that are available for support of at-risk and exploited youth. Some responses were recognized as more successful than others, and almost all participants mentioned the importance and adoption of the trauma-informed care framework across new and existing systems and services.

Success in CSEC Response

Although Georgia is rated as a hub for trafficking for various reasons, there has been a strong response to CSEC and different successful outcomes. It was noted that due to the complexity of CSEC, what is defined as "success" is everchanging.

> "The way you define success has to oftentimes be adjusted, I think, for what people might initially think of as like a successful case outcome, you have to be creative sometimes in what you what you consider success with a case." (Participant 1)

There has been an extension of existing organizational and placement/residential facilities available in Georgia, which has provided more placement opportunities and options that can focus assistance and care to exploited youth.

> "You also have really good models of safe homes and programming. So, you've got Wellspring, who has been a leader in this work 20 plus years, first starting with adult survivors, and then moving into working with children. And they were able to do that successfully." (Participant 2)

This also included a new 24-hour CSEC receiving center referenced by participants (n=2). This receiving center fills in a large gap as an immediate place that youth the community can become familiar with so individuals can access direct multi-dimensional support including mental, physical, housing, and community-based support as well.

> "[…] Provides a one stop shop, like a child is picked up by law enforcement or identified with DFACS or DJJ, they can come in and every service they need happens on that one location. […] that's medical, that's forensic interviews to interviews, and therapeutic services. […] a full, fully functioning school on site, as well as their residential care up to 90 days." (Participant 4)

Adoption of a Trauma-Informed Approach

Every participant expressed a clear knowledge and familiarity with the Trauma-Informed care framework. Trauma and mental health were mentioned as having strong long-term effects on youth and can cause increased risk for exploitation and crime, and because of this, participants emphasized the importance of different agencies and systems to take a Trauma-Informed approach and train all staff to understand not only the types and effects of trauma, but best strategies to communicate with individuals who have had severe traumatic effects.

> "[…] It's not required, but I know a lot of agencies are trying to work towards getting that certification because it really not only does it look good to say that you've gone through the certification, you really are committed to being Trauma-Informed and trauma aware, but it also, of course, helps the youth that they're serving and helps to their employees, it helps the people that are working with those views and really being aware of it. So not required, but highly recommended." (Participant 3)

The Importance of Aligned Implementing Partners

There is a strong need and value to partners, sectors, and different agencies working across the different stages of CSEC to be able to align priorities and clear partnership and communication across agencies. All Participants (100%, n=6) enforced the importance of communication and collaboration to provide the most comprehensive care services.

> "[…] The fact that you can bring together juvenile justice, child welfare, behavioral health, education, early learning, and get us all at the table to think about how we share responsibility, how we have a response in our own systems, and then collectively, that's a model. It wasn't always perfect, but it's a model." (Participant 2)

Unexpectedly, the misaligned motives of partners and implementors that enter the field of CSEC work was mentioned by two participants. Specifically, partners and implementors with good intentions want to help, and sometimes jump to open a program or a residential facility, and either don't have the adequate training, awareness of CSEC youth needs, or come in with a "savior complex."

> "I'm always suspicious of the lone rangers who want to come into the work and kind of do the cult of personality thing, like, "I'm going to start a safe home and I'm going to rescue girls or I'm going to rescue boys and I'm going to convert them all to Christians." And it's like, just come in from a perspective of humility and really understanding the needs of survivors." (Participant 2)

Recommendations for Improving Programming for Exploited Youth

To provide better services and fill needed gaps in youth services, observed barriers to implementation were mentioned. Participants also mentioned priority focuses and recommended services that they observed are needed, especially a stronger focus on allowing survivors to take a more leading role for recommended CSEC response initiatives, a stronger focus on prevention services, community-based programming, support which helps underrepresented populations, and a continued spread and expansion of services.

Barriers to Implementation

Most participants mentioned specific barriers to providing support and programming for exploited youth. This included, as mentioned before, participation from the youth, and youth

denying or being manipulated into refusing care or refusing that they are exploited. This also included the likelihood of many of at-risk youth being a transient population and often running away or crossing state lines and different agencies.

> "You know, these kids are definitely not just staying in Atlanta, they're going everywhere. You know, the reason they are here in Atlanta is because there's an airport. And this is and this is like a stopping a stopover on the way to Florida or this is a stopover on the way to Nashville, Tennessee, or something along those lines. So, you know these, so collaboration, without a doubt, between local, state and federal law enforcement is very important." (Participant 5)

There is also an overall barrier and difficulty of identifying youth that are being exploited because of these reasons and as well as the lack in data and research therefore making support much more difficult.

> "[…] People always want to know the numbers and there's just not a lot of super reliable numbers there." (Participant 1)

Need for Survivor-Led Initiatives

Participants expressed a gap and need in including and allowing survivors to lead the movement against CSEC. This included the need for understanding the real needs of survivors and understanding what type of support is most needed.

> "I think there's a there was a lot of good intention, but I do feel like there were some struggles because you had a set number of voices who were leading the work with the best of intentions, but occasionally there would be struggles. So, there would be folks who were survivors who had risen up to sort of want to take a lead role in the movement and it was interesting watching those dynamics play out." (Participant 2)

This participant also explained that not only are survivors not given the stage space to lead the movement and initiative against CSEC, but they are often used by other organizational or agency partners to be an example and express their "tragic stories," to then either receive more funding or support from donors for program and project implementation:

> "We need to make sure that we are not just pulling on survivors to tell their sad story and help us raise money for more safe homes. […] There's still sort of that element of who gets to be the spokesperson for the issue. Survivors are often called upon to tell their sad, terrible, awful stories and then a little bit of triumph in there, but they're not called upon to be the leaders of the movement and I think there's a gap with that." (Participant 2)

Importance of Community-Based Programming

Also intertwined within survivor led initiatives and survivor needs, there is an overall need for more community-based programming, and initiatives and programs that focus not only on providing residential and inpatient facilities, but sustainable programs as well.

> "Not every kid is going to be appropriate for a safe home. So how do we build out continue to build out a continuum?" (Participant 2)

Within the data, there were very few mentions of current successful community-based programs, mainly due to the gap in these interventions. Those that do exist, were expressed as overwhelmingly successful but there is a need for more programs of this kind.

> *"*The corporate community has gotten more involved; I think that's a huge deal because it brings it to the place the perpetrators might be. And so, one of the opportunities we had […] was to open a [program], which is in the community for any woman who is or has been exploited to have the opportunity to move for a living wage job. The way corporate entities got involved is by choosing to give paid apprenticeships to our graduates at the career track, and that has been a remarkable partnership and we've seen incredible results.

> And I think that's a big marker for our organization and I think the city as well." (Participant 4)

Prevention as a Key Need

There is a strong need for increased services and initiatives targeting the prevention of exploitation of youth. Prevention services can target underlying issues and help strengthen communities and individuals that might be at a higher risk of exploitation.

> "I think the biggest gap is prevention. A lot of people talk when there can be things, they can do to prevent it from happening. Trafficking is not just a silo problem because trafficking involves poverty, homelessness, family dysfunction. Everything that's wrong in the world is wrapped up in trafficking. And so I really feel like we've got to address those basic needs of people; food insecurity […] We can't stop trafficking unless we make it zero with poverty, make zero in food insecurity, make it zero in sexual abuse, make it zero in foster care and isolation. You know, so it's not something that's going to change unless we learn how to do preventative steps or maybe a more street based way of saying that strengthening the vulnerable population, with a tangible way." (Participant 4)

Family and Relationship Focused

In terms of both prevention as well as response initiatives, most participants mentioned a need for systems change in focus on including non-offending family members more and providing more assistance and services to build these relationships and aim more for family reunification when possible and safe for the youth.

> "There needs to be more intervention at the front end. In other words, education, going out to the schools and the schools I'm talking about are the elementary schools and getting out to the community and talking to these kids about this so they're aware of it. Educating the parents about it." (Participant 5)

Individualized Support for Underrepresented Populations

Most services and placements for exploited youth are only able to support certain youth. Because of this, it was mentioned that there is often a gap in services and support for exploited you that also experience diverse circumstances such as pregnant youth, youth that have been identified as potential recruiters, youth with substance abuse problems, LGBTQ youth, and youth with severe mental health disorders. Due to these needs being so specific, they are often difficult to provide for exploited youth therefore increasing their risk of exploitation and increasing the need for programs with specific trainings and capacities that can provide services to these populations.

> "I would claim that we haven't done as much as we need to provide adequate services for our LGBTQ plus youth, for our pregnant youth, for our youth with severe mental health needs, severe substance use needs kind of intersectionality, right? It's sort of if you have one of those things, there's probably a treatment program. There's probably a plan, there's probably an appropriate placement. But if you have multiple of those things, it gets harder and harder to find and kind of identify the appropriate treatment that's going to be that's going to be um as intensive as it needs to be." (Participant 1)

Expansion in Services and Funding

Lastly, all participants mentioned a need for overall expansion and increase in CSEC services, funding, research, and overall support in all fields of CSEC while truly targeting the exploited and at-risk population needs.

> "I mean, yes, always room for more advocacy, more policy change, more research and research in particular. I think there's a real need for that because there are those of us who want to be on the front lines with the kids (Participant 1)."

> "I think that we need a lot more money for programming. Without a doubt, programming needs to not just deal with the individuals that are already in it and, you know, we need a lot more secure residential facilities for these kids. But you also need, programming for these kids that are being groomed and you can tell they're being groomed by their behavior, they're constantly running away, they're staying out for days at a time." (Participant 5)

Discussion

Ever-changing risk factors, and environmental and social stigmas have changed with time and contributed to the needs and successes of services. Regarding the assessment of the Trauma-Informed care framework, all stakeholders showed a clear understanding and knowledge of the framework and confirmed the importance of trauma-informed care within their specific field of work but listed barriers to applying a Trauma-Informed framework. Participant stakeholders all work in different organizational and state supporting roles and have worked in the CSEC field anywhere from 2 – 27 years. Some worked directly with youth and have a better understanding of youth characteristics, direct support, and their real-world experiences while others have more administrative experience with the system and service perspective. The results of this analysis provide information for future evaluation and research opportunities, and suggest recommendations for evaluating, expanding, and implementing current and new systems and services.

Demographic and societal risk factors applicable to youth in Georgia and the metro Atlanta area are affected by external influencers, social determinants, and the strength in the demand from buyers of commercial sexual exploitation. Accurate and extensive research and

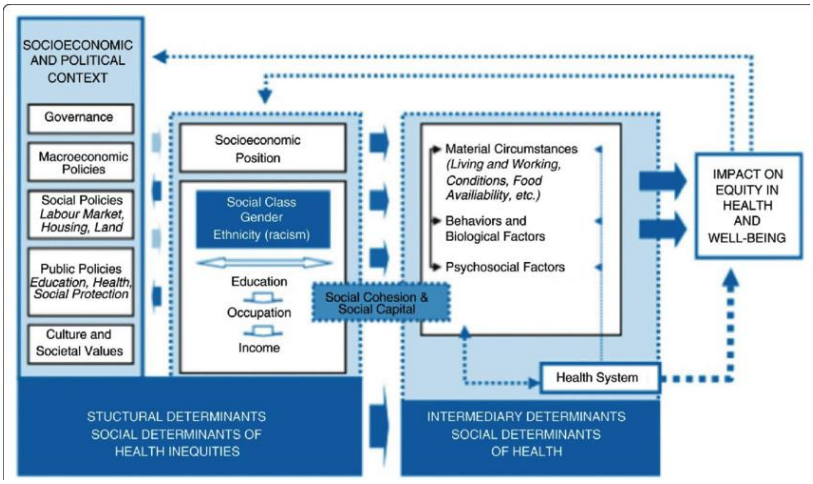

Figure 2. *Commission of Social Determinants of Health (CSDH) conceptual framework,* Received from (World Health Organization, 2010)

data on risk factors and associations to CSEC are very limited and underreported, because of this, awareness of populations is ever-changing. Available research indicates primary feeders into CSEC for youth are directly correlated to social and economic factors (Fedina et al., 2019; Franchino-Olsen, 2019; Tyler et al., 2004). Our research supports this link and takes it further by associating the broader social determinants of health framework to the populations most vulnerable to CSEC. Although this framework is a broad framework applicable to various health impacts, our research focuses on factors directly linked to CSEC such as socio-economic positions including social class, ethnicity, and gender as well as psychosocial factors which can be linked to living and familial conditions. Previous research has linked youth with turbulent backgrounds and lower socio-economic status to higher risk for CSEC (Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014). Although there is a general link to social determinants, there are specific direct associations with issues like poverty, familial issues, and systemic racism. In the Georgia and Atlanta specific context, respondents indicate an observed association with youth who are and have been in the child welfare system and pre-existing involvement with Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS). This can mean children come from a broken home, have experienced previous maltreatment, have experienced or are in foster care, or are/have experienced homelessness (Brown et al., 2012). It was also

directly mentioned that without targeting issues like poverty and systemic racism correlated to poverty, youth from these communities will continue to be at risk for sexual exploitation. Nevertheless, research directly links poverty and lower SES to disproportionately affecting Black and brown populations (D. R. Williams et al., 2016). Specific to Atlanta, 33% of Black residents in comparison to 7.4% of white residents live below poverty (*Poverty in Atlanta, Georgia*, n.d.). This also affects access to quality education, risk of gang violence, access to support and health facilities, child welfare rates, and drug use, which respondents all referenced as observed on-ramps and risk factors to CSEC, but our research has not linked direct correlation between race and CSEC risk alone.

Other sources identify young girls between the ages of 12-14 as the majority of CSEC victims; in contrast, our research shows a change in targeted demographics (Development Services Group, Inc, 2014; Sarrica et al., n.d.). From their experience and time in the field, respondents indicated witnessing more and more male and LGBTQ CSEC cases over time. Research has shown that there is a strong toxic masculinity driven social stigma against among male and boy victims of sexual assault and abuse (Hlavka, 2017). In relation to our results, respondents suggest a change in stigma against male sexual assault victims and a national rise in awareness of LGBTQ populations may be the cause of seeing and identifying more male and LGBTQ CSEC cases rather than an overall rise in cases. Results also suggest a decrease in age of youth targeted, some respondents specifically observed younger youth closer to the age range of 9-11, rather than the 12-14 average age recorded by the majority of research. Furthermore, awareness and identification gaps in populations especially across age groups and gender should be included as a more focused component in future CSEC research and initiatives.

Recruitment strategies and methods used to route youth into trafficking developed using other platforms and strategies over respondents' exposure to the field. Previous research has indicated manipulation and grooming strategies used by exploiters as a tool to enter exploitation (Franchino-Olsen, 2019; Tyler et al., 2004). The reported analysis supports this statement and indicates using close peers or trusted persons to manipulate youth into grooming strategies and trafficking. Familial trafficking and using other previously exploited youth to entice at-risk youth with promised gifts, lifestyles, and money is also used as a grooming tactic (Reed et al., 2019). Like domestic violence and abusive relationships, emotional and romantic attention is also often used to emotionally manipulate exploited youth into believing they made the decision to be trafficked. This emotional bond created by an abuser is also known as the theory of trauma-coerced bonding and can cause complex attachments of the youth to the exploiter and refusal to accept services to believe they are sexually exploited (Sanchez et al., 2019).

Respondents also saw noticeable changes in recruitment and types of on-ramps on trafficking. Specific to the Atlanta metro area, there has been an observed increase in gang recruitment of exploitation and correlation with extreme gang violence and CSEC recruitment. This including the trafficking and selling of youth across gangs in Atlanta and Georgia. Overall, online recruitment and use of online platforms for buying and selling of youth was observed as an overall increase throughout time, but also specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic and the corresponding lockdowns. Online strategies include: social media (e.g.TikTok, Facebook), content sharing platforms (e.g. OnlyFans, PornHub), and online video game chats. Although it is hard for stakeholders to identify an observed rise or fall in CSEC cases during lockdown and pandemic closures, they observed changes in at-risk youth behaviors and higher risks of at-home abuse or running away due to lockdown orders. These changes in recruitment and on-ramps of

buying and selling youth needs to be integrated into state and national policies of regulating and shutting down online media sites including both exploiters and buyers.

Available systems and services in place for youth experiencing CSEC in Georgia can play a supportive and positive role for ending CSEC but can also hinder the progress and leadership of the initiative against commercial sexual exploitation of youth. The reported results all supported the national and state growth in awareness and initiatives especially with the CSEC recognition from the U.S. First Lady and Georgia state representatives which helped increase nationwide focus and funding. There was a strong support for the availability of a Georgia CSEC statewide response team as well as a new 24-hour CSEC receiving center. These new additions were highly appraised and gave not only availability of placement and housing facilities for youth, but also immediate medical, psychological, and sustainable support including family support services targeting to reunite families. Housing services and statewide response were recognized as important and necessary, but there is also a need for more community based, preventative services, and a survivor led focus. Because of the nationwide sudden "popularity" of CSEC as a topic and mention from the First Lady, there are often implementors and stakeholders who aren't properly trained or familiar with the underlying needs of the community and youth or are competitive and enter the CSEC field with a savior or power complex. When partners and inter-agency leaders collaborate and get past power differences, stakeholders noted strong successes in inter-agency partner and program initiatives. This lack in communication creates an influx of facilities and services that either don't cater to all needed populations or aren't led by survivors and local populations and create gaps in services. Currently, most housing facilities and services don't have the capacity or are unable to provide services for populations that might be labeled as "recruiters" which can put other youth at risk, or pregnant youth, youth

suffering from substance abuse, or severe mental health disabilities. This creates a gap in services that apply to these populations and cannot assist these populations that might be most vulnerable to exploitation and other risk factors. There need to be more initiatives that target prevention of exploitation across vulnerable populations and support specific populations with targeted needs.

There has been large growth in the awareness and initiatives against CSEC in Georgia and Atlanta. There is a greater need for more incorporation and survivor leadership at the forefront of the initiative including individuals who have previously been trafficked, LGBTQ individuals, and Black and brown leaders. Due to systemic racism and social differences, there cannot be true sustainability and success in ending CSEC without targeting systemic determinants such as poverty, access to health, familial support, and livable wages and incomes, which can target the prevention of CSEC across vulnerable populations. The need for strengthening communities and families to re-unite and build familial and economic structure allows youth to be less vulnerable to exploiters, grooming, and manipulation. The demand of youth exploitation is linked to the power dynamic and wealth of buyers. Buyers are more likely to be identified as males between the ages of 20-60 years old and are more likely to have higher levels of education, socio-economic status, and stable lifestyles (Carpinteri et al., 2018). Without a strong political push on the identification and incarceration of buyers of CSEC, the demand will continue, and will continue to affect marginalized communities and vulnerable youth populations nation and Georgia wide.

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CHAPTER 3: Public Health Implications

The primary findings of this study identified the gaps across existing systems and services in place to end CSEC, and the barriers to developing programs and systems to successfully end and prevent CSEC. This study was limited due to the small sample size of stakeholders interviewed and would require future expansion and additional research across all CSEC entities and systems in Georgia and Atlanta. Despite this limitation, there were strong uniform implications regarding CSEC prevention of Black and brown girls identified by key stakeholders.

Due to the lack of accurate and accessible research and data on CSEC and the risk factors found in populations vulnerable to sexual exploitation, the ratio of exploited youth across genders, sex, and race are misidentified and leave gaps of identification. There needs to be further statewide and nationwide research on male and LGBTQ populations affected by CSEC and the differences in types of CSEC, and risk factors that might differ from female and girl populations. Without understanding the different systems and types of exploitation male and LGBTQ populations might experience such as survival sex, there cannot be population specific systems and services in place to accurately identify the rates of and protect these populations. There also needs to be a deeper focus on the research and social determinants that put Black and brown youth populations at higher risk of CSEC than other populations. To create services, there must be more in-depth research and systems to understanding how different populations might be affected and experience sexual exploitation.

The only way to prevent commercial sexual exploitation of youth, and the exploitation of Black and brown girls is to target systemic and social determinants that push Black and brown populations into low socio-economic, low educational, and low resource situations that lead to

higher risks of abuse, entering the welfare system, illness, and substance abuse. Without creating reparations for slavery, and identifying systemic racism across systems and institutions, Black and brown populations will continue to be marginalized, and youth within these communities won't receive proper education, communal support, and opportunities to prevent the need and risk of being groomed, manipulation, and forced into commercial sexual exploitation. There needs to be global and national initiatives that target poverty, LGBTQ support, food insecurity, foster care, and sexual and physical abuse. One example of a poverty and economic driven policy change includes increasing minimum wages and creating a basic livable wage for all. Because racial, sexual, and gender minorities are at higher risk of CSEC, policies and systems that target issues such as poverty, homelessness, or foster care, can help these populations have access to direct economic, social, and communal support and remove them from high abuse and high-risk situations that cause vulnerability.

Another direct need for the prevention and response of CSEC is survivor leadership at the forefront of the initiative against CSEC. Partners often leading the planning and development of services and programs for the prevention and support of CSEC are often individuals with social power, system and political influence, and available funding sources. Partners sometimes enter the field of CSEC work with the aim to help and "save" youth that are at risk of or are experiencing sexual exploitation and can be externalized through programs and placement facilities that may lack in training and knowledge of the different systems that influence CSEC and can lead to a Savior Complex. To remove the gaps in these programs and systems, and directly focus on policies and programs that target root causes and underlying issues, there needs to be room for survivors to lead and be the direct voices advocating against CSEC. This includes survivors of all races, gender, and sex, that can not only be used to express their own sob stories,

but to advocate for the different social, community, policy, and systemic needs to be put in place to prevent youth from being exploited and provide sustainable on-ramps into society for those who have been exploited.

One major objective of this study was to determine the role and future of the Trauma-Informed Care Framework and how it is applied in CSEC services. The results implied that there are training services in place across state, organizational, and political agencies for staff on the incorporation of a Trauma-Informed approach from individual to policy level systems. Currently there are organizations such as Wellspring Living that hold a training institute[2] with open direct care training for staff, and external interested individuals and services on CSEC and how to implement a Trauma-Informed Care framework. Although these trainings can provide other organizations gain a better understanding for trauma and create a positive change in different levels of services, there are gaps and barriers that prevent vulnerable populations from receiving services and interacting with the Trauma-Informed Care Framework. The challenges in implementing Trauma-Informed care within systems goes beyond the training of the staff and individuals in agencies. There is an overall need for stronger mental health support. This study noted the need for placements and services for CSEC survivors with extreme underlying mental health issues, includes the need for individualized services and placements for these individuals, but also having mental health specific experts in all agencies that might encounter those exploited or at-risk of exploitation. Due to manipulation and grooming recruitment strategies, trauma-coerced bonding can cause youth to refuse services and may not realize they are being exploited, which creates a large barrier to getting youth in placements and services that can provide Trauma-Informed care (Sanchez et al., 2019). Because of this, there is a need for all

[2] https://wellspringliving.org/institute/

potential CSEC judicial cases, and organizations, to have psychological specialists on site able to provide support when services recommendations are made by court or systems.

Stronger court and policy interventions are needed to protect and prevent CSEC and at-risk youth. Although political and judicial involvement with CSEC has increased in the U.S. and especially in Georgia over time, there are still major gaps in interventions and strength where it's needed, especially against those of power. This includes online and social media platforms, such as Facebook, Pornhub, and others. Although some media platforms have worked to assist stopping the recruitment of youth through their platforms, and some sites such as Backpage have been shut down, there is still strong push against regulation laws. These sites are also never found liable for any human trafficking that might be initiated through their site, due to the Communications Decency Act of 1996 which protects platforms from the responsibility for content and actions of other users and information providers (Dolan, n.d.). This creates a barrier for the human trafficking and CSEC initiative and prevents sites from having to feel responsible or enact policies against recruitment and trafficking through their platforms. Most social media and online related laws were created in a time where a lot less individuals used these technologies (Dolan, n.d.). There needs to be federal and state level enforcement to hold online and media platforms accountable and enact stronger CSEC and trafficking censorship policies.

There is also a need for stronger enforcement and identification against buyers of youth. Many buyers are individuals of power and have more education, higher SES, and stronger support systems (Carpinteri et al., 2018). This causes buyers to have more resources, power, and money for lawyers to protect themselves from charges, incarceration, and being on the sex offender list. Without targeting buyers of CSEC, the demand for CSEC will continue and there will be no repercussions for those that feed the child trafficking and exploitation demand.

In sum, although systems, services, and awareness for CSEC have increased, there is a strong need for more preventative and specific need services and systems. This includes targeting the social and systemic determinants that influence minority and at-risk populations, a higher focus on survivor led influence to determine root needs, more community-based programming, more research and data collection, and stronger policies against online recruitment and buyers. Although trauma-informed care is an important and needed step that can be contributed to the prevention and response to CSEC, there needs to be stronger preventative causes and measures to not only support those being exploited, but assisting in economic, social, and community support to build populations stronger rather than only provide response services.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Consent Form

Informed Consent Form for Sparking Systemic Change Key Stakeholder Interviews

Project: Sparking Systemic Change

PI: Dabney P. Evans, PhD, MPH, Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University

Introduction & Study Overview

Hello, I am Dora Ducak and I am a 2nd year MPH student at Emory University, Rollins School of Public Health. Thank you for your willingness to be interviewed as a key stakeholder engaged in prevention of and response to commercial sexual exploitation of children in Georgia.

Before we get started, I would like to review a few important things to think about before you decide whether or not to participate. If you decide to take part, you can stop the interview at any time and withdraw from the interview at any point. The choice that you make will have no bearing on your participation in the larger project.

1. The purpose of this interview is to examine the current context of and response to commercial sexual exploitation of children in Georgia.
2. Your participation will last about 1 hour.
3. If you agree, you will be participating in a one-on-one interview regarding the current context of prevention of and response to commercial sexual exploitation of children here in Georgia.
4. The interview involves a conversation (with me or another interviewer) over Zoom, Skype, or another teleconference software.
5. You may decide to share some personal or confidential information, or you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. However, we do not wish for this to happen. You do not have to answer any questions or take part in the interview if you feel the question(s) are too personal or if talking about them makes you uncomfortable. You may also choose not to answer any individual question for any reason.
6. The interview is not designed to benefit you directly. Your participation will help us better understand the landscape for prevention of and response to commercial sexual exploitation of children in Georgia. Your answers will help us develop a robust evaluation of existing services, which will then allow us make improvements to these services and replicate the best practices that provide the most support to at-risk and exploited youth in communities throughout the United States.
7. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. The choice that you make will have no bearing on your participation in this project in another role. You may change your mind later and stop participating even if you agree now. None of the information you provide will be attributed to you by name. Information will be reported in aggregate. Your privacy is very important to us; all personal identifiers (like your name) will be removed from the data.
8. We do not intend to share your personal information with any other organization.

Contact Information

If you have questions about this interview, your part in it, your rights as an interviewee, or if you have questions, concerns, or complaints about this work, you may contact the following:

Dabney P. Evans, PhD, MPH Dabney.evans@emory.edu or 404-849-5643

Informed Consent Form for Sparking Systemic Change Key Stakeholder Interviews

Consent

Do you have any questions about anything I just said? Were there any parts that seemed unclear?

Do you agree to take part in the study?

Participant agrees to participate: Yes No

If Yes:

_____
Name of Participant

_____ _____
Signature of Person Conducting Informed Consent Discussion Date Time

_____
Name of Person Conducting Informed Consent Discussion

Appendix 2: Data use agreement

Emory University
Office of Technology
Transfer (Rev. 03/18)

INCOMING DATA TRANSFER AGREEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Certain information is required to process and execute your Data Transfer Agreement (DTA). To avoid any delays with your DTA, please complete all of the fields below.

Please forward by email (1) an electronic WORD copy of the DTA, (2) the completed questionnaire, and (3) any relevant correspondence to OTT-MTA@emory.edu.

Principal Investigator Information:

(The Principal Investigator is the Emory faculty member/senior investigator under whose direction the research with the materials will be conducted)

Name of recipient scientist: Dabney P. Evans		
Phone: 404 727 3061	Email address: dabney.evans@emory.edu	
Department : Hubert Department of Global Health	Emory Employee ID: (Please do not provide SSN)	0096972
Mailing address: 1518 Clifton Rd, NE, Mailstop 1518-002-7BB, Atlanta, GA,30322, USA		

Provider Information:

Name of providing institution or company: youthSpark Inc.	
Name of providing scientist: Renee Shelby, Ph.D	
Phone: 404-502-1256	Email address: renee@youth-spark.org
Name of DTA/DUA specialist at providing institution: Renee Shelby, Ph.D	
Phone: 404-502-1256	Email address: renee@youth-spark.org
Mailing address: 395 Pryor St SW #2117 Atlanta, GA 30312	

Funding Information:

Please indicate the funding source and grant/contract number for this study: **NoVo Foundation Grant Number: 19-07519**

Data Information:

1. Please describe the data, including whether it will contain identifiers or is **fully de-identified** under HIPAA:

Incoming data will include fully de-identified qualitative and quantitative data collected from clinical case notes and files, client psychological assessments, client testimonials and interviews, or focus groups directly gathered by youthSpark Inc.

2. Provide a brief but complete description of the proposed research with the Data, including the name of the research study:

Sparking Systemic Change : A trauma- and mental health-informed, community based, early intervention model for survivors and at-risk girls and young women in Fulton County, GA.

Proposed Research: See Attachment

3. Will the incoming Data be used in conjunction with: (a) data generated by Emory under a sponsored agreement or (b) data received from a third party institution? OR Will the incoming Data be **transferred** by Emory to another institution? ☑ Yes ☐ No
If yes, please identify the third party or sponsor and briefly describe how the incoming Data will be shared and/or combined with other data? Incoming data will be used in conjunction with data generated by Emory
4. Has applicable IRB approval been obtained for the research you will conduct using the Data? ☑ Yes ☐ No
5. Have you read, and do you understand and agree to comply with any and all data security parameters that are contained in the DTA? ☑ Yes ☐ No
6. Do you anticipate any new inventions will be developed from the use of the Data? ☐ Yes ☑ No
If yes, please describe the anticipated inventions or discovery (e.g., will invention incorporate the Data, be an entirely new product, new use of the existing product, cell line etc.?)

DTA Checklist:

☑	Advise Emory's Contract Specialist of any time-sensitive / urgent deadlines for this DTA.
☑	Send electronic *.doc* copy of the DTA template to: OTT-MTA@emory.edu
☑	Send signed copy of (this) Incoming Data Questionnaire to: OTT-MTA@emory.edu

I certify that all the information provided above is accurate and up to date.

Signature of the Principal Investigator: (who is the grant recipient)	Dabney P. Evans, PhD, MPH Digitally signed by Dabney P. Evans, PhD, MPH Date: 2021.01.15 14:56:21 -05'00'

Appendix 3: Interview Guide

Key Informant Interview Guide

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to an interview today. My name is Dora Ducak and I am with the Emory University, Rollins School of Public Health.

We have asked you to talk with us today to hear about the current context of prevention of and response to commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) here in Georgia. Your point of view is valuable. Your responses will be used to better understand the current CSEC context and to help design an evaluation for the Sparking Systemic Change Project, a partnership between Emory University, the National Center for Civil and Human Rights and youthSpark.

With your permission, we will be recording today's conversation. Afterwards, we will analyze the recording to understand the context of CSEC, which will be used to inform the future evaluation efforts for the Sparking Systemic Change Project. We will keep all of your comments confidential and remove your name, or any other identifiers from any quotations, so please feel free to share your opinions.

Do you agree to participate? [[Note: Written consent will be obtained via **(insert here)**].

Do I have your permission to record this session?

Please remember, your participation is voluntary, and you can stop the interview at any time or choose not to answer any questions. If at any point you decide you no longer wish to participate, we may end the conversation immediately.

I have a list of topics I would like us to talk about, but feel free to bring up anything else you think is relevant. Our interview will last about **one hour**. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Opening Questions:

1. How long have you been working in the CSEC field?
    a. What roles have you played? In what types of organizations?
    b. How long in Georgia/Atlanta specifically?
    c. How has your perspective changed over the time you've been working in the field?
2. What led to you to work in this field?
    a. Please describe any important milestones or turning points that led you to this work.

Evolution of CSEC in Georgia/Atlanta:

3. What are the changes you've seen in this field in Georgia/Atlanta since you started?

    a. Biggest successes in the field overall?
    b. Biggest challenges in the field overall?

Current status of the CSEC field in Georgia/Atlanta:

4. What should someone entering this work know about the current landscape of commercial sexual exploitation of children in Georgia?
    a. Are there relevant research or reports we should know about?
    b. What legislation or policies are important to know about?
    c. What interventions are you aware of?
        i. With/By whom?
    d. What changes have you observed in the 'landscape'?
        i. new actors, funding, awareness
    e. What changes have you observed in demand?
        i. e.g. using different online platforms to exploit children, new exploiters
    f. What changes have you observed in terms of the populations being exploited?

CSEC Gaps and Barriers

5. What are the current gaps in addressing the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Georgia?
    a. Can you identify gaps in legislation, programming, direct service, research and/or advocacy?
    b. How do you know?
    c. What is your organization doing to address this?
    d. What are others doing?
    e. What opportunities do you see?

6. What are the main barriers to addressing CSEC here in Georgia?

CSEC Opportunities and Successes

7. Are there opportunities for change here in Georgia?
    a. Policy /law
    b. Direct service provision
    c. Research
    d. Advocacy
    e. Behavior change
    f. Social support
    g. Identification
    h. Enforcement
    i. Collaboration
8. What are some examples of success in addressing CSEC that we can learn from?
    a. What area are they in? Programming policy, research, advocacy?
    b. How/where did they take place?
    c. Is there documentation available?
9. Are there things happening that might create a window of opportunity?
    a. At the state level
    b. At the national level

Future Opportunities and Trauma Informed Care

10. Are you familiar with the Trauma Informed Care Framework?
    a. If so, what do you know about it?
        i. (If they do not know) Trauma Informed Care – An approach and framework professionals or organizations work with, which is based on the knowledge of the impact of the trauma, aimed at ensuring environments are welcoming and engaging taking a more patient centered approach.
    b. Have you seen any change in programs or organizations taking a more trauma informed framework approach? And how do you expect this to change in the future?
11. What do you see as the impact of COVID-19 closures and restrictions on CSEC in Georgia?
    a. Programs, policies, funding, other

Closing

12. Who else should we be talking to within the CSEC community?
13. Is there anything else that we have not yet talked about that you feel is important?

<Don't turn off recorder until they really stop talking. This is usually when informants give good info>!

Thank you for your time.

Appendix 4: Recruitment Email

Good Afternoon,

My name is Dora Ducak and I am current second year MPH student at Emory University, Rollins School of Public Health. As part of my degree requirements, I am working with the "Sparking Systemic Change" Project, a partnership between Emory University, the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, youthSpark, and Covenant House which seeks to examine and address both on- and off-ramps to commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) here in Georgia.

As a part of our work, we are focusing on the prevention and response of commercial sexual exploitation and how different key stakeholders and partners interact. Through previous conversations, you've been identified as someone having a wealth of information on this topic.

As such, I would like to conduct an interview with you to gain a better understanding of CSEC prevention and response. The interview would be conducted via Zoom, last about an hour and cover the following topics: 1) the current CSEC environment in Georgia evolution, 2) successes and gaps in programs and policies, and 3) opportunities for change. The information we gather will only be used to for the purpose of this project. All identifying information will be kept confidential.

Are you available to participate in an interview sometime in the next couple of weeks?
Thanks so much for your time and consideration.

Appendix 5: Codebook

Landscape of CSEC systems in Georgia and future needs

Theme	Code	Definition	Criteria	Code Frequency
1.0 Recruitment Strategies	---	---	---	---
	1.1 Online Recruitment	Stakeholder's reference to online platforms including virtual marketplace/social media/digital media/video games being used to recruit youth for exploitation.	*Include* changes or mentions of online platforms closing or opening that have been suspected of exploiting youth.	8
	1.2 Someone You Know	Mention of youth being recruited into exploitation through individuals they know.	*Include* anyone youth previously knew or might be close to, such as family, friends, close individuals, and previously exploited individuals. *Exclude* exploiters or traffickers.	5
2.0 Youth Characteristics	---	Explained examples or observational demographics of youth at risk for or sexually exploited.	---	2
	2.1 Target Change	Stakeholders' observational changes in demographics of youth being targeted for CSEC. this includes age, race, sex, etc.	*Include* observed changes in age, race, sex, etc. *Exclude* changes in demand or recruitment strategies	4
	2.1 Race	Specific mentions of race and ethnicity of CSEC and at-risk youth. This can include the changes of race or just observations of race and ethnicity of youth in specific case examples.	*Include* mentions of observed changes in or experience in certain racial groups that might be vulnerable to exploitation.	*5*
	2.3 Social Determinants	Mention of environmental or social conditions that may cause youth to be more vulnerable to exploitation.	*Include* mentions SES, housing, education, physical or mental disabilities. *Exclude* racial differences	*11*
3.0 Response Success	---	---	---	---
	3.1 Trauma-informed Focus	References to available services that currently account for survivors' trauma and mental health.	*Include* available programs, trainings, or specific stakeholders that follow a trauma-informed approach. *Exclude* lack or need for trauma-informed or mental health programming	*4*

	3.2 State	References to state run or state-run services, systems, or programs that respond to or work to prevent CSEC.	*Exclude* federal and national level systems, policies, and programs.	*5*
	3.3 Prevention	References to preventative systems, services, or initiatives for U.S. CSEC.	*Include* national and state, or organizational level preventative measures.	*2*
	3.4 Funding	References to funding provided for CSEC.	*Include* state, national, international, or private funding for organizations or state-run program that affect U.S. and Georgia level CSEC work.	*2*
	3.5 Alternative Programming	Refers to any successful community-based programming.	*Include* sustainable community programs such as: family reunification, career training, etc. *Exclude* residential or inpatient programs.	*3*
	3.6 Residential	References to inpatient programs and services available to those who have exploited.	*Exclude* the mention of needs for housing or residential programs.	*6*
	3.7 Legislation	Refers to federal or state level laws, and legislative policies that affect CSEC.	*Include* safe harbor laws, enforcement of buyers and exploiters, etc.	*10*
4.0 Gang Violence		Mentions of extreme physical or mental violence in any capacity experienced by youth through gang violence, association, or recruitment of exploitation through gangs.	---	*8*
5.0 Perception of a Victim		Mentions of a social and overall perception of who exploited youth are and what are some underlying symptoms as well as a perception of how youth are recruited. These perceptions can be false and based off stigmas.	*Include* an expectation of an exploited youth's gender, race, behavior, and background, false perception of the majority of trafficking recruitment strategies. *Exclude* mention of different observations of recruitment strategies youth experience.	*6*
6.0 Awareness		Mentions of stakeholder's observational experience in a change or increase in awareness and understanding of sexual exploitation as a topic.	*Exclude* Perception or awareness of exploited youth and at-risk youth characteristics.	*18*
7.0 Identification		Reference to the difficulty and challenge of services, and the juvenile system identifying and uncovering youth that are being or have been exploited.	*Include* mentions the complexity of identification, or reference to it as a challenge. *Exclude* the platforms or recruitment strategies being used to identify youth.	*5*
8.0 Demand	---	Reference to the overall rates of sex trafficking and exploitation, and how sought over sexual	---	*6*

		exploitation of youth is for buyers and traffickers.		
	8.1 Buyers	Mentions individuals who seek to purchase and exploit youth. In any reference of characteristics, prosecution, or legislation against buyers.	*Exclude* traffickers, pimps, or exploiters.	*3*
9.0 Grooming/Manipulation		Mention of youth being groomed or manipulated by physical gifts, luxuries, or emotionally for the entrapment or sexually exploitation by a buyer or exploiter.	*Include* emotional entrapment and manipulation, false friendly or romantic relationships, gifts such as phones, paying for services such as hair, nails, etc.	*11*
10.0 COVID-19 Effects		Reference to any effects on youth, facilities, programs, or other resources due to the COVID-19 pandemic and isolation.	*Include* observed behavior change in youth, CSEC rates, recruitment strategies, funding, or other challenges.	*11*
11.0 inter-Agency Relations		Mentions interdisciplinary programs, CSEC responders, or stakeholders coming and working together or disagreeing and fighting against one another.	*Include* The mention of communication or lack of between different stakeholders and partners working in CSEC.	*13*
12.0 Savior Implementors		Mention of new program leads or stakeholders that become involved in CSEC without proper knowledge or training in youth needs and resources.	*Include* mentions of "white savior" implementors or implementors and programs that open facilities that are either underqualified or not aware of underlying causes and needs.	
13.0 Implementation Barriers	---	Barriers that prevent prevention and response CSEC services and systems from being able to implement and provide youth services or get youth to participate in services.	----	*1*
	13.1 On the Road	Mentions of youth running away from homes, or services and systems	*Include* at-risk youth running away, exploited youth running away from housing, court/state mandated services, or outpatient organizations and support services.	*9*
	13.2 Identification	The difficulty, challenge, or barriers to identifying youth that have been sexually exploited. This can be for several reasons and is the stakeholders observational reasoning for the inability to identify all CSEC youth.	---	*5*

14.0 Needs and Recommendations		Mentioned needs and recommendations for future CSEC response and prevention.		
	14.1 Survivor Led	Reference to the need of CSEC survivor leadership on the forefront of initiatives, organizations, and programs both preventative and response to CSEC.	---	*5*
	14.2 Family Support	Reference to a gap in family services or family participation in care and treatment to help youth being exploited.	*Include* families not being able to help or identify youth as trafficked, as well as need for programs reuniting families or training families.	*7*
	14.3 Community Based Programming	Mention of overall change in awareness or understanding of CSEC and youth trafficking.	*Include* the need and gap of community based and alternative programming. *Exclude* successful existing programs.	*7*
	14.4 Targeted Support	Reference to a gap in services or programming for specific targets of exploited population.	*Include* gap in services for recruiters, pregnant/youth with children, or risk of runaway youth.	*11*
	14.6 Data	Reference to lack of or need or research and data regarding CSEC and CSEC youth.	*Include* mention of inaccurate data, and lack of research	*2*
	14.7 Funding	Reference to a need for more or different funding sources involved in CSEC services/systems/prevention.	*Include* previous or current limitation of funding or need for more general or specific funding in CSEC involvement/programming.	*5*
	14.8 Placements	Reference to the need of placement facilities for CSEC youth.	*Include* reference of a gap or need in housing.	*3*
	14.9 Prevention	Stakeholder recommendation or reference to need for specific or general services used to target youth before being exploited and limit future risks of exploitation.	*Include* educational, organizational, or social services/programs that can be created or expanded. *Exclude* non-preventative services	*8*

TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1.
Table 1. Participant Demographics

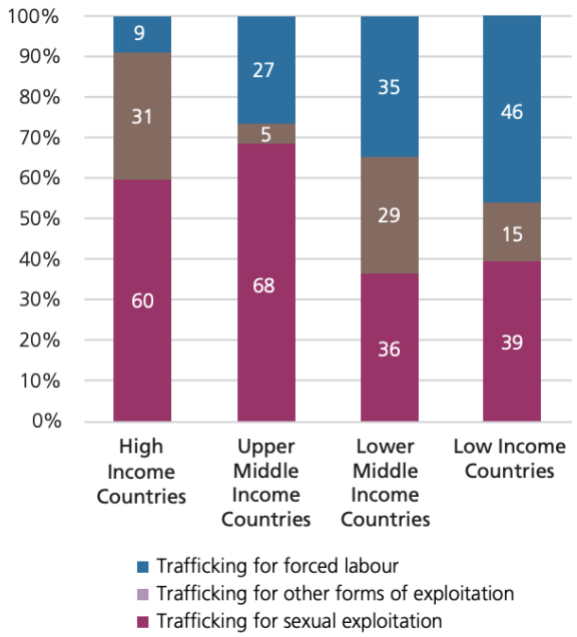
Participant ID	Gender	Age range	Sector	# of Years Working in CSEC
Participant 1	Female	45-55	Organizational	8 years
Participant 2	Female	35-45	State employee	10 years
Participant 3	Female	25-35	Organizational	6 years
Participant 4	Female	55-65	Organizational	2 years
Participant 5	Male	45-55	State employee	27 years
Participant 6	Female	35-45	State employee	19 years

Figure 1.
Figure 3. Share of Detected Trafficking Victims by form of Exploitation

(United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020)

Figure 2.

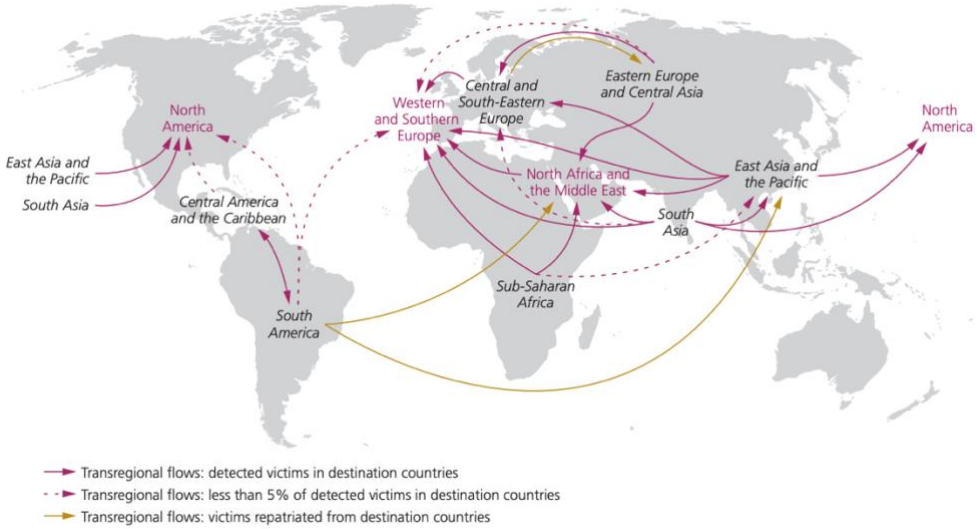
Figure 2. Shares of Detected Child Victims of Trafficking, by form of Exploitation and national income



(United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020)

Figure 3.

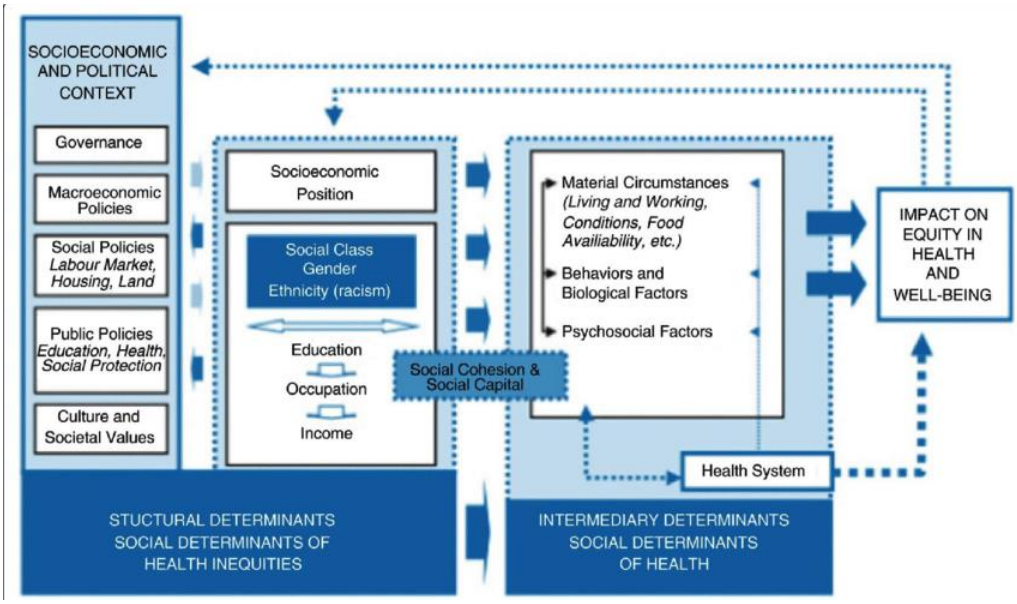
Figure 3. Main Detected Transregional Flows, 2018 or most recent



(United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020)

Figure 4.

Figure 4. *Commission of Social Determinants of Health (CSDH) conceptual framework*



(World Health Organization, 2010)