

**Evaluating the State of Predatory Alienation in New Jersey
Final Report**

Report Prepared for:
**The New Jersey Department of Children and Families
The New Jersey Department of Human Services**

Project Conducted By:
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November 2017

This material is based upon work supported by the Department of Children and Families and the Department of Human Services, State of New Jersey under Contract # 17AAMA with Rutgers University. Any opinions and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the State of New Jersey, the Department of Children and Families, or the Department of Human Services.

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Introduction

The objective of the project, “Evaluating the State of Predatory Alienation in New Jersey,” was to identify the nature of predatory alienation and its effects on young adults and older adults. The Department of Children and Families and the Department of Human Services contracted the Center on Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) at the Rutgers School of Social Work to study this issue.

In 2012, several individuals in New Jersey began a nonprofit organization, NJ Safe & Sound, to advocate for legislation to protect families in cases of undue influence and predatory alienation. Their own personal experiences with predatory alienation led them to their advocacy efforts.

As a result of the advocacy efforts of NJ Safe and Sound, Senate Bill 2562¹ and Assembly Bill 4244 were passed and signed by the Governor (P.L. 2017, Chapter 64), requiring the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Department of Human Services (DHS) to conduct a joint study and make recommendations concerning predatory alienation. The Act defines predatory alienation as “extreme undue influence on, or coercive persuasion or psychologically damaging manipulation of another person that results in physical or emotional harm or the loss of financial assets, disrupts a parent-child relationship, leads to a deceptive or exploitative relationship, or isolates the person from family and friends.” With this definition in mind, researchers at VAWC sought to answer the following questions:

- 1) How do online predators, human traffickers, con artists, gangs, cults, and other groups use predatory alienation to isolate young adults and senior citizens from their family and friends?
- 2) What are the grooming practices used to target and control young adults and older adults?
- 3) What are the high-pressure tactics used in scams and exploitative relationships to manipulate, control, and take advantage of older adults?
- 4) Why are young adults and older adults particularly vulnerable to predatory alienation?
- 5) What can young adults and older adults do to protect themselves from predatory alienation?

VAWC used a two-phased approach to gain a better understanding of predatory alienation and how it affects young adults and older adults, including a comprehensive literature review and key stakeholder interviews. This report presents a synthesis of the findings from these two phases of the research project.

¹ New Jersey Senate Bill 2562: <https://legiscan.com/NJ/text/S2562/2016>

Methods – Overview

Approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Rutgers University was received prior to conducting this research. First, VAWC conducted a comprehensive literature review to examine the state of predatory practices targeting young adults and older adults across the United States. Second, in-depth interviews were completed with key stakeholders from organizations serving or advocating on behalf of individuals who have fallen victim to predatory behaviors. These interviews aided the researchers in gaining an understanding of current practices in responding to victims of predatory behaviors. Third, this report was written which includes a synthesis of findings from the literature review and in-depth interviews, and recommendations for policy, practice, and research.

Phase One – Literature Review

The first step involved a comprehensive literature review of sources related to predatory behaviors used against young adults and older adults. Qualitative content analysis was conducted to identify common themes across the literature.

Data Collection. The research team searched Academic Search Premier, Ebscohost, and Google Scholar for existing academic literature, research studies, technical reports, fact sheets, white papers, working papers, and committee reports. Additional articles were collected based on relevant references from these sources. Various combinations of the following search terms were used:

predatory alienation; coercion; persuasive coercion; manipulation; isolation; recruitment; undue influence; (sexual) exploitation; exploitative relationships; coercive control; domestic violence; financial exploitation; scams; fraud; elderly; older adults; senior citizens; young adults; youth; teens; trafficking; street gangs; cults; extremism; terrorists; recruitment; grooming; internet; online; technology; risk factors; protective factors.

The literature review included research on: predatory behaviors; isolation and grooming tactics used by traffickers, scammers, cults, gangs, extremist groups, domestic violence perpetrators, and online predators; risk factors for victimization of young adults and older adults; protective factors for young adults and older adults; and research on best practices and policy related to addressing predatory behaviors.

Data Analysis. As sources were collected, they were entered into a tracking sheet for review. The research team reviewed each article to identify which sources were most relevant for this project and to identify preliminary themes for further consideration. A VAWC research assistant conducted primary coding of all relevant articles in NVivo guided by a coding list based on the research questions for this study and the preliminary themes found during the first review of articles. A second VAWC research assistant then reviewed each article and the coding conducted by the first assistant to determine if any additional concepts or themes needed to be added. The research assistants met weekly through this process to discuss and come to consensus on project findings.

Phase Two – Stakeholder Interviews

Following the literature review, interviews were conducted with key stakeholders such as Department of Children and Families (DCF) and Department of Human Services (DHS) staff and contractors, law enforcement, service providers, and other advocates for families who experienced predatory alienation. These interviews were conducted in-person at a VAWC office or public area, over the phone, or over Skype video call. Qualitative analysis was completed to examine common themes among participant responses.

Sample. Potential stakeholders were identified by the VAWC research team, DCF, DHS, and interview participants. Criteria for participation included professional engagement in issues of predatory alienation through advocacy, direct services, research or practice expertise, law enforcement, or legal services. Each stakeholder was contacted via email to participate in the project; those interested were asked to complete a one-time, in-depth interview on the date and at the location of their choice. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Snowball sampling was used to identify additional stakeholders by asking participants to provide the names of other possible stakeholders. The original sample of potential key stakeholders included 22 individuals. Another 10 individuals were identified via referral of study participants. A total of 22 key stakeholders participated in interviews from July 2017 through September 2017.

Data Collection. Two research team members attended each stakeholder interview. This included one facilitator who obtained informed consent and facilitated the interview, and one research assistant who recorded detailed notes on a laptop. Each stakeholder interview was also audio recorded. The facilitator protected the confidentiality of each participant by assigning and using a numerical identifier used in place of the participant's name. The research assistant used these codes in place of names while taking notes. Following each interview, the notes were uploaded to a password-protected secure folder located on the Rutgers University School of Social Work server, to which only members of the research team had access. The notes were then reviewed and compared to the audio recording by both the note taker and another member of the researcher team to ensure accuracy. Direct quotes were included in research notes whenever possible. Only minimal grammatical corrections for clarity were made, thus retaining the meaning of participant quotes in analysis. See Appendix A for interview guide.

At the conclusion of Phase II stakeholder interviews, five of the twenty-two participants were asked to complete follow-up interviews in order to collect participant feedback on interview findings and recommendations. The five participants were selected to represent the perspectives of professionals working in the areas of cults, gangs, trafficking and domestic violence, and older adults. The same consent and recording procedures were used for these interviews including completion of a new consent form. Participants were first presented with a summary of interview findings and then asked to provide their impressions. Participants were then presented with a summary of recommendations and then again asked to provide their impressions. Participant feedback was compiled and used to clarify and expand upon study findings. See Appendix B for follow-up interview guide.

Instruments. Qualitative interviews (Phase II) were semi-structured, which adhered to a guide with several domains of open-ended questions. This allowed flexibility for participants to speak about their own personal experiences.

The interview guide included the following topics (see Appendix A for full guide):

- Participant understanding of predatory alienation
- The nature of the participant’s work with victims of predatory alienation
- How participants identify victims of predatory alienation
- Risk factors participants observe among victims
- Common tactics participants observe among perpetrators

Each participant was asked about barriers to assisting victims, needed improvements to the current system, and general feedback about the investigation of perpetration and advocacy efforts for victims of predatory alienation.

Data Analysis. The research team conducted a multi-step content analysis of qualitative interview data using NVivo qualitative data analysis software. First, a member of the research team coded participant responses by question, comparing responses to each interview question across all participants. The researcher then grouped these codes into broader categories and overarching themes. To ensure the rigor of the qualitative findings, a second member of the research team then coded each individual participant interview, and grouped these codes into broader categories and themes. Both coding lists were compared to ensure that all concepts were thoroughly captured in the qualitative analysis. Finally, the entire research team met to discuss and come to consensus on the codes, categories, and themes.

All descriptive summaries of demographics were conducted in SPSS version 23.

Results – Literature Review

The results from the literature review have been synthesized into several themes including: 1) definitions, 2) historical, legal, and theoretical background; 3) predatory tactics; 4) grooming techniques; 5) isolation techniques; 6) compliance without physical boundaries; 7) effects of predatory alienation; 8) factors that put individuals at risk; and 9) strategies for protection against predatory alienation. Each of these themes are reviewed below.

1. Definitions

The Act defines predatory alienation as “extreme undue influence on, or coercive persuasion or psychologically damaging manipulation of another person that results in physical or emotional harm or the loss of financial assets, disrupts a parent-child relationship, leads to deceptive or exploitative relationship, or isolates the person from family and friends.” A search for predatory alienation produced no results, revealing a dearth of literature on the specific topic. Hence, our search turned to concepts indicative of situations where alienation and predatory behaviors are used to gain a better understanding of how we might conceptualize predatory alienation, the grooming and isolation tactics associated with this practice, the effects of predatory alienation on

victims, as well as what makes someone vulnerable to or protected against predatory alienation. The areas of focus included: human trafficking, sexual predation or abuse, exploitation of older adults, cults, gangs, and extremist groups. Literature on coercive control was also reviewed due to the similarity in tactics used by perpetrators to maintain control over victims in intimate relationships. For this literature review, we focused on the experiences of young adults and older adults.

Although predatory alienation is not a mainstream term, conceptually we focused on the actions that characterize victimization. Predatory alienation involves the use of predatory behaviors such as entrapment, coercion, and undue influence on the part of the perpetrator to establish and maintain a relationship with the victim and to isolate the victim from existing relationships and support systems, including family and friends. Deceptive trust development and a cycle of entrapment, through grooming, isolating, and approach tactics, help to establish and solidify the relationship between perpetrator and victim (Olson et al., 2007). Various actual or threatened forms of coercion may be used in cases of predatory alienation. Physical forms of coercion tend to be more blatant, whereas social, psychological, or financial manifestations of coercion are more covert (Singer, 1992). Undue influence may also be at play when the weaker individual in a relationship is exploited and is forced into making questionable decisions by the stronger individual in the relationship (Wood & Liu, 2012). Undue influence, when involving older adults, often centers on a confidential relationship and a power differential leading the weaker individual to be coerced into making questionable decisions about finances, transfer of property, and signing of wills (Singer, 1992; Wood & Liu, 2012). Many tactics are used to maintain control and keep victims in the relationship including those that facilitate compliance in the absence of physical boundaries.

In most instances, the primary goal is control over the victim. However, in some instances the goal may be control only for the sake of control while others seek control for another motive such as human trafficking, sexual predation, abuse, scams, or financially exploitative relationships. Cults, religious sects, gangs, and extremist groups may use predatory tactics for the purpose of group recruitment to spread belief systems, carry out crime, or political agendas.

2. Historical, Legal, and Theoretical Background

An examination of the state of predatory alienation in New Jersey and the United States must consider a review of the current legal definitions and the status of policies addressing the various topics of concern. Following is a summary of state and/or federal definitions as they are relevant, and the legal responses to the issues of elder abuse, sexual exploitation, gang activity, and cults. For more details please see Appendix C.

Legislative Definitions and Legal Recourse. The state and federal definitions of the topics of concern vary, and policies addressing these concerns offer a range of legal recourses for prosecution. Elder abuse is defined at both the state and federal level. However, it is prosecuted at the state level, with laws and punishments varying across state lines. In New Jersey, the Adult Protective Services Act classifies older adults as a vulnerable group due to diminished capacity to make decisions and defines exploitation as the act or process of illegally or improperly using a

person or his resources for another person’s profit or advantage (Civil N.J. Stat. 52:27D-407). New Jersey’s Domestic Violence Act also provides guidance for some cases of elder abuse that occur within intimate or caregiving relationships. Domestic violence, more broadly, is addressed through state and federal law, with punishment for perpetrators including fines, imprisonment, restraining orders, and mandated professional counseling. Federal legislation defines domestic violence as crimes of violence committed by a current or former spouse or intimate partner of the victim, and also includes various other relationships (US Code §34: 12291). New Jersey legislation details domestic violence acts to include assault, false imprisonment, harassment, criminal coercion, and other crimes. (N.J.S.2C25-19).

Sexual exploitation may be covered under several laws, both at the state and federal level. However, it is typically prosecuted at the state level. Sexual exploitation includes both child sexual abuse and sexual assault. New Jersey criminal code highlights the use of physical force or coercion in its definition of sexual assault (NJ Rev Stat § 2C:14-2). Punishment for crimes involving sexual exploitation at the state and federal level varies, and involves fines, imprisonment, or both for the perpetrator. Human trafficking incorporates sexual exploitation into some aspects of its definition and has some overlap in terms of legal response. Within federal trafficking legislation such as the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 and state-level legislation like New Jersey’s Human Trafficking Prevention, Protection and Treatment Act, there are specific guidelines for legal response to trafficking crimes. The common element defining trafficking comes from federal legislation that characterizes the problems as the “recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act” where the act is induced by force, fraud or coercion, or where the person is a minor (22 USC § 7102).

Criminal code on the federal and state level addresses criminal street gang activity. Criminal street gangs are defined as an association of people that engages in criminal offenses as one of its main activities (NJS 2C:44-3(h); US Code §18:521). While there is no offense for recruiting a gang member, punishment may result for crimes committed as part of a criminal street gang depending on the class and nature of the crime committed. Penalties for activities related to extremist group recruitment and involvement focus on acts or threats of international and domestic terrorism and are available at both the federal and state level. Terrorism is defined as acts that are dangerous to human life, are in violation of criminal laws, and are committed with the intent to intimidate or coerce civilians or to influence the government through mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping (US Code §18: 2331). Punishment for engagement in terrorism includes a term of imprisonment, and includes life imprisonment for those acts where death resulted (NJ Rev Stat § 2C:38-2).

Cults are different than the previously mentioned areas, as they are not defined or punished at the state or federal level. Instead, experts who conduct research on victims and/or perpetrators have shaped our understanding to include ideological organizations that are held together by charismatic relationships, require high levels of commitment from members, and may become exploitative and abusive to members (International Cultic Studies Association). Prosecution for recruitment by or involvement in a cultic group is not punishable unless a separate illegal action has been taken, and at which point prosecution would be guided by legislation specific to those particular crimes (Olgoff & Pfiefer, 1992).

Theory and Conceptual Frameworks. There are a few existing theories and frameworks that help contextualize the phenomenon of predatory alienation. These include: 1) Coerced persuasion and Coercive Control, 3) Stockholm Syndrome, and 4) Luring Communication Theory.

1) Coerced Persuasion and Coercive Control. The study of psychological coercion was first conducted in the context of confinement of American soldiers during the Korean War by sociologist, Albert Biderman (Baldwin et al., 2015). Biderman examined interrogation techniques used to manipulate the behavior of captive American soldiers in the absence of physical force (Baldwin et al, 2015). This resulted in eight methods of compliance-inducing coercion: 1) isolation, 2) monopolization of perception, 3) induced debility or exhaustion, 4) threats, 5) occasional indulgences, 6) demonstration of omnipotence, 7) degradation, and 8) enforcing trivial demands (Baldwin et al., 2015)

The theory of coercive control draws parallels between coerced persuasion techniques, such as those used during the Korean War, and the tactics used by perpetrators of abuse in intimate relationships (Stark, 2009). These tactics result in the breakdown of the victim's personality due to extreme threats, and also result in extreme emotional and behavioral adaptations such as guilt, loss of self-esteem, detachment, overreaction, fear of escape, identifying with the perpetrator, and others (Stark, 2009). The theory highlights how experiences of survivors of intimate partner violence mirror experiences of hostages, inmates in concentration camps, and American prisoners of war with regard to the eight methods of compliance-inducing coercion (Baldwin et al., 2015; Stark, 2009).

2) Stockholm Syndrome. Stockholm syndrome is associated with the psychological bond that hostages develop with their captors during captivity as a coping mechanism for victimization (Jameson, 2010). Victims develop positive feelings toward their captors and sympathy for their motives, and develop negative feelings toward police and authorities (Adorjan, Christensen, Kelly & Pawluch, 2012). Stockholm syndrome is said to occur when face-to-face contact has transpired between victim and perpetrator, and when victims experience extreme helplessness, powerlessness, and submission to the perpetrator (Adorjan et al., 2012).

3) Luring Communication Theory. Luring Communication Theory (LCT; Olson et al., 2007) was developed to explain the cycle of entrapment involved in cases of sexual predation. However, this theory may be applied more broadly to better understand the cycle of entrapment that occurs in other scenarios involving predatory alienation. In LCT, the perpetrator first gains access to the victim, and then engages them in a cycle of entrapment centered on the establishment of trust between the perpetrator and the victim or the victim and their family. This allows the perpetrator to then groom, isolate, and approach a potential victim. These actions take place simultaneously and create a scenario in which a perpetrator is able to exploit the victim. A power differential creates a sense of respect toward the perpetrator that facilitates the development of trust.

3. Predatory Tactics

Perpetrators use a variety of predatory tactics to establish and maintain relationships with victims. Grooming and isolation techniques are actions taken to gain control over victims, encourage their compliance, and maintain control over them in the relationship. The creation of compliance despite a lack of physical boundaries is also a key part of maintaining the relationship. Perpetrators who are strangers to the victims may use these tactics. However, there are some cases, as in cases of sexual exploitation, where the victim and their family may know the perpetrator.

Perpetrators target, lure, and control their victims using various modes of communication. The use of telephone, television, mail, or personal interaction have all been cited as means for engaging with victims. Service providers and sales people have targeted older adults in person, through telemarketing calls, mail offers, or television advertisements (Reisig & Holtfreter, 2013). The growth of technology and increased availability of the Internet have created additional ways for perpetrators to lure and maintain control over victims, such as through social media and messaging apps. Traffickers may initially contact potential victims through social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram (Dixon, 2013). Internet advertisements for employment may also be used to lure potential victims to a secluded place where they are then trafficked (Dixon, 2013). In cases of extremist group recruitment, the Internet is used to radicalize potential victims and facilitate recruitment (Hills, 2015; Rogan, 2006).

4. Grooming Techniques

Grooming techniques involve: 1) establishing trust, 2) desensitizing the victim to the abuse or exploitation they are experiencing, 3) providing a sense of a faux family, 4) romancing and buying gifts for the victim, and 5) high pressure or special tactics.

1) Trust. Establishing trust is a key tactic used by perpetrators to prime victims for further grooming and exploitation. As described in LCT (Olson et al., 2007), the cycle of entrapment begins with the development of trust and the cultivation of a relationship between the perpetrator, victim, and sometimes the victim's family. In cases of financial scams and exploitation of older adults, con artists will gain the victim's confidence via salesmanship focused on promised benefits and rewards of the scam (Langenderfer & Shrimp, 2001). Crimes of predation against older adults involving finances have also included the building of trust with a professional advisor or through a relationship that may be romantic or otherwise, that is then used to exploit the victim at a later time (MetLife, 2011). Scammers may gain a victim's trust by providing them with an opportunity to share their deepest thoughts, thoughts typically not discussed with other people (Whitty, 2013). Trust has been identified as key in victims' descriptions of their relationships with perpetrators in cases of online relationships and cyber abuse (Mishna et al., 2009). Building rapport and establishing trust have also been identified as tactics used by extremist groups to initiate recruitment of young women in the Western world (Hills, 2015). Traffickers also develop trust with their victims by helping youth and young adults

in ways they need, such as providing shelter, food, clothing, money, personal items, or transportation (Reid, 2016).

2) Desensitization. Desensitization is also a key tactic in the grooming of victims. This involves the gradual and incremental exposure of abuse or exploitation so victims are less likely to feel distress as it builds in frequency and intensity. In the case of sexual predation, perpetrators will begin grooming youth by verbally and physically desensitizing them to sexual contact, finding intimate situations in which to be with the victim as a way to get them used to the abuser's presence (Olson et al. 2007). Online predators use prior sexual acts as a way to coerce youths to engage in new acts (Mishna et al., 2009).

This practice is also discussed in relation to trafficking. Traffickers use peers such as friends and boyfriends to recruit new victims by normalizing prostitution (Reid, 2016). Traffickers also glamorize prostitution by telling youth that prostitution is a smart way to make money and that it provides evidence of their worth (Reid, 2016).

Older adults who experience abuse and exploitation are often isolated, dependent on caregivers and local agencies for support, and desensitized to what is going on around them. Perpetrators often befriend older adults and may begin by asking for small amounts of money or gifts, and then increase the request based on those initial responses (Whitty, 2013). Giving money to fraudsters is normalized by the claim that it will be used to help someone such as a sick child, someone in an urgent and financially worrisome situation, or for medical or educational expenses (Whitty, 2013).

In situations of cults, individuals are slowly brought in and encouraged to increase their involvement as a way to keep them unaware of their resulting entrenchment in the group. Whether it may be bible study or therapy, the goal is to get the individual to spend more time with the group by increasing the frequency of sessions they attend (Singer, 1995).

3) The Faux Family. As part of the grooming and isolation process, perpetrators may aim to provide an alternative family connection for the victim. In research conducted on gangs, it is suggested that youth perceive gang membership as a way to escape their own dysfunctional families (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). Victims of online sexual predation talked about engaging in cybersex or meeting for sexual encounters as a way to engage with someone who would listen or as a distraction from trouble at home (Mishna et al., 2009). The idea of perpetrators providing love and affection not available from others was also present in research on sexual predation of youth (Olson et al., 2007). In cases of trafficking, victims reported loving their pimps and sometimes viewed the other youth they worked with as a team or family (Reid, 2016).

4) Romancing and Gift Giving. Another tactic used by perpetrators to develop and maintain control over victims is the idea of romancing and gift giving to lure the victim. In cases of extremist group recruitment, "love bombing" was used to influence potential victims through extreme attention and affection, or by offering a prize in exchange for an agreement (Hills, 2015). In sexual predation of youth, perpetrators may take a victim out on a date or on a special outing, provide bribes or gifts, and show affection and understanding (Gilgun, 1994).

Traffickers also use romancing, buying gifts, and spending money on victims as ways to convince them to engage in prostitution (Reid, 2016). This form of targeting and control is also used in cases of exploitation of older adults, where a perpetrator will send a small gift such as flowers or a teddy bear to a female victim, hoping that the victim will then send the requested money in return (Whitty, 2013). In some cases, older adults describe being in love with the fake persona on the other end of the financial scam, viewing them as the ideal romantic partner, which motivated them to provide the money requested (Whitty, 2013).

5) High Pressure Tactics. In some cases involving older adults, high-pressure tactics are used. This might involve scams where victims are lured into paying money upfront for a good or service, or for a prize to be released upon receipt of “customs duties” paid by the victim (Langenderfer & Shrimp, 2001). These requests may raise concerns for the victim, but the skill of the perpetrator to focus the victim’s attention on the reward is what makes the tactic successful (Langenderfer & Shrimp, 2001). Victims are often blinded by greed or focused on the reward more than on any concern about having to provide money up front (Langenderfer & Shrimp, 2001).

5. Isolation Techniques

Isolation can occur in physical or mental forms, and acts in a way that keeps victims away from social support, including family and friends (Baldwin et al., 2015). Perpetrators use isolation to limit communication with social support, with perpetrators acting as “gatekeepers” that control incoming and outgoing information (Singer, 1992; Whitsett & Kent, 2003). In cults, isolation may involve taking control over the victim’s social and/or physical environment, including controlling their time (Singer, 1995; Whitsett & Kent, 2003). Phone calls and meetings including the victim result in the victim spending more time with the group, and as they spend more time there, they become more distant from their pre-cult identity (Singer, 1995). Physical isolation may also include the geographical relocation of a victim to another place as in cases of trafficking (Reid, 2016). Traffickers may also isolate youth by checking and controlling access to cell phones and social media, and by changing phone numbers and passwords (Reid, 2016). In some cases involving the use of the Internet, victims become so involved in the online communication they are receiving from the perpetrator that they withdraw from other environments (Whitty, 2013).

Mental isolation occurs when the perpetrator creates or enlarges a psychological and emotional separation between the victim and their support networks so the perpetrator can then occupy that space (Olson et al., 2007). In trafficking situations, women have described how their traffickers limited exposure to and understanding of the outside world, and how they called them frequently as a way to monopolize their attention even when they were not physically with the victim (Baldwin et al., 2015). Cults may interfere with a victim’s ability to assess what is going on around them (Whitsett & Kent, 2003) or keep a person unaware of what is happening on a larger scale or how they are changing in small ways that are cumulative over time, that lead to increasing entrenchment (Singer, 1995). Victims of elder abuse involving undue influence may be isolated through the construction of a false reality in which they are manipulated into believing only what that the perpetrators want them to believe about the world around them, and

in which someone who is highly stressed and captive will begin to form bonds with and become dependent on the perpetrator (Singer, 1992).

6. Compliance without Physical Boundaries

One of the primary means for keeping a victim in a relationship once it has been established is by creating compliance in the absence of physical boundaries. Tactics used to maintain victims in the relationship despite a lack of physical boundaries may include: creating conditions that render victims physically unable to leave or that entice victims to stay; deprivation of basic human needs; creation of dependency on the perpetrator; exertion of extreme control; implementation of a reward and punishment system; intimidation and threats; deception and manipulation; shame, blackmail and humiliation; reconstruction of the victim's world view; creation of a power differential in the relationship; or by fostering a trauma bond with the victim.

In some cases, perpetrators create conditions for the victim that render them unable to leave or that entice them to stay. Illicit substances, such as alcohol or drugs, may be forced upon or be taken willingly by the victim. In cases of trafficking, this approach has been used to induce weakness and lower resistance of victims or to facilitate abduction (Baldwin et al., 2015; Reid, 2016). In situations of sexual predation of youths, marijuana and crystal meth have been used to groom for sexual encounters (Mishna et al., 2009).

Deprivation of basic human needs is another way victims are kept in abusive situations they may otherwise leave. Traffickers have induced weakness and exhaustion in victims by depriving them of food, sleep, and health care, and by working them for long periods of time (Baldwin et al., 2015). In situations of cults or religious extremist groups, victims may be denied physical or mental health care outside of the group (Ward, 2011).

Emotional dependency on the perpetrator may also keep victims compliant without physical boundaries. Trafficking victims became increasingly emotionally and socially dependent on traffickers due to isolation from other people (Baldwin et al., 2015). In cases of abuse and exploitation of older adults, a perpetrator might create a sense of dependency by leading the victim to believe the perpetrator is the only person they can trust (Singer, 1992). In cults or religious extremist groups, victims spend so much time in the group that the norms of the group become the norms for the victim, creating an emotional dependency on the group (Singer, 1995). Cult or extremist group victims may also experience regression to an earlier developmental stage due to parent-like treatment by cult leaders that does not allow followers to question leadership or God. This leads to dependency on the leaders because followers felt they were not able to think for themselves (Ward, 2011). For many types of perpetration, perpetrators may use coercive control to create a situation of child-like dependency for the victim (Stark, 2009).

Perpetrators may also exercise extreme control over the victim's environment or require that victims ask permission to do things. In situations of trafficking, some victims may be under constant surveillance by security cameras at their residences, with security alerts sent to a trafficker if the victim tried to leave without permission (Reid, 2016). The victim may be faced with extreme consequences for leaving or with an unpredictable reward and punishment system. Traffickers may provide indulgences or demonstrate compassion or kindness intermittently to

counter abusive behavior as a way to encourage compliance, leaving victims in fear of making mistakes and in hope of pleasing traffickers (Baldwin et al., 2015). Victims of online sexual predation discussed online rewards or higher grades for failing students as tactics used to engage them in online encounters (Mishna et al., 2009). Cults have also been noted to use a system of rewards and punishments that promotes learning the belief system of the group and leaving behind the person’s former social identity (Singer, 1991).

Intimidation and threats of physical or emotional harm to the victim or their family are common. In cases of trafficking, threats of deportation, against family members, of violence and death have all been used to control victims (Baldwin et al., 2015). Victims of trafficking have also been threatened with or intimidated with sexual and physical assault, pregnancy, abortion, or the harm to or selling of their children (Reid, 2016). Perpetrators of sexual predation of youth may threaten to harm or kill the child or a loved one, may threaten that they will lose their “special relationship,” or they may threaten that the child will not be believed or will be blamed if they tell someone about the sexual encounter (Olson et al., 2007).

Perpetrators of financial abuse of older adults also achieve their goals through deceit, threats, and emotional manipulation of the victim (MetLife, 2011). Fear and vulnerability of an older adult may be encouraged through exaggeration of physical ailments and by reframing their view of people in their surroundings as threatening or having ill intentions (Singer, 1992). Where older adults are being targeted in a financial scam, perpetrators may threaten withdrawal of their relationship if the victim does not provide the money they are requesting (Whitty, 2013). This unfounded sense of danger is also present in cult situations where victims are threatened if they consider leaving or actually leave the group (Ward, 2011).

Shame, blackmail, and humiliation are also used by perpetrators to keep victims in a relationship. Traffickers may degrade victims by insulting and humiliating them, denying them privacy and dignity, and by reducing them to an animal level with no control (Baldwin et al., 2015). Victims of online sexual predation may feel shame about publicly shared explicit photos and be reluctant to contact police due to the possibility of their parents finding out (Mishna et al., 2009). Victims of trafficking may feel shame at the demeaning of traffickers or their voyeurism during sexual encounters, or at the prospect of family members finding out about prostitution arrests or explicit photos (Reid, 2016). Cults may reframe a victim’s previous life in a negative way or shame them as a way to exert control (Whitsett & Kent, 2003). Blackmail may be used in cases when older adults no longer have money to provide to online financial scammers who are engaging them in false romantic relationships. In these cases, the perpetrator often threatens to share a sexually explicit recorded video with the victim’s work or family as a way to blackmail the victim (Whitty, 2013).

In some cases, perpetrators reconstruct the victim’s world view or view of themselves as a way to keep them in the relationship. Sexual predators may modify a youth’s understanding of right and wrong, their sense of self, and their agency, or frame abuse as being beneficial for them later in life, as a way to facilitate continued abuse (Olson et al., 2007). Perpetrators in cases of financial abuse of older adults might create a scenario in which the victim believes they are under attack from nonexistent sources (Singer, 1992). Victims in cults may be unable to assess

their situation objectively, or may reinterpret their past through their current lens and no longer be able to conceive of a life outside the group (Singer, 1995; Whitsett & Kent, 2003).

Some victims are enticed to stay in the relationship due to the nature of the relationship they have formed with the group leader or perpetrator. Traffickers often demonstrate omnipotence, claiming powerful connections to law enforcement, immigration official, or gods, creating a situation where victims believe their resistance would be pointless (Baldwin et al., 2015). Sexual predators also place themselves in or take advantage of being in positions of authority that demand respect and obedience, such as a teacher or priest, as a way to lay the groundwork for achieving the goal of a sexual encounter (Olson et al., 2007). In cases of abuse of older adults, a perpetrator may create a sense of powerlessness for the victim via isolation, dependency, and the idea that they are under attack from outside sources so that the victim sees the perpetrator as the only one with the power to do anything (Singer, 1992). Older adults involved in fake online relationships with financial scammers also reported that the fake persona of the perpetrator was often that of a person with authority who they felt they could trust, such as a doctor, army general, or successful businessman (Whitty, 2013). Cults also facilitate relationships via an authoritarian structure in which victims are accountable to leadership (Singer, 1995).

Trauma bonding, similar to Stockholm Syndrome, is also relevant in some relationships. This occurs when an emotional connection has been formed with the perpetrator that may keep the victim in the relationship (Reid, 2016). Trauma bonding happens when a victim is subject to intermittent abuse that alternates with positive or neutral interactions, resulting in feelings of terror, helplessness and vulnerability, as well as gratitude and intense loyalty (Dutton & Painter, 1993; James, 1994).

7. Effects of Predatory Alienation

Victims of predatory alienation experience a multitude of negative effects. There are lasting physical and psychological implications, as well as economic effects. Isolation and disruption of relationships also occur in many cases.

Physical and emotional harm are felt in many situations. Psychological stress along with physical and sexual violence is common in situations of trafficking (Baldwin et al., 2015). Those who experience cyber abuse have experienced depression, confusion, guilt, and shame, and have also self-harmed (Mishna et al., 2009). Victims of cult involvement experience physiological difficulties along with physical and psychological repercussions (Ward, 2011). Older adults involved in financial scams experience shame, embarrassment, shock, anger, worry and stress, fear, or that they had been mentally violated (Whitty & Buchanan, 2016). Some older adults even experience feeling as if they have been sexually abused if they engaged in cybersex or expressed symptoms of PTSD (Whitty & Buchanan, 2016). Devastation at the loss of the perceived romantic relationship with the perpetrator was also expressed (Whitty & Buchanan, 2016).

Victims of sexual predation may experience a disruption in the parent-child relationship and fear disclosing the abuse due to feelings of shame or fear of potential consequences suggested by the perpetrator (Olson et al., 2007). Perpetrators may further erode an already damaged relationship between parent and child (Olson et al., 2007). This is also true for online sexual predation

victims, where shame and guilt, and the belief that their parents would hate them or severely punish them if they found out about the activities all inhibited disclosure (Mishna et al., 2009).

Isolation from family and friends serves as both a grooming tactic to target and control victims, and as a negative effect of engaging with the perpetrator. Withdrawal from peers and family is evident in cases of online sexual abuse (Mishna et al., 2009). Social support was often withheld from important people like family, friends, and work colleagues (Whitty & Buchanan, 2016). Victims felt they were changed personally and socially for the worse, losing trust in others and feeling less inclined to be social (Whitty & Buchanan, 2016).

In cases of financial abuse of older adults, there is a clear loss of financial assets (MetLife, 2011; Whitty & Buchanan, 2016). Victims lose varying amounts of money, but some were affected greatly even by small losses due to already strained financial standing (Whitty & Buchanan, 2016).

8. Factors that Put Individuals at Risk

There are various factors that put victims at risk for experiencing predatory alienation. For youth and young adults, experiencing childhood or adolescent adversity, or significant emotional or psychological challenges contributes to overall risk. Witnessing and experiencing violence first hand and risk-taking are also indicators of risk. Various demographic characteristics were also identified as increasing risk of falling victim to predatory alienation. For older adults, physical and cognitive functioning, demographic characteristics, as well as social realities associated with older age may signal increased risk of predatory alienation.

Youth and young adults are particularly vulnerable to predatory alienation when experiencing some form of childhood or adolescent adversity. Dysfunctional family relationships, fragile parental relationships, or alienation from family are common among gang-involved youth, and victims of sexual predation and abuse and online abuse (Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014; Merrin et al., 2015; Mishna et al., 2009). Family disruption in the form of divorce, never married parents, or deceased parents are also risk factors (Simi et al., 2016). High amounts of conflict and low amounts of communication between parent and child also increase vulnerability of potential victims (Wolak et al., 2003). Lack of parental supervision, support and involvement, as well as weak attachment can increase the risk of sexual predation (Kenny & Wurtele, 2012).

Risk taking behaviors such as abuse of alcohol or drugs are also indicators of risk for victims of trafficking, cyber abuse, as well as extremist groups (Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014; Mishna et al., 2009; Simi et al., 2016). School problems and delinquency are also experiences associated with victimization in situations of gang-involvement, cyber abuse, and involvement in extremist groups (Merrin et al., 2015; Mishna et al., 2009; Simi et al., 2016; Wolak et al., 2003).

Witnessing and experiencing violence and neglect were also identified as risk factors for youth and young adults. Witnessing serious violence has been identified as a risk factor for victims of extremist group recruitment (Simi et al., 2016). Childhood neglect and abuse in physical and sexual forms contribute to the vulnerability of victims of trafficking and recruitment into extremist groups as well (Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014; Simi et al., 2016).

Victims facing significant emotional or psychological challenges may also be at increased risk to predatory behaviors (Mishna et al., 2009). Self-harm was identified as a risk factor for trafficked youth (Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014). Victims of cyber abuse were found to be highly troubled and also had depression (Wolak et al., 2003). Depression and suicidal ideation were found to be predictive of gang involvement (Merrin et al., 2015). Suicidal ideation, attempted suicide, and general mental health problems were associated with involvement in extremist groups (Simi et al., 2016). Individuals with an intellectual disability have also been targeted by traffickers while leaving home or waiting for the school bus, and more easily manipulated due to their disability (Reid, 2016).

Demographics such as age, sex, race and ethnicity may also contribute to risk. Youth who are naïve to potential abuse may engage in actions without understanding the situation or how to stop the abuse, particularly when it comes from a trusted adult (Olson et al., 2007). Other demographics such as identifying as a racial or ethnic minority, or being male, have also shown to increase vulnerability to gang involvement (Merrin et al., 2015).

Risk factors for older adults are also of note. Overall wellness and functioning contribute to the vulnerability of older adults to exploitation and scams. Mental state and cognitive function, in particular, have been found to have an effect on this group. Lower levels of cognitive function in general, or related to dementia or intellectual disability have been cited as increasing vulnerability (James, Boyle, Bennett, 2014; MetLife, 2011; Pesiah et al., 2009). Lower levels of psychological well-being are also associated with vulnerability to exploitation (James, Boyle, Bennett, 2014). Mental health disorders were also found to be possible risk factors for susceptibility to undue influence in older adults (Pesiah et al., 2009). Substance abuse may also contribute due to its ability to affect a victim’s cognitive state (Pesiah et al., 2009). A victim’s physical and/or psychological dependence on a caregiver has also been linked to vulnerability (Pesiah et al., 2009). Physical impairment, such as physical disability, or vision, hearing, and mobility impairment, may also put an older adult at risk of victimization (MetLife, 2011; Pesiah et al., 2009). Illness has also been identified as increasing vulnerability due to regression and dependency of the older adult in that state (Pesiah et al., 2009).

Demographics also contribute to vulnerability. One study found that women were almost two times as likely to be victims as men (MetLife, 2011). In another study, age was identified as a stand-alone factor contributing to risk for older adults, with the “oldest old” demonstrating increased vulnerability to exploitation (James, Boyle, & Bennett, 2014).

Some have suggested that the trusting nature of older adults places them at increased risk for exploitation (MetLife, 2011). Low levels of financial literacy are also associated with abuse of older adults (James, Boyle, & Bennett, 2014). Living alone and loneliness have also been associated with vulnerability, as older adults in this situation are increasingly isolated, and may also require assistance with care, opening the door for potential exploitation by those contracted to provide that care (MetLife, 2011; Pesiah et al., 2009). Some older adults become susceptible to exploitation via family conflict where a person of influence, typically a child, brings the older adult into the conflict for their personal gain (Pesiah et al., 2009). Exploitation via family

members increases during the holidays, highlighting time of year as contributing to risk for older adults (Pesiah et al., 2009).

9. Strategies for Protection Against Predatory Alienation

Specific prevention and protection strategies have been identified for youth and young adults, as well as for older adults. Online and on the ground outreach and training for parents and educational institutions are key focuses in the literature in protecting youth and young adults. Training for professionals working with youth has also been identified as a key way to identify potentially abusive situations in organizational settings (Kenny & Wurtele, 2012). Healthy relationship education and fostering supportive environments for youth and young adults have also been identified as ways for lowering risk. For older adults, psychological intervention, financial literacy training, and increased public awareness and collaboration are seen as ways to intervene and prevent victimization.

There are various suggested prevention and intervention strategies for youth and young adults at risk of being exploited. Where the Internet is used, anonymous counseling has been identified as a requested resource for those who have experienced cyber abuse (Mishna et al., 2009). Parent/teacher awareness, monitoring, and early intervention have been suggested as important in combatting extremist group recruitment through the Internet (Morris, 2016). Collaboration between social media platforms, governments, law enforcement and NGOs to develop tools to remove dangerous content, and the work of search engines to highlight counter messaging and remove illegal extremist content are mentioned as important in preventing recruitment in this area (Morris, 2016). It was also recommended that education and community engagement occur so that an understanding of online trends and technology used to target and exploit potential victims is more easily identified and counteracted (Morris, 2016). Online safety curriculums may also be adapted to include information about extremist content, and critical thinking skills should be taught so youth are able to effectively evaluate the information they come across (Morris, 2016).

Healthy relationship education was also a primary focus in the literature, with one study reporting that teens who participated in relationship training learned skills that would aid them in developing healthier relationships with peers, family, dating partners and themselves (Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014). These teens learned: 1) about the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships; 2) how to set boundaries in relationships; and 3) what to do and how to get help for themselves or someone else if in an abusive relationship or if trafficked (Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014). Participants in this particular intervention also reported decreased involvement in commercial sex activities, as well as a lower likelihood of becoming involved in trafficking (Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014). These types of interventions are also suggested for their potential to expose traffickers' grooming tactics and potentially prevent manipulation of adolescents in sexually exploitative relationships (Reid, 2016). In relation to cults or extremist religious groups, teaching about healthy versus unhealthy spiritual leadership may also be protective against recruitment into these groups (Ward, 2011).

Potential protective factors from predatory behaviors included having a functional home environment, adult support in the community, and perceived neighborhood safety, as these were

factors that aided youth in avoiding gang membership (Merrin et al., 2015). The home environment is also important in protecting youth from falling victim to sexual predation. Protective factors against sexual predation include: making sure parents provide supervision of their children in the home and on the Internet, that parents are involved in their children’s lives, have open lines of communication, provide social support, and have appropriate boundaries (Kenny & Wurtele, 2012). As such, interventions focused on fostering this environment may be helpful in reducing exploitation of youth and young adults.

For older adults, early psychological intervention was suggested as a way to help victims recover from instances of exploitation and to help prevent additional waves of the scam (Whitty & Buchanan, 2016). Financial and health literacy interventions were also suggested as ways to decrease susceptibility to exploitation and scams (James, Boyle, & Bennett, 2014). The idea was that by increasing awareness of financial concepts and how financial and health care institutions work, older adults would be less likely to believe false information presented to them by a perpetrator (James, Boyle, & Bennett, 2014). Increasing public awareness through educational materials has also been suggested as a mode of preventing of the financial exploitation of older adults (Brown, 2012). Collaboration between social services, law enforcement, and banks was also encouraged as a way to screen for and report exploitation more effectively (Brown, 2012). In this vein, local initiatives involving multidisciplinary groups that meet to discuss and resolve cases of abuse involving older adults have been formed, and federal level grants have been made to encourage this collaboration (Brown, 2012).

Results – Stakeholder Interviews

Results are presented using data from the stakeholder interviews. Participants were first asked a series of questions regarding their demographic information (see Table 1). There were slightly more male participants than female participants and the majority of participants (86.4%) identified as White. Participants also identified as Black (9.1%) or Hispanic (4.5%).

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Demographic Variable	Interview Participants (n=22) %	
Gender		
	Male	59.1
	Female	40.9
Race/Ethnicity		
	White	86.4
	Black/African-American	9.1
	Hispanic/Latino	4.5

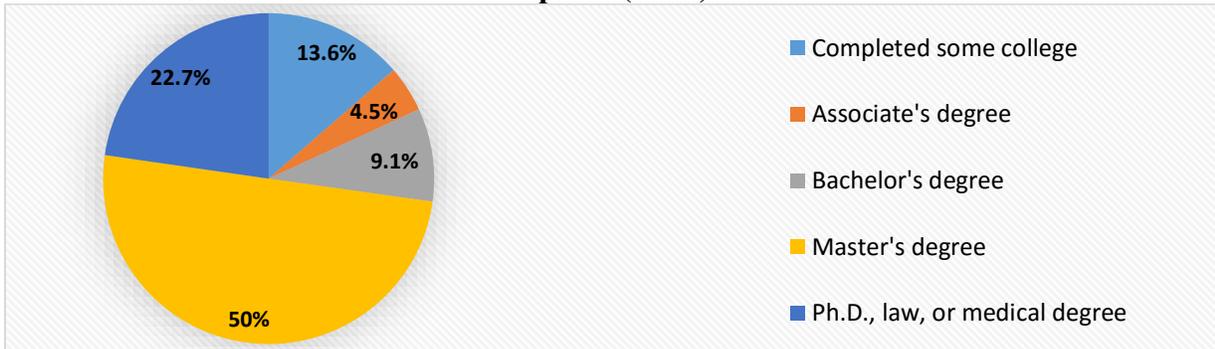
Stakeholders were asked to identify their age by selecting one of five age ranges (see Chart 1). No participants were in the 21 to 30-year age range. About 9.1% of participants were between the ages of 31 and 40, 31.8% were between the ages of 41 and 50, 22.7% were between the ages of 51 and 60, and 36.4% were 60 and older.

Chart 1. Age of Interview Participants (n=22)



Half of the participants had a Master’s degree, 18.2% had a Ph.D., law, or medical degree, 9.1% had a Bachelor’s degree, and 4.5% had an Associate’s degree. Another 13.6% of participants indicated that they had completed some college (see Chart 2).

Chart 2. Education of Interview Participants (n=22)



Participants were also asked about their professional position and field of current employment (see Table 2). These positions included law enforcement and legal services (40.9%) and service providers (59.1%). Law enforcement and legal services included positions such as prosecutors, investigators, and lawyers serving in administrative roles. Service providers included direct service providers, expert consultants, and advocates. Most of the participants worked in a nonspecific field with multiple populations (27.3%). Participants also worked in the fields of trafficking and sexual abuse (22.7%), gangs (18.2%), elder abuse (13.6%), domestic violence (9.1%), and cults (9.1%).

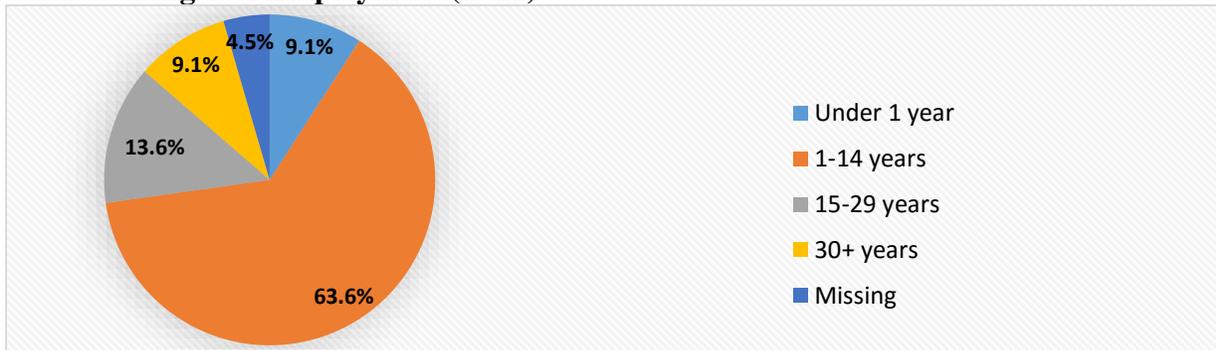
Table 2. Participant Employment

Variable	Interview Participants (n=22) %
Position	
Law enforcement and legal	40.9%
Service providers	59.1%
Field	
Nonspecific	27.3%
Elder abuse	13.6%
Trafficking/sexual abuse	22.7%

	Domestic violence	9.1%
	Gangs	18.2%
	Cults	9.1%

The majority of participants had been in their current position between 1 and 14 years (63.6%). Other participants had been in their professional positions less than a year (9.1%), between 15 to 29 years (13.6%), and over 30 years (9.1%). The one missing response was from a retired participant who did not indicate his former professional role or length of employment (4.5%) (see Chart 3).

Chart 3. Length of Employment (n=22)



Participants were then asked a series of questions as outlined by the Act including:

- 1) What is predatory alienation?
- 2) How do online perpetrators, human traffickers, con artists, gangs, cults, and other groups use predatory alienation to isolate young adults and senior citizens from their family and friends?
- 3) What are the grooming practices used to target and control young adults and older adults?
- 4) What are the high pressure tactics used in scams and exploitative relationships to manipulate, control, and take advantage of older adults?
- 5) Why are young adults and older adults particularly vulnerable to predatory alienation?
- 6) What can young adults and older adults do to protect themselves from predatory alienation?

These questions were addressed through direct feedback from the interview participants. To frame these questions, we also asked questions about their roles and the particular populations that they served.

Three main themes were derived from the interviews: 1) Naming the Concept; 2) Victim Risk Factors and Vulnerabilities; and 3) Predatory Patterns and Tactics. Each theme includes subthemes that expand on the topics that emerged from the data to thoroughly address each research question. Participant identities are confidential. However, their job position and title may be included to understand context. Whenever possible, direct quotations from the interviews are included.

1. Naming the Concept

In order to understand the research question: *What is predatory alienation?* we asked participants to identify and define all terms they use in their own work that describe phenomena that are similar to predatory alienation. Although participants were not asked if they had heard or were familiar with the term, “predatory alienation,” roughly a third of them mentioned that they had never heard the term before. Seventeen terms resulted from this, as seen in Table 1. The use of certain terms seemed to vary by field of work or position of the participant. For example, the term coercive control was used by participants who had experience working with survivors of domestic violence and the term cultic influence was used by individuals who work with or advocate on behalf of survivors of cults.

Table 1. Similar Terms Identified

Term	Times Used
Coercive control	3
Grooming	3
Coercive persuasion	3
Undue influence	3
Mind control	2
Brainwashing	2
Predatory	2
Purposeful isolation	1
Sexual exploitation	1
Psychological manipulation	1
Emotional abuse	1
Membership	1
Manipulation	1
Coercion	1
Cultic influence	1
One-on-one cult	1
Coercive isolation	1

2. Risk Factors and Vulnerabilities

Participants were also asked to characterize the ways in which young adults and older adults may be vulnerable to predatory alienation. Participants commonly identified low family involvement, lack of support systems, loneliness, and social isolation as risk factors among both young adults and older adults. Among youth, single parent homes or living with grandparents was viewed as a risk factor. Loneliness was identified by participants as occurring more frequently among older adults. The following are direct responses from participants:

It's about family structure. If they don't get love and attention from their family, that's when they look for attention elsewhere. (Criminal Justice System/Gangs A)

They are lured in and don't really have support systems. (Service Provider/Trafficking A)

I find that's there is very little family involvement at all anymore. (Service Provider/Older Adults A)

It seems like the traffickers are specifically looking for the children saying on social media "I'm sad today, I'm lonely, I don't have any friends, my family isn't paying attention to me." (Criminal Justice System/Trafficking A)

The desire to be a part of a group and the need for companionship or love was also identified as a risk factor:

I think the kids signal that they want to be a part of something. They want to play with other kids. That dynamic is wired into their psyche. When you're in college, you want to be involved. It's always the same. I think these perpetrators just key in on this dynamic and some kids are more susceptible because they have a greater desire to belong. Some kids may have the tools necessary to resist it such as strong family, strong religion, stronger friends and values. Some kids have absolutely nothing and any group is better than no group. Any attention is better than no attention. They just want to belong and depending on where they are at, they are going to join. (Criminal Justice System/Gangs B)

They have reached a point where they crave companionship and need other people. They have to trust somebody and they wind up trusting the wrong person. (Criminal Justice System/Older Adults A)

Other participants noted that while isolation is a risk factor, there are particular scenarios that may lead to further social isolation. Cultural differences, especially language differences and legal status, could make an individual vulnerable to predation. Technology was also described for its separation from an individual's proximal relationships with the potential for connection to distant predators.

Cultural differences, disabilities, lack of English proficiency, anything that keeps them isolated or in a closed community. (Service Provider/Domestic Violence A)

I think about online child exploitation. Technology is rapidly changing all the time. Now there are apps, they can communicate through games, they are hard to trace and tap into. If you are a perpetrator and you can come into contact with a kid, the kid is already isolated. (Criminal Justice System/Trafficking B)

Lack of education was another common risk factor listed. Lack of education could include a lack of awareness about predatory behaviors or educational disparity. Several participants mentioned educational disparity as a problem in low-income neighborhoods. Additionally, one participant, who works as a service provider for trafficked youth, noted that youths who qualify for

Individual Education Plans (IEPs) were at risk reflecting the youths' learning difficulties or other qualifying needs for special services.

Substance abuse and previous trauma, including domestic violence, sexual violence, and child abuse, were identified as risk factors. A few participants identified unresolved trauma as a particular vulnerability:

...delays due to trauma in their childhood including sexual violence, community violence, and family violence. A lot of the service providers diagnose them with things that have nothing to do with trauma. Some of them don't even screen them for PTSD. That's a huge stumbling block. If they're labeled with ODD and not labeled with a trauma disorder, it's often made to feel like it's their fault when they get taken advantage of or trafficked. A good portion of them have untreated trauma. (Service Provider/Trafficking B)

Individuals who have experienced previous violence who haven't processed their trauma [are vulnerable]. If they know that's their vulnerability, perpetrators use that as a way to groom them. Individuals who have previous childhood trauma – having access to trauma informed care is important. (Service Provider/Trafficking C)

Many participants identified lack of basic needs, lack of options, and lack of resources as increasing vulnerability for victimization. In particular, limited or deficient resources were defined as financial resources and options for community support.

I look at where they are in their hierarchy of needs. Some kids are at that very bottom level where they are just trying to survive. Kids at that level are easy prey. (Criminal Justice System/Gangs B)

It comes down to options - people have limited options. How educated they are, what kind of family support, do they have financial options. (Criminal Justice System/Trafficking B)

In regards to age, older adults were perceived to be trusting and gullible, and more vulnerable if they had higher levels of dependency, lower levels of cognitive functioning, and less mobility. Risk factors facing older adults included health concerns, cognitive impairments, dementia, compromised decision making abilities, grief, loss, access to financial resources, and lack of technological skills. These risk factors were identified for both elders in the community and those in institutional settings. However, one participant noted that those in the community may face more isolation.

With older adults is the level of dependency on the caretaker. Could be physical, could be mental deterioration such as dementia or Alzheimer's, could be a lack of technological knowledge. It's easier to disconnect them from other people. People with more money or resources can be more vulnerable. . . They capitalize on vulnerability in mental capacity, dementia, or forgetfulness. Likely the victim has not been exposed to information about the scams because they may be naturally isolated from people overall. (Service Provider/Domestic Violence A)

Health concerns, lack of resiliency, lack of supports. Perpetrators prey on forgetfulness. Skepticism diminishes with age. A lot of has to do with mobility. If they can get around on their own, they are better able to resist. (Service Provider/Older Adults B)

Youth and young adults were reported as being more vulnerable to victimization due to their lack of cognitive and emotional maturity and their exposure to social media and the Internet. Youth with developmental delays and cognitive impairments were also identified as being at increased risk.

The kids are left a lot to their own devices. They don't have the maturity or cognitive ability to cope. (Service Provider/Trafficking B)

The young people are vulnerable because they don't have enough life experience. It's the innocence of youth. They haven't learned to put up their guard because nobody should have to learn that. They haven't been able to build their defenses. (Criminal Justice System A)

It's hard to answer this because there are some commonalities but I also think because of social media any child is vulnerable to being a victim. Now with social media, the access to our children has grown exponentially, that unless we specifically instruct our children, any of them can be vulnerable to it. (Criminal Justice System/Trafficking A)

Individuals who worked with cults identified transition periods as a risk factor. Transition periods were defined as any period of change in someone's life such as going off to college, the loss of a loved one, moving, experiencing a decline in cognitive abilities, or the desire to seek meaning in life.

People who are going through transitions or setbacks. When someone has experienced a setback in life which was taken as a blow to their self-esteem, it leaves them feeling depleted, dysphoric, and depressed . . . So the vulnerability is somewhat transit. It can be when people lose a job, fail out of school, moving. Part of it is developmental, they are searching and learning about one's self. (Service Provider/Cults A)

All of the victims are in transition. However, we're almost always in transition. The transition period that everyone goes through is late adolescence. Young adults are particularly vulnerable. Older people also experience diminished capacity. (Service Provider/Cults B)

One participant emphasized that *anyone* can be at risk, even if there are none of the telltale risk factors.

Everyone is at risk because we all become vulnerable at times in our life. Any time in a period of transition, young adults going to college, widower, your world is changed and you're seeking meaning and new friendship. Anyone is at risk at any point in time. (Service Provider/Cults A)

There were also a number of risk factors that were particular to gangs. Participants identified neighborhood, existing family involvement in gangs, and the need for protection as risk factors to joining a gang.

There are certain kids living in certain areas who don't have protection unless they join a gang. Traditionally, it seems like a majority of them come from a single parent home, or they are raised by their grandparents. There's often drug addicted mothers and a father is incarcerated. Their uncle or father might be in the gang and they're brought in that way. (Criminal Justice System/Gangs C)

3. Predatory Patterns and Tactics

Participants were also asked to identify predatory patterns and tactics used by perpetrators. Responses could be grouped into several subthemes including: 1) Dynamics; 2) Grooming Tactics; 3) Isolation Tactics; 4) Abuse and Threats; and 5) High-Pressure Tactics.

1) Dynamics. Many participants described the dynamics of perpetration. They discussed how perpetration occurs over time and space as do the dynamics of recruitment and psychological coercion. Participants also highlighted how perpetration dynamics might vary and depend on whether an individual or a group of perpetrators is attempting to lure a victim.

Participants noted that perpetration usually takes place over time in which the perpetrator grooms and isolates the victim. This can occur over a week or months and is in contrast to a one-time crime that is committed in a single incident. Financial scams may be short or quick and take place at one time or take place over time.

Participants also discussed the spaces in which perpetration occurs. The places where perpetrators recruit victims depend on the motive of their crime and the individuals being targeted. For example, perpetrators may use the Internet, chat rooms, social media and gaming platforms to find youth and young adults in cases of trafficking, gangs, and child sex abuse. In person, perpetrators may go to senior centers or find vulnerable youth on the streets. Cults may recruit on college campuses. Perpetrators using technology as a means for recruitment may continue to use that medium while building up the relationship and eventually convince the victim to meet in person. Additionally, the Internet serves as a way to sell the individual in cases of sex trafficking.

The ability of perpetrators to maintain control over a victim, even in the absence of physical restraint, was discussed by some participants.

A lot of them [victims] are “compliant”. They are not really compliant because they don't have physical chains on them but there are psychological chains on them in order to maintain control and compliance from the victim. (Criminal Justice System/Trafficking A)

The unique characteristic is that they cross social space. Coercive control is control without physical boundaries. A major mechanism that is carried out is stalking and surveillance. (Service Provider/Domestic Violence B)

Participants also mentioned that predatory behaviors can occur within a group of varying sizes or in a one-on-one relationship. For example, gangs and cults involve a group dynamic. These relationships may be initiated with a one-on-one dynamic that facilitates a victim being brought into a group dynamic at a later time.

2) Grooming Tactics. Grooming tactics were identified as the ways a perpetrator gains the victim's trust and establishes a relationship. Participants described a process where the perpetrator fulfills a need for the victim – such as providing love, completing errands, providing basic needs like food, or even by serving as a replacement family (See Table 2). The most common way perpetrators achieved this was through what several participants called “love bombing.” This tactic involves bestowing a wealth of compliments, affection, and gifts upon a victim to make them feel special. For older adults, perpetrators may run errands for them or complete tasks they cannot do themselves. Several participants described these processes:

Perpetrators use that and the technology to groom them and make them feel special, focus on them and make them feel important. (Service Provider/Domestic Violence A)

...the “Romeo” trafficker which seduces the child themselves or through this female to convince them they are in legitimate relationship and they will give them care and love that they don't get from their family. Initially, they will give them clothes, food, a place to stay, get their nails done. (Criminal Justice System/Trafficking A)

He would bring her groceries, he would stop by and see her after work... he would cut the lawn for her. He would do a lot of things that she needed to do that she couldn't do herself. And really didn't have the wherewithal to make the arrangements to have these things done. He started filling a lot of those gaps in her life. (Service Provider/Older Adults A)

A common predation theme that emerged was the incremental escalation of exploitation. This includes exposing the victim to lesser forms of exploitation and gradually increasing the severity of the exploitation so that the victim becomes desensitized.

The foot in the door technique - "would you contribute to our charity?" Once they get you committed to even a small donation, they do a love bombing and say "we know you are good and we can count on you." (Criminal Justice System B)

There is always an escalation of violence. They start them out with small crimes like robbery, then selling drugs, and eventually shootings. (Criminal Justice System/Gangs C)

Participants discussed how perpetrators reframe victims' past experiences or interrupt their belief system.

The common one is to criticize or upset or destroy the existing belief system of the victim. On a personal basis, it may be something like "why didn't your parents send you to a better college? They don't want you to succeed." Another case was the perp telling the victim "your mother is going to destroy you, she's in competition with you and your father is colluding with her. Move in with us and we'll treat you right." It's by destroying connections with people they love, alienating someone from their belief system (religious or social beliefs), use of guilt - "if you were really sincere in your beliefs, you wouldn't do that". (Service Provider/Cults A)

Table 2. Grooming Tactics

Tactic	Example
Romancing or “love bombing”	Act as their significant other, show them excessive love or flattery
Fulfilling needs	Look for the thing that is “missing” in the victim’s life and provide it – i.e. caretaker, food, place to live, money
Replacement family	Convince the victim that they are their family, this is especially important among gangs
Establishing trust	Trust is built by using the tactics in this table along with continually being there for them over time
Gifts or bribes	Give victims gifts such as drugs and alcohol, clothes, or money
Saviors	Convince victims that they have “saved” them and they are the only one who will care for them
Incremental escalation	Slowly desensitize the victim by increasing the severity and frequency of exploitative acts over time
Reframing experiences and understanding of self	Reframe the way the victim sees themselves and their family
Appealing to emotion	Appeal to emotion rather than reason

3) Isolation Tactics. As grooming occurs, perpetrators will simultaneously begin to isolate victims from their support systems as a way to increase dependency of the victim on the perpetrator. There are various tactics used to achieve isolation (See Table 3). Isolation serves to entrap the victim in the relationship, stopping them from leaving the perpetrator. Pre-existing isolation may make a victim more vulnerable to predatory behaviors, and perpetrators may use this to their advantage when seeking to further isolate a victim from their support systems.

Table 3. Isolation Tactics

Tactic	Example
Control phone use	Restrict access to cell phone, take cell phone away
Control the places they go	Restrict them from going certain places, make the victim ask to go places, serve as their mode of transportation
Taking up their time	Take up their time whether that be by maintaining constant contact through technological means or by in person contact

Controlling and restricting access to basic needs	Restrict and monitor access to money, restrict access to basic survival needs such as food, water, medication
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4) Abuse and Threats. Perpetrators will use threats or abuse to keep the victim fearful and compliant (See Table 4).

Table 4. Abuse or Threats

Tactic	Example
Physical or sexual violence or threats	Physical acts to cause injury such as punching, hitting, or other acts; forced sexual interaction, sexual coercion or assault; or threats of such acts
Degradation	Make verbal insults or negative comments to negatively affect the victim’s self-esteem
Threats to family	Threaten to injure members of the victim’s family; show the victim proof that they know where their family lives
Blackmail	Threaten to show photos of a sexual nature or threaten to share evidence of crimes committed by the victim
Stalking and surveillance	Monitor the victim by following them or by looking through their phone
Threats to self	Threaten to physically harm self or threaten to leave the victim as a way to maintain compliance

5) High-Pressure Tactics. Perpetrators who engage in one-time or short-term financial scams may use high-pressure tactics to gain compliance from the victim quickly (See Table 5). These scams often take place over the telephone.

Table 5. High-Pressure Tactics

Tactic	Example
Urgency	Create a sense of urgency, “you must do this now!”
Changing numbers and repeat calls	Attempt to call from different numbers, call several times a day
Threats from authority	Threaten that the IRS will pursue the victim, or that a family member is in jail and will stay there if victim doesn’t send money

Implications and Recommendations

The goal of this study was to explore the nature of predatory alienation and its effects on young adults and older adults. Through two phases of research, a comprehensive literature review of the practices targeting young adults and older adults was completed and in-depth interviews were finalized with twenty-two key stakeholders responding to predatory alienation with diverse expertise. Based on the syntheses of the results from these two phases along with feedback from direct questioning of key stakeholders’ own recommendations, below are several recommendations for advancing policies, practices, and research in New Jersey. The suggestions of all study participants were considered, reflecting the expertise of diverse professionals ranging from domestic violence to cults, with practices ranging from service to criminal justice.

Additionally, we conducted post-analysis feedback interviews with five participants, carefully chosen to represent the varying areas of expertise in order to gather impressions of these recommendations. Post-analysis interview data have been considered and incorporated where applicable. We present six recommendations by first describing the suggestions made by stakeholders and then summarizing these potential future directions.

Recommendation 1: Build and Maximize Collaboration

Several participants mentioned collaboration as a strength of current policy and a recommendation for future development. Participants who work with older adults, young sex abuse survivors, and trafficking survivors noted that there is currently a trend toward collaboration that has strengthened various systems' responses. For example, elder abuse and trafficking task forces have been created for key stakeholders in fields such as law enforcement, investigation and protection, service providers, content experts, and advocates for the purpose of collaboration. Other examples of collaboration observed in New Jersey and throughout the United States are Family Justice Centers and Child Advocacy Centers, which bring together a multidisciplinary group of professionals in order to provide a "one-stop shop" for serving victims. We recommend fostering these types of collaborations within individual systems.

However, cross-systems collaboration may be another approach to consider. Domestic Violence Liaisons are an example of how to bridge systems. Domestic Violence Liaisons achieve collaboration by having knowledge and skills to interface with both the domestic violence and child welfare systems. The research VAWC completed on predatory alienation demonstrates that the process of isolating individuals for the purpose of exploitation may be similar for many types of victims who have varying experiences of exploitation or abuse. As such, collaboration between systems focusing on issues of domestic violence, trafficking, other forms of sexual exploitation, gangs, and cults may be beneficial. A cross-systems approach may not be the standard practice, and it may be difficult to accomplish, but it may be a prime area for developing innovative strategies. One participant reflected on this potential barrier stating that a cross-systems collaboration approach is challenging to conceive, particularly when collaboration within individual systems is already difficult to achieve. We recognize the potential for challenges and we recommend further discussion and exploration about how individual (i.e. within a system) and cross system (i.e. between systems) collaborations can be developed and implemented to improve community responses. The social problems described in this study are issues where similar symptoms lead to disparate forms of victimization often requiring the response of parallel groups of professionals.

Law enforcement professionals focusing on gangs noted the need for collaboration between social service providers and law enforcement, or between different law enforcement units. For example, law enforcement officers who work in the area of sexual violence need to collaborate with law enforcement officers who work in the area of trafficking and organized crime because of the overlap between the two areas. Similarly, law enforcement officers who work with gangs should collaborate with those working the narcotics unit due to the overlap of gangs and drugs. Other participants discussed how identification of victims might be improved through collaboration between law enforcement units, social services, and the community. Based on this feedback, we recommend an approach fostering collaboration between different specialties of the

same field, such as in law enforcement where the sex crime unit might interact with the organized crime unit. We also recommend a strong collaboration between service providers and law enforcement so that law enforcement can understand what services are available and make appropriate referrals, and receive training from service providers on how to properly identify victims. For example, human trafficking service providers in New Jersey continually provide training for law enforcement to properly identify victims of trafficking so they are not mistaken as perpetrators.

Recommendation 2: Promote Public Awareness and Education

Almost every participant discussed the need for expanded public awareness and education on predatory behaviors and exploitative relationships. Participants discussed the need for ongoing education campaigns that could be conducted in schools, college campuses, community centers, and retirement homes. They also expressed the need for training and awareness campaigns for first responders, the general public, law enforcement, social services, teachers, and others.

I think that the best way to do it is education, awareness, and training so the person begins to understand that they are a victim, they can self-report, and they can bring it to someone's attention. There's been a huge effort since 2005 to raise awareness in all sectors including health care workers, taxi or limo drivers, hotel/motel staff, schools – people who may come in contact, other than law enforcement – DCP&P and child services, court system. We have to educate and train which raises awareness of the issue and then we can begin to identify. (Criminal Justice System/Trafficking A)

In an effort to maximize existing resources, rather than creating new education or awareness campaigns, we recommend strengthening current campaigns on trafficking, gangs, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, elder abuse, or others to include more general language that names the problem of victimization with common language and emphasizes the overlap in coercive and exploitative tactics. Leveraging existing efforts, we recommend public awareness and education should include:

- a) Education about healthy relationships versus exploitative, manipulative, or coercive relationships
- b) Bystander and family education about recognizing risks and signs of victimization (See Table 6)
- c) Training for first responders, police, and service providers at all levels to recognize signs of victimization and take a trauma-informed approach in engaging victims
- d) Promoting public awareness about available services and what they do

These campaigns may achieve the most impact by tailoring their efforts to their target demographic. For example, for the younger demographic, consideration should be given to places youth frequent and media commonly engaged such as schools, social media, or other online platforms such as YouTube. One suggestion provided by a participant was to consider using an anonymous online chatroom where youth can ask questions and receive referrals. Campaigns for older adults could focus on advertisements in senior centers, nursing homes, retirement communities, or banks. Understanding the differences between community-based

public awareness campaigns and institutional-based campaigns is critical in reaching the most vulnerable older adults.

Table 6. Signs of Victimization

Sign	Example
Change in affect/behavior	Normally warm and friendly, now standoffish and cold
Physical signs of abuse	Visible signs of bruising; tears from sexual assault
Physical signs of neglect	Bed sores, weight loss, skin break down (older adults)
Other signs of neglect	Bills not paid, no running water or clean clothes, lack of proper nutrition (older adults)
Isolation	Lack of support systems, lack of communication with family and friends, withdrawn, alone, excessive time on the internet or phone
Fearful	Hesitant to ask for help, fearful of authorities, fearful of reporting
Depressed mood	Appearing down or sad
Financial irregularities	Banks or others may notice irregularities in bank statements or financial documents, large purchases that are not characteristic
Humiliation or shame	Embarrassed about being a victim; don't want to be seen as stupid
Change in job, school, interests	Stop participating in activities, drop out of school, quit a job
Cannot leave perpetrator	Feel trapped, fearful of leaving, dependent on perpetrator
Signs of being controlled	May not be allowed to speak to family or friends on the phone, perpetrator may insist on speaking for the victim
New friend or lover	New friend or lover that is taking up all of victim's time
Tattoo or brand	Especially in trafficking, victim may have a tattoo or a brand to identify them as "property" of the trafficker
Recruiting others	Victims may begin to recruit others for the perpetrator to exploit

Recommendation 3: Use a Trauma-Informed Approach

Many participants discussed the need for trauma-informed care at all levels, including law enforcement, social services, the legal system, and community services. Participants also discussed the need to have better prevention efforts and better systems to identify and address trauma. One participant shared:

We go back to trauma. Prevention of trauma, effective intervention when there is trauma so there's some resolution, strengthening family units to reduce vulnerability to being disconnected from their family . . . Education about the risks, strengthening the ability to talk to people about what's happening. Help people identify risk factors when they are happening. It's about that strong social fabric, the protective resources that people have, and the recognition that there are points in people's lives when they are more vulnerable and being able to recognize this to avoid getting caught in perpetrator traps. The prevention of bullying, of DV, sexual assault, bullying - they are so common because it involves vulnerabilities, the more we can strengthen individuals, the less likely it is that they will be vulnerable. (Service Provider/Domestic Violence A)

As victimization often includes the loss of autonomy due to dependence on a perpetrator, victim advocates, social workers, and other service providers should be trained and remain mindful of the goal for helping a victim regain autonomy while professionally avoiding any interactions that mirror the perpetrator’s control. Empathic and respectful service provision will help to establish a strong and trusting relationship between the service provider and the victim.

Additionally, it is important that services are culturally appropriate. It will be more difficult to establish trust with undocumented victims and/or victims who speak a foreign language. Having interpreters available or staff onsite who speak a victim’s native language could promote rapport building and the establishment of trust.

Trauma is often a risk factor for victimization and the victimization itself comes with associated trauma. As such, we recommend a trauma-informed approach at all levels of care. This includes using language that is understandable to the victim and does not result in further shame or embarrassment. To have the most influence, a trauma-informed approach should pervade all service delivery positions where a professional interacts with a victim, particularly those professionals working in law enforcement or other first responder roles.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) identifies a trauma-informed organization, program, or system that: “realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and seeks to actively prevent re-traumatization” (Administration for Children & Families).

Recommendation 4: Expand Resources and Services

Many participants identified the need to expand resources and services as a necessary improvement. This includes financial resources, access to services, awareness of existing services, additional community outreach, and better long-term care. Participants gave these specific recommendations on improving service provision:

Part of it is a lack of services for victims. We have [trafficking agency] but we don’t have enough in place for long-term services. (Criminal Justice System/Trafficking A)

Organizations are not always out there in terms of people knowing about their services, not enough public awareness or the resources available . . . Policies and procedures that enable the victim to get information about DV, then being able to make an informed decision about whether they are a victim. The safety factor in social services is missing many pieces. Once they have identified as victims, there’s a lack of resources for them to become independent. (Service Provider/Domestic Violence A)

So, really looking at a systems perspective and having them making appropriate referrals. The second is around self-identification. Helping individuals who are exiting situations and giving them access to services that are trustworthy. Building trust is very

important. That understanding of what it takes for someone to actually self-identify.
(Service Provider/Trafficking C)

Access to services and payment for services can be very tricky. There are gaps. Statewide there is an inconsistency throughout the state – there are long waiting lists. In my mind a childhood survivor of physical/sexual abuse – there should not be a wait list for that but there is. (Criminal Justice System/Sexual Abuse A)

...it doesn't appear to me that the system [of service provision] is working as well as it should be. Our initial information is that there are a lot of programs out there but they are not suited for the kids they are seeing. There is no one, cookie cutter solution for the individual, and unless you are willing to make modifications for each individual, you are going to fail. (Criminal Justice System/Gangs A)

Currently, resources and service provision for victims are specific to the type of exploitation experienced. For example, there are service systems for victims in trafficking, domestic violence, sexual violence, elder abuse, gangs, and cults. We recommend that all service providers use a common comprehensive screening and assessment tool to identify all possible types of exploitation and trauma experienced by a victim. A universal screening and assessment tool focused on exploitation and trauma could be used in places like emergency rooms, doctor's offices, clinics, religious organizations, educational systems, and law enforcement agencies. A comprehensive screening and assessment tool could then facilitate the appropriate referral for all relevant areas of need.

Most importantly, in order for expanding resources and services to be plausible and then effective, diverse and sustainable funding opportunities should be established. While initial acute or crisis type services are important, long-term services are often lacking; yet, they are critical to victims successfully re-establishing their lives.

Recommendation 5: Strengthen the Legal System, Law Enforcement, and Terminology

In this study, we found that legal definitions and responses vary by fields of focus. Thus, we have separated out the recommendation for strengthening the legal system, law enforcement and terminology by field.

We found that there exists, at both the state and federal levels, a constellation of statutes that address trafficking. The availability of several legislative policies enhances the prosecutor's ability to pursue justice for victims and accountability for perpetrators. However, the path to legal status for foreign trafficking victims remains difficult to navigate and hard to achieve. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) does not grant many T-visas and S-visas to trafficking victims. Additionally, participants in this study described a need for law enforcement to receive additional training to recognize and understand the experience of trafficked victims, as many young adults are still being viewed as prostitutes rather than victims of trafficking. In some cases, law enforcement may be viewing cases of trafficking as only a domestic dispute because they are not asking enough questions. However, with the aid of service providers, law enforcement training continues to improve throughout the state.

Participants representing cults and domestic violence victims described a lack of legal protection in cases of cultic influence and coercive control. Coercive control can be difficult to measure and there may be a lack of physical evidence if other forms of abuse (e.g., emotional, financial) were used. One participant felt the field should move away from dependence on the legal system and focus on preventative efforts. As mentioned in participant interviews, only individuals with financial resources can pursue civil legal action against cults. We recommend looking for similar policies, such as undue influence in California or the coercive control law in the United Kingdom, to examine opportunities to expand definitions or change policies to include generalized language to help these victims.

A few participants engaging in cultic advocacy and/or expertise, called for legal recourse to address cultic influence through some form of court intervention. These participants described a desire for families to have the opportunity to bring their victimized loved one to court to present evidence of victimization that would lead to the loved one being removed from the individual(s) of cultic influence. These participants described this court involvement as essential for families to achieve a period of separation between the loved one and perpetrator because cultic victims often do not self-identify as victims. Cultic victimization presents a quandary where on the one hand there is concern for protecting an individual, while on the other hand there is concern for acknowledging an individual’s capacity to make decisions and their own autonomy. The ACLU examined this issue in the 1970s as many parents were “kidnapping” their children from cult groups. The ACLU felt that, unless physical coercion or threats were used, there was no legal justification for mental incompetency hearings, conservatorships, or temporary guardianships for those who have reached the age of majority (Donohue, 1985).

Following through with this recommendation may become a slippery slope. On the one hand, families are at a loss for what to do when one member is “brainwashed” or experiences undue coercive influence in which the family member does not recognize being victimized. On the other hand, stepping in and forcing adults to leave a situation that they might have voluntarily entered into can run counter to our laws and destroy the autonomy of individual decision-making. For example, family members might see their loved one as a victim of domestic violence and coercive control; yet, the identified family member (i.e. victim) may not recognize their own victimization. Current practices include providing information and education about domestic violence and available services without “forcing” the victim to leave the relationship. Changing those practices through legal recourse may open a Pandora’s Box. Our recommendation is to further examine how best to respond legally to such problems that arise and include domestic violence and legal experts to assess the problem and determine what can be done.

In consideration of older adults, one participant working at the state level felt that fines for facilities that fail to report elder abuse are not high enough. This participant described a need for stronger accountability mechanisms to improve efforts for protecting older adults. Another participant expressed the view that criminal statutes for elder abuse are not harsh enough, as elder abuse is only considered a misdemeanor. This participant suggested that elder courts, which are currently being implemented in other states, could be helpful for New Jersey.

Finally, the term, “predatory alienation,” was often confused with the term “parental alienation” in our participant interviews. Parental alienation is a controversial term in the field of domestic violence and we think it would be better to use a consistent and established term such as coercive persuasion, undue influence, or coercive control. Many participants stressed the need to establish a term and clearly define it in order to improve victim identification. We recommend further discussion and exploration about which term to adopt.

Recommendation 6: Conduct New Research

Following completion of the literature review and stakeholder interviews, we recommend that additional research be conducted to better understand differences and similarities across the areas of victimization as well as the diversity of legal responses possible. We collected perspectives from advocates, professionals, and experts in various fields about the social problems under study. These viewpoints have provided a greater understanding of the issues surrounding victimization. Similarly, we think that research should be expanded to include victim narratives of their experiences with coercion and exploitation, especially victims who were unable to find legal recourse. Gaining the perspective of individuals who have experienced exploitation can provide a greater understanding of the predatory processes used to achieve exploitation and the potential for interventions. It is also important to study laws such as the undue influence law in California and the coercive control law in the United Kingdom to explore implementation processes and evaluate victim outcomes.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide 1

1. Participant ID Number: _____
2. Today's Date: ____ / ____ / ____
mm dd yyyy
3. Please indicate your age group:
 - 20-30
 - 31-40
 - 41-50
 - 51-60
 - 60+
4. What is your gender?
 - Female
 - Male
 - Other
5. What is your racial or ethnic background? *(please check all that apply)*
 - White
 - Black or African-American
 - Hispanic or Latino
 - American Indian/Alaska Native
 - Asian
 - Native
 - Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
 - Other (please specify): _____
6. What is your education level?
 - Completed some high school
 - High school graduate
 - Completed some college
 - Associate's degree
 - Bachelor's degree
 - Master's degree
 - Ph.D, law or medical degree
 - Other (please specify): _____
7. Where are you currently employed?
 - Department of Children and Families
 - Department of Human Services

- Law enforcement
- Prosecutor’s office
- Other (please specify): _____

8. Title/position: _____

9. How long have you worked at your current place of employment?

_____ Years or _____ Months

Recently, the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey enacted a requirement that the Departments of Children and Families and Human Services conduct a joint study and make recommendations concerning predatory alienation and its effects on young adults and senior citizens. We are conducting this interview to examine:

(1) how online predators, human traffickers, con artists, gangs, cults, and other groups use predatory alienation to isolate young adults and senior citizens from their family and friends;

(2) the grooming practices used to target and control young adults;

(3) the high pressure tactics used in scams and exploitative relationships to manipulate, control, and take advantage of senior citizens;

(4) why young adults and senior citizens are vulnerable to predatory alienation;

(5) what young adults and senior citizens can do to protect themselves from predatory alienation; and

(6) any other information relative to the subject matter of the study.

As described in the act, “predatory alienation” means a person’s extreme undue influence on, or coercive persuasion or psychologically damaging manipulation of, another person that results in physical or emotional harm or the loss of financial assets, disrupts a parent-child relationship, leads to a deceptive or exploitative relationship, or isolates the person from family and friends.

10. What is your understanding of predatory alienation?

- a. How do you define the term?
- b. How is this term similar to other terms you may use that describe the same phenomena?
- c. How have you seen this in your work?
- d. How long have you worked with or on behalf of victims of predatory alienation?

11. How long have you worked on behalf of victims of predatory alienation (or term used by interviewee)?

_____ Years or _____ Months

12. Have you received any specialized training for victims of predatory alienation (or term used by interviewee)?

- a. How long was this training?
 - b. Who conducted the training?
 - c. What was the content of the training?
 - d. Did you find it helpful?
13. How do you recognize a victim or perpetrator of predatory alienation (or term used by interviewee)?
- a. Are there specific predatory patterns and common tactics among perpetrators?
 - b. Are there certain risk factors among victims?
14. What is the nature of your work with victims of predatory alienation (or term used by interviewee)?
- a. Do you provide advocacy? If so, how?
 - b. Do you assist with the investigation? If so, how?
 - c. Do you provide representation (legal or other)? If so, how?
15. How is a victim of predatory alienation (or term used by interviewee) identified among your clients?
- a. Are they referred to you? If yes, how?
 - b. What are some barriers to identifying clients?
 - c. How would you improve identification?
 - d. Is there a specific screening process? If yes, what does the process look like?
16. How do online predators, human traffickers, con artists, gangs, cults, and other groups use predatory alienation (or term used by interviewee) to isolate young adults and senior citizens?
- a. What are the grooming practices used to target and control young adults and senior citizens?
 - b. What are the high pressure tactics used in scams and exploitative relationships to manipulate, control, and take advantage of senior citizens?
17. What makes young adults and senior citizens particularly vulnerable to predatory alienation (or term used by interviewee)?
- a. How can young adults and senior citizens protect themselves from predatory alienation?
18. Do you have other feedback to provide about the investigation or advocacy provided to victims of predatory alienation (or term used by interviewee)?
- a. What are the challenges with the current policy and process?
 - b. What are the strengths of the current policy and process?
 - c. Do you have any specific recommendations for improving service provision for victims of predatory alienation?

Appendix B: Interview Guide 2

1. Participant ID Number: _____
2. Today's Date: ____ / ____ / ____
 mm dd yyyy
3. What are your impressions of the summarized findings and recommendations of the Predatory Alienation Study?
4. What do you make of the findings and recommendations?
5. What questions or feedback would you offer in framing next steps?

Appendix C: Legal Definitions and Codes

Human Trafficking

Federal Legislation

According to U.S. code, sex trafficking is defined as the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age (*22 USC § 7102*). **Labor trafficking** is defined as the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery, (*22 USC § 7102*). Coercion is defined as threats of serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform an act would result in serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; or the abuse or

The United States Federal Government addresses the crime of human trafficking through the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA). The TVPA establishes human trafficking and related offenses as federal crimes and attaches severe penalties to them. It also establishes methods for prosecuting traffickers. It also mandates that restitution be paid to victims. It creates a federal civil cause of action for victims to sue their traffickers.

Additional laws addressing trafficking are the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015 and the Preventing Sex Trafficking And Strengthening Families Act of 2014.

United States Code – Title 22, Chapter 78 – Trafficking Victims Protection, Section 7102.

Definitions. Retrieved from

<https://humantraffickinghotline.org/what-human-trafficking/federal-law>

<http://uscode.house.gov/browse/prelim@title22/chapter78&edition=prelim>

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/1591>

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/1590>

New Jersey Legislation

The State of New Jersey addresses the crime of human trafficking through the Human Trafficking Prevention, Protection, and Treatment Act (TVPA). This act defines human trafficking as knowingly holding, recruiting, luring, enticing, harboring, transporting, providing or obtaining, by any means, another, to engage in sexual activity or to provide labor or services through the following means: 1) By threats of serious bodily harm or physical restraint against the person or any other person; 2) By means of any scheme, plan or pattern intended to cause the person to believe that the person or any other person would suffer serious bodily harm or physical restraint; 3) By committing a violation of N.J.S.2C:13-5 against the person; 4) By destroying, concealing, removing, confiscating, or possessing any passport, immigration-related document as defined in section 1 of P.L. 1997, c.1 (C.2C:21-31) or other document issued by a governmental agency to any person which could be used as identifying information; or means of verifying the person's identity or age or any other personal; or 5) By means of the abuse or threatened abuse of the law or legal process. Human trafficking also includes the act of receiving anything of value from participation as an organizer, supervisor, financier or manager in a

scheme or course of conduct with violates the acts previously described. The State of New Jersey describes an offense under this definition of human trafficking as a crime of the first degree.

Department of Law & Public Safety; Office of the Attorney General. Statutes: Title 2C The New Jersey Code of Criminal Justice 2C:13-8 Human trafficking. Retrieved from <http://www.nj.gov/oag/dcj/humantrafficking/statutes.html>
<http://www.nj.gov/oag/dcj/humantrafficking/downloads/HT-Prevention-Protection-Treatment-Act.pdf>

Sexual Crimes – Child Sexual Abuse

Federal Legislation

Under U.S. federal legislation, child sexual abuse is addressed through U.S. Code Title 18, Part I, Chapter 109A. Federal laws typically do not apply to child sexual abuse that occurs within a single state, as those cases are handled by local authorities under state laws (DOJ, 2015). Federal law applies when abuse occurs on federal lands such as military bases, Indian territories, or other government-owned land (DOJ, 2015).

Within this code, sexual abuse is defined as causing or attempting to cause another person to engage in a sexual act by threatening or placing that other person in fear; or engaging or attempting to engage in a sexual act with another person if that other person is incapable of evaluating the nature of the conduct or incapable of declining participation in or communicating unwillingness to engage in that sexual act. The punishment includes a fine and imprisonment for any term of years or for life (US Code §18: Part I-109A-2242)

Aggravated sexual abuse is defined as knowingly causing or attempting to cause a person to engage in a sexual act by using force against that other person or by threatening or placing that other person in fear that any person will be subjected to death, serious bodily injury, or kidnapping, or by rendering or attempting to render another person unconscious in order to engage in a sexual act with that person, or by administering or attempting to administer a drug, intoxicant, or similar substance to a person by force, threat of force, or without the knowledge or permission of that person, thereby impairing the ability of the other person to provide consent or appraise the situation and engages in sexual act with the other person. These crimes are punishable by fine, imprisonment of any number of years of life, or both. Aggravated sexual abuse with children is defined as crossing a State line with intent to engage in a sexual act with a person who is under the age of 12 years, or the act or attempt of knowingly engaging in a sexual act as described above with a child between 12 and 16 years old who is at least 4 years younger than the person engaging in the sex act. This crime is punishable by fine and imprisonment of 30 years to life. (18§US Code: Part I-109A-2241)

Sexual abuse of a minor or ward is defined as knowingly engaging or attempting to engage in a sexual act with another person who is between 12 and 16 years of age and who is at least four years younger than the person engaging in the act, or with a person in official detention or who is under the authority of the person engaging in the act. This crime is punishable by fine, imprisonment of 15 years, or both (US Code §18: Part I-109A-2244)

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/2241>
<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/2242>
<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/2243>
<http://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title18/part1/chapter109A&edition=prelim>
<https://www.justice.gov/criminal-ceos/citizens-guide-us-federal-law-child-sexual-abuse>

New Jersey Legislation

Sex crimes are addressed through Title 2C of the NJ Criminal Code. Within this code, sexual assault is defined as the penetration, no matter how slight, in which physical force or coercion is used or in which the victim is physically or mentally incapacitated. This particular crime is severely punished under state law and includes a range of sexual contact, levels of force, and intimidation. The punishment depends on the nature of the crime and age of the victim. Sexual assault is typically categorized as a second-degree crime, with a maximum of 10 years in prison. Aggravated sexual assault is a first-degree crime with a maximum of 20 years in prison. Title 2C:14-2 further defines sexual contact as “intentional touching by the victim or defendant, either directly or through clothing, of the victim’s or defendant’s intimate parts for the purpose of degrading or humiliating the victim or sexually arousing or sexually gratifying the defendant. Sexual contact of the defendant with himself must be in view of the victim whom the actor knows is present” (NJ Rev Stat § 2C:14-2 (2014)).

<http://statelaws.findlaw.com/new-jersey-law/new-jersey-sexual-assault-laws.html>).
<https://njcasa.org/learn/law-and-legislation/>
http://www.nj.gov/njsp/spoff/megans_law.html
<http://statelaws.findlaw.com/new-jersey-law/new-jersey-sexual-assault-laws.html>
<https://www.ageofconsent.net/laws/new-jersey>

Elder Abuse – Exploitation

Federal Legislation

U.S. Code and the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 define elder abuse as any action against a person who is 50 years of age or older that constitutes the willful infliction of injury, unreasonable confinement, intimidation, or cruel punishment with resulting physical harm, pain, or mental anguish; or deprivation by a person, including a caregiver, of goods or services with intent to cause physical harm, mental anguish, or mental illness (US Code §34: 12291). There is currently a lack of federal legislation that provides specific criminal punishment for exploitation of older adults. This legislation and prosecution is handled at the state level, with laws and punishment varying across state lines.

New Jersey Legislation

Adult Protective Services Act

Exploitation of older adults is addressed through the Adult Protective Service Act (Civil N.J. Stat. 52:27D-407 (2015)). Under this act, exploitation is defined as the act or process of illegally or improperly using a person or his resources for another person’s profit or advantage. Vulnerable adult means a person 18 years or older who resides in a community setting and who, because of a physical or mental illness, disability or deficiency, lacks sufficient understanding or capacity to make, communicate, or carry out decisions concerning his well-being and is the subject of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/20082009/AL09/276_.PDF
https://www.justice.gov/elderjustice/prosecutors/statutes?field_statute_state=NJ&field_statute_category=1

The Domestic Violence Act includes general guidelines for the police response procedures to domestic violence cases, including abuse of the elderly and disabled. Under this law, police are instructed to follow procedures for domestic violence cases when the criminal offense is considered an act of domestic violence. The officer may file criminal charges against an offender for acts or omissions against an elderly person where these do not meet domestic violence conditions. A person can be charged with endangering the welfare of the elderly or disabled, if the person has a legal duty to care for or has assumed continuing responsibility for the care of a person who is 60 years or older, or emotionally, psychologically or physically disabled, and the person unreasonably neglects or fails to permit to be done any act necessary for the physical or mental health of the elderly or disabled person. (N.J.S.A. 2C:24-8).

Also see N.J.S.A. 52:27 G et. seq, N.J.A.C. 17:41 et. seq, 45 CFR 1321 and 1327, and 42 U.S.C. 3058G.

Domestic Violence

Federal Legislation

Under U.S. code and as part of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (VAWA), domestic violence is defined as felony or misdemeanor crimes of violence committed by a current or former spouse or intimate partner of the victim, by a person with whom the victim shares a child in common, by a person who is cohabitating with or has cohabitated with the victim as a spouse of intimate partner, by a person similarly situated to a spouse of the victim under the domestic or family violence laws of the jurisdiction receiving grant monies, or by any other person against an adult or youth victim who is protected from that person's acts under the domestic or family violence laws of the jurisdiction (US Code §34: 12291). Interstate domestic violence offenses involving the travel of an offender to commit an act of domestic violence, or where an offender causes a victim to cross state lines by force, coercion, duress, or fraud and commits a crime of violence against the victim is punishable by federal law(18 § US code: 2261). This crime is punishable by fine and imprisonment of varied lengths of time based on the severity of the injury inflicted upon the victim (18 § US code: 2261).

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/2261>

New Jersey Legislation

Under New Jersey criminal code, domestic violence is defined as the occurrence of one or more acts inflicted upon a person protected under the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (PDVA) of 1991 by an adult or an emancipated minor. Acts included are as follows: homicide, assault, terroristic threats, kidnapping, criminal restraint, false imprisonment, sexual assault, criminal sexual contact, lewdness, criminal mischief, burglary, criminal trespass, harassment, stalking, criminal coercion, robbery, contempt of a domestic violence order that constitutes a crime or disorderly personal offense, cyber harassment, or any other crime involving risk of death or serious bodily injury (N.J.S.2C:25-19). A victim of domestic violence is defined as a person who

is 18 years of age or older or who is an emancipated minor and who has been subjected to domestic violence by a spouse, former spouse, or any other person who is present household member or was at any time a household member, as well as any person who has been subjected to domestic violence by a person with whom the victim has a child in common or anticipates having a child in common if one of the parties is pregnant, or any person who has been subjected to domestic violence in a dating relationship (N.J.S.2C:25-19).

Sentencing for a person found guilty of a crime or offense involving domestic violence may include a condition where the defendant's ability to have contact with the victim, the victim's friends, coworkers, relatives or animals may be restricted. The court may also require the defendant to receive professional counseling (N.J.S.2C:25-27). Imprisonment of varied lengths of time, as well as varied fine amounts based on the nature of injury suffered by the victim, may be part of sentencing (N.J.S.2C: 43-6, 43-3). Civil penalties may also be incurred of an amount between \$50 and \$500, depending on the nature and degree of injury suffered by the victim (N.J.S.2C:25-29).

http://www.womenslaw.org/statutes_detail.php?statute_id=2016#statute-top
<http://statelaws.findlaw.com/new-jersey-law/new-jersey-domestic-violence-laws.html>

Gangs

Federal Legislation

According to U.S. criminal code, a criminal street gang is an ongoing group, club, organization or association of five or more persons that has the commission of one or more criminal offenses as one of its primary purposes, where its members engage or have engaged in the past five years, in a continuing series of offenses and where the activities affect interstate or foreign commerce. Offenses include a federal felony involving a controlled substance for which the maximum penalty is not less than five years, a federal felony crime of violence with an element of the use or attempted use of physical force against another person, and a conspiracy to commit either of these crimes. Sentencing for a person convicted of an offense as described here is increased by up to 10 years if committed as part of a criminal street gang.

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/521>

New Jersey Legislation

According to New Jersey Criminal Code (2C:44-3(h)), “gang,” “street gang,” or “criminal street gang,” means three or more persons associated in fact. This means: 1) they have in common a group name or identifying sign, symbol, tattoo or other physical marking, style of dress or use of hand signs or other indicia of association or common leadership, and 2) individually or in combination with other members of a criminal street gang, while engaging in gang related activity, have committed, conspired or attempted to commit, within the preceding three years, two or more offenses of robbery, carjacking, aggravated assault, assault, aggravated sexual assault, sexual assault, arson, burglary, kidnapping, extortion, or a violation of chapter 11, section 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7 of chapter 35 or chapter 39 of Title 2C of NJ Statutes. Sentencing for crimes committed as part of a criminal street gang varies based on the underlying crime committed (N.J.S. 2C:33-29). Solicitation or recruitment to join a criminal street gang is also punishable offense under New Jersey criminal code, with sentencing for this crime based on the

age of the person recruited, where the recruitment took place, and whether threat or infliction of harm was used in the act of recruiting someone to join a criminal street gang (N.J.S. 2C:33-28).

<http://www.state.nj.us/njsp/info/pdf/njgangsurvey-2001-2004.pdf>
<https://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Legislation/New-Jersey>

Cults

Federal and New Jersey state legislation is not available in addressing the recruitment and actions of cultic groups. This appears to be a result of the challenge that exists in criminally defining a cult or a cult's actions in a way that will not violate the first amendment. Unless a separate illegal action is being taken, recruitment by or involvement in a cultic group is not punishable (Olgoff & Pfiefer, 1992).

Extremist Groups

Federal Legislation

According to U.S code, “international terrorism” is defined as activities that 1) involve violent acts or acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any State, or that would be a criminal violation if committed within the jurisdiction of the United States or of any State; 2) appear to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population, to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion, or to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping; and 3) occur primarily outside the territorial jurisdiction of the United States, or transcend national boundaries in terms of the means by which they are accomplished, the persons they appear intended to intimidate or coerce, or the locale in which their perpetrators operate or seek asylum.

“Domestic terrorism” means activities that 1) involve acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any State, 2) appear to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population, to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion, or to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping; and 3) occur primarily within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States.

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/2331>

New Jersey Legislation

A crime of terrorism, under New Jersey criminal code, is defined as committing or attempting, conspiring or threatening to commit any crime as described below with the purpose to promote an act of terror, or to terrorize five or more persons, or to influence the policy or affect the conduct of government by terror, or to cause by and act of terror the impairment or interruption of public communications, public transportation, public or private buildings, common carriers, public utilities or other public services. The crimes included are as follows: murder, aggravated manslaughter, vehicular homicide, aggravated assault, disarming a law enforcement officer, kidnapping, criminal restraint, robbery, carjacking, aggravated arson or arson, causing or risking widespread injury or damage, damage to nuclear plant with purpose to cause or threat to cause release of radiation, damage to nuclear plant resulting in injury by

radiation, producing or possessing chemical weapons, biological agents or nuclear or radiological devices, burglary, possession of prohibited weapons and devices, possession of weapons for unlawful purposes, unlawful possession of weapons, weapons training for illegal activities, racketeering, and any other crime involving risk of death or serious bodily injury to any person.

Terror is defined as the menace or fear of death or serious bodily injury. Terrorize means to convey the menace or fear of death or serious bodily injury by words or actions.

Terrorism is a crime of the first degree under New Jersey law. Conviction of terrorism results in a sentence of 30 years without parole, or a term between 30 years and life imprisonment, where parole eligibility does not occur prior to serving a minimum of 30 years. If death occurred as a result of terrorist acts, life imprisonment without parole is the accompanying sentence for that crime.

[NJ Rev Stat § 2C:38-2 \(2013\)](#)

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