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## Eliminating Silos: Developing System Design for Information Sharing in Violence Prevention

Jacqueline Kulaga

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Eliminating Silos: Developing System Design for Information Sharing in  
Violence Prevention

by

Jacqueline Kulaga

A Dissertation Presented to the  
Halmos College of Arts and Sciences of Nova Southeastern University  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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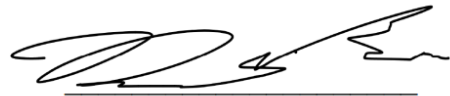
**Nova Southeastern University**  
**Halmos College of Arts and Sciences**

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## Dedication

In dedication to the victim advocate who worked endlessly to support survivors, especially when they needed support. To the police officer that took the extra steps in their case to ensure the victim's safety, even when their life was at risk. To the prosecutor who stopped at nothing for the best evidence possible to push for a conviction, even when questioned on their beliefs. To the survivor who keeps moving forward, we are behind you. To those whose lives were taken, we work in your honor. To all of you ... this is for you.

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## Abstract

The 21st century has brought about changing social perspectives on victimization and offender accountability related to sexual violence. States across the United States have established, and continue to develop, legislation and protocols to address such violence. While there has been a great shift in combating this form of violence, it is essential to create structures to enhance services for victims as well as create recommendations for those who work to hold offenders of these violent crimes accountable. This dissertation was conducted using a qualitative content analysis (QCA) of documents from the Palm Beach County Sexual Assault Response Team (PBC SART), the Florida Council Against Sexual Violence (FCASV), and the National Sexual Violence Resource Centers (NSVRC) SART toolkit. The purpose of this case study was to understand the successes and challenges of SART. The researcher also examined the guidelines and protocols translating from theory into practice. Findings revealed that while there were successful first steps in community coordination, SARTs are not effective in reaching their overall goals. With this result, the researcher offered important recommendations of a systems design for information sharing.

## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Reducing violence in any community is a particularly daunting task. Many variables coincide and contribute to achieving short- and long-term goals within collaborative efforts. Domestic and sexual violence are two egregious acts that have become the focus of many efforts to combat violence within the last decade. Coordinated response teams have emerged on local, state, and national levels to work together in monitoring responses to domestic and sexual violence and developing methods to combat these forms of violence. Responding to violence requires a multiagency effort, which can be difficult at times. The roles and responsibilities of each agency differ; some agencies only focus on prevention or intervention components, while others participate in both. Creating response teams takes time and patience, as the key component of such teams is interpersonal relationships. Internal conflicts are often present, which do not foster collaboration but create tension. The presence of conflicts may be based on historical interactions between agencies or may go deeper into personal beliefs on the issues of domestic and sexual violence. An understanding of where coordinated community response is today begins with a review of the historical timeline outlining the evolution of community response efforts.

The response efforts related to domestic and sexual violence have steadily progressed in recent years. The #MeToo movement shifted the cultural view of sexual assault, NoMore campaigns addressed violence, and the growth of social media made information about domestic and sexual violence readily available. Social media also provides a platform where survivors can be vocal about their experiences. The monumental New York State versus Harvey Weinstein case in February 2020 led to a

verdict against serial rapist Harvey Weinstein, which was noted to have been heavily influenced by the movement's efforts (Dweyer & Romo, 2020). Weinstein was convicted to 23 years in prison for his countless acts of sexual assault and rape against many women. A conviction with that much impact is rarely heard of, as most cases of domestic and sexual violence are dismissed or never make it to a trial (Dweyer & Romo, 2020).

Domestic and sexual forms of violence have always carried social stigmas and cultural expectations related to the family and behavior. Traditionally, such assaults were not viewed as criminal acts, but rather were considered to be the result of interpersonal conflict (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence [NCADV, n.d]). In almost every case of violence, the victim was targeted as a cause for the violence; it was suggested that the victim either did or did not do something to create a reaction of violence from the perpetrator. Because the history of the criminal justice system's participation in antiviolence, particularly related to domestic and sexual violence victims, is complex, an examination of response efforts must begin with an understanding of the evolution of the criminal justice system's place within the movement.

### **History and Definitions**

Acts of interpersonal violence have existed throughout human existence. Conflict between individuals dates back to the beginning of time. Violence can occur on a massive scale via war, it can happen as part of societal discourse or manifest within personal relationships. While efforts to combat violence can be traced back centuries, this study focused on the efforts of the latter part of the 20th century within the United States, with an emphasis on those response groups that participate within the criminal justice system.

## Grassroots Efforts

Through grassroots efforts, the domestic and sexual violence movement created a platform for social change, moving the conflict from interpersonal to communal. Local, state, and national communities worked together to create legislation to acknowledge this violence as a crime (Jacquet, 2015). The grassroots movement also developed organizations at each level to ensure that all survivors and potential survivors had representation throughout the system. It was not until the 1970s and 1980s that substantial efforts were made to stop addressing domestic violence as a family problem and to instead address the issue as a matter that warranted legislation (Schechter, 2005). This shift was brought about mainly by the feminist movement of the 1970s, when activists and survivors came together in a nationwide effort to recognize violence against women as being more than a “matter between a husband and wife,” as was culturally acceptable at the time (Jacquet, 2015, para. 2). Therefore, it is important to understand the timeline of how the matter of this form of violence went from being a *family matter* to an epidemic that we understand today.

Grassroots action has always led the way in the response to domestic and sexual violence (Greensite, 2009). While violence against women is a historical reality, the movement began to step forward with the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and its formal development was heavily influenced by the Black Women’s Club. As early as 1974, shelters for battered women began to open. Many shelters were started through a group of women developing a phone number for victims to contact. The victims would then create a plan to leave their violent homes and find refuge with the fledgling shelters. By the end of the 1970s, over 250 women’s shelters had been constructed. (Greensite,

2009). Today, counties across the nation have established safe homes, and states have created coalitions to address the issue of domestic violence, not only on a localized level, but a systems level as well (Jacquet, 2015). Researchers like Jacquelyn Campbell and Catherine Jacquet began to recognize the lack of support and protection for domestic and sexual violence victims within the medical and legal fields. They called for reliable data and comprehensive protocols within departments. Activists like Susan Schechter created centers for battered women. Schechter (2005) authored a classic paper entitled “Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women’s Movement,” which offered a first-hand look into the movement in the late 1970s and 1980s. In her paper, Schechter referenced the need for a woman to have the right to consent to what she wants to do with her body, free of a societal or communal oversight.

### **Federal Funding**

In 1980, new legislation for federal support for funding domestic violence shelters was drafted and introduced by California Senator Alan Cranston (Georgetown University Law Center et al., 2009). Congress met the bill with great hesitation. Many senators insisted support of shelters would be interference of family matters, and that federal regulations on such issues would lead to the disruption of the family and home and issues such as child rearing, parenting styles, as well as the fear of regulation of the sexual relationship between a husband and wife. Tensions grew for the next 5 years, with claims from congressmen that the “theory” of domestic and sexual violence was all but “pro-lesbian, pro-abortion, and radically feminist” (Georgetown University Law Center et al., 2009).



Despite the backlash, U.S. Attorney General Benjamin Civiletti created the Department of Justice Task Force on Family Violence in 1984 (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2019). The House Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families held hearings in 1983 and 1984 regarding child abuse and family violence including elderly abuse. It was the first time a task force would report on the impacts of domestic violence (to include sexual assault) around the country, and provide recommendations on improvement within the judicial system, criminal justices system and response of communities (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2019). As a result of the task force findings, Congress and the Reagan Administration enacted the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) to be administered by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS; FVPSA, 1984). This legislation defined *family violence* to include those “who are legally related by blood or marriage and/or live in the same household ... who live together or are related by blood or marriage” (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2019, p. 2). Domestic violence was also defined as physical and/or threats of physical violence to those residing within a dwelling. As it was understood, this may include intimate partner violence or sexual assault (FVPSA, 1984).

FVPSA (1984) provides funding for emergency shelters, crisis hotlines, crisis counseling services, as well as programs for underserved communities. FVPSA initially included response for both social service and law in both prevention and intervention assistance. FVPSA also established grants for states, territories, and Indian tribes to fund domestic and sexual violence programs. Grants also included law enforcement training and technical assistance. Beginning in Fiscal Year 1986 until Fiscal Year 1994, these grants and programs switched their operations from the HHS to the Department of Justice (DOJ), under the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC). During these years, the DOJ

funded “23 projects to train law enforcement officers on domestic violence policies and response procedures, with approximately 16,000 law enforcement officers and other justice system personnel from 25 states receiving this training” (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2019, p. 8). Programs were extended to provide support for state coalitions against domestic violence, as well as providing prevention programs. Unfortunately, funding for law enforcement training was discontinued in 1992. However, advocates and leaders in Congress were working together to create new legislation to strengthen policies and programs in support of women’s rights (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2019).

Another important creation was the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) in 1984 (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2019). This federally funded program was passed by Congress to support state and local level programming for victims of crime. An important point of VOCA is that it utilizes fines that are paid by federal criminals, as opposed to taxpayer money. These funds support services for all victims of crime, especially those direct services agencies for domestic and sexual violence and child abuse. VOCA made it possible for these dire programs to continue their work (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2019).

In 1990, then Senator Joseph Biden, introduced the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA; Fernandes-Alcantara, 2019). With the assistance of the staff of the Senate Judiciary Committee and Legal Momentum (now called the Legal Defense and Education Fund), the dialogue about violence against women took center stage (Georgetown University Law Center et al., 2009). The conversation invited leading experts and anti-violence organizations together to form the Task Force on the Violence Against Women Act. Together, they worked to draft the VAWA legislation. Eventually, the task force became known as the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence. As of

2019, the task force was continuing to draft and work toward passing VAWA reauthorizations (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2019).

The main goal of the VAWA legislation was to establish legal protections for women's civil rights in the public and the home (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2019). The shift in ideology from violence against women as a family matter to a public health issue represented a monumental move in public thought. FVPSA and VAWA were created and, together with VOCA, constitute the main sources of federal support in response to domestic and sexual violence, as well as the focus for prevention efforts (National Network to End Domestic Violence [NNEDV], n.d.). While FVPSA primarily focused on prevention efforts and victim service programs, VAWA created federal statutes as well as grant programs. VAWA established a formal response to domestic and sexual violence about law enforcement and emphasized the legal response to crimes of domestic and sexual violence. VAWA included provisions on sexual violence, funding for victim services, and evidentiary matters. For the first time, federal law established statutes against domestic and sexual violence, and the requirement of each state established a "full faith and credit to orders of protection issued anywhere in the United States," particularly in the civil courts (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2019, p. 11).

VAWA (Rogers, 2020) was passed by Congress and became part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. Provisions to the act were expanded upon, providing more inclusive definitions and programs in 2000, 2005, 2013, and 2019 (Rogers, 2020). The Office of Violence Against Women (OVAW) was also created under VAWA and is housed within the Department of Justice. VAWA emphasizes the use of coordinated community responses to domestic and sexual violence through engaging law

enforcement, the court systems, prosecutors, and victim services. In addition, VAWA promotes cultural programs, particularly with indigenous tribes and tribal organizations, which deal with domestic and sexual violence.

### **Federal Programs and Their Functions**

This section contains an explanation of the types of programs that address domestic and sexual violence in the United States. It is important to clarify how each program contributes to the ongoing fight to end domestic and sexual violence. Programs fall under one of the three major federal statutes: FVPSA, VOCA, and VAWA (NNEDV, n.d.).

The FVPSA authorizes program oversight to HHS (NNEDV, n.d.). Program funding includes emergency shelters, crisis lines, counseling, and victim assistance. One of FVPSA's greatest areas of focus is prevention programming. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) oversees the DELTA prevention grant, which invests in strategies for community prevention programs. VOCA focuses on direct services programs, including state formula victim assistance grants and victims' compensation programming (NNEDV, n.d.).

VAWA programs stem from the Department of Justice (NNEDV, n.d.). These programs target the criminal justice components of domestic and sexual violence. VAWA is also solely dedicated to domestic and sexual violence, whereas FVPSA and VOCA's programming also supports other forms of victimization. Various programs within VAWA enhance very important coordinated community responses (NNEDV, n.d.).

Some of the programs authorized by VAWA focus on legal assistance for victims through the civil courts, services for rural victims, offender accountability, homicide

reduction, and recidivism (NNEDV, n.d.). The Sexual Assault Services Program provides much needed funding for rape crisis centers and services. The most important of these grants, about this study, is the Services, Training, Officers, and Prosecutors (STOP) grant program. STOP is a state formulated grant that is strictly dedicated to coordinated community responses to domestic and sexual violence. The grant allows for the formation of response teams such as the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART), although SART does receive funding from other avenues for components of the program. The STOP program includes the development of appropriate services and crisis intervention services for victims of domestic and sexual violence. The grant supports programs that are not funded under FVPSA, mainly those programs that work with law enforcement, courts, and prosecutors. STOP grants are also allocated to risk reduction response teams, which work with criminal justice components to reduce the occurrence of high risk domestic and sexual violence in their communities (NNEDV, n.d.).

VAWA, VOCA, and FVPSA allocate funds authorized in the congressional budget (NNEDV, n.d.). The program funds are distributed to each state, who then disperse the funds locally through the grant management process. Centers providing domestic violence and sexual assault (DVSA) services must apply to receive the funding, providing a layout of the intent and purpose for use. This entire process must also follow the guidelines designated by FVPSA, VOCA, and VAWA, Federal definitions for the types of crimes linked to the funding guide the grant proposal process for states seeking funding. Grants provided through VAWA must specifically benefit law enforcement, prosecutors, and victim service providers (NNEDV, n.d.).

Competition is high when applying for DVS grants. Agencies must follow the guidelines of grant writing as well as the definitions of the crimes if they seek to receive these awards. Once an agency receives a grant, the agency is subject to audits, which ensures the funds are appropriately allocated and used. Monthly reporting and documentation are vitally important to the operational components of the grant. Agencies applying for grants must understand the definitions of terms that are necessarily used in grant requests related to the issue of domestic and sexual violence.

### **Definitions of Key Terms**

Definitions of the terms *domestic violence* and *sexual violence* vary between the public understanding and meanings established by the law. Domestic violence is defined as “the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior as a part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another” (NCADV, n.d., para. 1). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, n.d.) define intimate partner violence as “abuse or aggression that occurs in a romantic relationship” (para. 1). It is important to note that the term domestic violence is also interchangeable with *intimate partner violence* when describing the act within a romantic relationship (past or present). Domestic violence may also include familial violence between parent to child, sibling on sibling, in-laws, and other members of the household. Sexual violence is “an all-encompassing, nonlegal term that refers to crimes like sexual assault, rape, and sexual abuse” (Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network [RAINN], n.d., para. 1). With regard to sexual violence, the term *sexual assault* is used within the criminal justice and legal parameters.

Crimes of domestic violence may be charged at the state level but are charged at the federal level when they meet the threshold for that purpose, specifically, through VAWA's creation of the federal statute for interstate domestic violence (Interstate Domestic Violence, 1996). The federal statute for Interstate Domestic Violence (1996) carries the penalty of imprisonment or fines for perpetrators who cross state, foreign, tribal, or territorial lines to "kill, injure, harass, or intimidate" [§2261(a)] a current or past intimate partner; or to use force, fraud, or coercion to facilitate a current or past intimate partner to cross those same lines to attempt to "kill, injure, harass, or intimidate;" [§2261(a)] or in violation of a valid civil or criminal protection order. The federal laws for sexual violence are much more complex.

For federal prosecution purposes, federal crimes of sexual abuse are determined through Title 18, Crimes and Criminal Procedures, Chapter 109A in the federal code (Sexual Abuse, 1994). These crimes are prosecuted when nonconsensual sexual acts, or the attempt of nonconsensual acts occur in,

the special maritime and territorial jurisdiction of the United States or Federal prison, or in any prison, institution, or facility in which persons are held in custody by direction of or under a contract or agreement with the head of any Federal department or agency. (Sexual Abuse, 1994, § 2242, para. 1)

Similar to crimes of domestic violence, sexual crimes that are committed by perpetrators within their respective states are prosecuted at the state level through state statutory laws for sexual crimes. However, the various reauthorizations of VAWA included expanded federal mandates to the existing laws to strengthen programming and

services, while also deepening the structure of how these investigations and prosecutions are handled from beginning to end.

It was not until 2016 that federal statutory law was enacted for sexual assault victims and survivors. The Survivors' Bill of Rights Act (2016) provides victims' rights legislation and civil rights. The act mandated comprehensive processing of rape kits, established their preservation for the length of a case's statute of limitations, allowed for the survivor to be notified about the results of the exam, and to be informed of the destruction of the rape kit. The bill also amended VOCA to include sexual assault as part of crime victims' rights statutes. The Survivors' Bill of Rights Act of 2016 (also known as the Adam Walsh Reauthorization Act) amended VOCA, mandating "states to develop sexual assault survivors' rights and policies and to disseminate written notice of such rights and policies to medical centers, hospitals, forensic examiners, sexual assault service providers, law enforcement agencies, and other state entities" (para. 5) and requiring the DOJ to establish working groups that focus on the creation of best practices for survivors.

Those crimes that do not meet the federal threshold fall under the statutory laws of the state in which the crime was committed. Crimes are charged according to that state regardless of where the victim and the perpetrator reside (Boateng & Abess, 2017). States and territories create their statutes and draft their legislation about domestic and sexual crimes. It is not uncommon, however, that states and territories look at the federal legislation as a guide. It is important to note that the statutes can be heavily influenced by the political parties in office as well as the socio-political environment of that state (Boateng & Abess, 2017).



This section contains a discussion of the statutory laws for domestic and sexual violence in the state of Florida, as this content analysis study was focused on Palm Beach County (PBC), a county located in Florida. For context, the state of New York's statutory laws will also be presented to illustrate the vast difference between state legislation for such crimes. It is important to understand these differences, as the wording of laws affects how each state allocates federal funding through VAWA, VOCA, and FVPSA for these crimes.

The federal statutes for crimes of domestic and sexual violence are foundational and are used in prosecution when crimes are committed over state lines. Additionally, much of the language that is provided in federal statutes are developed to assist with grant funding purposes. Before April 2018, the federal definition of domestic violence was determined by OVAW (2017a) as:

a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone. ("What is Domestic Violence?" para. 1)

The former definition described the different forms of violence including physical, sexual, economic, emotional, and psychological. The statute also provided clarifications on targets, victims, and general information on the effects of domestic violence.

Currently, OVAW (n.d.-a) states domestic violence:

includes 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 or 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. ("What is Domestic Violence?" para. 1)

OVAW refers persons to 911 and the National Domestic Violence Hotline for further assistance. In the same respect, OVAW (2017b) defined sexual violence before April 2018 as:

any type of sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of the recipient. Falling under the definition of sexual assault are sexual activities as forced sexual intercourse, forcible sodomy, child molestation, incest, fondling, and attempted rape. ("What is Sexual Assault?" para. 1)

While the list of clarifications was considerably shorter than that of domestic violence, OVAW offered a list of resources to further explore the types of situations that would qualify for funding. Today, OVAW (n.d.-b) defines sexual violence as, "any nonconsensual sexual act proscribed by federal, tribal, or state law, including when the victim lacks capacity to consent" ("What is Sexual Assault?" para. 1). This change in definition eliminated clarifications on violence and referred to local jurisdictions to determine how they understand violence to be defined. Currently, each state determines its definitions for domestic and sexual violence.

Outside of the federal outlines, the general definitions for domestic violence are maintained. Despite alterations within the federal outlines for domestic and sexual crimes, national and local nonprofit agencies, alongside partners within the academic, medical, legal, law enforcement, and mental health fields, have come together to develop research and statistics to support prevention and intervention methods to reduce violence at the local, state, and national levels. Domestic and sexual violence does not only impact an individual but have consequences for the community as a whole. The ripple effect is so profound it requires assistance from a variety of fields.

To unravel an already complicated legal framework, it is imperative to note that state statutory laws for sexual abuse vary significantly across all 50 states and territories. All state statutes follow the basic parameters that the legal framework constitutes as sexual abuse: “penetration, contact without penetration, and noncontact exposure; use of force; absence of consent; a victim’s capacity to consent; whether the conduct was for the purpose of sexual arousal or degradation” (Kruttschnitt et al., 2014, pp. 25–26). While each state and territory have laws that support these indicators, states and territories vary in what constitutes each indicator. *Penetration* is not always deemed illegal, but the purpose of that penetration determines whether a crime has been committed. *Consent* must be present. This requires “permission” and “positive cooperation” (p. 28). Some statutes address forced to consent or coercion. Perhaps the most jarring of the elements is that of *consent*, specifically regarding age. When looking at state statutes, the term *consent* references a minor’s capacity to give permission. Some states have caveats to the defined age of consent (Kruttschnitt et al., 2014, p. 29).

The state of Florida established a clear framework around sexual battery as well as other related offenses of violence. Under Fla. Stat. §794.011 (2019), the state defines sexual battery as:

oral, anal, or vaginal penetration by, or union with, the sexual organ of another or the anal or vaginal penetration of another by any other object; however, sexual battery does not include an act done for a bona fide medical purpose. (para. h)

The state goes even further to clarify that this definition sets the foundation for defining different levels of sexual violence. Fla. Stat. §794.005 (2019), defines sexual battery as:

the least serious sexual battery offense, which is provided in s. 794.011(5), was intended, and remains intended, to serve as the basic charge of sexual battery and to be necessarily included in the offenses charged under subsections (3) and (4), within the meaning of s. 924.34; and that it was never intended that the sexual battery offense described in s. 794.011(5) require any force or violence beyond the force and violence that is inherent in the accomplishment of “penetration” or “union.” (para. 1)

This clear distinction by the state ensures that other acts of sexual violence can and do occur. The crime is considered a felony charge. In all cases of sexual violence, consent is plainly defined within the statute as “intelligent, knowing, and voluntary” (Fla. Stat. §794.011, para. a).. The statute further outlines the distinction about the ability to grant consent by defining “mentally defective” (para. b), “mentally incapacitated” (para. c), “physically helpless” (para. e), “retaliation” (para. f), “serious personal injury” (para. g), and “physically incapacitated” (para. j) in correlation to the term consent.

Fla. Stat. §794.011 (2019) is not the only statute that guides sexual violence. The state of Florida has also developed a language around human trafficking, which includes definitions of egregious acts of sexual violence. Fla. Stat. §787 (2018), Kidnapping, Custody Offenses, Human Trafficking, and Related Offenses provides detailed information on the crime of human trafficking. §787.06, human trafficking includes definitions of the crime, who is affected, and by what means the crime is committed. The language is not solely limited to the concept of sex trafficking and includes language around labor trafficking.

In Fla. Stat. §794.011, the term *minor* is expressed through the terminology for statutory rape, and is defined as:

A person 18 years of age or older and commits sexual battery upon, or during an attempt to commit sexual battery injures the sexual organs of, a person less than 12 years of age; (2a)

a person less than 18 years of age and commits sexual battery upon, or during an attempt to commit sexual battery injures the sexual organs of, a person less than 12 years of age. (2b)

While this definition determines the age of consent to be 18 years old, the wording also appears rather broad regarding the types of sexual battery included.

However, Fla. Stat. §794.05, unlawful sexual activity with certain minors, provides further clarification:

A person 24 years of age or older who engages in sexual activity with a person 16 or 17 years of age commits a felony of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084. As used in this section, “sexual activity”

means oral, anal, or vaginal penetration by, or union with, the sexual organ of another or the anal or vaginal penetration of another by any other object; however, sexual activity does not include an act done for a bona fide medical purpose.

(para. 1)

The provisions of this section do not apply to a person 16 or 17 years of age who has had the disabilities of nonage removed under chapter 743 (para. 2).

The victim's prior sexual conduct is not a relevant issue in a prosecution under this section. (para. 3)

If an offense under this section directly results in the victim giving birth to a child, the paternity of that child shall be established as described in chapter 742. If it is determined that the offender is the father of the child, the offender must pay child support under the child support guidelines described in chapter 61. (para.4)

A perpetrator is also identified as a defendant for criminal prosecutions. According to RAINN (2020), the defendant in cases of statutory rape the defendant of statutory rape is defined as:

- A person who is in a position of familial or custodial authority to a person less than 18 years of age and who:
  - Solicits that person to engage in any act which would constitute sexual battery ... or
  - Engages in any act of sexual battery with that person while the person is 12 years of age or older but less than 18 years of age ... or
  - Engages in any act of sexual battery with that person while the person is less than 12 years of age, or in an attempt to commit sexual battery injures

the sexual organs of such person. (“Statutory Rape: What are the punishments for this crime?” para. 10)

Other crimes of sexual violence and domestic violence are explicitly defined in other statutes such as the Fla. Stat. 784, Assault, Battery, and Culpable Negligence (2019). The state of Florida criminalized such acts as misdemeanor and felony crimes. The act of assault is considered a misdemeanor crime in the state of Florida. Fla. Stat. 784, §784.011 defines *assault* as:

an intentional, unlawful threat by word or act to do violence to the person of another, coupled with an apparent ability to do so, and doing some act which creates a well-founded fear in such other person that such violence is imminent. (para. 1)

Those crimes in which a weapon is utilized without the intent to kill are considered aggravated assaults, punishable under §784.021, aggravated assault. The act of violence is defined as a *battery*. §784.03 states battery is an act which: “actually, and intentionally touches or strikes another person against the will of the other” (para. 1), or intentionally causes bodily harm to another person. para. 2).

The state also clearly indicates strangulation in domestic violence (inclusive of dating violence) is a felony crime. Chapter 784, Assault; Battery; Culpable Negligence (2019) contains definitions for what constitutes strangulation and domestic relations by perpetrator and victim are found in §784.01. Crimes of domestic violence also include aspects of sexual violence, and often go beyond the scope of what is seen as traditional forms of violence. With the rise of technology, definitions for cybercrimes have also been created. §784.049 defines the act of sexual cyberharassment as depicting a sexually

explicit image of someone without their consent. This not only includes the sharing of sexual images of a victim but publishing pictures online without the consent of the person in the image. Crimes under Chapter 784 can be prosecuted both as a misdemeanor or a felony.

Of equal importance, the state of Florida distinctly defined victim rights and civil measures for victims of violence. Under Fla. Stat. §784.046 (2019), “Action by victim of repeat violence, sexual violence, or dating violence for protective injunction; dating violence investigations, notice to victims, and reporting; pretrial release violations; public records exemption” (para. 1), victims are afforded several ways to apply for a protection order in the civil courts. The statute defines the term for violence, repeat violence, sexual violence, dating violence, and domestic violence. This civil action is important, particularly for those without a criminal proceeding, or for those cases where the criminal case has been dropped or dismissed. The protection order remedy creates a legally binding measure of safety, whereby a respondent must abide by the order. Failure to abide results in violations of the order and becomes a criminal act (Fla. Stat. §784.046). Stalking and cyberstalking are also defined in §784.0485. One important key term is the *threat* of violence. Whereas many definitions call for the petitioner to establish imminent danger, Fla. Stat. 784.048 states stalking, or cyberstalking includes the threat of imminent danger:

(c) “Credible threat” means a verbal or nonverbal threat, or a combination of the two, including threats delivered by electronic communication or implied by a pattern of conduct, which places the person who is the target of the threat in reasonable fear for his or her safety or the safety of his or her family members or



individuals closely associated with the person, and which is made with the apparent ability to carry out the threat to cause such harm. It is not necessary to prove that the person making the threat had the intent to carry out the threat. The present incarceration of the person making the threat is not a bar to prosecution under this section. (para. 4)

(d) “Cyberstalk” means:

1. To engage in a course of conduct to communicate, or to cause to be communicated, directly or indirectly, words, images, or language by or through the use of electronic mail or electronic communication, directed at or about a specific person; or
2. To access, or attempt to access, the online accounts or Internet-connected home electronic systems of another person without that person’s permission, causing substantial emotional distress to that person and serving no legitimate purpose. (paras. 5–7)

### **Research Problem**

Several researchers identified challenges within the field of domestic and sexual violence prevention. Likewise, many scholars contributed to the creation and implementation of best practices to enhance victim services. While the compendium of studies has successfully revealed an understanding of victimization and researchers have contributed to developing trauma-informed methods of care, there is still a great need within the research base to establish a more concrete resolution to the root issues of domestic violence in communities across the United States (the State of Florida, 2017). Over recent decades, communities throughout the country established coordinated

community responses to domestic violence and sexual violence. The federal provisions and the grassroots movements for both forms of crime have always worked simultaneously and in conjunction with one another. The coordinated nationwide responses to violence are established and are generally comprised of criminal justice agencies and human service providers to understand how communities can address prevention and intervention services (State of Florida, Department of Children and Families, 2017).

The State of Florida's Department of Children and Families (2017) developed its strategic plan for the 2017–2020 Stop Violence Against Women (STOP) grant program. In their planning, the state indicated a need to accomplish the goals of the grant. First, the STOP grant must assist in providing effective training for those working within the criminal justice system such as law enforcement, judges, prosecutors, and other personnel. In turn, proper training should assist the implementation of policies, orders, and services within these agencies and their efforts to combat domestic and sexual violence. To measure these efforts, the state's grant proposal calls for the development, installation, and expansion of data collection and communication systems that will identify and track the agency programs that support domestic and sexual violence prevention and intervention. Agencies are also asked to improve upon and expand any current programming to be more inclusive of victim needs. This task is executed through formal and informal multidisciplinary efforts and must include matters related to immigration, underserved populations, victims within correctional and detention facilities, and coordinated community responses. The language of the grant proposal directly speaks to the creation and/or enhancement of a county SART. Funds are

distributed to counties throughout the state to carry out the mission of the STOP grant (State of Florida, Department of Children and Families, 2017).

Leaders must be accountable for their roles when they participate in projects aimed to attain a certain goal. In this instance, oversight is necessary for SART to ensure the leaders not only set objectives but put steps into practice to achieve those objectives. SARTs are funded by federal grant money (State of Florida, Department of Children and Families, 2017). Failure to use the funds appropriately and create a structure that supports methods addressing the issue and its progress places the community at risk. When a task force is constructed to reduce violence in their community, the group is also tasked with reflecting upon their institutions and actors. The greatest conflict is the organizational and systemic conflict that must be addressed first to tackle the larger issue of domestic and sexual violence. When institutions and actors are transparent, internal conflicts can be acknowledged. When institutions and actors are proactive rather than reactive, internal conflicts can be resolved. Once systemic issues are resolved, there is a unified force that can combat the violence plaguing their communities.

The end of 2019 and early 2020 presented a prime example of what happens as a result of extraordinary conflict within institutions and the corruption that was built because of a lack of oversight and collaboration. The Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence (FCADV) was removed as the main provider of funding for domestic violence centers across the state. FCADV once stood as the primary hub for receiving and distributing state and federal funding and providing training and advocacy to 42 local domestic violence centers across Florida. Former Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Tiffany Carr was found to have been paid over \$7.5 million by the coalition over the previous

decade (Klas, 2020). Members of the board were aware of, and participated in, providing her salary with money meant to be allocated to programs across the state. Board members testified that they deliberately altered records. The majority of board members were comprised of experts and leaders of local domestic violence agencies across the state. These individuals were also paid an exorbitant salary, considering their nonprofit status.

Florida's Department of Children and Families (DCF) distributed to state and federal funding to FCADV, who acted "as a clearinghouse ... to centralize purchasing, coordinate advocacy and streamline training, saving money and improving operations" (Klas, 2020, "Where are the Minutes to Meetings" para. 8). With Carr the CEO, FCADV leveraged its alliance with important political figures of the state to push for more privatized funding. Former Governor Bush and their family stood in support of Carr's efforts, helping to host galas to raise funds for programs across the state. From 1998 until 2008, Columba Bush served on the board. The financial documentation submitted to the DCF was vague on costs and spending, never clarifying the purpose of such extreme finances. The questioning of such practices began as early as 2012, even alarming then Governor Rick Scott. In response to allegations, "then Rep. Denise Grimsley, a Republican from Sebring who headed the House Appropriations Committee at the time and was a friend of Carr's, said she was 'perplexed' by Scott's comments. The coalition, she said, 'does an outstanding job'" (Klas, 2020, "Documents tell the tale," para. 9). However, this response came into question years later.

Although there were no mandates, guidelines for FCADV recommended the keeping of meeting minutes as part of their oversight (Klas, 2020). However, no such documentation or accountability measures were put into place. When Carr officially

retired from her post as CEO of FCADV in November of 2019, she was kept on as a consultant at \$81.25 an hour. She was instructed to keep all her travel expenses and “all information related to her duties confidential” (“Where are the minutes to the meetings?” para. 4). Through a preliminary investigation by the House Committee on Public Integrity and Ethics, legislators believe the leadership of FCADV is guilty of criminal violations (Klas, 2020).

As a result of the crime, FCADV is no longer operational, and the handling of all domestic violence programming is now returned to DCF. This means that DCF is responsible for the oversight of programming and distribution of funds, but questions surrounding the lack of oversight and transparency from DCF linger. For years, FCADV operated at will, never providing sufficient documentation to justify spending. When questions arose in the past, they were not investigated. As a result of years of fraud, corruption, and greed, there is now a great fear that local domestic violence centers will have to rely on their forms of fundraising for programs. The state does not have universal programming for all centers. While basic funding for these programs continues, the loss of additional funding excludes many centers from providing important programming that can assist in reducing violence in the community. This lack of accountability and oversight has created possible state and federal criminal consequences for these vital services. More importantly, it has shaken the trust between agencies as well as the survivors they serve. This misuse of monies can affect the ability of the state to receive further federal and state funding, placing programs like SART at risk. Therefore, this research provides valuable insight into the accountability and oversight of such programs.

This research was conducted to evaluate and assess the successes and challenges of implementation with a current grantee of funding, a SART program.

Greeson and Campbell (2015) conducted a national survey on SART implementations and programs. The findings indicated that multi-agency systems are somewhat successful with the coordination of services; however, the study also highlighted challenges to those efforts. Greeson and Campbell found that while there was a collaboration between a variety of agencies with the criminal justice system, the SART leadership was mostly comprised of rape crisis center advocates. More importantly, when SARTs developed formal protocol and policies for the team, there was more coordination between agencies when they were developed by agencies with less formal positions. Those with formal structures were found to have more success than those who did not have a system in place. Greeson and Campbell offered recommendations that would assist in SART sustainability such as creating response groups made up of representatives from several disciplines and providing resources that encourage victims to seek help and that improve the likelihood of better outcomes for victims within the criminal justice system. Greeson and Campbell concluded that for a SART to perform at an optimal level to reduce sexual violence in its community, the organization would need to follow state guidelines that provide this structure to achieve better outcomes.

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this case study using content analysis was to provide a needed follow-up to Greeson and Campbell's (2015) study. The researcher conducted a case study of currently functioning SARTs in PBC. The study was an examination of how the state's recommendations are reflected in the work of this specific SART.

The case under consideration was the Palm Beach County SART (PBC SART). The researcher conducted a content analysis of 5 years' worth of SART agendas and meeting minutes, which are made available to the public to assess the progress of the team. Qualitative coding of these program documents assisted the researcher in comparing the program's functions to the recommendations provided to the Florida Council Against Sexual Violence (FCASV) and the statistical reporting of the Unified Crimes Reporting Program (UCR) about sexual violence for the same period.

This researcher sought to explore two avenues of understanding in this case study. The first aim was to understand how the PBC SART interprets the recommendations provided by state coalitions. The researcher analyzed how communication between agencies benefits or hinders program effectiveness. The second aim of the research was to investigate how PBC provides similar coordinated community responses to domestic violence. Domestic and sexual violence are often overlapping, and many services providers offer programs to assist both types of victims. If there is success in one area, the other should also find success, not just in the services provided, but in the preventative measures taken by stakeholders.

### **Goals of the Study**

The primary goal of this study was to assess and analyze the current state of SARTs and coordinated community response teams for domestic violence. The researcher examined how the best practices written by FCASV are reflected in the SART strategic plans, agendas, and meeting minutes. The researcher also examined the meeting minutes to see what they reveal about the implementation, and how actions are related to the agenda plans in conjunction with the recommendations.

Previous studies created recommendations that were adopted by leading state coalitions; however, there has yet to be an assessment of the work that was completed since 2010. It was important to understand how the recommendations were translated to practice, as well as gain an understanding of how that translation correlates with crimes of sexual violence in PBC. The goal was to assess whether the measures in place have achieved their own goals and outcomes. It was also important to assess what this may mean. If there has been progress, what factors assisted in that achievement? If there was little to no progress, what factors contributed? By providing insight into this piece of prevention and intervention, we will be able to set forth further recommendations or address larger systemic issues that occur within responses to violence. When communities seek to create change, self-reflection provides information that can move them forward. This *bottom up* approach can then expand upward to addressing needs beyond the community and within systems of influence.

### **Significance of the Study**

The efforts to collaborate were not instituted only to reduce violence in communities, but to address how communities can bring about systemic change. If a coordinated response to violence has difficulty operating and communicating on interpersonal levels, it will be impossible to address larger and deeper issues surrounding domestic and sexual violence. Previous studies already provided recommendations for best practices. The authors of those studies addressed that support through the legislation and public policy increases the effectiveness of response teams. The recommendations are aimed at policies within the group as well as internal policies of the respective



agencies. Researchers looked at the importance of oversight, not only for grant purposes, but for establishing effective leadership within the program itself.

Even with these updates and recommendations there is very little in the way of research to examine how SART and other response teams have implemented these changes. Research on domestic and sexual violence typically focuses on examining the trauma in the context of survivorship (Bonnet & Whittaker, 2015; Carbone-Lopez, 2012), perpetrator behavior (Rock, 2013; Williams, 2012), and other areas in direct relation to the violence committed (Mensch, 2013; Pierotti, 2013; Rojas Durazo et al., 2011–2012; Runge, 2010). The extant studies always reference a need to look at the system that regulates prevention and intervention actions. In contrast, there is not a large amount of available research on the systemic response to violence. One aspect of exploring the systemic response to violence involves addressing the conflicts within the system. A system's ability to resolve its conflicts is necessary to resolve violence within communities. The conflict of violence in local communities cannot be resolved if the conflicts within the system are not first addressed. One of the purposes of this study was to provide a foundation for further studies within the area of domestic and sexual violence utilizing tools from the conflict resolution field. This research was conducted to contribute to violence prevention by bridging conflict resolution theory with practice (Greeson & Campbell, 2015).

## Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theories

Within the last 20 years, communities throughout the country established SARTs. SARTs were established to create a countywide response to sexual violence and are generally made up of criminal justice agencies and human service providers to address prevention and intervention services. Empirical research regarding sexual violence has focused more on the part of intervention than prevention efforts. This is, in part, due to how sexual assault is often associated with other issues regarding substance abuse, child abuse, and mental health issues. One example of research related to sexual assault was Haas' (2011) study on the co-occurrence of child abuse and domestic violence. The study surveyed child protection service workers to evaluate the effectiveness of a state-wide, cross-disciplinary training series for interagency collaboration regarding domestic violence and child welfare. Findings determined that more interaction and information sharing between agencies provides a positive impact on the work of child protection workers (Haas, 2011).

As a result of this focused attention, several efforts were started around the country to cross-train domestic violence and child welfare workers. Many of these initiatives were based on recommendations derived from prior research, which emphasized the importance of cross-training child welfare workers, domestic violence advocates, and others to enhance inter-agency collaborations and ultimately improve the handling of co-occurrence cases (Haas, 2011).

Using a survey design and two samples of child protective service (CPS) workers, Haas (2011) evaluated the effectiveness of a statewide initiative to improve inter-agency collaboration through a series of cross-disciplinary training. Special attention was also

given to the identification of barriers and the potential role of barriers in shaping collaboration. While Haas find significant changes in CPS workers' knowledge, attitudes, or self-reported levels of collaboration overall as a result of the training, collaboration was found to be related to increased knowledge and positive attitudes toward posttraining collaboration. The findings further demonstrated that efforts to cross-train staff can change the way CPS workers view the presence of some barriers to collaboration. Haas also discussed implications for future research and strategies for enhancing inter-agency collaboration in co-occurrence cases.

The task of gathering a team of professionals to collaborate on the reduction of violence in their communities requires a deep understanding of the dynamics of violence, as well as the dynamics of each actor's respective profession to combating violence. In this chapter, the researcher will explore the findings of past studies on sexual violence. The roles of law enforcement, prosecutors, victim advocacy groups, and the medical community will be examined to ascertain how each stakeholder responds to sexual violence. This review of the literature is structured to support the purpose of this study and provide a foundation of knowledge that is necessary for the execution of further research.

### **Overview of Theoretical Framework**

If researchers are to address SART as a catalyst for systemic advocacy and change, there must first be an understanding of how systems operate. A system is a sum of its parts. There are no harmonious systems. Change becomes necessary, especially when the human factor is considered (von Bertalanffy, 1968). Therefore, system theory allows an examination of the larger layout for the design and execution of response teams

like SART through the lens of systems theory. Systems theory was first developed in the 1940s through the natural sciences. Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968) developed general system theory, explaining that everything is a part of a system. There are natural systems and social systems. Each system has structures and processes in place that allow the system to function. Each system is also interdependent, relying on other systems as part of the system's ability to function. Larger systems are embedded with small systems that allow the larger system to function or to cease functioning. This idea is easily understood by looking at the natural sciences (von Bertalanffy, 1968). Over time, system theory was applied to the social sciences with purpose. The social sciences system is designed to flow through highs and lows, and is flexible enough for expected change (Knight, 1992). Society can move forward or backward in systems; therefore, systems need to be able to mutate or transform. If there is a vested interest in a direction, it will manipulate the system to transform it in that direction. Within the context of social systems, there are institutions and actors (Knight, 1992).

*Institutions* fall under two categories: formal and informal. Formal institutions include laws, policies, and systems such as the political, legal, and criminal justice systems where laws and policies are practiced (Knight, 1992). Those who operate within these systems are known as *actors*. Formal institutions tend to have more abrupt changes than informal institutions like religion, social, and cultural systems. The norms of systems tend to progressively change throughout time. Social institutions are best understood by looking at the outcomes of their conflicts. Social institutions are those entities that provide a cooperative benefit to the actors and people of that community. While social instructions are designed to develop systematic benefits for the people, they

can develop systematic benefits for only certain kinds of people, or actors. Actors can look for an advance on benefits without regard for others, meaning, there is often unequal distribution of power and equity for certain outliers of institutions. This imbalance creates social conflict, and the institution must respond to bring back balance to the system. If the social institution recognizes the conflict and there are no adjustments to reconcile it, then alternatives are created, some bad and some good (Knight, 1992).

It is important to understand that systems theory speaks about interdependent and interrelated parts such as institutions and actors. Society is a complex system that often carries a reaction to action (Laszlo, 2002). If it is understood that society is a complex system, it must therefore be dissected. Social systems are diverse and complex but there must be balance with diversity in systems. While there will always be mutation and replication, a system will inevitably be forced to change or alter itself to balance if there is too much diversity. With too little diversity, the system might fail to exist. Systems can only survive through the evolution of culture and society (Laszlo, 2002).

Talcott Parsons (1937) best described systems theory as a theory of action in his classic book, *The Structure of Social Action*. As a well-known structural functionalist, Parsons understood that society is a complex system that relies on multiple layers of social construct. Social order has its part in culture; however, Parsons believed that order and stability within society are derived from how society places value on ideas and instructions instead of a structure for society such as an economic structure. Parsons theorized action through a voluntary basis by actors. Action theory is based on structural social components that create order. Action theory focuses on human interaction instead

of the structure that it makes up. The structure is the result of human behavior (Parsons, 1937).

According to Parsons (1937), there are four important implications for action theory. Parsons created a four-part structure known as the AGIL scheme. The first component is an *adaptation*, meaning that a system must be able to adapt to the current environment. Second, a system must create, define, and attain basic goals. This is known as *goal attainment*. Third, systems must *integrate*, or maintain a relationship with other parts, whether it is actors or institutions. Finally, the system must be able to maintain cultural and individual motivations to create further motivations, a component known as *latency* (Parsons, 1937).

Parsons (1937) believed that actors work as an independent element, voluntarily. The actor must be first because, without the actor, it can be assumed that no change is necessary. It is by design and human factor that the individual or group feels it necessary to change a social norm when it is no longer working in favor of the actor/agency. When the “normative orientation” is no longer an option and there is divide within the unit, the actor will develop alternative “orientations” or “means” to create the new norm (Lemert, 2013, p. 157). This concept is clearly indicated by the reactions of agencies participating within their own hierarchical systems and then later within coordinated response teams. Ideally, collaborations between each actor of an agency would be synthesized to create a connection between systems that would allow multiple systems to function together in addressing the larger issues they seek to resolve. This effort would then also emerge within each actor’s system of original function (Lemert, 2013). Within the context of this study, individual members in SART would work within the SART as an effective

collective and take that work into their own agencies to address and enhance their own internal processes.

Knight (1992) argued that institutional systems are made up of choices that change a society. Social institutions develop as the result of social conflict that is caused by actors seeking or working off of power and interests. Actors create institutions in order to have a strategic advantage. Knight stated that these asymmetries over resources are known as a bargaining power. Interdependent action is the result of social outcomes. Expectations with social behavior become important for actors to maximize their utility. Knight wrote, “self-interested actors want institutional arrangements that favor them as individuals, they will prefer institutional rules that constrain the actions of others with whom they interact.” (p. 164). This implies the shape of these institutions can manipulate future behaviors that have the ability to affect how other actors operate. Knight stated that social institutions “constrain the actions of others with whom they interact” (p. 19). Knight believed that social outcomes result from the rules of the institutions and reflect the self-interests of the individuals. Knight examined the informal norms and rules with those power asymmetries in society.

The establishment of response teams has proven Knight’s (1992) ideas to be true. Currently, agencies that participate in coordinated community response teams come to the table with their own ideas and agendas for success. This does not necessarily indicate that they are wrong in their perspectives. However, in order to create a change for the collective good, representatives (actors) within these groups must acknowledge their self-interests and allow room for understanding another angle or factor so that these coordinated responses can function properly. Otherwise, coming together to work on a

problem becomes ineffective. The greatest challenge to social institutions is the ability to consider multiple approaches to combating a problem (Knight, 1992). This is why if SARTs seek to successfully reduce sexual violence in their communities, the game plan must consist of ideas from everyone involved in that decision making process, not just the thought or idea from one actor.

Introducing a form of game theory to this conundrum may offer a strategy to success. While game theory is traditionally popular in counterterrorism and national security, the theory's principles can easily translate to a more localized level of combating violence (Schelling, 1958). To be able to analyze SART, this study must also acknowledge the individual institutional hierarchies of agencies that work within their own systems. These systems interlock with other systems that have their own orientations, social norms, and behaviors. To go deeper, even those individuals working within the affected institutions carry their own belief systems and social norms. Actors within the institutions can create change within their own systems. If they are able to achieve change, they have the ability to expand these changes within the institutions and systems with whom they work. Actors working with a SART or response team for domestic violence have indicated the institutions they work within are ready to create systemic change in addressing domestic and sexual violence. Therefore, systems theory can be taken one step further and be fused with the concepts of game theory as it relates to conflict.

Game theory was originally developed to understand the strategic interactions between two or more parties within a game (Schelling, 1958). Game theory utilized mathematical models for strategy predominantly within the social sciences (i.e.,



economic). When studying game theory, it is important to clearly define how conflict and the actors within that conflict interact. First, the *game* refers to the set of circumstances based on the actions of decision makers. Similar to systems theory, *change* is based upon the actor within an institution of a system. The correlation of the theories and the emergence of ideas for effective are clearly seen when applied into the areas of game theory (Schelling, 1958).

Thomas Schelling (1958), an economist and Nobel laureate, developed an important finding within social conflict. Schelling specifically examined game theory through the context of strategy, not only within war and negotiation but also within the bureaucracy and social hierarchy. Schelling concluded that traditional game theory carried too much weight with its mathematical approach and had yet to consider the human condition when assessing strategy for counterplay. This revelation led to the reorientation of game theory, promoting *the strategy of game*. With regard to conflict, Schelling reproached game theory's relation to conflict and concluded the theory was still underdeveloped when approaching conflict resolution. Schelling stated the theory could only see conflict as a *pure conflict* or a *zero-sum* situation. Schelling deduced conflict as having mixed motives; therefore, mathematics alone does not consider several variables. First, parties involved in conflict often have divergent and convergent interests. Second, the theory does not incorporate the conditions that created the behavioral traits of the parties within that conflict. Third, and most importantly, pure conflict and zero-sum do not acknowledge suggestions, inferences, threats, and promises. Therefore, the theory is limited. According to Schelling, this basis for further empirical research allowed the theory to be strengthened to include other factors.

The original game theory assumes that parties within a game carry the same viewpoints, the same goals, and the same strategies (Schelling, 1958). Schelling's (1958) example of playing a game of chess illustrates where zero-sum can be applied. The game itself involves one person per party where the end goal is to simply win the game. However, if the game incorporates multiple persons within one team and sets alternative goals into the game, the players must now begin to cooperate together in order to achieve outcomes. This is where players must learn to communicate with one another, develop strategies as a collective and learn to listen in order to win. This zero-sum game has now become *non-zero sum*. Schelling confirmed it is not just enough to win in conflict, but best approaches are ones that seek cooperation within parties and among their opponents. In this case study, the researcher sought to learn how game theory functions in practice in a SART organization.

The literature translates the idea that game theory can be incorporated into two approaches (Schelling, 1958). The first approach is that this idea of the strategy of game is most certainly applicable toward social conflict. Essentially, organizational conflict poses a hindrance to agencies' abilities to effectively combat the violence they seek to reduce (Schelling, 1958). In the second approach, the theory can be translated into how organizations work in violence prevention, specifically domestic and sexual violence prevention. If responses to domestic and sexual violence on the communal level (this includes the response by local government agencies) are considered against game theory, then it can be understood that analyzing statistics and aggregated data is necessary, but not sufficient. Institutions must develop a strategy that is inclusive of the ideas of all agencies, not just one point of view. The strategy of the game applied to conflict within

SART may provide those necessary alternative goals and outcomes. It is for this reason that SART exists. SART members must respond as a collective to the violence in their communities. It will take more than statistics to address the troublesome issues; prevention requires deep communication between institutions.

It is also understood that the nature of domestic and sexual crimes requires not only quantitative but qualitative approaches with two concentrations. First, advocates must develop the dynamics of the violence in accordance with the current policies and procedures that are in place within the agencies that respond to the violence. Second, stakeholders must develop a process within interagency collaborations that seeks to respond to the violence not only through a counterplay, but with the aim to support preventative measures. The understanding of human interaction and reaction within the strategy of game can be deepened by also incorporating strategic approaches borrowed from leadership theory. Traditionally, the basis of game theory focuses on the behavioral traits of actors working within institutions (Schelling, 1958). The more contemporary understanding of the theory includes the incorporation of frameworks that focus on the transactional and transformational actions of the actors and institutions they function under within systems. If SART is to lead the way toward collaborative efforts of social change for victims of domestic and sexual violence, SART must apply a strategic leadership theory that fosters that collaboration in an effective manner.

Within *strategic leadership theory*, there is an element of “leader to follower dichotomy” (Filho & Rettig, 2016, p. 4). By shifting the focus from the individual to the system’s design, the strategic leadership approach explores the relationships between the macro, meso, and micro levels of institutions. The approach also focuses on several areas

in which organizations can become better equipped to prevent conflict while fostering positive change within the organization. Actors within institutions must be able to examine relationships and interactions of members inside and outside these group settings (Filho & Rettig, 2016).

The first consideration for strategic leadership is how leadership can utilize social networking (Filho & Rettig, 2016). Strategic leadership theory implies that those individuals with executive authority value connections and networking. Leaders should recognize trends in the local and national culture while developing relationships with stakeholders from all areas who can to engage in these trends (Filho & Rettig, 2016).

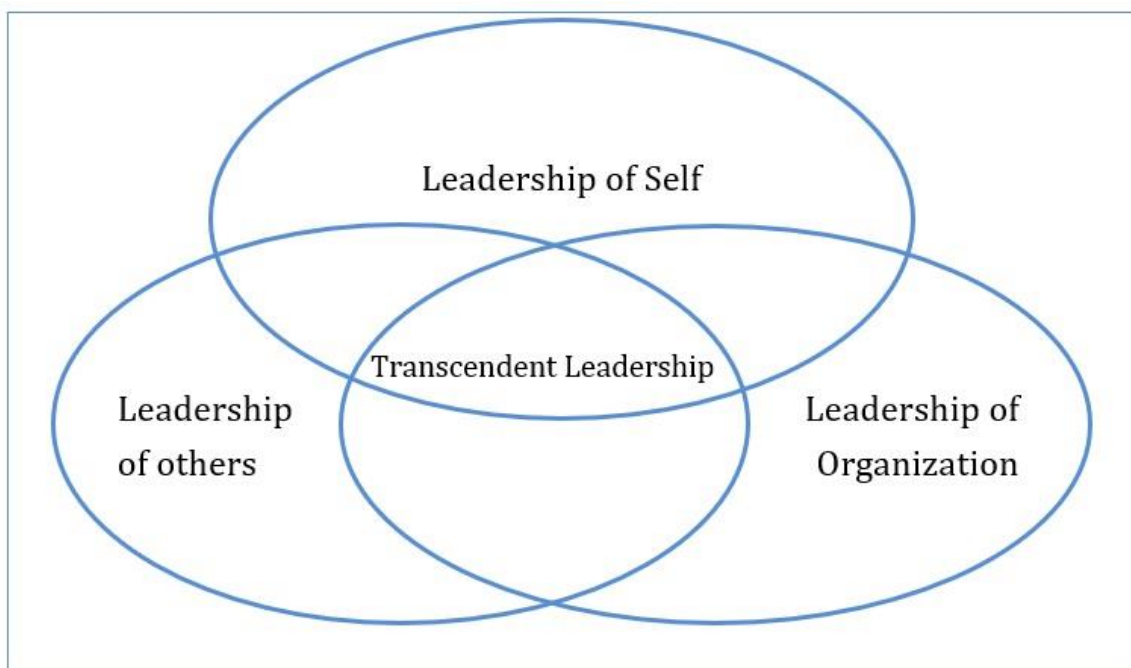
The second consideration for strategic leadership is the dichotomy of exploration-exploitation (Filho & Rettig, 2016). Individuals with authority must be able to expose and acknowledge outdated ways of operating or old ways of thinking while opening the door to explore new avenues for success. This may mean engaging in dialogue with individuals who have opposing views to find middle ground or becoming creative in how a team can move forward with a project. In cases where the stakes are high, leaders must commit to this practice in order to a generate peaceful resolution. Figure 1 depicts the relationships within strategic leadership theory.

In order to execute this idea properly, these actors and institutions must recognize leadership theory and strategic leadership. When referencing strategic leadership, the focus is on transcendence and transformation. Those in executive positions concentrate on organizational responsibilities. Strategic leadership goes beyond the structure and approaches leadership holistically. It is flexible, visionary, and strives to implement social and emotional intelligence (Crossan et al., 2008). Research on leadership theory

generally looks at a single level analysis. However, strategic leadership theory employs three level analysis. First, they look at the leadership of the organization, then leadership of others, finally by the leadership of self (Crossan et al., 2008).

**Figure 1**

*Strategic Leadership*



*Note.* Adapted from “Transcendent Leadership: Strategic Leadership in Dynamic Environments,” by M. Crossan, D. Vera, and L. Nanjad, 2008, *The Leadership Quarterly*, 19(2008), p. 570 (<https://doi.org/10.j.leaqua.2008.07/008>). Copyright 2008 by Elsevier.

The great challenge here is the “non-human elements” (Crossan et al., 2008, p. 572). Organizational leadership is tasked with financial, organizational, and communal responsibilities to create a collective idea and purpose for the institution under which they operate. These tasks can disconnect the leader from their personal goals and the interest of the group because of the need to side with the elements needed for successful

operation. There may be a disruption to the working environment and effective leadership must learn how to respond to such a change in ways that support the collective rather than hinder progress. This is where the tenets of strategic leadership can be utilized to realize positive outcomes. The emphasis of strategic leadership theory is on communication flow and how information is passed down the line of leadership (Crossan et al., 2008).

*Leadership of others* offers practical ways to navigate the sometimes competing demands of leadership (Crossan et al., 2008). Leadership of others involves looking at the individual level versus the group level. Think about the differences between a chief executive officer (CEO) versus the top management team (TMT). Strategic leadership research must be multi-leveled. Strategic leadership examines how a CEO would relate to TMT (Crossan et al., 2008). The concept can be translated to how SART leaders within criminal justice services respond and relate to their direct teams. Strategic leadership can work through all levels of the system. For example, executive directors of victim advocacy centers relate and work with their leadership teams and the actors on the team translate that the decisions of management to those who work below them. Strategic leadership fosters positive communication and engaging communication. There is an importance to understanding human behavior, nonverbal cues, and company culture. Strategic leadership focuses on charisma or transformational guidance. When those in authority present a space that is open to change, transparency, and communication, the leader-follower relationship is more balanced. The follower seeks to emulate the leader's message (Crossan et al., 2008).

*Leadership of self* is the guiding force for the other components of strategic leadership (Crossan et al., 2008). It is imperative that individuals with power understand

their authenticity in the institution. The ways leaders handle crisis and conflict will determine the dynamics of the workspace and ultimately spill into the perception of the institution (Crossan et al., 2008). Peterson and Seligman (2004) stated it is necessary to establish “six core moral virtues that emerge consensually across cultures and throughout time” (p. 28) when learning the culture and people that create the institution. The six virtues are based on a person’s character, rather than their aptitude. First, leaders must possess wisdom and knowledge. This virtue speaks to emotional intelligence. Second, leadership requires courage and integrity. Third, leaders must possess elements of humanity toward social intelligence. Fourth, leadership involves fairness and justice. Fifth, leaders must practice temperance, the ability to carry humility, and practice self-regulation. Finally, leaders must be able to transcend and appreciate with grace and humor (Peterson, & Seligman, 2004).

This introduction of the theoretical framework presents an excellent foundation for the process of combating domestic and sexual violence in communities. The theoretical framework guides an understanding of how to operate the strategy of the game by understanding the theory of systems. The process of strategic leadership is not only important in theory but is essential for practice. Individuals who seek to find success in SART must become comfortable with the tools described in strategic leadership, especially as the field has notoriously found disconnections in process, both internally and externally.

This research was conducted to examine the recommendations for SART by Florida state coalitions in relation to the PBC SART documentation. Documentation for this study included the memorandum of understanding (MOU), meeting agendas, and

meeting minutes. The researcher endeavored to analyze whether the SART documents reflected the recommendations provided by the state coalitions. The researcher expected to find correlations and connections and identify gaps and/or variances between what was proposed by the state coalitions to the county teams. Essentially, this study brings an understanding of the theoretical approaches as they are applied to practice. To further explore the validity of these practices, the researcher also analyzed statistical data from the UCR for PBC from the years 2015–2019. The data analysis assisted the researcher in determining the effectiveness of response teams as they stand today. The statistical data provided a base point for understanding what is happening in practice. However, the importance of the qualitative approach was to break down the understanding of what those numbers may mean through a variety of human factors.

### **Myths and Misconceptions**

A multitude of myths and misconceptions surround the motivations behind crimes of sexual violence. It is important to delineate the tenets of these myths to increase understanding of the complexity of sexual violence. Common myths and misconceptions that assign blame for the crime, at least in part, to the victim, include the stranger versus acquaintance victimization stance, the justice motive theory, and cultural stereotypes.

#### **Stranger Versus Acquaintance Victimization**

One of the most widely misunderstood concepts of sexual violence is the *stranger versus acquaintance victimization* (Drakulich, 2015). Founded by great fear, cultural expectancies and public safety pushed the development of tradition plans and policies around victimization by a stranger. A number of campaigns and marketing for protection components (i.e., home security systems, guns, law enforcement ads) were designed with



a focus on public safety from random attacks of sexual violence. Additionally, these promotions are specifically targeted at women. While women are more likely to experience sexual violence than men, the likelihood does not preclude men from becoming victims of sexual violence. Drakulich (2015) studied how relationships affect victimization for three types of crimes: sexual assaults, non-sexual assaults, and burglaries. Drakulich discovered there are different patterns for different crimes. The relationship of the offender to the victim of crimes of burglaries is of no consequence, while the greatest concern related to relationships is with sexual assaults, both stranger and acquaintance. These narratives have set the cultural tone for how the public sees sexual violence. As a result, the expectancy of acquaintance victimization is likely not perceived as a threat of a form of sexual violence. Individuals who are affected by acquaintance sexual assault are less likely to report than persons who have experienced stranger rape. This may have much to do with stigmas and victim blaming that is present when someone acknowledges a sexual crime has been committed against them. When persons report sexual violence committed by someone they know, there are always questions of the victim's behavior and the environment that led to the assault. Drakulich concluded that stranger assaults, both sexual and nonsexual, have clear effects on victims. Furthermore, the role of sexual violence plays a major role in how public safety demands drive policies and social norms compared to how policies and social norms are developed for nonsexual assaults. In nonsexual assault, the focus is on the crime and the perpetrator. In cases of sexual assault, the focus is on the victim. If the narrative traditionally safety plans for stranger sexual assault, and there has always been a lack of safety planning around acquaintance sexual assault, it would be expected that victims experience

difficulties navigating a system that has not created social norms or comprehensive policies to support victims of such crimes (Drakulich, 2015).

Because of the prevalence of acquaintance sexual assaults, victim blaming is a common response by friends, family, and the public in general. In a joint research project, the World Health Organization et al. (WHO, 2013) estimated that one in three women will experience sexual violence in their lifetime. Those who survive such violence are at greater risk for mental and physical health concerns. As a result, mental health declines are very much in relation to the negative social reactions toward the survivor's victimization and misunderstanding of the dynamics of sexual violence (Breen & Boyce, 2018).

### **Justice Motive Theory**

Several theories provide insight as to the reasons for such reactions to sexually violent crimes as opposed to other forms of violence. One such theory examines the *justice motive*, which focuses on a "just world" (Lerner, 1980, p. 3). The premise of the justice motive is that people who participate in victim blaming understand the world through a specific moral compass. It is the belief that by behaving in accordance with expected societal rules individuals will inevitably remove the risk of sexual violence. Therefore, when a victim comes forward with an accusation of sexual violence, people with this societal expectation believe a victim must have behaved badly, and thus, individuals attribute the victim's behavior as the reason for the exposure to the violence. The basic idea is that people will get what they deserve. The justice motive belief system provides a rationale for cause and effect to a crime that is difficult for many people to comprehend. Because society cannot provide an explanation suitable enough to answer

why someone would commit a crime of sexual violence, it becomes a cultural norm to question the victim's behavior before and after the crime. Typical societal responses aligned with the justice motive question what a victim wore, the time of day, and what the victim did to have an offender approach them. The prevalence of acquaintance sexual violence as opposed to stranger violence raises societal questions against a victim surrounding the dynamics of that relationship. The justice motive provides a method of control over the narrative for cause and effect. This way of thinking is disconcerting, as it is not a practice in other forms of violence. There is no evidence to suggest that this type of thinking occurs with regard to robbery or mass shootings. In these cases, there is always research into and questioning of the perpetrator's mental health and behavior (Lerner, 1980).

Despite these justifications, the justice motive myth provides false answers as it focuses on questioning the victim of a crime rather than questioning the perpetrator. If the moral compass approach states that an individual doing wrong will be punished, then it should be assumed that violent offenders will be punished for doing wrong. However, the moral compass approach is not supported in practice, as sexually violent crimes rarely find conviction within the system, supporting the premise of the justice motive theory. Just world personal belief systems bleed into the criminal justice and judicial systems. A study on college students' personal beliefs and perceived ideas of sexual assault by Buddie and Miller (2001) showed that 57% of student participants indicated their beliefs had been influenced by myths and the reactions to the victims' trauma. A similar study by Page (2007) surveyed 891 police officers. The results suggested that while 93% of

participants did believe that someone could be sexually assaulted, 44% would be unlikely to believe the victim if the victim was a sex worker (Page, 2007).

It has even been suggested that the judicial system also follows this strong justice motive. Judges have been reported to consider survivor behavior and conduct in their decision-making within a case presented before them. Some of these factors include the victim's dress and "seductive behavior" (Sokratis et al., 2015, p. 5). Sokratis et al. (2015) provided a meta-analysis on nine juror case studies and found that these myths of sexual assault were significantly adopted. Myths of sexual assault substantially affected decision making in eight of the nine studies analyzed. Because of this belief system, jurors were more likely to offer a not guilty verdict for the alleged perpetrator (Sokratis et al., 2015).

Breen and Boyce (2018) examined three hypotheses to understand several thoughts related to the justice motive. Seven hundred fifty undergraduate students participated in reading random fictitious vignettes based on a sexual assault involving two undergraduate students, after which they were asked to participate in a survey. The first hypothesis explored if participants who carried a strong justice motive would embrace the sexual assault myths more than participants with a weak justice motive. The other two hypotheses examined the relationship between victim and perpetrator. The second hypothesis queried participants' beliefs if the victim maintained contact with their assailant, and the third hypothesis questioned participants' point of view if the victims and perpetrators were described as intimate partners. Based on the findings, Breen and Boyce concluded that those who carried a stronger justice motive were more likely to support victim blaming ideas and personal beliefs. Breen and Boyce's findings aligned with other studies on the justice motive and the stranger versus acquaintance myths.

## **Cultural Stereotypes**

A third myth or misconception about sexually violent crimes involves the cultural stereotypes present in society. Deitz et al. (2015) explored the differences between cultural, societal, and self-related aspects of the stigmas of sexual violence. Deitz et al. theorized if victim blaming is prominent for a survivor, it is likely that trauma will be prolonged for the survivor, leading to deeper self-blame. Prolonged response to trauma coupled with societal blame increases the effects of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in survivors of trauma. This perpetuated negative reaction furthers the epidemic of violence against vulnerable populations. Deitz et al. found the presence of several cultural stereotypes related to victims of sexual violence within the United States. Some stereotypes include ideas that a husband cannot sexually assault his wife, that victims enjoy being sexually assaulted, victims lie about their assault, and victims ask for the abuse. Individual and societal stereotypes derive from these aberrant beliefs. The negative perspectives devalue a survivor and suppress their ability to thrive after trauma (Deitz et al., 2015).

Neville and Heppner (1999) provided an ecological study to explain the role of human adaptation in human interactions. Neville and Heppner's culturally inclusive ecological model of sexual assault recovery (CIEMSAR) describes the factors that influence a sexual assault survivor's path to recovery. Neville and Heppner analyzed the cultural impact of survivor's ability to work through trauma based on racial and ethnic factors. Findings revealed racial and ethnic factors impact survivors and how they adjust in recovery. Additionally, the model suggests that culture influences the entire sexual assault recovery process. Individuals who are concerned about the cultural stereotypes are

less likely to have adequate support systems and tend to deal with their trauma internally (Neville & Heppner, 1999).

Racial and ethnic stigmas are part of a social construct and are developed to produce the conceptual framework for society. In Neville et al.'s (2004) study, gender and race were found to play a significant role in a survivor's ability to recover. Neville et al. noted that studies have overlooked race and gender within sexual violence. Neville et al. further tested the CIEMSAR by examining how cultural stereotypes affect the self-esteem of Black and White survivors. Sexual assault researchers understand there are multiple factors and systems that assist in the recovery from this specific type of violence. Those factors include the survivor, their surrounding environment, the broader community, and the survivor's culture (Neville et al., 2004). While both White and Black women who experience sexual assault face trauma through the recovery process, Neville et al. discovered Black women found the cultural attributions more significant to understanding their assault than White women. Findings also revealed that cultural stereotypes blame Black women for their assaults more than White women. Feminist theorists suggest that the race-gender stereotype against Black women internalizes a "Jezebel image," (p. 91), creating deep levels of low self-esteem (Neville et al., 2004). Based on this research, it is important to acknowledge the disparities for survivorship and to acknowledge the need for inclusion for race, sexual orientation, and gender within the discussion of recovery and remedies to sexual violence. Attention to inclusion is important not only for assisting with those who are in survivorship, but within the leadership design of developing such remedies.

## Diversity and Inclusion

In order to work toward violence prevention, institutions must become anti-racist and inclusive of a variety of perspectives from those in marginalized communities. More importantly, there must be representation from such communities within institutions to provide fair and equal opinions for policy and procedure that directly affect the people they serve. It is counterproductive to have practices in place that do not consider a large population of people who suffer the very violence that is being sought to diminish. Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence (SPAN) provided guidance on this issue as early as 2005 in their publication *Anti-Racism Education*. While SPAN's training is not a new discovery, it provides very critical insights on the behaviors of poor leadership toward the groups they support and outlines best practices to become highly inclusive.

The problem with anti-violence movements is the imbalance of representation in leadership roles. One important focus is the lack of diversity and inclusion within nonprofit leadership. Without individuals from diverse communities, it is impossible to reduce violence. It is counterproductive for people who do not belong to particular groups to speak on behalf of them and, furthermore, to impose remedies they are ill-equipped to recommend or set in place. In 2016, The Building Movement Project implemented an initiative entitled *Race to Lead* (Thomas-Breitfeld & Kunreuther, 2017). The purpose of the initiative was to uncover and explore the racial gap among leadership in nonprofit organizations. BMP's methodology stemmed from a literature review of race and leadership within nonprofit and for-profit sectors. Three dozen interviews on barriers for people of color were conducted with leaders in nonprofits, capacity builders, and funders. The project surveyed over 4,300 individuals who were, at the time, employed in a

nonprofit. The survey reached 15 partnering organizations that sent the survey nationally via social media, newsletters, and email. The overwhelming responses provided some clear indicators that there was, in fact, a lack of diversity and inclusion in both sectors. The initiative verified that barriers do exist not only in leadership but in decision making (Thomas-Breitfeld & Kunreuther, 2017).

A majority of respondents (58%) in the BMP study identified as White, while 42% identified as people of color (15% African American, 11% Latino/a or Hispanic, 8% Asia/Pacific Islander, 8% Multiracial, and 1% Native American; Thomas-Breitfeld & Kunreuther, 2017, p. 5). Forty-nine percent of respondents came from the Northeast and Midwest with smaller portions stemming from the South and West. Females made up 78% of the respondents, while 19% were male, and 3% identified as transgender, nonconforming, and nonbinary. The large majority of respondents (77%) were from the millennial and generation X age groups and 73% of the respondents were children of parents born in the United States. The study indicated three key findings. First, there were not many differences with a background in education or qualifications between White respondents and respondents who were people of color. The same was indicated for salary ranges. However, there were slight differences in positions and roles. The study found that White respondents held more executive and directorial leadership roles and people of color who responded were identified more inline/administrative staff roles (Thomas-Breitfeld & Kunreuther, 2017).

BMP re-launched the Race to Lead survey in 2019 (Kunreuther & Thomas-Breitfeld, 2019) and collected over 5,000 responses from nonprofit professionals. The Race to Lead report series explores the results of both surveys and challenges the way the



nonprofit sector approaches the racial leadership gap. The 2019 survey indicated there were few changes to the data since 2016. There was no significant shift in the percentages moving forward three years later; however, there was an inclusion of gender identity shift. In 2019, language for both cisgender and transgender respondents were included as opposed to the 2016 survey, where transgender respondents were identified as “trans, gender non-conforming, non-binary, et al.” (Kunreuther & Thomas-Breitfeld, 2019, p. 6). The greatest difference in the data indicated there were more millennial participants in 2019 than in 2016, moving from 38% to 47% participation (Kunreuther & Thomas-Breitfeld, 2019, Thomas-Breifeld & Kunreuther, 2016). The outcomes of the 2019 survey concluded the same findings as 2016. There was very little movement in the progression of people in color within leadership roles. People of color still indicated their race/ethnicity negatively impacted their career advancement. One noticeable change was the increased gap between White respondents in roles of leadership and the people of color respondents. The data revealed there was still a desire for people of color to advance in leadership roles. An important take away from the survey was the need to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts for the nonprofit sector, as well as a need to consider addressing inadequate salaries in a comparison of White respondents to respondents of color. Ultimately, both the 2016 and the 2019 surveys revealed the systemic barriers that still exist in the nonprofit sector (Kunreuther & Thomas-Breitfeld, 2019, Thomas-Breifeld & Kunreuther, 2016). Analysis of the data revealed White participants did not experience the same barriers as participants of color, because they did not share the same lived experience obstacles as participants of color (Kunreuther & Thomas-Breitfeld, 2019, Thomas-Breifeld & Kunreuther, 2016). If the data from *Race to*

*Lead* confirms the participants had similar educational training and similar positioning and the data indicate that White participants felt more contentment than their counterparts within their roles (Kunreuther & Thomas-Breifeld, 2019, Thomas-Breifeld & Kunreuther, 2016), then agencies must come to terms with addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion concerns. In order for a nonprofit agency to thrive, the agency must have its own house in order.

### **Institutional Roles and Actors**

The criminal justice system and the public health sector have both focused on the social problems of domestic and sexual violence. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS, 2009) created the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) to provide statistical data concerning criminal victimizations from rape, sexual assault, robbery, assault, theft, household burglary, and motor vehicle theft (Kruttschnitt et al., 2014). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) administers the *National Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence Survey* (NISVS). The national survey is continuously conducted to assess the severity of rape and sexual assault in the United States (Kruttschnitt et al., 2014).

The creation of evidence-based data is an important element in creating solutions to address issues of violence. Institutions and the actors within those institutions play particular roles in this process. While best efforts are made in data collection and analysis, the issue of violence is not a precise science. Because there are situations where data may be vague or where data can be interpreted differently from institution to institution, there can be no one solution to resolving violence.

It is important to note that the reported numbers are a general estimate of the crimes committed as many victims do not report or discuss their victimization for the many reasons described earlier in this chapter (Bachman, 2002). Data on these types of crimes of violence are based on cases reported to either police, hospitals, or surveys, and while there are good data made available through these sources, it is important to be aware that the reported cases are instances where victims have come forward to give context to the crime. Domestic and sexual violence cases are deeply personal to those impacted by it. Therefore, it is common to find *estimates* from reports (Bachman, 2002).

The service providers for survivors of domestic and sexual crimes play important roles in how a survivor discloses the crime and participates in the process. Agencies have their own part within the system and engage with survivors in different ways. As a result, there are different approaches to survivorship depending on agency roles. Understanding the micro and mezzo roles within the programs that address domestic and sexual violence will create better awareness of the structural conflicts agencies face on a macro level.

### **Victim Advocacy Services**

The work of a rape crisis center is to provide crisis intervention services for victims of sexual violence. Crisis intervention services encompass an empowerment approach to providing information about all aspects of the journey to survivorship. The path to survival may include interacting with the criminal justice system, judicial system, and medical system. Advocacy teams aid prior to reporting, during processes, and after care. To understand the success of these services, Patterson and Tringali (2015) conducted a study to examine the work of victim advocates and sexual assault nurse examiners (SANE). Patterson and Tringali conducted interviews with 13 victim

advocates and 10 forensic nurses who participated in a large Midwestern SANE program to explore the relationships between service providers and the victims they encountered. Findings revealed the primary goal of the team was not to encourage survivors to participate in the criminal justice system, but rather to provide information about each system and its processes so that survivors would be able to make well informed decisions. Information also included safety planning with survivors on each decision they made to allow proper survivorship. This approach allowed survivors to feel they had someone who was on their side, not forcing participation. The approach confirmed the second finding. Because survivors felt well-informed on the processes of the criminal justice system and were prepared for public reaction, they felt more compelled to participate. Participation also occurred with the understanding that advocates would be supporting survivors through the entire process, helping to answer any questions that might arise, and providing feedback on the pros and cons of options (Patterson & Tringali, 2015).

Because of funding through programs like VAWA, victim advocacy services continue to be available and continue to grow for survivors. Leaders in the fields of domestic violence and sexual assault prevention concluded the need for such services and continued multi agency collaboration. Through these conversations, it was clear that victim services are more about empowering growth and understanding. The Victim Empowerment, Safety, and Perpetrator Accountability Through Collaboration (VESPAC) model developed by White et al. (2019) explain the vitality of victim services in reducing violence in communities. The model not only focuses on immediate responses for victims, but long term programming that transforms these individuals to survivors. It

focuses on five intertwining concepts of community readiness, victim services, justice responses, coordinated community responses, and cultural relevance (White et al., 2019, p. 107). Community readiness relates to the infrastructures and training for those in positions that interact with survivors. Victim services specifically relate to the overall response for survivors, including the rape crisis centers and their short term and long term services. Justice responses reference the programs that hold offenders accountable, such as investigations, arrest, prosecution, protection orders, probation, incarceration, and civil remedies. Coordinated community responses are the interagency collaborations developed to continue efforts to work in favor of survivorship. Cultural relevance emphasizes communities developing culturally specific strategies which allow for proper and ample access to resources while also acknowledging the needs of underrepresented populations in order to provide sustainable services. However, these efforts are consistently under attack when communities do not grow away from the myths and misconceptions of sexual assault. Therefore, this article concludes the need for continued training and collaboration for victim service providers in order to move in the direction of violence reduction (White et al., 2019).

### **Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners**

SANE workers play a pivotal role in rape crisis center programs. SANE workers have specialized training in medical, forensic, and psychological services for survivors of sexual violence and are based in hospitals or community based clinics. The goal is to provide health care crisis intervention for victims of sexual violence (Campbell et al., 2014). SANE workers conduct rape kit examinations to collect evidence for law enforcement and prosecution. They also screen for sexually transmitted diseases,

pregnancy, and other medical issues that may come into question. The examiners work in conjunction with victim advocates, law enforcement, and prosecutors from the moment of the examination until the end of cases that go before a judge. While performing examinations, victim advocates are, by law, allowed to be present with the survivor. Examiners will also refer survivors to rape crisis centers for ongoing support. If the survivor agrees to provide the evidence from the exam to law enforcement, SANE workers will collaborate with law enforcement to transfer the kit accordingly. Subsequently, this evidence becomes a major component to the prosecution. Ideally, SANE workers will cooperate with attorneys to assess the evidence as well as confer on the survivor's role through the prosecution stage alongside victim advocates. (Campbell et al., 2014).

Campbell et al. (2014), veteran sexual assault researchers, looked into the SANE program to determine whether the involvement of SANE increases prosecution rates. Because of the large number of SANE programs across the United States, Campbell et al. conducted random sampling from six SANE programs located at various places across the nation. Two of the programs were rural, two were midsize, and two were urban. These programs were chosen by their "readiness," (p. 610), meaning the programs were able to fully function while participating in the research without disrupting service (Campbell et al., 2014,).

While all six SANE programs differed geographically, the findings were similar for all across the board (Campbell et al., 2014). Campbell et al. (2014) found that prior to SANE program implementation, referral rates to prosecutors were extraordinarily low. An average of 90% of cases were not referred by law enforcement or charged by

prosecutors. After SANE programming was implemented, there was no significant change; 86% of cases were not referred or charged. Campbell et al. did find a higher rate of plea bargains in cases. While there was little significant change, Campbell et al. concluded that a deeper and more rigorous study of this data could offer insight into the factors that played into the statistics. Campbell et al.'s findings validate the study of SART programs can offer further information and provide outcomes to help explain any data or statistics that come from studying programs.

### **Law Enforcement**

The role of law enforcement in sexual assault crimes is to provide the investigative component for the criminal justice system. Duties entail interviews with victims, suspects, and witnesses. Law enforcement officers also collect and preserve any evidence presented for prosecution. While these measures seem straight forward, they can become complex when considering human factors. Because they act as first responders, officers report on initial and immediate examination of a situation.

It is not uncommon to see the criminal justice system create its own ideas about determining what is *real rape* and who is considered a *real victim*. The implementation of trauma-informed and survivor-centered approaches within the criminal justice system has proven to enhance services for survivors of sexual assault. When law enforcement officers are conditioned toward rape myths, they are more likely to discredit victims who come forward (Garza & Franklin, 2021). In order to understand law enforcement's extent of myth endorsement, Garza and Franklin (2021) collected data from police officer participants from one of the United States' largest and diverse cities. The quantitative study was conducted to explore three research questions: (a) to understand the police

officer participants' extent of rape myth endorsement, (b) to understand the factors that led to the endorsement, and (c) to understand how the rape myth endorsement affected police officer participants in their preparedness to respond to sexual assault cases. Data were collected from 517 surveys given to police officers and analyzed using three stages: zero-order correlation, matrix, and standard deviations; multivariate ordinary least squares regression; and path modeling (pp. 560–561). Garza and Franklin concluded that any rape myth endorsement would hinder an officer's preparedness to respond to sexual assault. While it is common for individuals to have bias, law enforcement officers who endorse negative ideas of victims will ultimately influence a victim's cooperation during an investigation and participation in the criminal justice process. Findings indicated that women officers were less likely to hold rape myths than male officers, which led to a recommendation for more sexual assault trainings for officers as well as further cooperation with victim advocacy groups. Finally, Garza and Franklin concluded that when officers engaged in training and survivor centered approaches, rape myth endorsements decreased. The study demonstrated that collaboration and open communication provide healthier approaches to reducing sexual violence in our communities (Garza & Franklin, 2021).

In 2020, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), the professional association for police leaders, worked with the Department of Justice to develop trauma-informed training and guidance for officers engaging with sexual assault victims. One guidance document produced from this process was *Successful Trauma-Informed Victim Interviewing* (IACP, 2020). This document stemmed from a grant provided by the Office of Violence Against Women. The guidance provides officers with interviewing



techniques that reframe old methods of questioning to become more open-ended and inclusive of a victim's experience. Prior to this development, IACP also provided workers within the criminal justice system with the *Sexual Assault Incident Report: Investigative Strategies* (2018) manual that offers guidance and interviewing strategies derived from best practices across the nation. The guidance was developed in collaboration with law enforcement from local, state, and federal agencies as well as prosecutors, advocates, medical, and forensic professionals (IACP, 2018). The IACP (2018, 2020) took great lengths to enhance services provided by law enforcement by collaborating with other agencies to identify gaps within their own field and to develop strategies that can unify the agencies working to reduce violence. These efforts indicate the work of leadership. As both guidance documents are fairly new, it will be important to follow the guidance's evolution in practice.

### **Prosecutors**

The role of the prosecution for sexual violence cases is to carry out the evidence from an investigation and bring justice to the crime committed. Prosecutors of sexual assault cases work within specialized units that focus on crimes. Historically, prosecutors are known for not bringing forth as many cases as expected by the public. Court data from 75 of the largest counties in the United States indicated that in 2009 only about one third of rape cases resulted in a felony conviction, while 27% of felony charged cases were not convicted, leading to dismissal for a large majority of the cases (Alderden et al., 2021). Because there is very little research on the criminal justice perspective regarding sexual violence, Alderden et al. (2021) conducted a qualitative study with eight assistant district attorneys (ADAs) in northeastern urban areas of the United States to discover

insights from a prosecution perspective about the handling of sexual assault cases and to understand how prosecutors use biological and injury evidence in their cases.

Prior to the study, Alderden et al. (2021) asked the ADAs to review cases they felt provided sufficient evidence to prosecute in a court. The cases reviewed consisted of female victims and male perpetrators. Alderden et al. concluded that ADAs placed high value on two particular things: (a) obtaining forensic medical examination material, and (b) biological and injury evidence. Forensic medical examination material references the SANE rape kit. The kit provides biological and injury evidence from the victim. It is important to understand that biological and injury evidence may also be discovered beyond the rape kit. Biological and injury evidence holds great value in the courtroom because of what it can reveal about the crime. First, the biological evidence can identify unknown perpetrators or confirm known suspects. Biological evidence also serves to support a survivor's statements of the crime committed and rebut a defendant's denial of the crime. Injury evidence can illustrate the severity of the crime while supporting the survivor's account. Defense teams will often seek ways to discredit a survivor, making assumptions regarding consent or the role of the survivor in the crime. ADAs stress the importance of biological and injury evidence because it is their duty to "establish reasonable doubt" (p. 3888) that such a crime took place (Alderden et al., 2021).

Alderden et al.'s (2021) study showed that while many ADAs do believe victims, they understand the procedure to a successful conviction of a defendant. The challenges they face are to show a judge and jury that a crime did in fact take place. It is difficult to go by words alone, and physical evidence to support an account is necessary to convict. The other challenge is to collect the physical evidence. It may be that prosecutors

understand the stress and fear of moving forward experienced by a victim yet are challenged with the requirement of evidence to successfully defend the case. Therefore, it is imperative that prosecutors are able to collaborate with other agencies within the community.

### **Collaboration**

While agencies come together to look at the problem, it is also true that some agencies do not look outside their own responsibility, processes, and protocols for addressing sexual assault crimes. These agencies do not have a follow through with meetings and tend to not agree with other agencies on pressing issues. One of the biggest concerns identified in past studies is that response teams often have “system- and individual-level barriers” (Haas, 2011, p. 359). This means that macro level issues must be addressed and personal relationships between individuals within the agency must also be tended to as well as relationships with other agencies. Haas (2011) stated that important issues such as staff turnover, funding, and political agendas are all things that take precedence over the issue of domestic violence in many cases. It is also important to note that while efforts are being made to understand domestic violence in communities, other issues such as drugs in communities tend to be on a higher level within the politics of the criminal justice system. Other things to consider are the culture and viewpoints toward domestic violence within each agency. Depending on the sentiments of leadership and their service providers, outcomes will look different case by case (Haas, 2011).

States have different mandates and requirements for addressing domestic violence. The Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Violence Justice Institute (2019) explored SARTs to determine how they function across states. MNCASA discovered that

states like Virginia, where it is mandated, that agencies participate in coordinated community response teams, have better success in building up such teams, while those states without mandates have a harder time bringing people to the table. Across the board, SARTs found difficulty in the next step of the process, which was to begin the dialogue for responding to violent crimes. MNCASA's study showed that without the enthusiasm of those who represent the agencies required to attend collaborative response meetings, not much would come from the meetings. All SARTs interviewed indicated they wished to resolve many of the issues surrounding sexual assault but did not know how to address the problems. Furthermore, there SARTs indicated a need for coordination in order to move forward (Engelking & Florman, 2019).

### **Conflict Resolution as a Means to Address Institutional Conflict**

Institutional conflict is inevitable; therefore, SARTs must establish conflict resolution practices to move forward toward success. Conflict resolution can be adopted by any discipline, as it is a practice that seeks to create positive change and effectiveness for any problem. Conflict resolution practices can be found in many fields. Perhaps the most unique aspect of the conflict resolution field is the ever shifting balance between theory and practice. While many disciplines have constructed mechanisms to address conflict resolution, there is a need to be flexible in resolution approaches due to the ebb and flow of conflict; constant adjustment may be necessary for successful outcomes (Alberstein & Rothman, 2013). Though scholars today have many points of view on the development of the field of conflict resolution, all seem to agree there are no simple directions for a transdiscipline area of study. Perhaps the main focus of many scholars is to develop "a scientifically based contingency" (Alberstein & Rothman, 2013, p. 6) that

allows the field to grow from infancy into a discipline of its own, while still employing elements from related fields.

In the early 2000s, scholars examined the concerns related to conflict resolution and navigated ways to deliver results. The Alliance for Conflict Transformation (ACT; Zelizer, 2015) conducted a research project to determine the needs of workers in the multidisciplinary field. Through a series of online surveys, ACT was able to reach out to an array of organizations to determine whether they utilized conflict resolution and what the specific needs of the organization were in regard to conflict resolution. From the 130 organizations contacted, the 60 who chose to participate assisted in the research and provided enough feedback to help outline key themes for this diverse field. First and foremost, it was determined that most organizations were shifting from using conflict resolution as a key term. The study revealed that companies, organizations, and agencies preferred to dissect terminology to be more specific to their individual needs. Classifying particular terms to fit the needs of the institution, students and researchers in the field were able to find careers that were tailored to their respective studies, as well as better construct their expertise (Zelizer, 2015).

For many organizations that participated in Zelizer's (2015) study, *peacebuilding/conflict transformation* provided a more embodying theme for the work they did. Peacebuilding was a means to address structural violence and provide solutions to local and national networks through education. Peacebuilding differs slightly from *peacekeeping*, another term commonly used in discussions of conflict resolution. Peacekeeping focuses more on policy analysis and maintenance of conflict, whereas *peace education* brings conflict resolution practices into the education sector. Terms such

as *conflict prevention and conflict management and mitigation* were loosely defined, self-explanatory and, at the time, not widely used by participants in Zelizer's study. Two interesting concepts noted were *conflict recovery* and *two-track diplomacy*. These terms are focused on the application of conflict resolution in the aftermath of conflict, promoting group interaction and trust building. These terms seemingly belong to a particular sect of international relations track of conflict resolution where agencies have generally designed mechanisms to address long-term conflicts in sectors such as public policy, humanitarian aid, and international development. Zelizer indicated that the utmost importance for the study's participants was the ability to bridge relationships and facilitate dialogue for long-term stability in their respective fields. While Zelizer did not find any real career path that specifically indicated conflict resolution positions, it was clear in the findings that the skillsets of the field were utilized in a variety of positions. Certainly, in the earlier part of the century, this framework fit the needs of organizations almost perfectly; however, since that time, the multidisciplinary field has expanded the definition of conflict resolution beyond what most people consider its meaning to be.

It is important to note that the expansion of technology, globalization, and shifts in politics has led to a need for more skillsets from neighboring disciplines within the field of conflict resolution. The field has planted roots in the international development and humanitarian aid sectors and has expanded into higher education. Conflict resolution efforts draw from established areas of psychology, sociology, communication, anthropology, public policy, environmental science, and journalism. While the majority of the background for conflict resolution lies within the political science field, conflict resolution practices cannot be connected exclusively with political science due to the

interconnections it has through system design. It is critical that these efforts also reach systems and institutions that work with violence prevention in the United States. This research was conducted to promote pathways for conflict resolution principles to be employed in a variety of disciplines within the criminal justice system and among victim service providers.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### **Introduction**

This research was conducted to explore the experiences of Palm Beach law enforcement officers, district attorney offices, and victim advocacy organizations within their local SART to analyze the effectiveness of the recommendations provided by the Florida state coalition to combat sexual violence in their community. The overall goal of the agencies involved within SART is to reduce sexual violence within their communities, yet agencies within the criminal justice system have different responsibilities in their efforts to respond to violence. Therefore, if approaches and desired outcomes vary from agency to agency, the diversified practices can lead to distrust, adversarial relationships, and lack of cooperation within the SART. Community SARTs rely on the good faith and good will of agencies to participate in the response to sexual violence. SARTs assume that members of the affected agencies want to be included in meetings and come to the table willing to discuss any and all issues around violence prevention efforts within their respective agency (Whetstone, 2001). Greeson and Campbell (2015) indicated that teams follow recommendations provided by the sexual assault state coalitions. The recommendations lay out a foundation for team building, assessment of policies and procedures, and promoting inclusion of a complex journey that can be explored through many different avenues (Greeson & Campbell, 2015).

Violence prevention is not just about numbers and agencies; it is about human connections that often get lost in the paperwork of everyday life. Qualitative methods work best at developing a holistic picture of a complex process, as they focus more on the



people and the real life situations individuals encounter rather than on statistics alone (Neuendorf, 2017). Statistical data is insufficient for verification that something needs to be changed. Qualitative methods afford researchers the tools to create a humanistic approach to issues that need solutions on the ground (Neuendorf, 2017). Foundationally, social change needs qualitative research because qualitative methods help research become the voice of the voiceless (Mitchell & Clark, 2018).

Evaluation of the standard of performance of PBC SART began with an analysis of data since the last program recommendations were instituted. By examining documentation from 2015 until 2019, the researcher was able to compare and contrast the proposals of various state coalitions for sexual assault with the data provided by current efforts. This research also considered statistical data on behalf of the UCR, which provides information on arrests and demographics for states and counties. For this study, a qualitative method provided the best framework to compare the recommendations of the state of Florida regarding the efforts of response teams and how PBC SART has interpreted these recommendations.

The researcher chose QCA as the preferred methodology. This method is used to analyze recorded communication to discover similarities, differences, and/or patterns (Neuendorf, 2017). QCA is a method used to establish the effects, purpose, and practicality of a certain phenomenon or issue. QCA is systematic and objective, using both human-coded and computer-aided text analysis. QCA allows researchers to critique and examine human interaction through recorded documentation and can be used to study perceptions of character behavior, the use of words in speeches and advertising, and to

dissect interactions through social media and other venues (Neuendorf, 2017). While the range of application varies, the method is generally studied in two manners.

Researchers select either a quantitative or qualitative methodology when designing empirical studies. Quantitative methods are focused on the numerical measurement of frequency that justifies a particular theory or assumption (Bengtsson, 2016). In contrast, qualitative methods allow the researcher to interpret and understand the text to explore thoughts, concepts, and/or processes within a particular phenomenon or issue (Bengtsson, 2016). QCA, a type of qualitative methodology, finds deeper meaning beyond the text. It seeks purpose and explanation for the unexplained. QCA is generally used when the aim of the study design is to describe a phenomenon.

Descriptive research is usually appropriate when existing theory or research literature on a phenomenon is limited. Researchers avoid using preconceived categories, and instead, allow the categories and names for categories to flow from the data. Researchers immerse themselves in the data to allow new insights to emerge, also described as inductive category development. Many qualitative methods share this initial approach to study design and analysis (Bengtsson, 2016).

This study followed the foundations of interpretivist research in that reality is socially constructed and requires reflective understanding to analyze the phenomenon of conflict with actors in a complex system (Willis, 2007). The interpretivist approach differs from traditional approaches reflective of positivism and postpositivism. Unlike postpositivism, which only accepts scientific methods and tests theory, interpretivism accepts subjective and objective research methods. The epistemological positions of positivism and postpositivism see the reality from the outside looking in, assuming that

social norms construct the actions of individuals. In contrast, interpretivism sees reality as subjective in that the actions of an individual are based on personal experiences, not only social norms. It is for this reason interpretive approaches prefer qualitative methods of interviewing and observing. The purpose of interpretivist research is to understand a particular context. It is important to note that the interpretivist position is that any form of research is considered acceptable for intellectual progress. As positivists believe in structured guidelines to research, interpretivists accept standards but do not believe the standards are universal for the sake of research (Willis, 2007). More importantly, interpretivists understand that data sources closer to the subject of research provide a better interpretation of data and context. QCA has found popularity within social sciences and is recognized as especially important within gender studies (Neuendorf, 2017).

### **Advantages of Content Analysis**

There are several advantages for using content analysis. Data can be analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively, allowing for the statistical analysis and interpretation of findings (Neuendorf, 2017). Content analysis can also focus on examining historical and cultural communications to discover insights into the phenomenon. This understanding of the data gives the reader a deeper connection to human factors of behavior and language. Most importantly, within the context of this research, trends of group dynamics can be discovered and examined provided by the recorded text (Neuendorf, 2017). In this study, content analysis allowed the researcher to develop best practice recommendations, as prior research highlighted several ideas worth investigating, forming the foundation of this qualitative case study.

QCA is found to be consistent with the use of a phenomenological, descriptive study design (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The approach is best utilized when furthering the research of an existing theory or research literature where the context of the phenomenon is limited. It is important to stray away from utilizing categories that already exist. Researchers should develop categories and names for categories from the data they are examining. Researchers immerse themselves in the data to allow new insights to emerge, also described as inductive category development (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Many qualitative methods share this initial approach to study design and analysis.

In QCA, the researcher must follow a simple process. The research begins with an analysis and reading of data collected for a first run through (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Then, the researcher creates codes and themes by going through the written data to highlight important and repeated words. This first approach develops a foundation for the creation of initial ideas for categories and themes about the information. As the data are further analyzed, the researcher becomes more reflective and is able to create coding labels. The initial analysis of data can now be formulated into a concrete theme. Finally, the researcher can begin to find similarities and differences within the data and develop a direction for the research question (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Eventually, the codes are placed into categories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Categories create more meaning, as the data can now tell a piece of the story. This process shapes how the researcher draws conclusions. It is not uncommon for the categories to segue into subcategories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

After identifying the codes and categories, the next step is to draw concurrences. In conventional content analysis, the researcher begins to look at the theories or other

findings that will be responded to by the categories created (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

This approach provides a great advantage to qualitative research by allowing direct responses from participants. While new data are supported by previous literature or theories, the researcher may expand understanding of the phenomenon with new interpretations of the data. The researcher does not need to carry a preconceived notion of what participants may feel or how they will react, but rather, can rely on the information provided within the data collected to examine participants' emotions, meanings, and feelings (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The disadvantage to qualitative content analysis is that the researcher may not be able to fully understand the meaning behind the context of the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This may, in turn, create difficulties in creating categories and lead to inaccuracy in the data. Good research requires validity and reliability (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Because QCA is a of open-ended analysis that leads to further research, it is often times confused with grounded theory. Both methods look beyond the text and seek to understand a participant's lived experience. Conventional content analysis explores lived experiences as well but is limited on theory development as the sampling only measures one instance with a participant rather than an ongoing relationship. The best approach for QCA is to view it as a starting point, or "model building" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1281). This may derive from comparing a current phenomenon to existing theory, or to observe a phenomenon and examining the relationships to that phenomenon. It is at this point a researcher will develop their ideas (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

QCA is uniquely flexible in that a study may follow a deductive or inductive (sometimes both) approach in the data analysis process (Cho & Lee, 2014). The purpose

of the study helps guide the researcher to which approach provides the most success. An inductive approach is best when previous data from the phenomenon is limited or disconnected. A deductive approach is based on already discovered theories and data in order to help move the study along. Inductive coding is developed through the analysis, whereas deductive coding is derived from past analyses. Unlike grounded theory, which structures data collection and analysis as a constant parallel, QCA focuses on data reduction, meaning that the scope of data analysis is narrowed specifically to the research question (Cho & Lee, 2014).

Both the inductive and deductive approaches begin with research questions and determined data sets; however, the coding process develops differently. When using an inductive approach, the process must begin with preliminary open coding (Cho & Lee, 2014). This requires combing the data to create codes, followed by revisiting the data to see if the codes are an accurate representation of the data. In the deductive process, coding is determined by existing codes attained in other analyses of the data. Data that do not fit within those parameters are then categorized into new codes. Both approaches are used to determine categories and themes that form the findings of the research. The differences are that inductive processes are used to create new themes from the data, where deductive processes confirm existing themes and introduce new themes when necessary (Cho & Lee, 2014). In this study a deductive approach was utilized to conduct the content analysis through the QCA method known as directed content analysis.

### **Methodology of Study**

Directed content analysis (DCA) is one approach to QCA and is generally used with a study design aimed to describe a phenomenon. DCA works best for ideas or

research that preexist. Sometimes prior research helps to develop theories or ideas that require further study or a more in-depth analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The outcomes of DCA include validating or elaborating on a previously developed framework. That existing theory can be the driving force behind the research question in the new study. Unlike conventional approaches, DCA relies on predicted variables or relationships to develop codes and the relationships between those codes. DCA is a deductive approach to analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

In DCA, the research question guides the coding process. An example would be to look at preexisting text such as a transcript to underline initial reactions or impressions (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Within the text, predetermined codes may already organize the ideas into categories. Another strategy is to forgo developing initial reactions and begin the coding process immediately using the predetermined codes. If the data cannot be identified and analyzed, they can be placed into new categories or a category of a code that previously existed (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The strategies used in DCA are determined by the goals of the researcher. (Assarroudi et al., 2018). If the researcher seeks more trustworthiness from the analysis, they may approach the data in the first style by highlighting and identifying emotions, feelings, and instances prior to coding. When seeking to reduce bias, the researcher may begin the coding process immediately. The advantage to using DCA is that the study will have validity in that previous works supported the need to examine a phenomenon further. Structuring research questions becomes clearer as the previous studies guide the formation of the research questions. The disadvantage to DCA is that it goes against a naturalistic paradigm. By relying on previous works, the study is almost always biased to

support the previous findings rather than challenge them. If the study is conducted to deepen an existing theory or practice, DCA may be the best approach, but if the study's aim is to explore new avenues or look to find alternative outcomes, using DCA may pose a challenge (Assarroudi et al., 2018).

Assarroudi et al. (2018) suggested using DCA in phases throughout the research process. DCA begins with collecting relevant research findings that serve as a guide for the early stages of developing the initial codes (Assarroudi et al., 2018). The researcher must begin with a seven-step preparation phase, an eight-step organizational phase, and a reporting phase. In the preparation phase, the researcher must develop particular skills such as “self-critical thinking, analytical abilities, and continuous self-reflection” (p. 48). The researcher must become flexible, creative in thinking, and sensitive to data interpretation. A best practice is for the researcher to become self-aware in their abilities to engage DCA within their analysis. Assarroudi et al. recommended aligning the research with Vroom's expectancy theory. The three main categories within expectancy theory are *expectancy*, *instrumentality*, and *valence*. Expectancy is an understanding that the research will be successful and produce good outcomes, while instrumentality is the perception that good outcomes are a result of “good performance” (p. 48). Valence is “the value that the individual personally place[s] on the outcomes” (p. 48). Then, the researcher must determine the appropriate sampling process. This means the researcher determines the proper phenomenon to analyze and what data to use. This process is completed once the researcher has determined there is a “redundancy” or saturation of the data (p. 49).



The third part of the preparation phase is determining how the data will be analyzed, if data are “manifesting,” meaning to transcribe, or “latent,” meaning to interpret (Assarroudi et al., 2018, p. 49). The fourth step in the preparation phase is to create the interview guide. An understanding of the purpose of the study guides the research to consider the main categories of the data from which to form open-ended questions (Assarroudi et al., 2018).

The fifth part of the process is when the researcher conducts the interviews and transcribes the interview data. Sixth, the research forms the unity of transcribed interviews, then moves to the final step of the preparation phase, which is to consider the transcribed data more thoroughly. The researcher creates meaning around the data by questioning the who, what, where, and why (Assarroudi et al., 2018).

The eight step organizational process is derived from a preexisting theory and category building (Assarroudi et al., 2018). First, the researcher must develop formal categories from the data. Then, the researcher must create theoretical definitions to these categories. That is, the definitions must align with the basis of the study. This step is followed by the rule for coding, which provides particularity for supporting the trustworthiness of the study. Testing the categories is an important step, especially if there is more than one researcher. This step provides discussions for any difficulties with the categories to better determine reliability. Then, the researcher determines examples to support the categories, followed by the next step to relate meaning to the data. Finally, the researcher can determine “generic categories” (p. 51), which can then be compared to main categories.

These steps all lead to the final portion of DCA, the reporting phase, which sums up this entire process along with the outcomes and results. The researcher has confidence in the work because the proper steps were taken to develop the research question and collect and analyze the data according to DCA. The researcher should follow a deductive approach, utilizing the previously developed codes and themes from the existing data sets, to compare the findings of the new research, possibly developing additional themes through the analysis process (Assarroudi et al., 2018).

### **Credibility and Trustworthiness**

The DCA process involves using previously created text; there are no set evaluation criteria for DCA (Cho & Lee, 2014). The research is guided by the principles of trustworthiness, which are credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability. Unlike grounded theory, which can become a cyclical journey of data discovery and interpretation, DCA has an end point and goal. While grounded theory is best suited for new discovery of theory within a phenomenon, it was not the best approach for this QCA study. Because the research was focused on previously developed data sets and existing theories of best practices in the specific field of sexual violence prevention, the researcher found deductive DCA to offer the most opportunity for credibility and trustworthiness in this study. The researcher relied on the validity established within the specific data set and theory and followed a deductive approach to the content analysis, thus narrowing the scope of the research design to DCA as a best practice (Cho & Lee, 2014).

The DCA approach was important for the purpose of this research as the problem related to SART efficiency, which varies from county to county. Therefore, the dynamics

of the actors, institutions, and systems also differ on a variety of factors. With this knowledge, the researcher chose to conduct this QCA on data received from one specific county, with an understanding of the unique realities for those involved within the SART of that given area.

Working with victims of domestic and sexual violence requires multidisciplinary action and collaboration. This research required an exploratory option for analysis. DCA offered a foundation to unpack the data beyond the text. The analysis of FCASV and other agency program requirements was conducted to compare and contrast uniformity among protocol. Florida's SART recommendations suggest the provided guidelines are key to a successful program that reduces sexual violence in communities across the state. The researcher used DCA to expand on that existing theory and examine how one county interprets the guidelines and explores the success of guideline implementation.

### **Data Collection**

In 2015, the Florida Coalition Against Sexual Violence developed guidance around the design and structure of a SART. FCASV provides a SART toolkit (FCASV, 2012), a checklist, and committee reports for the state. The reports deliver the state recommendations based on past practice successes and challenges. FCASV also provides national toolkits and checklists that support those created for the state. In addition, FCASV provides guidance from other states including the Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force (OAGSATF) SART handbook and the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR, 2002) guidelines for SART. The instructional guides provide step-by-step processes for building and sustaining a team. The documentation also includes samples for oversight and proper forms to fulfilling the grant needs of the program. The

researcher extracted the listed documentation from FCASV's website (<https://www.fcasv.org/training/sart>).

In order to see how this data was used in practice, the researcher collected PBC SART's strategic plans, meeting minutes, and agendas for the years 2016–2020. The strategic plans include outlines for the years 2015, 2016, and 2017. The agendas and meeting minutes from each year are based on meetings assigned and presented. The breadth of information provided a depth of data for analysis. All information related to PBC SART was extracted from the dedicated website (<http://pbcsart.org/>).

### **Data Analysis**

As this study was focused on DCA as the sole analysis process, the researcher began with an analysis and reading of the collected data, following the steps outlined by Assarroudi et al. (2018). The researcher then developed codes and themes by highlighting words from the text. This allowed for initial thoughts to be created about the information. As the information was dissected further, the researcher became more reflective and created coding labels, meaning, the initial ideas were formulated into a concrete theme to represent a direction for the research question. Eventually, the codes were placed into categories. While assumptions could be made for the overarching goals, this research was conducted to produce data outcomes that reflect the unique perspectives of the local community and the needs of the SART for this particular group. This method was considered viable in the context of understanding the organizational and interpersonal conflict within the SART. The researcher recognized that individuals carry biases that may affect the research in a variety of ways. Research is a continuous process that

involves digging deeper, layer by layer to discover areas that can develop a fuller and deeper connection to the findings of the topic.

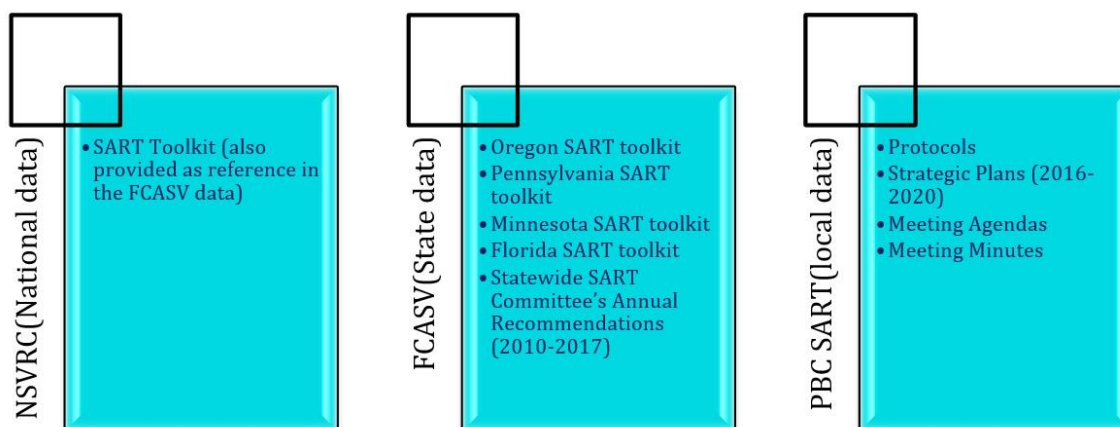
In order to evaluate the standard of performance of the SART, it was necessary to analyze data acquired since the last recommendations for the program. By examining documentation from 2016–2020, the researcher was able to compare and contrast proposals from various state coalitions for sexual assault with the data provided by current efforts. First, the researcher examined data provided by the NSVRC SART Toolkit (n.d.-f). This data included the nine sections of the SART toolkit. The researcher then examined data from the FCASV (2012) SART toolkit. Other examples of SART toolkits provided by the FCASV website included the Oregon SART toolkit, the Pennsylvania SART toolkit, and the Minnesota SART toolkit. Following this analysis, the researcher examined the Palm Beach SART data including a toolkit, protocols, strategic plans from 2016–2020, meeting agendas, and meeting minutes. Chapter 4 provides results from the examination of the data, along with the themes, successes, and challenges the researcher discovered upon completion of the directed content analysis.

## Chapter 4 Research Findings

The objective of this study was to evaluate the current execution of a SART on a local level. The researcher identified challenges and successes of the process and operations of the SART. This study was conducted through a case study of current functioning at PBC SART in Florida using a DCA approach outlined by Assarroudi et al. (2018). The researcher analyzed the recommendations and resources from the national level, recommendations from the state level, and data from the local SART (Figure 2). The content analysis began with examining the state of Florida's toolkit and recommended information and resources, followed by analyzing the data developed by PBC SART.

**Figure 2**

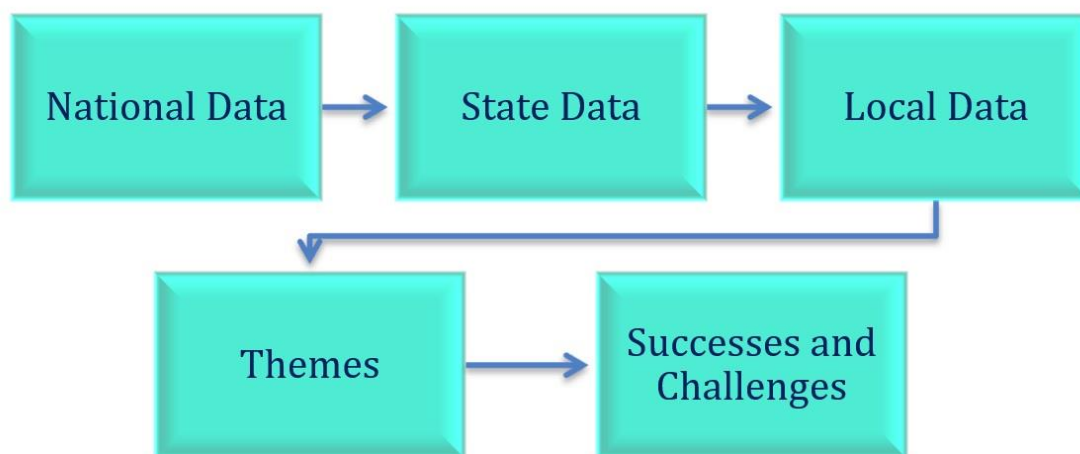
*Data Used in the Content Analysis*



As the state's leading funder of programs, FCASV dedicated a portal on their website to SART efforts (<https://www.fcasv.org/training/sart>). At some point during 2021, the information contained on the sexual assault program portal became restricted to public view. Currently, the information can only be accessed with a password. Prior to

FCASV restricting the content on the portal, the researcher gathered data related to the statewide SART program. The portal contains a brief description of Florida's interpretation of SART programming and the state's needs. It is important to note that the state developed their own toolkit and state advisory committee, referencing national resources for standards as well as other state models. These resources included OAGSATF, MNCASA Sexual Assault Training Institute, and PCAR.

Figure 3 provides a flowchart outlining the data analysis process for this QCA. The figure brings clarity and depicts a clear flow of the information processing procedures that led to the findings in this study. The researcher first examined national data resources from the NSVRC to establish the recommended national standards for SART programs. Next, the researcher examined the FCASV's recommended state data consisting of resources from Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Minnesota. The researcher then explored FCASV's SART recommendations for the state of Florida, including its counties, that administer services under SART. The careful analysis of the combined data led to the development of themes related to the data. The researcher then examined local data from PBC SART, which included the program's strategic plans, meeting agendas, and meeting minutes for 5 years (2016–2020). Finally, the researcher identified the FCASV SART program's successes and challenges.

**Figure 3***Data Analysis Flowchart***National Data**

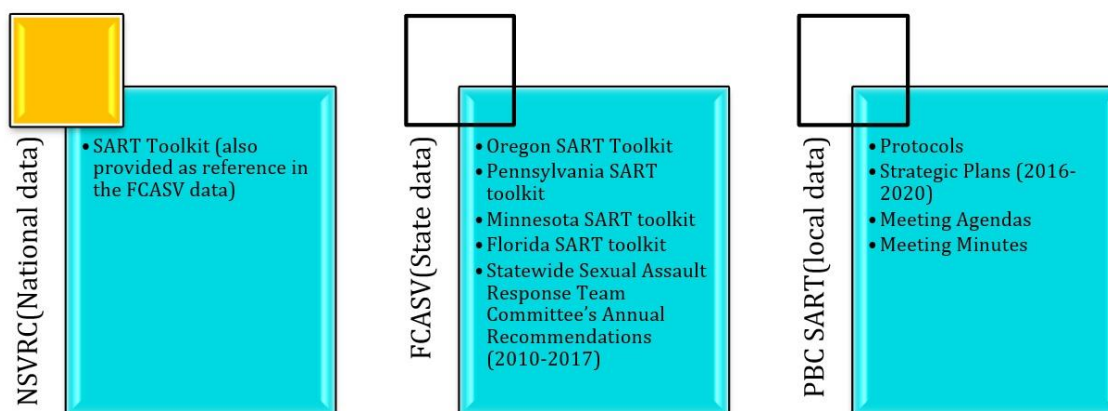
To begin data analysis, the researcher examined the resources from the national level, which were cited on FCASV's website. The state coalition provides two links that connect to NSVRC's dedicated webpage for SART. The first link connects to an updated webpage for information. The second link is archived and directs the searcher back to the NSVRC page. For the purpose of this research, the researcher examined the initial webpage. The information provided from the national level included a SART toolkit, which was retrieved from the NSVRC website (Figure 4; NSVRC, n.d.-f). NSVRC was founded by PCAR in the early 2000s. The center received funding through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of Violence Prevention. NSVRC is governed by a board of directors and a leadership team from PCAR. The mission of the nonprofit is to translate research and trends that are then developed into best practices. NSVRC focuses on prevention and collaboration by using the research to build resources



(NSVRC, n.d-a) As indicated on the center’s website, one of NSVRC’s biggest research projects was the creation of the SART Toolkit.

**Figure 4**

*NSVRC Toolkit*



The SART toolkit provides an eight-section orientation that includes information about the toolkit, learning about SART, building a SART, logistics, responses, and approaches of a SART, the SART and sex offender management, and a glossary of important definitions (Figure 5).

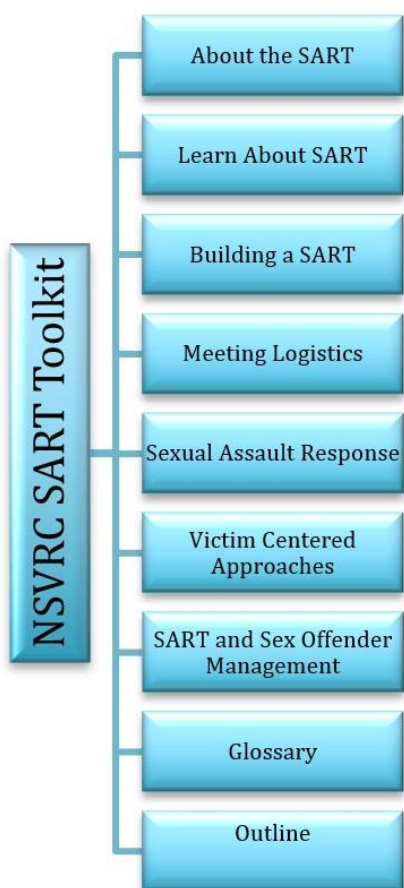
The information about the toolkit was analyzed first. The first four sections address the foundational elements of SART, while the remaining sections highlight important factors considered when operating a SART. For the purpose of this analysis, the researcher found the first four sections of great importance in establishing an effective SART. The remaining sections of the toolkit provided best practices for maintenance of the program.

The toolkit was created, developed, written, and reviewed by a variety of different scholars. Collaborators included direct victim service workers and members of the law

enforcement, medical, advocacy, academic, and legal fields. The collaborators were individuals who work on the federal, state, and local levels. The SART toolkit has gained support from victim groups from across the country.

**Figure 5**

*NSVRC SART Toolkit*



### **Section 1: About the SART**

The first section of the NSVRC SART toolkit begins with a brief background on the history of SART and other multidisciplinary teams. The section presents the importance of interagency collaboration with the purpose of three main goals: victim support, offender accountability, and community safety. As of 2004, NSVRC was

granted funding from the OVC to create a comprehensive response to sexual assault. NSVRC used the funds to develop a SART toolkit and throughout the years expanded upon the original framework. The original structure was designed to establish a national advisory committee comprised of advocates, medical, and legal specialists who would contribute to the creation of the toolkit. The committee also developed and distributed a National Needs Assessment Survey to establish the general framework of SARTs across the country. The committee received survey responses from 49 states and three territories. NSVRC also created an extensive resource library with SART templates, research papers, manuals, and other helpful resources and launched an email-based discussion board for those working within the context of sexual assault to exchange knowledge and ideas (NSVRC, n.d.-a).

In 2015, NSVRC received additional funding from OVC to expand and update the existing toolkit. With new understanding and knowledge within the anti violence movement, the amended goal now seeks “to inspire and help SARTs work toward providing victim-centered, trauma-informed, culturally relevant, and community-specific services through meaningful systems change (NSVRC, n.d.-a, “Creation of the SART Toolkit,” para. 9). Using the additional funding, NSVRC added a review of literature, the existing discussion board, the needs assessment, website analytics, technical assistance, and most importantly, the existing toolkit.

There is currently no mandate on the use of SART or the toolkits provided by the NSVRC. All materials and resources are suggested and aim to act as a guide for any local entity or state seeking to create a SART. NSVRC acknowledges that SART is part of an interchangeable language for multidisciplinary team models that is recognized within

domestic and sexual violence prevention tactics. Other names for response efforts include Multidisciplinary Teams (MDT), Coordinated Community Response Teams (CCRT), Domestic Abuse Response Teams (DART), and other joint domestic and sexual violence response teams (NSVRC, n.d.-b). This variance in nomenclature is an important acknowledgement, as it validates the overlap in services for this type of crime. NSVRC also references a direct publication from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services as an example of important language for SART. The publication provides a legal framework developed by the state of Virginia, which establishes state legislation in support of SART, or SART-like committees to address adult sexual assault (NSVRC, n.d.-b). The 118-page publication addresses the Commonwealth of Virginia's effort to combat sexual assault.

In 2004, the Virginia General Assembly inherited legislation regarding a mandated state response to sexual assault. The language of the legislation reads:

The Department of Criminal Justice Services shall promote the use of local and regional sexual assault response team policy and protocol, established pursuant to subdivision 46 of §9.1-102 of the Code of Virginia, as an integral part of an effective coordinated community response to sexual assault. (Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, 2012, p. 3)

The legislation also mandates that the department “establish training standards and publish a model policy and protocols for local and regional sexual assault response teams” (§9.1-102). The Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (2011) created guidelines and protocols based on the review of existing state and national protocols, and in consultation with local working members of existing SARTs. The guidelines and

protocols are intended for addressing adult sexual assault (Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, 2011).

The NSVRC data inform agencies seeking to create a SART. Members should consider the pertinent definitions associated with sexual violence and seek to understand the trauma that occurs when sexual violence is committed as well as the aftermath of the crime. The medical data offered by NSVRC support not only the physical traumas sustained, but the mental and emotional trauma that follows, specifying that victims/survivors may experience difficulties with memory.

It appears that NSVRC has adopted aspects of the Virginia model in their latest toolkit revision. Sections Two and Eight highlight important definitions and resources for all participating agencies. NSVRC is the national resource for sexual violence; it provides vital information on the federal laws and policies surrounding sexual violence. These sections provide clear and in-depth data on the role of SART in the community.

## **Section 2: Learn About SART**

Section Two of the NSVRC SART toolkit (NSVRC, n.d.-d) indicates that SARTs must understand all aspects of sexual violence in order to properly function. Section Two clarifies definitions of sexual violence within the state, territory, federal, tribal, and military statutes and offers insight on violations within the civil and administrative codes (NSVRC, n.d.-d). One very important definition provided is that of consent. There is no federal definition for consent; therefore, the toolkit provides a lengthy introduction to the concept. An understanding of consent is very important for SART building, as consent determines wanted and unwanted verbal and nonverbal cues and advances (NSVRC, n.d.-d). The toolkit determines consent through a variety of avenues such as age, cognitive

and physical ability, and culture. In its basic form, the definition expresses the variety of ways consent is granted. Consent must be a verbal, enthusiastic, sober agreement between parties. Section Two defines consent for use in the judicial system. Each state has legislation around sexual violence and each state is also responsible for defining consent and other aspects of sexual violence. SARTs may also use the language around consent to further clarify their own standing on consent. While their states may offer a legal framework for definitions related to sexual violence, SARTs may determine they need to go beyond a basic definition and enhance their definitions to include things beyond criminal and civil law (NSVRC, n.d.-d).

The data in Section Two also includes the dynamics of victimization and survivorship (NSVRC, n.d.-d). Statistical resources and medical reports on trauma that occurs during and after the violation of sexual violence, and on the economic effects of violence are available through several medical journals including the *Harvard Review of Psychiatry* and *New England Journal of Medicine*. Medical research provides clarity on victims' responses and on how the brain responds to trauma. Scholars have linked trauma to the body's response as well as victims' habits post trauma. When an individual encounters trauma, the brain activates its defense mode, which is not a singular response. Rather, each person may have their own way of coping with their trauma during and after the experience (Kozłowska et al., 2015). Beyond the physical response to sexual violence, victims' emotional response is outlined in Section Two, to include the impacts of the economic costs of victimization as well as the psychological effects of violence (NSVRC, n.d.-d). Victims' responses are shaped by the cultural norms created by

societies, leaving victims to often feel isolated and to cope with their trauma using maladaptive mechanisms (NSVRC, n.d.-d).

Crimes of violence also come with a personal and financial cost. Victims may need to invest in health care including mental health and incur potential costs through the legal system if property is damaged or lost, or if they seek assistance through the civil system where hiring attorneys is necessary. Trauma from violence may affect a victim's employment. Victims may be unable to work as a result of the violence or take time off from work, a consequence of the emotional/physical response to trauma. There are economic costs to the community as well. The criminal justice and healthcare system must utilize resources for forensic testing and/or resources for ensuring persons are employed and tasked with assisting in the investigation of sexually violent crimes. Funding for positions in the criminal justice, health care, and victim advocacy systems often rely on grants through state and federal programs. Such systems are intertwined in multiple avenues to support victims of sexual violence. No one system bears the necessity of response; rather, the community as a whole is required to have knowledge and funding and to aid address crimes of a sexual nature. The end of Section Two lists additional resources to enhance SARTs' knowledge.

Section Two of the SART toolkit (NSVRC, n.d.-d) provides a foundation of information that assists SART development. By understanding the findings of research on sexual violence, SARTs can build a community that supports a trauma-informed response. Section Two (NSVRC, n.d.-d) outlines an important consideration for communities as they develop their SART. According to Section Two,

People who committed the assaults and defense attorneys often use the lack of education and clarity around habit responses to introduce doubt and claim that victims had “mixed feelings” at the time and only later claimed it was an assault because they regretted their behavior. (Brain-Based Responses to Trauma, para.16).

This is a critical piece of information. Offenders and defense attorneys represent how society culturally responds to sexual violence. A SART must use the resources provided to combat this lack of understanding by building a response team that supports trauma-informed care.

Section Two (NSVRC, n.d.-d) continues by clarifying memberships through formation, focus, evaluation, and operation. It also acknowledges the major challenges of creating and maintaining a SART. NSVRC specifically states the hurdles individuals and agencies must clear as they respond to sexual violence. As noted in Chapters One and Two, SART effectiveness is determined by the participation of member agencies. The challenge for the team is in how members show up to meetings and what they do with the information provided at meetings. Section Two echoes echo these sentiments. First, NSVRC acknowledges the limited research available for SART, and notes the available research shows issues with consistency as well as leadership, power, and authority within SARTs. The challenges result in difficulties in developing common goals and needs for the SART and the community it serves. SARTs must be tasked with providing victim centered approaches and must understand their role in systems change. SARTs should be able to learn and identify gaps in victim services and distinguish enhancements within local, state, and federal system responses such as prevention and intervention methods.



The best mechanism to provide this depth of knowledge is via research and evaluation (NSVRC, n.d.-d).

### **Section 3: Building a SART**

The formation of the SART is continued into Section Three (NSVRC, n.d.-c). NSVRC recommends a step-by-step process that includes (a) forming a planning team; (b) determining community readiness; (c) defining vision, mission, and goals; (d) agency recruitment; (e) leadership support; and (f) current victim service and resource assessment. Here, jurisdictions are highlighted as an important component in the development of a SART. Federal, state, and/or local communities must be tasked with determining their cross jurisdictions. Communities should understand their statutes, health department regulations, federal and state grant certifications, and conduct a community needs assessment to determine the greatest needs within the community related to sexual violence (NSVRC, n.d.-c).

A planning team is designed to bring together agencies that have traditionally been involved with serving victims and offenders of sexual violence (NSVRC, n.d.-c). The planning team is tasked with building a SART comprised of agencies that play a pivotal role in the community with regard to reducing sexual violence. SARTs are typically comprised of criminal justice agencies and include health and human service providers. Planning teams also must be in charge of assessing their community needs and issues of readiness. The community's cultural and societal norms must also be considered and addressed. The planning team should survey what current services and resources are available to victims, what response to sexual violence currently looks like, and what current outcomes look like in the community. The planning team should ask, "What is the

culture of law enforcement, attorneys, health and human services, and other community members when sexual violence occurs?” Understanding trends and traditional outcomes within a community will help determine the vision, mission, and goals of the SART (NSVRC, n.d.-c). It is important to note that NSVRC encourages input from community members such as victim/survivors and professionals in respective fields when developing the SART. Planning and seeking input may be tasked to a third-party consultant. NSVRC suggests that a third-party consultant can offer unbiased professional assistance and execute research and analysis on behalf of the community to ensure a fair assessment is conducted for feedback on the development of SART (NSVRC, n.d.-c).

After information gathering, SART leadership structures must be developed (NSVRC, n.d.-c). In order to successfully build a team, there must be a building of relationships within community agencies and members. This includes learning about agency roles within a community, understanding workplace culture and norms, and understanding how agencies understand sexual violence as it relates to the agency’s professional and personal beliefs. Section Three provides tactics to create more community buy-in for SART, which may include continuously working with a consultant to facilitate community engagement (NSVRC, n.d.-c).

Section Three indicates that as communities differ from one another, leadership roles will also depend on the structure of the community (NSVRC, n.d.-c). These roles may include coordinator, facilitator, chairperson, fiscal agent (if and when SARTs are funded), subject matter experts, and member agency leadership. Every position is not required for the functionality of SART, but each position reflects the recommended roles for a successful SART (NSVRC, n.d.-c).

The coordinator role provides leadership for the SART. This role may be housed in different agencies from public health to local sheriff's offices to victim service providers. The important role of a coordinator may belong to a partnering agency. If this is the case, the coordinator must be able to conduct their different roles separately and effectively. Section Three emphasizes that the coordinator role is preferred as a main point of contact and executor of SART. There are also the assigned roles for fiscal agents, those who maintain budgeting for the SART in the event the SART is funded through grants. Fiscal agents are also key holders for information on how to allocate monies for programming and other circumstances. Subject matter experts hold a unique role, as every member of SART can be a subject matter expert, bringing an expertise relevant to their agency's role in combating sexual violence. Each agency should also present a member to the leadership team who also holds a leadership role within the respective agency (NSVRC, n.d.-c).

According to NSVRC (n.d.-c), facilitation plays a vital role for the SART. The facilitator is tasked with providing conflict resolution skills and maintaining an unbiased and enthusiastic role when conducting meetings with members of the SART. The facilitator ensures that conversations at meetings avoid conflict and remain focused on proactive measures to reach SART goals and vision. This role also includes continuous community engagement (NSVRC, n.d.-c).

Section Three (NSVRC, n.d.-c) emphasizes relationship building; from leadership teams to community engagement, the SART must mirror what is going on within the population it serves. Some important tasks of community engagement are to be able to learn and know what resources are available, not only within the context of sexual

violence but also the overlapping needs connected to the crime. It is also imperative that SARTs train community members and agencies on the dynamics of sexual violence to promote understanding and to learn how the community will be able to participate in combating sexual violence. This is how alliances are built and how buy in from potential partner agencies is created (NSVRC, n.d.-c).

The next important piece of community building is effective communication. Effective communication is not only outward facing but includes how the SART engages with member agencies. Section Three calls for the need to establish a shared language and community standards. SARTs should be able to create terminology that is agreed upon by all members in reference to sexual assault, the law, process, and outreach. Section Three also provides guidance on ethics and de-escalation tactics in the event of what is referred to as “turf issues” (NSVRC, n.d.-c, Establishing SART “Turf” Relative to Communication). This guidance is broken down to address ethics for the individual, the team, and the organization, highlighting the importance of creating a safe and effective SART, as systems and actors must be aligned in order for productivity. A table for factors and levels in an interprofessional ethics framework can be found in Appendix of Section 3.2 of the SART Toolkit (Ethics, table. 1). The focal points of ethics are illustrated, and guidance is provided to establish healthy boundaries and practices for SART members. These ideas are helpful within the SART as well as within the agency’s internal structures (NSVRC, n.d.-c).

De-escalating *turf issues* is a critical part of the responsibilities of the SART (NSVRC, n.d.-c, “Establishing SART ‘Turf’ Relative to Communication”). Protocols ensure everyone is aware of how the SART operates and what members are responsible

for, which serves to improve communication. This process of establishing the rules includes basic and fundamental conflict resolution, mediation, and facilitation tactics (NSVRC, n.d.-c).

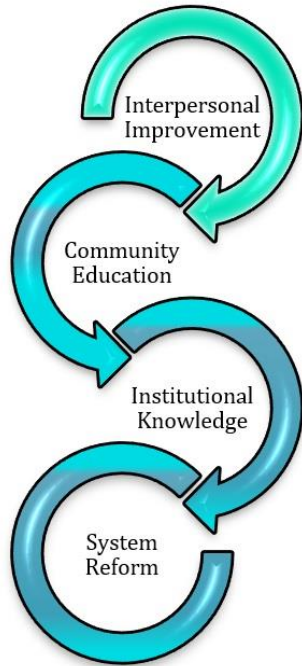
#### **Section 4: Meeting Logistics**

After providing a foundation of communication skills in Section Three, NSVRC (n.d.-e) developed Section Four to address the logistics of SART. Similar to structuring ethics from the individual to the organization, meetings begin with the specific to the overarching goals. Strategic planning sets the tone for the direction of the SART. Section Four addresses the process of creating vision and mission statements. Vision statements are forward-looking goals adopted by the organization. They embody the inspiration for the SART members and consider best possible outcomes of the creation of the SART. The vision statement should align with the mission statement and the values of the SART. The vision statement explains the purpose of SART as well as the who, what, where, when, and how of SART operation. It provides a structure of what the SART is and the direction of the organization. The vision statement is bound to the present by focusing on how the values shape the SART and provide concrete priorities the SART intends to adopt (NSVRC, n.d.-e).

Strategic planning must also include honing in on the vision and mission to create goals and objectives that will build the foundation of the SART (NSVRC, n.d.-e). Goals do not follow any specific timeframe but should bridge what members do presently to the long term goals of the organization. Objectives address the changes that are necessary to reach those goals. They are often measurable and have timelines. Objectives are specific and should be something that the SART and its members are able to achieve. Objectives

can be focused on systematic, organizational, or individual issues. Strategic plans lay out an action plan to execute the goals and objectives by breaking down responsibilities, deadlines, resources, process, challenges, and collaborations (NSVRC, n.d.-e).

SART is tasked with addressing sexual violence through prevention and intervention methods. In order to achieve these goals, work must be done at each level, from the actor to the institution to the system. Section Four (NSVRC, n.d.-e) explains goals are accomplished through building from the bottom up. While NRCSV outlines six levels of knowledge, system theory blends the concepts into four movements (Figure 6). Members must examine their own views about sexual violence, address their biases, and work through their collaboration with others to reintroduce victim-centered and trauma-informed perspectives. It is through this viewpoint that the SART can begin to educate the public and community, which includes other institutions and providers of community services. Community education is also community engagement. Allies and partnerships occur when conversations around sexual violence happen. SART can establish healthy relationships to participate in coalitions, which in turn, set the stage for partners and agencies to consider their own internal protocols and approaches to sexual violence. As these achievements are made as a collective, communities build momentum to begin looking at how they can address the system responses to sexual violence. It is when communities build these common ideas around victim-centered approaches that they can focus on bigger changes. If there is no unity from the ground up, systems will not change (NSVRC, n.d.-e).

**Figure 6***Movements of Knowledge*

The NRCSV toolkit (n.d.-e) makes clear that successful SART operations establish strategic planning as well as consistency of data and documentation. Part of strategic planning involves developing and revising protocols and MOUs. Before the SART can begin structuring meetings on a frequent basis, it must establish ground rules. Protocols assist members in defining roles, guidelines, and responding best to community needs. MOUs provide the official agreement of SART member agencies. MOUs highlight the work of each agency and their contributions to the SART, sets the structure of what the SART stands for, and outlines the processes and overall accountability of each agency and as a collective (NSVRC, n.d.-e).

According to NSVRC (n.d.-e), the SART should create a schedule of meeting times in order to collaborate and engage in dialogue to move goals and objectives forward. There is no guidance on the frequency of meetings, but Section Four focuses on the needs of the community. For some, this may require monthly meetings, while for others it may be less frequent. However, a team decides, it should always be in the best interest of victims and their needs from the community. Successful SARTs will provide agendas that are available to all members in a timely manner and clearly indicate the goals of the meeting. Agendas provide recall from the last meeting (NSVRC, n.d.-e). These simple steps may seem tedious, but there is extreme importance in preparing consistent documentation. As stated in Chapter One, documentation is important for accountability as well as funding for programming.

Meetings should follow an established procedure (NSVRC, n.d.-e). The meeting protocol should respect and accept differences of views and opinions, promote diversity, be inclusive of victim perspectives, and not rush the process. Meeting structures should be flexible in that members can expand upon a conversation while always keeping the mission and goals of the SART in mind. The use of meeting minutes proves to be a helpful tool. Minutes document the conversations and activity of meetings and ensure accountability and awareness of participating members. Meeting minutes are specifically useful to measure the SART's successes and challenges and may provide evidence and a timeline for SART goals within the strategic plan (NSVRC, n.d.-e).

Facilitation and conflict resolution are highlighted in Section Four as they pertain to meeting logistics (NSVRC, n.d.-e). As discussed in Section Three, it may be useful for the SART to look to a third-party to assist in facilitating the meetings. If this cannot be



accomplished, those members who do facilitate meetings in the SART should not be tasked with other roles and responsibilities. Section Four also clarifies how members come to making decisions, through working out the purpose and using follow-through. Section Four elaborates on facilitation practices that ensure a successful meeting and also provides conflict resolution strategies to handle issues that arise within the meetings (NSVRC, n.d.-e).

Facilitators are engaging members. They should not dominate the conversation but extract from members present in the meeting. Facilitators have an opportunity to catch missed ideas and bring members back to focus when it may seem the dialogue is moving away from the goal. In this role, facilitators have a responsibility to remain neutral, even if they have wants and needs outside of their role as a facilitator. Facilitators have a duty to generate a safe and creative space for members to make well-informed decisions as a collaborative. When it feels that this objective is not occurring, facilitators must employ conflict resolution skills to resolve any negativity. Section Four (NSVRC, n.d.-e) expands upon tactics and skills derived from a variety of conflict resolution teachings. Section Four discusses basic steps and observances and offers tools in evaluating the conflict and how to address it proactively (NSVRC, n.d.-e).

While the toolkit does not mandate case review, it is often a useful procedure within the SART. In Section Four (NSVRC, n.d.-e), the process of structuring case reviews is highlighted. In keeping with the spirit of facilitation and conflict resolution, case review should only be considered once a foundation of trust and mutual collaboration is established. It is in a case review that conflict may arise with member agencies due to individual perspectives as well as each agency's system process and

protocol toward the crime of sexual violence. Case reviews are helpful for discussing cases and for working through problems with systematic response to improve upon existing processes. Teams must come with a readiness to tackle these issues and be open to staying accountable to the goals and mission of the SART. This means members should be able to work through common language, avoid gender bias, and focus on improvements and best possible outcomes for victim services (NSVRC, n.d.-e).

As addressed in other parts of the Toolkit, consistent and continuous evaluation of processes and outcomes are imperative to the success of SART (NSVRC, n.d.-e). Simply referring to standard protocols and MOUs without evolution will hinder the SART's effectiveness. Monitoring progress and staying committed to open dialogue about the status allows agencies to grow and expand. Meetings must include measurements of service from participating agencies, investigations, trainings, and educational materials provided. Meetings should also provide qualitative outcomes such as diversity and inclusion expansion and responses of service providers' evaluations. The toolkit provides an array of data collection examples that may be useful for SARTs. In all cases, SART data collection is designed to be both quantitative and qualitative. This approach allows evaluation on the interpersonal, institutional, and systematic levels of the SART (NSVRC, n.d.-e).

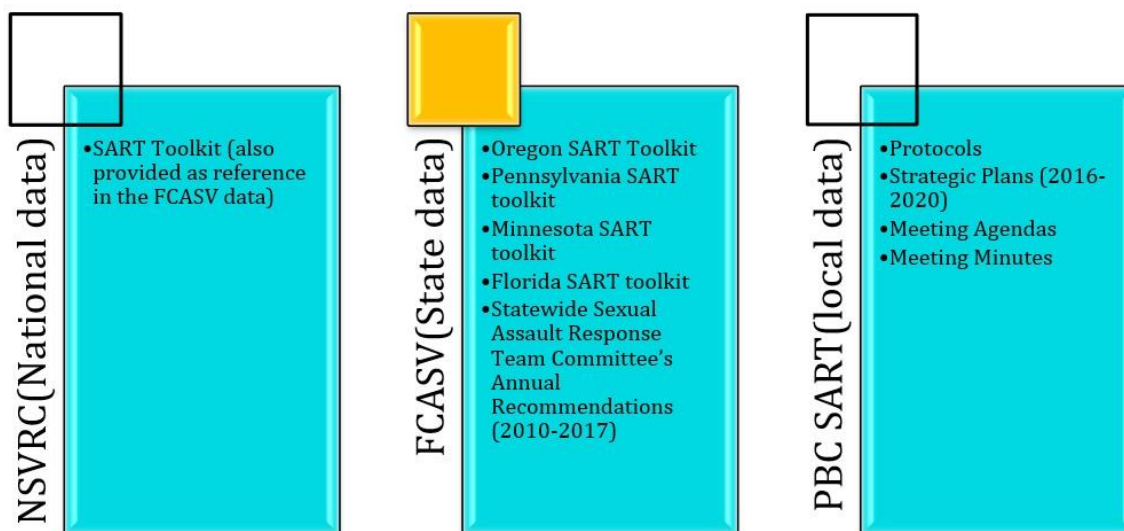
### **Sections 5–9: Training Materials**

The remaining components of the SART toolkit focus on the variety of training materials for creating a victim-centered approach to sexual violence. As established through this research and through the first four sections of the toolkit, the SART must be led by believing survivors and believing in collaboration of community to reduce

violence (NSVRC, n.d.-g). SART members should understand there is an intersectional relationship between sexual violence and other forms of violence. These concepts are addressed in Sections 5 through 7. Section 5 is focused on intervention approaches to sexual violence by marrying the best practices of technology, criminal justice, medical, and legal approaches in responding to sexual violence. Section 6 addresses prevention focuses through enhancing personal knowledge of victim-centered approaches and inclusion. The process includes learning about and incorporating culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity and orientations, immigrant issues, HIV-affected communities, disabilities, rural versus urban demographics and their accessibility to service, and ageism (NSVRC, n.d.-g). Inclusion means to be open to change, ready for difficult conversations, and, most importantly, to be accountable for the individual, agency, and systematic response to sexual violence (NSVRC, n.d.-g). Section 7 is focused on sexual offender management, while Section 8 provides the glossary for the SART, and Section 9 sums up the SART through an outline (NSVRC, n.d.-g).

### **State Data**

The researcher created a foundation of understanding of what SART guidelines look like from a national standpoint. These tools developed by a larger community were adopted into the FCASV's structure for SARTs. The next step in this content analysis was to explore how the State of Florida has interpreted these guidelines in their response to sexual violence. It must also be noted that as of May 2021, FCASV has removed access to these documents. Figure 7 outlines the important data gathered from the state level.

**Figure 7***State Data*

The data from the FCASV toolkit (Figure 8) adopted much of its basic guidelines from the NSVRC toolkit. The FCASV toolkit states the focus of SART is to provide a thorough response to the issue of sexual violence by examining and coordinating the community's response through engaging agencies from multiple disciplines (FCASV, 2012). The toolkit was developed by the Statewide Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) Advisory Committee, comprised of leadership from FCASV, law enforcement, the district attorney's office, and the academic field. The link to the toolkit indicated that it was developed in 2010, but there were no indicators that the toolkit has undergone revision since that time. FCASV also provided the Statewide SART Committee's annual recommendation reports from 2010 until 2017. There are no indicators of reports since that time (FCASV 2012).

From the beginning, the FCASV toolkit (2012) emphasized that prospective and existing SARTs use this template as a resource. FCASV utilizes an eight step model for a

community SART. They offer training and support along with appropriate contacts. Much like the national toolkit, the FCASV toolkit does not insist that communities adopt the guidelines as presented in order for teams to achieve success. While there is no mention of the adaptation of materials from the national toolkit, there is evidence of its influence in the creation of the FCASV toolkit. Upon review, NSVRC's toolkit spells out ideas and methodology for composing a SART, while FCASV's toolkit is a brief and general information sharing document for communities to use for team building within a SART (FCASV, 2012).

### Figure 8

#### *FCASV SART*



One such influence is the establishment of common language formatted into a glossary at the beginning of the FCASV toolkit (2012). FCASV also provides four main categories of recommendations for building a SART to include membership; protocol and decision making; meetings, coordination, and implementation; and evaluation. Checklists

are provided within the toolkit. The toolkit encourages SARTs to include in their membership agents of the criminal justice system and other providers of service to sexual assault victims. These core members work together to advance the SART as it grows, using the core team to bring in new members as appropriate for the community. Step One of the toolkit is titled Initiate a SART. Once a core group is established, the team is tasked with developing protocols and MOUs. FCASV only mirrors the national toolkit in developing a mission and purpose of SART for their community. Instructions are broader in addressing how this can be achieved, as opposed to the national toolkit, which defines mission, goals, and vision thoroughly. These beginning stages move the SART into Step Two of finding commitment from agency members (FCASV, 2012).

Founding members are tasked with recruitment, keeping in mind the needs of the community and how each agency member connects to the mission of SART and the role they play within the community (FCASV, 2012). Unlike the national toolkit, FCASV offers a tangible method of coalition building with power mapping. This strategy of physically writing down and placing names in relation to the SART provides founding members a visualization of what their team may look like, as well as identifies allies and potential connections (FCASV, 2012).

Founding members are also tasked with developing an MOU (FCASV, 2012). The manual gives a minimum recommendation for successful MOUs. The minimum includes simply stating the mission and goals along with a signature. This is a big shift from the national toolkit, which dedicates extensive language around building and sustaining a SART. While there is not specifically targeted language for the MOU, the structuring of important protocols and MOUs is addressed several times in the national

toolkit. FCASV does adopt Step Three for the organization of the SART, much like that of the national toolkit. It establishes the need for ground rules and protocol development. FCASV leaves the structuring of leadership to communities to decide. FCASV acknowledges that not all SARTs are alike, but a coordinator is most common to keep the team in line and focused.

An interesting component of the FCASV toolkit (2012) is its focus on conflict resolution through the FCASV model. Much like the national toolkit, foundational conflict resolution skills are employed. Here, the toolkit creates guidance around how teams should address conflict from the community, institutions, and in interpersonal relationships. While the FCASV does ask members to be mindful of differences, there are no resources within the toolkit for best conflict resolution practices. This same brief step is also evident within Step Four: Assessments and Data Collection. There is less than one page of information regarding the important process of determining the needs of the community and SART's role in helping to meet those needs. Examples are limited to surveying and asking for members to provide data to compare to one another. The toolkit does offer sample assessments in the appendix of the document. However, while it addresses the purpose of collecting data, there is no evidence of process within the toolkit. First, the toolkit does not indicate who would administer data collection. Second, there is no explanation of how the data would be measured and analyzed. Third, there is no indication of what happens once the data are collected and used. The process for asking members or victims to come forward to share information should also include a protocol for confidentiality. The toolkit does not provide guidance for how to protect the confidentiality, which may mean the SART will be challenged to build trust if it is not

made clear how the data will be used and what happens to the data after collection. Step Seven does return to evaluation and data collection, once again briefly addressing the importance of data to keep the SART's momentum and to stay up to date on community needs. The challenge still is the lack of knowledge of the process. The data in Step Seven expresses quantitative and qualitative measurements, but without clarifying how the data are collected, analyzed, or stored (FCASV, 2012).

Step Five provides protocol structuring (FCASV, 2012). It tasks SART members with developing protocols that include roles, responsibilities, SART logistics, and victim service structures. FCASV does acknowledge the data in this section to mirror that of PCAR. FCASV recommends creating a flowchart that outlines when a victim begins utilizing the community agencies. Using case scenarios, SART can use the flow chart to provide yet another visualization of process. This can help to identify gaps of services and the needs of the community. Once a SART has identified these needs, the process of developing a protocol can begin. Step Six is a continuation of Step Five where the protocol is implemented. This step requires founding members to develop language and written processes into a protocol so that all members understand their roles and requirements in participating. Finally, Step Eight only addresses that the SART find ways to keep flexible and keep the momentum moving forward. The data do not indicate any substantial new information. Rather, the short and brief page asks that the SART recall its mission and purpose to ensure that the SART continues to focus on victims and the needs of the community (FCASV, 2012).

While the FCASV toolkit provides minimal structure, the statewide SART Committee's annual recommendations call for many advancements, not only to the



toolkit, but for participating members. The recommendations also provide a historical timeline of the state's progression in policies and procedure. Many of the recommendations reflect practices that are present today. The SART committee is the ongoing project of FCASV, the Florida Sheriff's Association, and the Florida Office of the Attorney General, and is comprised of a variety of members within the criminal justice, medical, legal, and academic fields. The committee addresses that all recommendations are best practices intended for community SARTs. In this capacity, the toolkit indicates significant progress in the advisory committee as it responds to sexual violence on the state level while providing ample guidance to the local level (FCASV, 2012).

The SART Advisory Committee report for 2010 (Florida SART Advisory Committee, 2010) highlighted five major recommendations: first to improve the sexual assault forensic exam kit paperwork; second, to provide support to local SARTs in the state of Florida; third, how to serve nonreporting victims; fourth, to provide better training for law enforcement, prosecutors, and medical personnel; and fifth, to address issues of victim consent for medical treatment and the forensic exam. While all five recommendations carried deep significance, the most important recommendation was the support for local SARTs at the community level. The recommendation spoke about developing county level SARTs and called on existing SARTs within counties to assist in the development of SARTS in those counties without a response team. It also called for a minimum of cooperation and participation from rape crisis centers, law enforcement, medical facilities, and the state attorney's office. The state of Florida embraced the guidance from the national toolkit and emphasized mutual collaboration. There was also

an emphasis on thoroughly training all partnering agencies in law enforcement, prosecution, and medical staff on sex crimes as it pertained to their role. While not explicitly stated, the committee focused their training on becoming trauma informed. The recommendations also called for further collaboration, regardless of participation in SART (Florida SART Advisory Committee, 2010). Given the timeline of the recommendation, terminology like trauma-informed may not have been a universally coined phrase at the time of publication.

By 2011, the data reflected the expansion of the committee. The Florida SART Advisory Committee (2011) simply identified as the Statewide SART Advisory Committee in the recommendations document. The committee developed subcommittees, which targeted focus areas. The committee also provided a more sophisticated structure that implemented many of the logistics found in both the national and state toolkits. For transparency, the committee outlined that subcommittees should meet several times a year through teleconference or webinar, while the advisory committee should meet four times a year. New subcommittees consisted of the Interjurisdictional Subcommittee, Evidence Storage for Nonreporting Victims Subcommittee, Evidence Storage for Nonreporting Victims Subcommittee, Elements of a Prosecutable Case Subcommittee, Grant Writing Subcommittee, and Public Awareness Campaign for NonReporting Forensic Exams Subcommittee (Florida SART Advisory Committee, 2011, pp. 5–6). The subcommittees were reflective of areas the advisory committee identified as issues that required immediate review and analysis. Each subcommittee was tasked with analysis of the current practices surrounding the issue, with a final recommendation list for agencies to embrace new victim-centered approaches. Some of the recommendations included

internal practices of agencies toward victim services, while other recommendations called for the legal system to address statutes concerning sexual assault (Florida SART Advisory Committee, 2011). In 2021, current practices reflect the changes that occurred based on the advisory committee's recommendations in 2011.

The 2012 report showed evidence of the implementation of recommended best practices for the years 2010 and 2011 (Florida SART Advisory Committee, 2012). The report specified two surveys that were administered across the state to rape crisis centers and law enforcement evidence storage personnel. The first electronic survey was administered to 30 certified rape crisis centers and 10 colleges and university victim advocate/counseling programs. The intent of the survey was to understand how SART programs were implemented across the state. In response, 22 rape crisis centers and four colleges/universities provided feedback. Findings revealed that 92% of rape crisis centers participated in a SART program. Referring to protocol development, 88% of the respondents stated having developed protocols for forensic exams and evidence collection, 6% were in the process of developing protocols, and 6% had not yet developed any protocols. The protocols outline procedures for forensic medical examinations and all reporting (to include nonreporting) for cases of sexual violence. Only a little more than half of the centers (58%) engaged with trainings around the role of the criminal justice systems in cases of sexual violence. Data also indicated that 38% of rape crisis centers admitted concern for the involvement of hospitals and law enforcement around issues of responding to victims . The data collected by the 2012 survey highlighted important findings, which could be used to provide improvements to state

systems so that victims may have access to needed services (Florida SART Advisory Committee, 2012).

The second survey was distributed to attendees of the 2012 Property and Evidence Association of Florida (PEAF) Conference (Florida SART Advisory Committee, 2012). The attendees were members of the association and evidence technicians from law enforcement agencies across the state. The survey asked about the efficacy of the Statewide SART Advisory Committee presentation at the 2011 conference on nonreporting victim evidence collection and storage. Findings revealed that among the 47 respondents, most felt the presentation was helpful, but they still faced practical challenges in storing evidence. Results also indicated uncertainty among participants with regard to documenting nonreporting victims' evidence. As a result, the SART Advisory Committee set goals for rape crisis centers to enhance SART by 2014. The goals included the development of SARTs in 100% of the state's counties and a focused protocol on enhancing forensic services for victims (Florida Sexual Assault Response Team Advisory Committee, 2012).

In 2012 the state of Florida began to develop language around sex trafficking, particularly when handling minors (Florida SART Advisory Committee, 2012). Terminology varies from state to state; Florida designated the term *domestic minor sex trafficking* (DMST) as its nomenclature. The committee provided recommendations for more training on the issue of sex trafficking, and for social service providers (including first responders), on developing protocols for screening and assisting victims. At this time, changes at the national level around sex crimes against minors and structured responses to the crime were also occurring. The acknowledgment of this specific crime

helped support legislation around sexual assault in general and how children are protected under the law (Florida SART Advisory Committee, 2012).

In 2012, a subcommittee of the SART Advisory Committee was developed to make recommendations related to new legislation within the Sexual Battery Victims' Access to Services Act (2012), specifically, Fla. Stat. §794.052, "Sexual battery; notification of victim's rights and services" (Florida SART Advisory Committee, 2012). The provision gave victims the opportunity to participate with law enforcement in the final reporting. The Advisory Committee maintained their victim-centered perspective by recommending language that supports the rights of victims. The subcommittee's recommendation was that rather than requiring a victim to participate, the victim should be provided a well-informed option to participate, along with instructions on documenting responses. The recommendations of the subcommittee offered consistency that should contribute to positive progression for advancing the mission of SARTs across the state (Florida SART Advisory Committee, 2012).

The 2013–2014 recommendations offered by the Florida SART Advisory Committee continued the focus on victim-centered responses (Florida SART Advisory Committee, n.d.-a). The report reflected the trends of recommendations that were identified as a result of the previous reporting. In an effort to stay on trend, the SART Advisory Committee focused on adult forensic examination revisions from the 2007 protocol and the policies surrounding them for the years 2013–2014. While much of the data were similar in structure to the previous summaries of research, surveys, and recommendations, the 2013–2014 report fleshed out survey questions through quantitative visuals. Each question was addressed, along with its corresponding results.

Each question also provided detailed guidance to performing and documenting forensic exams. This layout promoted best practices to ensure as much accuracy on the part of forensic teams as possible, but also honored and respected best practices for victims. In an effort to go beyond seemingly dense text, the report provided sample documentation with visual aids to assist those performing the exam (Florida SART Advisory Committee, n.d.-a).

The Florida SART Advisory Committee (2015af) continued with the theme of improving forensics examinations and focusing on victim-centered approaches. To progress from the layout of the forensic exams from the previous year, the Committee extended the reporting to include recommendations for directions about the physical evidence recovery kit with regard to suspects, and a forensic exam model facility. The report also highlighted the importance of developing and sustaining a community SART. What was not explicitly suggested before but was included in the 2014–2015 document is that the SARTS are assisted by the rape crisis centers. The 2014–2015 report specifically stated it is the responsibility of every certified rape crisis center to be engaged in coordinated community efforts. While the material in previous reports explicitly stated that any recommendation was not mandated, the language in this section of the 2014–2015 report made a departure from *suggested* to *mandated*. It is in this report that the researcher began to see the similarities to the current NSVRC SART toolkit. The 2014–2015 report also extended the committee’s recommendations from the law enforcement subcommittee, which provided guidance for training law enforcement on sexual violence. The 2014–2015 recommendations appeared to follow the trends of the previous years and

expanded on the committee's previous recommendations (Florida SART Advisory Committee, 2015a).

The 2015–2016 report (Florida SART Advisory Committee, 2015,b) furthered the cause for forensic examination enhancements by the creation of subcommittees intended to examine the management and fiscal responsibilities of funding and functioning the exams. SART Advisory Committee surveyed two listservs from FCASV. This first was the directors of Florida's certified sexual assault programs and the other was a list of those individuals who wished to received correspondence from FCASV. The survey addressed costs related to operating a SANE program including (a) identifying funding resources, (b) understanding grant-allowable costs, and (c) examining the current standards for SANE. The advisory committee found that 53.8% of respondents ( $N = 26$ ) stated they received Florida Office of the Attorney General funding for forensic medical exam reimbursement. Other significant funding sources were FCASV-administered grants, local government funding, and private donations. In-kind sources made up 23.1%, while Florida Department of Health grants, federal government funding, and major donor/foundations totaled 15.4% of the funding (Florida SART Advisory Committee, 2015b).

The advisory committee also found that budgets as well as the structure in which SANE programs are performed varied by centers(Florida SART Advisory Committee, 2015b). For example, the average cost of an examination is approximately \$1,151. The Florida Office of the Attorney General only covers about 44% of the cost, leaving the remainder to be allocated from other resources such as in-kind monies or revenue. Depending on the center's available funding, this may pose a challenge. It is therefore

imperative to be mindful of how centers use the funding. The committee also called on the leadership to examine funding allocations at the state level as well as engage with legislative changes that would lean closer to providing sufficient funding for examinations. One of the other important recommendations was to provide a standard of training for nurses who administer the examination, as well as quality assurance and standards for facilities where exams are provided. The 2015–2016 report also introduced the consideration of individuals with disabilities and those who come from vulnerable populations as it relates to being provided examinations when requested. The report provided extensive recommendations that were, once again, victim centered. The advisory committee asked local providers to adopt a variety of best practices to include consent and review of legislation that outlines requirements (Florida SART Advisory Committee, 2015b).

The final public report brought colleges and universities to the table to look at Title IX and to research available resources for implementing best practices around crimes of sexual violence (Florida SART Advisory Committee, n.d.-b). Part of this is to include best practices in brochures to include definitions. The report also reintroduced training for criminal justice agencies, specifically judicial trainings. The recommendations tasked FCASV to cooperate with the Court Education Department of the Office of the State Court Administrator and the chairs of the Conference of Circuit Court Judges and Conference of County Court Judges to develop a cohesive presentation of trauma-informed tools for best practices when engaging with agencies and survivors. This recommendation was derived from the existing law enforcement investigation training recommended in the previous reporting. The report also included a



recommendation for attorneys to enhance tools and guidance for prosecuting sex crimes. It is clear to see that previous recommendations to the system were constructed to include prosecution and judges. This is a difficult task, as judicial officials are held to the standard of the law. The momentum of trauma-informed inclusion provided a foundation of language and practice. It is now seemingly easier to include the judicial system into the conversations around best practices for combating sexual violence (Florida SART Advisory Committee, n.d.-b).

Unfortunately, the FACSV website does not provide any further recommendations from the state past the year 2017. There is no documentation that clarifies the reasoning for the lack of information. FCASV cites shared language and practice from other states' coalitions and provides links to further data from sample state coalitions. Samples include the MNCASA Sexual Violence Justice Institute, the OAGSATF SART Handbook, and the PCAR SART guidelines. The OAGSATF SART handbook is not made available although the state's main web domain states the state of Oregon offers trainings for individuals who have interest in the developing a SART. Therefore, no data existed from which to provide analysis for the recommended resources. MNCASA and the PCAR both have toolkits available to the public for review. It is important to keep in mind that the PCAR houses the NSVRC, so it is acknowledged that the information is found to align closely with the national toolkit.

Minnesota and Pennsylvania both designed a toolkit for communities who either have or wish to begin a multidisciplinary team for sexual violence. Both toolkits focus on a team derived from criminal justice and medical systems. However, there are differences in the documents around clarifying roles. The first three guides of the PCAR (2002)

explain the function of the SART; however, much of the toolkit is devoted to explaining the role of SART member agencies in context to victim-centered approaches.

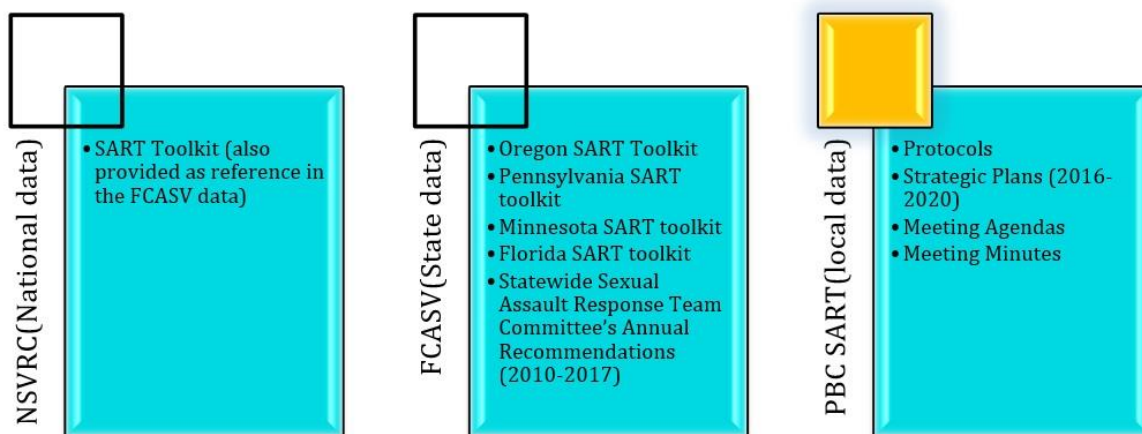
The MNCASA document, produced by the Sexual Violence Justice Institute details, much like the national toolkit, how a SART can be built, beginning with community assessments through the structure of meetings (Engelking & Florman, 2019). MNCASA highlights the importance of system change as part of the SART model. In their *Sexual Assault Response Team Starter Kit* (Engelking & Florman, 2019), MNCASA provides information for agencies who wish to create a SART based on micro issues for the community, while another SART may be formed to address systemic issues. Additionally, MNCASA places emphasis on the role of the coordinator. Like the national toolkit and FCASV, MNCASA highlights the need for conflict resolution and facilitation as a component of SART; however, unlike FCASV, MNCASA does not direct the rape crisis center to manage the coordination and facilitation of SART. Rather, MNCASA calls for the SART leadership to determine which agency is best equipped to perform this function (Engelking & Florman, 2019). It appears that PCAR envisions a SART on a case-by-case basis, frequently referring to the SART being “activated” (PCAR, 2002, p. 23). When explaining the role of the advocate, PCAR references that “the SART is activated immediately with the informed consent of the victim” (p. 23). Overall, both state coalitions provide basic and important guidelines for communities to develop and function a SART that is specific to the needs of each community (Engelking & Florman, 2019; MNCASA SJVI, 2017; PCAR, 2002).

## Local Data

This part of the data analysis is focused on the implementation of SART in the community setting (Figure 9). The research was focused on PBC’s response, creation, and implementation of a SART. PBC SART (2016a) created a website dedicated to archiving all documentation in reference to the SART. The first impression is a user friendly site, which includes visuals. There is a sufficient amount of transparency on the site, a list of agency specific protocols, a link to agendas/meetings, links to strategic plans, agency member websites, newsletters, and videos of SART trainings (PBC SART, 2016a).

**Figure 9**

*PBC SART*



PBC SART data collected for this study included the strategic plan, agendas, and meeting minutes for 2015–2020. The compilation of data is depicted in Table 1.

**Table 1***PBC SART Documentation*

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Strategic Plan	x	x		Combined		
Agenda		x	x	x	x	x
Meeting Minutes		x	x	x	x	x

The SART is housed out of the local PBC government, Victim Services Division (PBC, n.d.). SART has a dedicated location for meetings as well as services for individuals in the north part of the county (PBC, n.d.). The county has embraced many of the recommendations provided by FCASV. In an effort to maintain transparency, PBC SART provides site visitors a list of partnering agencies with direct links to their websites for further information. First, and most importantly, PBC SART has created multiple protocols. It appears that each member agency has a particular protocol outlined on the website. Agencies include law enforcement, hospital staff, first responders, and guidance for responding to sexual assaults. There are not, however, protocols in place for other member agencies to clarify their roles, purpose, and processes within the SART. The main protocol for SART members begins by clarifying the importance of a victim-centered, survivor-focused SART. Like the NRCSV and FCASV, PBC SART offers a mission statement along with goals, processes, monitoring, and evaluation. While the available data is lean, the protocol creates a foundation for the team (PBC SART, 2013). The protocol promotes unity, diversity, and equality of team members. It speaks to using

SART as an ongoing process which is continually revised and improved (PBC SART, 2013).

To understand how the SART process plays out over a period of time, the PBC SART website provides strategic plans for 2015–2017 and meeting agendas and minutes for 2016–2020. The review of PBC SART data enabled an analysis of how this SART has implemented the guidance of FCASV and NRCSV while being mindful of their own protocols. The following sections provide a review of information by year, starting with the PBC SART’s strategic plans, followed by the agendas and meeting minutes.

### **2015 SART Data**

While there are no agenda or meeting minutes provided for the year 2015, the strategic plan is laid out as a jump start for the SART program (PBC SART, 2015). The plan works as a foundation for community building, team development, and victim centered approaches. Essentially, the 2015 strategic plan reads as the real-life practice of the national toolkit recommendations. It calls for the SART to identify key members, assess the needs of the team, and look to increase institutional knowledge, both within individual agency members and as a collective. Another important goal of the SART is understand the needs of underserved communities. SARTS should target SANE nurse services and SANE’s presence in the community, and focus on becoming transparent with the county at large, developing the website to make information available to the public. Each goal is met with action plans and what is referenced as a “champion,” or responsible party. Overall, the 2015 strategic plan is themed around training so the SART can begin engaging partners and allies within the community in understanding sexual assault (PBC SART, 2015)

**2016 SART Data**

The strategic plan for 2016 (PBC SART, 2016b) follows the same goals and structure as presented in the strategic plan for 2015. The most innovative component of 2016 is the use of technology for the SART. It is in this time that the SART created the website in which all the data for this research is located. Providing these documents for public view helps to create accountability for the member agencies and increases transparency for the community. Goals are broken down into six categories. Goal #1 focuses on training for first responders and expands upon the initial foundation created in 2015. There are forward movements in certain goals. For instance, the strategic plan calls for surveying member agencies to determine training needs. The strategic plan is heavily focused on the development and implementation of trainings specifically geared toward law enforcement. There is also heavier emphasis on job specific training in relation to sexual violence for first responders and local university campuses. Another important focus for 2016 is identifying gaps in services across all member agencies and promoting diversity and inclusion. Goal #4 targets enhancing services and understanding underserved communities. The plan highlights goals to achieve for the year and outlines a plan of action for each goal with specific deliverables that are to be executed by member agencies or their representatives. It is important to note that each goal establishes a timeline of when these deliverables should be completed, or at least be in development (PBC SART, 2016b).

A review of the agendas and meeting minutes provided a comparison between the stated goals in the strategic plan and the implementation of those goals throughout the year. The general meeting minutes for January, 2016 indicated the development of the

strategic plan was discussed, with a goal to be prepared for the February meeting (PBC SART, 2016c). Although the 2016 strategic plan goals listed in the February meeting minutes are somewhat in line with the official documentation listed on their website, there are a variety of changes on the website not included in the February meeting minutes (PBC SART, 2016d). While the meeting minutes indicated a formal copy of the strategic plan would be sent via email to members, it is assumed the documentation provided on the website was considered to be the formal plan. The information included in the August meeting minutes (PBC SART, 2016f) appears to contradict the discussion from February, which stated the strategic plan was to be updated during the 2016 year. The August meeting minutes, however, establish that the strategic plan was created in December of 2015 (PBC SART, 2016f). The messaging creates confusion for achieving key goals to ensure SART's success. Maintaining clarity is vital for the smooth operation of the SART

The comparison of meeting agendas and meeting minutes for 2016 indicates the meetings followed the agendas consistently. The one exception occurred in October and November. The website did not include the October meeting minutes, the November agenda, and the November meeting minutes. October's agenda (PBC SART, 2016g) indicated a meeting for November 17, 2016, but there are no data to confirm this information.

The data related to PBC SART in 2016 indicates the presence of a team building a foundation (PBC SART, 2016a, b, c, d, e, f, g). During 2016, committees were developed with specific targets such as community action networks, training, legislative, and campus committees. Opportunities were provided for member agencies to learn about one

another through highlighting a community team member to discuss their purpose in the community and what services were available within each agency. This is an important part of building this foundation, as it reflects the suggested guidelines from the national and state levels in building partnerships and coalition development (PBC SART, 2016a, b, c, d, e, f, g). The best way to understand how to combat violence in a community is to first begin understanding and assessing what the community has and what a community needs (PBC SART, 2016a, b, c, d, e, f, g).

The data for 2016 presented 2016 as a year of formation and development of the necessary foundation for efficiency in a SART. The data also established necessary education on the legislative environment for sexual violence in the state of Florida. For each monthly meeting, members were provided updates and guidance to proposed and existing legislation. This effort to keep the community informed on legal matters surrounding sexual violence is vital for the success of SART. Providing clarity to laws that affect all agency members, outlining the language to be used, and making content available on the SART website give context to the cause. What the data do not reflect is the conversations around what these statutes mean or how they translate into member practices. Overall, the PBC SART 2016–2017 data show build-up from a foundational practice of SART and suggest major progress from the previous years in membership interaction and expansion of resources (PBC SART, 2016a, b, c, d, e, f, g).

### **2017 SART Data**

The 2017 strategic plan differs from the previous years, as it sets the plan for a longer timeframe of 3 years. The last public strategic plan available on the website is the 2017–2020 document (PBC SART, 2018c). Thereafter, the data only include the meeting



agendas and minutes. The data indicate that the final plan was approved in May 2018. This shows the team spent time collaborating and adjusting the plan. The 2017–2020 strategic plan was used to assess how the strategic plan was reflected in the agendas and meeting minutes for 2017.

The PBC SART Strategic Plan 2017–2020 (2018c) shows a shift from a law enforcement focus to a centralized focus on the advocacy, mental health, legal, and judicial components of SART, as well as further training. It does not mean that the data only reflect these areas. Continued work with law enforcement and SANE are evident and weaved within the goals for the SART. The seven goals reflect the efforts of the past and expand upon the present work. For instance, Goal #5 focuses on strengthening the existing SART and ensures that current efforts are still maintained (PBC SART, 2018c).

Perhaps the most important take away for the strategic plan in this timeframe is the effort to implement diversity and inclusion into the SART as a part of practice. The 2017–2020 Strategic Plan specifically highlights underserved communities. It looks at addressing African America, LGBT, and the disabled communities. While trainings are noted as important tasks/deliverables, the strategic plan indicates SART took some accountability for inclusion through the implementation of toolkits and printed materials for both Spanish and Creole speakers. PBC SART also planned for a contract with Language Line Solutions, and American Sign Language interpreters. Trainings are provided to agencies such as law enforcement, the courts, and service providers (PBC SART, 2018c).

The review of the PBC SART 2017 agendas and meeting minutes indicate the minutes (PBC SART, 2017a, b, c, d, e, f) reflected the agendas consistently except for the

absence of August's meeting minutes. August's agenda (PBC SART, 2017g) indicated a meeting for September 28, 2017, but there are no data to confirm this information. The data showed PBC SART did conduct a monitoring and evaluation of the SART's effectiveness at the beginning of the year. Through a survey provided to all SART members, it was determined that the program was 100% effective and that there were no concerns by any members (PBC SART, 2017a). This information was important to consider as the researcher examined subsequent years of data.

The PBC SART 2017 data indicated there were efforts at collaboration in training agencies to respond to survivor trauma (PBC SART, 2017a, b, c, d, e, f). Training opportunities were presented at every meeting along with information on how to participate. These trainings were in line with the goals of the strategic plan (PBC SART, 2018c) and were focused on disabilities. Another reflection is that of community engagement with underserved communities. These collaborations provided conversations with those within the community, which facilitated understanding their rights as victims and what resources were available to victims. The data also championed the important relationship building that occurred with community groups. This was reflected in the meeting with the Hispanic Guatemalan Community Group (PBC SART, 2017a), the collaboration with Destiny by Choice and Coalition for Independent Living Options (PBC SART, 2017e), the introduction of Special Needs Registry with local law enforcement (SPBC SART, 2017e), and trainings such as *Coming Full Circle: Responding to Cases of Sexual Violence Involving Victims with Disabilities*, a collaboration with universities and law enforcement; *'Family Strong' The intersection between Clergy & Domestic Violence*, a collaboration with Hispanic Clergy, PBC Victim

Services (PBCVS), Destiny by Choice, Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse (AVDA), and the Rivera Beach Police Department (PBC SART, 2017f).

The meeting minutes for February 2017 (PBC SART, 2017b) indicated technological advancements for SART were introduced. Minutes highlighted the development of the official Palm Beach County SART website. The website established a platform for members and the community by which to access SART-related information. The website also became a central hub for resources related to agencies in the community. This revelation is incredibly important for survivors and the community. The global shift to web-based technologies is highlighted in the 2017 documents as PBC acknowledged the importance of digital engagement and implemented a tool that is user-friendly (PBC SART, 2017b).

The most impactful highlight for 2017 is the introduction of legal language around human trafficking. Prior to 2017, this intersection of sexual violence was acknowledged, but not addressed with the emphasis that was prevalent in all the 2017 meeting minutes. All meetings touched upon the formation of the Enhanced Collaborative Task Force to Combat Human Trafficking (ECTFCHT) collaborative initiative, which was brought on by the DOJ, Bureau of Justice Assistance, and OVC. The multi-disciplinary team specifically addresses human trafficking issues and utilizes their partnerships with academia, law enforcement and local service providers (PBC SART, 2017f). Each month's legislative committee section speaks to the issue. The data introduce members to important statutes around trafficking, starting with the CS/SB 852: Human Trafficking General Bill, which provides the legal framework around the establishment of a multidisciplinary staffing for minors affected by exploitation (PBC

SART, 2017b); SB 970: Florida Compensation Trust Fund for Survivors of Human Trafficking (PBC SART, 2017c); and SB 286: Human Trafficking Education in Schools (PBC SART, 2017d). This emphasis on human trafficking is not identified within the strategic plan, but the communication of the issue is a vital component to the SART, as it has part to do egregious act of sexual violence.

It is evident from the data that PBC SART had a good starting base for following through with the goals of the strategic plan. SART did maintain an evaluation of the effectiveness of programming, although it will be clearer if this process is done annually to meet the goal expectations. While the goal to maintain regularly monthly meetings began successfully, there is no evidence to indicate that SART held regular meetings after June 2017. Any data to support further efforts of the SART mission are missing in this regard. However, the data do reflect that SART meetings did continue beginning in February 2018 (PBC SART, 2018a). It is also important to note that the subcommittee called Community Action Network stored 2017 on the website. The data, however, were minimal, and reflected much of the same information found in the meeting agendas and minutes for the general meetings (PBC SART, 2017a, b, c, d, e, f).

### **2018 SART Data**

The meeting minutes for 2018 reflect the agendas consistently except for missing agendas and meeting minutes for the months of January, July, and December. During 2018, PBC SART focused on using the strategic plan as a guide for the next few years, which emphasizes how evolving goals may be of value to the community. The legal framework for the state of Florida is also very much in the background for how the SART proceeds with trainings and community engagement. The legislative committee

highlights reflect the current community needs, addressing issues of diversity and inclusion, as well as ensuring that judicial and legal members of SART are also involved with the process. The PBC SART general meeting minutes (2018a) show there was conversation around FCASV advocating for legislative change related to the statutes addressing sexual violence.

The inclusion of vulnerable populations in context with sexual violence is prevalent in the data. The conversations in the meeting minutes addressed gender bias and discrimination in LGBT communities (PBC SART, 2018b). SART's Training Committee stated its acknowledgment of the need to improve upon trainings for underserved communities to meet the goals of the strategic plan (PBC SART, 2018d). This type of accountability is important for members to embrace, as it expresses not only the needs of the community but the efforts by SART members to ensure that training and resources are made available.

The 2018 data speak heavily to legislative, training, and community engagement efforts. Case staffing was addressed, but as in previous years, there was no information on how the team created change. The data only reflects summaries of what was discussed. The documentation does show how member agencies were sharing information in training and improving services or addressing important information that fellow agency members needed to be better at addressing sexual violence. For example, the Assistant State Attorney/Chief of Special Victims Unit shared the process for intake on prosecution and the need to move forward on a case, and the Sheriff's office established a helpline for survivors seeking to check the status of a rape kit (PBC SART, 2018e). These acknowledgments are evidence of community engagement.

Meeting minutes also contradicted the strategic plan, which called for more law enforcement involvement of SART (PBC SART, 2018c). The meeting minutes show several instances of law enforcement being directly involved. Some examples include law enforcement seeking clarity on technology issues with regards to investigations (PBC SART, 2018e) and law enforcement's engagement with the Human Trafficking Task Force (PBC SART, 2018f). The strategic plan (PBC SART, 2018c) is not clear on how exactly law enforcement may be more involved. However, the data do not support a lack of participation by law enforcement.

### **2019 SART Data**

The momentum to meet the goal of maintaining regular meetings appears to have faded in 2019. The agendas for all months except for June are not available through the links provided on the website. Therefore, the researcher could not identify if agendas were in line with what was discussed in the meetings. The meeting minutes for 2019 are available on the website with the exception of the March, July, August, and December meetings.

The data indicate the meetings' purpose was primarily as information sharing and updates rather than discussions of issues pertaining to SART. As noted in previous years, the Legislative Committee was consistent in reporting new or ongoing legislation updates that were relevant to sexual violence. There is confusing data, as most of the months indicate reports on pre and postSB636 cases in laboratory testing updates. It is unclear in the data what these reports addressed; however, the researcher inferred the discussions regarded legislation passed in 2016 related to evidence collection, which was a subject discussed in SART meetings in the past. The discussions were made slightly clearer in

meetings later in the year, when clarifying the importance of rape kit testing (PBC SART, 2019a). Apart from information on forensic examinations, the data for 2019 only reported general information about community events and member agency updates.

### **2020 SART Data**

The meeting minutes for 2020 reflect the agendas consistently except for missing agendas and meeting minutes for the months of March, July, August, September, October, November, and December. It is important to note the global COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020, forcing businesses and individuals to cease meeting in person. This phenomenon most likely played a role in the absence of data. However, the meeting minutes that are available differ from previous years, as there is no additional information attached. Additional resources included flyers from community agencies for events or offerings and thorough and comprehensive legislative updates. After February 2020, the remaining meeting minutes spoke more to addressing how member agencies adjusted services to meet the challenges associated with the pandemic.

### **Themes**

The themes from the analysis were determined by following the DCA process. The themes were derived from the SART main themes: victim-centered and training and collaboration. The researcher developed each main theme into two subthemes, successes, and challenges. Success themes included unity, teamwork, and consistency. Challenge themes included information saturation, goals in practice, case staffing, and conflict resolution.

### ***Victim Centered***

The most important aspect of PBC SART is its ability to remain victim centered. Throughout the planning, development, and implementation phases, the work was always rooted in trauma-informed approaches and ensuring what was best for the victims served by the SART. The term victim-centered was used within the meeting minutes and was reflected in the practices and approaches by all agencies who were part of the data reporting. The emphasis on being victim-centered was also provided in discussions regarding state legislation. Keeping agencies informed allowed agencies to be engaged with the legal process and how it related to their respective work.

In 2020, being victim-centered became even more important as the global pandemic created challenges for everyone involved in the sexual violence community. Despite this major obstacle, PBC SART remained vigilant in providing services and resources for individuals experiencing sexual violence. The SART also maintained a process of communicating with one another to ensure that victims' needs were assessed and addressed.

### ***Training***

There was never an instance in the data where training was not indicated. PBC SART ensured the members were informed and provided instructions on how to participate in both local and national opportunities. In many instances, trainings were specific to the community, the agencies, and to the issue of sexual violence. In fact, trainings were very informal and sometimes simply occurred through information sharing during discussions.



Trainings are significant as they are continuous and always in a state of continuous improvement. Trainings serve as education for members and are ongoing. As issues around sexual violence evolve, it is imperative that trainings remain a main component of SART. Trainings should always be universal for all members and never available to only one set of members, as every agency can benefit from learning new skills and information that could enhance their services to victims.

### ***Collaboration***

The emphasis on collaboration was evident in all levels (national, state, local) of the response to sexual violence. Without collaboration, a SART would not exist. PBC SART displayed collaboration as a major success, as it is evident there is a large pool of community agencies that have partnered and participated with the SART meetings, as well as engaged in the development of protocols and strategic planning.

It is also clear in the data that even when concerns arise, the efforts to work together with supporting the mission of SART and the collaboration always places victims at the forefront. The data identify that there is a representation of all key participants like law enforcement, victim services providers, SANE nurses, and the legal community. While the SART remains focused on the criminal justice system, it utilizes its community partners to address mental health, housing, and other important resources that are vital to a victim's survival success.

### **Successes**

The category of successes emerged in the analysis of the data, which was a result of reviewing the progression in the data of positive outcomes recorded by the SART team. Repetition of outcomes indicated a pattern of success or challenge. The difference

between each category was determined by whether there was positive growth in the SART or if there was the same idea and no growth. Growth was determined by recorded results of discussions and by finding any correlation between the national and state toolkits in conjunction with that of the local PBC SART toolkit.

### ***Unity***

The national and state data called for agencies to come together to reach specific goals of sexual violence reduction. This goal is also reflected in the local data. The PBC SART has taken great measures to develop and maintain a collaborative community. The organization has also taken great lengths to provide transparency for the community to build partnerships and buy-in from outside agencies within that community. As this research has highlighted, there are many systems that work within other systems. To find harmony and merge these together to function with purpose is a daunting task that poses many risks to the inner relationships of those individuals who operate within the systems. The Victim Services Unit remains a focal point for this team and brings the institutions together to find common ground and build a positive response to a very serious issue.

### ***Teamwork***

The data support a positive coalition-building mentality. PBC SART makes a point to highlight agency members and the work they do. at each meeting, all members have an opportunity to learn about one another's role, purpose, and mission. Because of the use of online presence and public information, this information is also accessible to the community at large. Even individuals who do not participate in the SART directly have an opportunity to comb through the data to become educated on Palm Beach's local services. This level of transparency may also be useful for others who seek to build

similar response teams for their communities. It is evident in the data that members sought to be part of the SART while the SART made sure to praise and highlight the work of agency members. The data also support an effort to make use of all who participate in the efforts of the team. A yearly SART member award highlights great work done in the field by a member of any agency that participates in the SART. This camaraderie is important to the motivation and momentum of SART's continuity.

### *Consistency*

The data show the SART maintained consistent reporting as well as uniformity in how the data were presented. Each agenda met its intended purpose, clearly evidenced by the meeting minutes. Linear composition is important, as it provides the necessary structure for building and maintaining a coalition. It is also useful for grant purposes, as SARTs rely on funding for programming and services. As indicated in earlier chapters, applying, and being awarded federal and state grants relies on proper documentation to assist in measuring the SART's successes and function for the community. The PBC SART data support the organization's efforts; the SART has made its data possible for research, such as this, to be produced.

Another important element in the SART's demonstration of consistency is the members involved in the collaborative effort and their attendance in SART activities. The SART has done well with maintenance; for the most part, the same actors from membership agencies attend the SART meetings. This allows for information retention and recall planning for the future of SART. It also provides a symbolic element of dedication and commitment to the cause and reflects highly upon how the community intends to stay involved in the efforts to address the issue of sexual violence in PBC.

There is, however, one aspect of operation where PBC SART has not been consistent. Inconsistencies were primarily noted in administrative issues. The data indicated an inconsistency with regular monthly meetings. Documentation showed there are times of the year when SART does not meet, and gaps between meetings may be as long as several months. There are also issues with accessing data, specifically for 2019, where links to data indicate information is either relocated or removed from the website. It is important that the messaging of consistency is apparent in all of SART's actions, including the transparency they hope to achieve within the community.

Challenges will always be present in any given situation. Therefore, it is important that this research addresses both the SART's successes and identified challenges.

### **Challenges**

Addressing challenges is an important task for growth and does not in any way undermine the incredible task of creating and maintaining a community collaboration. The challenges allow the opportunity for recommendations to form and alternative ways of function to be explored that may be useful to SART's expansion. The category of challenges was determined by the analysis of recorded data. Challenges reflected repetition in data without any recorded progression. Much of the data contained disconnects from the national and state toolkits to the local PBC SART toolkit. This category was determined as Challenges because the researcher understood the uncovered themes reflect a particular phenomenon with a particular time frame. This is to say that challenges can be transformed over time.

### *Information Saturation*

While data for meetings and committees at the national, state, and local levels provide extensive details for collaboration and community, there is far too much information presented without proper streamlining. This fact is evident in the local data. The PBC SART data, which expands over 5 years, provides wonderful information on community building. There are many trainings and awareness campaigns made available to the member agencies; however, it appears there is a saturation of information without anything to support what is done with the information once distributed. As a collaborative movement, information sharing is highly important, yet there is no evidence in the data that supports how institutions implement the trainings provided.

The national toolkit and Florida's toolkit both placed a heavy emphasis on conflict resolution skills and the need for facilitating internal conflicts. In the years of data provided, it appears there were no conflicts addressed within the PBC SART. In fact, the January 2017 meeting highlighted a survey that indicated 100% of participants felt SART was effective and 100% agreed the SART followed a collaborative, victim-centered approach (PBC SART, 2017a). There were rarely documented evidence of remedying any internal issues. One such indicator in the data was from the October 2019 meeting, in which the victim services agency provided a victim-centered training to 911 respondents (PBC SART, 2019b). The minutes clarified how the issue was raised and provided the outcomes of the training (PBC SART, 2019b). The other evidence stemmed from a case review in November 2019, when there was a challenge with a victim seeking services (PBC SART, 2019c). While the highlighted issues were lightly addressed, both incidents would have been an opportunity to focus on solutions for how agencies respond

to such challenges. The data already documented the issue but did not provide details on member agencies' steps moving forward to address similar situations in the future.

The April 2016 meeting minutes (PBC SART, 2016e) clarified Case Staffing's stated goals: "to review complex cases, learn from each other, set structure, and facilitate a smooth process" (p. 4). As there were no data available to analyze regarding the specifics related to case staffing, the only evidence available was the briefings in meeting minutes. The data provide general information, but nothing that would support the goal statement regarding learning from one another and facilitation of process. This may be due to the confidentiality required in the meetings. Some clarity on problem solving complex issues should be mentioned, however, and is missing in the data. When issues were mentioned in the data, there was almost nothing in the way of evidence to support how the SART addressed the issues. There were mild responses of *looking into* an issue further, but these concerns were never addressed again through the discussion process. Conflicts naturally arise, and to keep transparency within the community, reflecting on conflicts helps the community learn strategies for healthy approaches to resolutions. Partner community groups and the community at large may be able to learn from better approaches to conflict if they are provided evidence of the success of conflict resolution.

### ***Goals in Practice***

There are always challenges when there are many different agencies working towards a mission. SARTs are intended to be multiagency response teams to sexual assaults in the county. They call for transparency, equality, and engagement. While the Palm Beach SART provides ample and important information to the public, the data for the SART does not always reflect the transparency and equality. The protocol for all

SART members in PBC states that the SART will, “Define protocol and procedures to clear up roles and increase accountability; formalize agreements in a memorandum of understanding between all agents” (PBC Minutes, 2013, p. 3)

The data indicates much emphasis on law enforcement and SANE, but not as much as other agencies, such as District Attorney’s Office or the Victim Services agencies. There are two specific protocols for law enforcement and First Responders, but no such protocols exist for other agencies. All three Strategic plans address the creation and implementation of protocols for all agencies, highlighting the Florida Office of the State Attorney and campus initiative. The SART is housed from the Victims Services unit, is facilitated by the Victim Services unit, and managed by the Victim Services Unit. However, the website does not provide protocols in place for them or any other agencies beyond SANE and first responders. This is hard to determine whether the goal of protocol implementation for all agencies has occurred. There is a brief protocol for Child Abuse cases in which DCF is involved, but no other agencies provide information about their commitment. This challenge is also prevalent in the meeting minutes.

And while it is understood the role of Victim Services is by nature victim centered, an outline of this commitment would support the transparency and equality the SART promotes. This can also be said for county prosecution. They are held to a very specific standard, but documentation regarding their commitment in their role would also appreciate the need for transparency and equality. The researcher’s reflection does not mean to say that law enforcement does not or should not continually assess their role and improve upon their own practices and protocols. However, the data only provide evidence that supports a level of transparency with law enforcement participating on

some level of documentation, where there is no documented data to reflect transparency from their counterparts. Another example of this is found in the 2016 Strategic Plan. Goal # 2 is “Develop and implement a countywide protocol for a sexual assault special investigator role through the Office of the State Attorney (Strategic Plan 2016-2017, p 4). In the February 2016 meeting minutes, the SART re writes the Strategic plan to not include this goal (PBC SART, Feb 2016, p.2). The reason for its removal was not addressed or discussed in the data. What information was delivered in the meeting minutes differs slightly that what was formally be agreed upon. It is also never discussed again in any of the meeting minutes as to the status or such protocol or their involvement with the SART. Other protocols, such as the non-reporting protocol, were acknowledge and indicated as completed as of the June 2016 meeting minutes (PBC SART, Jun 2016, p.2). It is in this month’s minutes that the SART discusses important updates with the FCASV guidelines for SART. They acknowledge several protocols that were reviewed and updated. However, not all protocols are made available for all agency members to date. This does not align with the Strategic Plans nor the official protocol for the SART.

Equality amongst all agencies involved in the collaborative effort has been an important aspect of the creation and maintaining of SART on the national, state, and local levels. The data reads differently in varies instances. This is indicated, again, in the focus on law enforcement. The 2016 Strategic Plan uses phrases such as training with a “proper response” for underserved communities (Strategic Plan 2016-2017, p 3). As previously addressed by the researcher, while the data is accurate in their assessment for better trainings for law enforcement, it assumes that other agencies, such as the victim service providers, are not in need for training in diversity and inclusion. This can appear as a



conflict for interagency collaborating. Every agency will need proper response to victims. Every agency will have members who are not well versed in response, regardless of how victim centered they may feel they are. This supports the needs for third party facilitation and assessment of agency needs. As a collective, if there is a goal to improve the response for one agency, then that same effort must be made for all those partnering in the SART.

### ***Case Staffing***

It is of great importance that SART develops a team to review cases. This challenge is not regarding the execution of meetings, but in what is presented in the meeting. The data on SART general meetings reflect a careful effort to keep information generalized, staying in line with victim confidentiality. The information provided, however, is not worded with enough substance to create context and meaning. There are opportunities to discuss how the team worked together, address issues that came from the meeting, and any proactive solutions that were discovered because of these conversations that would not violate victim confidentiality. It is in that type of data where the reporting of case reviews can be proved useful. Simply regurgitating information that does not add value to the SART meeting does not serve any agency member in a positive way.

### ***Conflict Resolution***

The data indicated a heavy emphasis on conflict resolution skills as a necessity for SART. The NSVRC highlighted facilitation, negotiation, and mediation skills as lifelines for helping to sustain SART (NSVRC, n.d.-c). There is an extensive set of language throughout the NSVRC toolkit on the need for unbiased approaches to communication, as well as the need to employ conflict resolution skills for de-escalating issues within

agency disputes. Facilitation is mentioned several times in the toolkit in association with conflict resolution. Facilitation even holds a designated role within the leadership of SART (NSVRC, n.d.-c). FCASV also promotes conflict resolution skills in their state toolkit. In Section Three of the SART toolkit (FCASV, 2012), the FCASV provided methods to reduce dispute and acknowledged a variety of conflict resolution skills to assist teams in maintaining a fair and open SART. Even as early as 2010, conflict resolution was a beneficial component for team building and workplace dispute.

Conflict resolution skills are highlighted as a very important element for institutional and interpersonal collaboration throughout the national and state level toolkits; however, they are not discussed as much at the county level. While there is mention of facilitation and dispute resolution, skills are not discussed or clarified beyond the mission of the SART committees and throughout the meeting minutes. More information on conflict resolution skills may have addressed recurring issues in the PBC SART. There are evident conflicts, as indicated in earlier sections of this chapter, but solutions offered simply asked agencies to revisit their protocols. Conflict resolution can go beyond a simple task. Conflict resolution asks participants to be honest with issues so that real change can occur.

SART general meetings are attended by a variety of actors from institutions that are member agencies. Their position within their identified institutions varies. There may be those in leadership positions in attendance at the general meetings along with individuals who participate in direct service roles. Part of the issue of information saturation is that data is not filtered according to roles and responsibilities. For example, members with direct service roles have more immediate needs for which they seek

assistance, whereas members in mezzo-leadership roles manage the day-to-day operations of the agency. Members with high-ranking leadership roles must address more systemic issues, whether within or outside their own institution. While the general meetings present vital information on training, statistics, and community engagement, the entirety of the information waits to be facilitated and implemented accordingly into membership agencies. The years 2016-2018 only addressed basic announcements of past and present events related to training and community engagement. The only exception is the January 2017 meeting which provided feedback from a survey on SART effectiveness (PBC SART, 2017c). The data from 2019-2020 showed that problems were presented, but the resolutions to these problems were not as apparent. Conflict resolution requires intimate knowledge of sexual assaults in the community along with a commitment to use the data presented to address the conflict within agency protocols for responding to sexual assault. As the analyzed data did not present evidence of agencies engaging in conflict resolution, it was difficult to determine how the information presented in SART general meetings was transferred into practice.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter includes a discussion of the data analysis. The chapter also contains a discussion of the findings in the empirical research in comparison to the analyzed data. The data provided evidence that system theory and strategy of game theory are applied in PBC SART's practice. PBC SART data indicated that teams could come together to tackle violence in their communities. The application of the strategy of game theory revealed human factors do affect positive outcomes for resolving conflict. The data did not support strategic leadership theory because PBC SART does not provide a clear structure for information sharing. This disconnects in communication creates internal conflicts and does not support deeper connections within the SART community.

Because the conclusions drawn indicate there is an issue of information sharing and the overload that may occur with participating agencies, it is clear that conflict resolution skills offer positive results for PBC SART's effectiveness. Conflict resolution is heavily emphasized in the NSVRC toolkit (NSVRC, n.d.-d), as well as in FCASV SART (2012) documentation, but it is not as prevalent at the county level. There is a call for the use of third-party facilitation. The data in this study support this call. In fact, it is recommended that the coordination and facilitation of SART be removed from the responsibility of the Rape Crisis Center and moved to either an independent entity within the local government or an independent entity all together who would utilize conflict resolution skills to assist the SART address its challenges. By developing practitioners of conflict resolution to focus on social and communal initiatives, the Conflict Resolution and Crisis Management fields can realize a further reduction in violence. International sectors have used monitoring and evaluation projects for decades with positive results

(Tabaja et al., 2021). Scholars have developed program designs and evaluations to determine violence reduction in post conflict areas around the world particularly in developing nations (Tabaja et al., 2021), The same approaches must be applied to the issues plaguing communities within the United States.

The utilization of conflict resolution skills will facilitate two important factors. The first factor allows for total and complete equal participation of all agencies within the process. It will remove the ownership of ideas and process by one agency over another. The second factor will allow the Rape Crisis Center to focus on the very important work they do every day. The Rape Crisis Center is the expert in advocacy and providing crisis intervention services for survivors. SART protocol mandates that participants act as independent agents in the SART but be able to switch back to the roles of their respective agencies. Such role transitioning is not always possible, especially when working in violence prevention. By creating the role of an independent facilitator to manage the SART, a level of bias will be removed. The goal for an independent facilitator is a successful SART program with effective outcomes. The facilitator does not bring influence from a participating agency, but rather engages with all agencies to influence one another to achieve positive outcomes.

While many great strides have been made in the creation, development, and execution of SARTs, there are some challenges to the successful implementation of SART functions. Challenges present an opportunity to navigate in a direction that aligns with the mission of the SART. The challenges are opportunities to improve communication with members and provide proactive outcomes that will enhance the efficacy of the SART.

SART effectiveness is determined by the participation of member agencies. The challenge is in how members show up to meetings and what they do with the information provided at meetings. In Section Two of the NSVRC's (n.d.-b) SART toolkit, the NSVRC echoes these sentiments. First, NSVRC acknowledges there is limited research for SARTs and the research that is available shows issues with consistency as well as leadership, power, and authority within SARTs (NSVRC, n.d.-d). The result is difficulties in developing common goals and needs for the SART and the community it serves. SARTs must be tasked with providing victim-centered approaches and understanding their role in systems change. SARTs should be able to learn and identify gaps in victim services as well as identify enhancements within local, state, and federal systems' responses, whether those responses are prevention or intervention methods. The best mechanism to provide this critical education is via research and evaluation (NSVRC, n.d.-d).

In this study, PBC SART meeting minutes indicated that training offered knowledge to members but there was no indication of how that knowledge was transferred into SART practices. The SART is comprised of multiple agencies, but no evidence was found indicating how the information presented in training would later be used to improve either communication and/or relationships within the SART.

### **Recommendations**

This study revealed conflict experienced by members of law enforcement, district attorney offices, and victim advocacy organizations within the local SART and how such conflict may impact the SART's effectiveness in combating sexual violence in its community. The overall goal of the agencies involved on coordinated community

response teams is to reduce violence within the community, yet agencies within the criminal justice systems have different responsibilities in their efforts to respond to violence. Therefore, approaches and desired outcomes may vary from agency to agency, leading to distrust, adversarial relationships, and lack of cooperation within the SART. Current SARTs rely on the good faith and good will of agencies to participate. There is an assumption that members of community agencies want to be included in SART meetings and come to the table willing to discuss any and all issues around sexual violence prevention efforts within their respective agencies. This case study determined clear challenges that prevent agencies from moving forward together on strategy and approach. The research revealed a clear challenge to the larger shared goal of combating sexual violence within the community, and a need for more effective approaches to collaboration.

Findings in this study revealed the fusion between *systems theory* and the *strategy of game theory* was applicable to understanding the function of PBC SART. The response team provided an example of different systems attempting to merge together to resolve a larger conflict. The systems worked together through representative actors of each system. As understood in systems theory, if actors do not initiate change, then the conflict itself does not change (Schelling, 1958). As outlined in strategy of game theory, multiparty actors need to shift away from zero-sum expectations and adopt a nonzero-sum strategy. In practice, this means the SART should have incorporated more collaboration and cooperation from one another. Therefore, the conclusion is that while the SART began the process of systems change using multiparty actors, strategy of game theory supports that change did not occur because there was no clear direction as a team

(Schelling, 1958). There were many great ideas and training, but they were not applied by the actors and institutions into practice for effective reduction of sexual violence within the community. This gap is not a fault of any member agency but simply a result of the design and execution of the SART.

The SART has established a baseline of cooperation and collaboration between actors, but it has yet to emerge into full systems change. Much of this baseline is founded on the imbalance of power that the current SART displays in the data. Third-party facilitation is called upon for the SART to employ at the national and state levels . FCASV changed the approach and placed the responsibility on the Rape Crisis Center to maintain the SART, while mandating those who coordinate and facilitate the SART remove themselves from their original function. Even if the theories are not applied, it is humanly impossible to turn off individual perspectives and act as a neutral party when there is a vested interest in the cause. For example, to ask an actor from a rape crisis center to remove themselves emotionally while operating a SART places the actor in an unlikely situation and general bias will appear. In the case of PBC, the majority of SART coordination was executed by the Victim Services branch. At the same time, the SART highlighted the need for training for other agencies, but it was not ever clear what improvements were necessary from the agency that operated the SART. While this did not come across as intentional, it demonstrated that initiatives such as a SART best operate under a third party with neutrality to ensure all actors and institutions who participate can fully function within the SART without compromising their opinions, perspectives, and outcomes.



To take this one step further, the research also recalled strategic leadership theory. Now that the data in this study has established a need to remove responsibility from the actor to the system design, the next step is to draw a new approach for the SART through helping the function of the macro-, meso-, and micro-systems. While SART should remain open to any and all individuals who wish to participate, the real systems change will only occur when the correct information is provided to the level that not only responds, but that ultimately can create decisions based on that information. The issue of information saturation is what determines the effectiveness of SART. It is one step to provide trainings and insight, but the next step is to understand how that information can transform into the practices of institutions and larger systems. The outlook on important matters differs at each level. Since strategic leadership theory examines the dichotomy of exploration-exploitation, macro levels of leadership are the gatekeepers of setting protocols and practices under which meso and micro levels operate. Meso levels generally ensure that protocols and practices are maintained. Micro levels operate under the leadership provided by meso levels. However, meso and micro levels also provide important feedback to macro levels on trends of current operations. What becomes complicated within a SART is as much as information can be shared, the information has different meanings depending on which level that information is shared. Therefore, conflicts will arise in a SART because those who participate may interpret the data for different purposes. For example, a chief of police has a different outlook than a victim advocate. Both are on the same mission and may share similar views, but the capacity they operate under is extremely different. An advocate works at the day to day crisis level (micro), whereas the chief of police functions for the strategic and overarching goal of an

institution (macro). Therefore, if a SART structures itself to share information in a meaningful way, both of these actors will have the information available and will also have an opportunity to be heard effectively.

Therefore, it is recommended to develop a SART systems design that allows for the flow of information sharing to help the SART function at an optimal level. This concept is derived from other coordinated community response team models. The implementation of the design calls for a third-party facilitation for the entirety of the SART. The initiative would incorporate the basis of the NSVRC's (n.d.-b) SART toolkit while blending the use of standard conflict resolution practices. The use of neutral third-party interventions will allow the agencies who participate in SART to function as representatives of their intuitions without the need to wear many hats. The sole function of the actor is to engage in the process and collaborate within the multiparty approach to resolve the larger issue of sexual violence in the community. This process will also introduce a form of monitoring and evaluation, similar to what is practiced in international projects for violence reduction, only the focus will be on local domestic initiatives. The system design embraces both the academic theoretical frameworks and the practices of community agencies.

### **Who Facilitates the SART**

This proposed initiative will introduce academics into the SART process. Universities and colleges across the country have eager students who are looking to gain experience with data analysis and research. They also seek to gain real-life experience in projects such as SART. Therefore, utilizing students who are trained in conflict resolution practices would provide the ideal neutral party, while also giving students practicum or

internship credits. An example of this type of articulation is the Nova Southeastern University Conflict Resolution program. Students range from the undergraduate to doctorate level . Students are eager to practice their skills as well as gain real-life experience in the field. Operating initiatives such as this proposed design will not only provide students an opportunity to hone their skills but will offer communities a consistent resource. Doctoral candidates must complete a practicum as a requirement of their degree; facilitating SART initiatives can provide doctoral students the necessary practicum experience needed to gain course credit. If this ideal is not possible for some communities, local governments should develop and create an office dedicated to facilitators who solely focus on these types of initiatives. Both ideas will promote experience for budding practitioners as well as assist the communities they are serving.

The initiative works as a continuum. The process will repeat itself but will find new discoveries with each cycle. The initiative understands the relationships between the macro, meso, and micro levels. The proposed method of data collection, information sharing, and outcome process for agencies participating in SART are as follows. One facilitator will provide surveying to the micro level actors who participate in SART (e.g., law enforcement officers, victim advocates, ADAs, and SANE nurses). There will be an opportunity for actors to meet monthly and clarify any further information regarding sexual violence in the community. The information collected at this level will be analyzed and presented to the meso level operation. Through monthly meetings and case reviews, the team (along with the facilitator), will determine what issues can be resolved at the meso level and worked back into the micro level. For any issues that require further leadership insight, data will be collected and reviewed in the meetings with macro level

leadership. This process will continue with monthly meetings with macro leadership. Information discussed in micro and meso level meetings will be introduced and discussed at the macro level. From there, macro level leadership can strategically plan around the provided information. Agencies can work on protocol and processes within the SART or within their own agencies. The idea behind this approach is to filter information through the appropriate parties in an orderly manner, ensuring that all actors are heard, and all actors can effectively participate in systemic change. The general account of the process is described in the next section.

### **Process of Facilitation**

The focus of the facilitator is to assist in the creation, development, and monitoring of processes and procedures for optimum effectiveness of programs. The reference of the process is to understand how a group functions in harmony. Stability within the group determines short-term and long-term outcomes (Schuman, 2005). The group becomes ineffective when there is no structure in place or protocol for adherence. It is important to facilitate these conversations to gain input from members of the group to create a collective plan of action. According to Schuman (2005), a skilled facilitator approach considers the methods and values on which the facilitation is based. It is the responsibility of the facilitator to learn and be familiar with the common belief systems of each representative agency. The facilitator empowers members to lead the discussion and create the foundation for further communication. The ground rules are laid out by the actors to move forward with SART. The facilitator assists the group in clarifying information so that they may manage expectations and emphasize the importance of neutrality in guiding the conversation (Schuman, 2005).

Facilitation follows four basic principles: valid information, free and informed choice, internal commitment, and compassion (Schuman, 2005). It is the ethical and moral responsibility for the facilitator to use the principles as guidance toward community-based initiatives like the one's SART addresses. The facilitator and the actors within the SART have the shared responsibility to manage the expectations and goals of those parties' seeking facilitation. There must be an element of an unbiased approach. The delivery of information must be clear and concise for actors to validate the context of the conversation. This acknowledgment produces free and informed choices moving forward. Internal commitment only occurs with actors' mutual decision making and support from the group. It also requires compassion by the actors who agree to make the effort to engage with as little judgment as necessary so that conversations can flow without concern of incident. Facilitation requires active listening (Schuman, 2005).

, Facilitators should employ the *Diagnosis-Intervention Cycle*, a six-step process, when intervening through the dialogue. The *Diagnosis-Intervention Cycle* is a process designed for facilitators to be effective in communication and in action (Schuman, 2005). First, the facilitator should observe the group and the behaviors of the actors in the group. It is important to be aware and mindful of actors' relationships with one another. Second, the facilitator has an obligation to clarify and interpret the meaning of the communication of the group and its actors. If the facilitator feels it is necessary, they should be able to vocalize any questions they have about what is being shared. The candid approach will help avoid miscommunication and promote understanding. The third step is an option to intervene when necessary. There is trust in the facilitator to ensure the conversation is conducted in a safe and secure manner. The facilitator has a right to advocate for the

group to make sure the ground rules are intact during conversations. The last three steps refer to describing behaviors, sharing your own inference, and helping the group decide if they want to change behaviors (Schuman, 2005). While the facilitator may comment on their observations, this part of the process is open to members of SART to vocalize as well.

The facilitator should utilize a low inference in observation. In order to optimize group conversations, the facilitator should intervene only as necessary. In essence, the interjections should be provided for the purpose of moving the conversation forward (Schuman, 2005). Particularly with the case of a SART, it may be best to intervene if the same points are being made and the facilitator recognizes a theme from the conversation that can prompt a question to move the group into a new area of conversation. Identified themes should reflect the goals and missions of the SART, as well as what the SART is seeking to achieve in that time.

As the SART begins to exchange ideas and move into thought change, an element of common ground should have already been established. Common ground means to move away from right vs. wrong thinking and move toward mutual understanding and communication, thereby creating a more effective discussion (Schuman, 2005). It is necessary to become adaptable with facilitation styles and skills. If there is only one way of navigating the meeting, being met with a challenge can turn the conversation sour, resulting in a loss of trust. The facilitator must begin with a step-by-step procedure, establish how parties will be addressed, objectives, and possible outcomes. The facilitator must develop of a tentative plan of action for working within the SART and with the representatives of agencies. The facilitator must be prepared with expectations from the

beginning of the process. Facilitation requires consistency in making the process transparent for all parties involved. This means that the facilitator is aware of group dynamics, is emotionally and socially intelligent for a diverse group of people and is prepared to enter into any engagement with an open mind. An effective facilitator is aware of and embodies the core values of the group. This promotes respect for the group and their group culture. When representative agencies have a difference in values, it is important the difference is discussed as soon as possible in order to establish a common ground (Schuman, 2005).

One of the most important components for facilitating SART meetings and dialogue is the maintenance of *group memory*. Group memory is any written documentation of the values and procedures that were part of the initial discussion (Fleischer & Zumeta, 1999). Group memory may be in the form of a charter or a MOU. The facilitator should keep track of the conversation with notes to enhance group memory. As mentioned with the NSVRC SART toolkit (n.d.-b), the use of a flip chart that is visible for all participants to see is also a method to promote group memory. In the event a second person is writing on the flip chart, the facilitator will maintain their own notes as a way to keep track of the conversation flow (Fleischer & Zumeta, 1999).

As the process begins, there are two styles that the facilitator can use to continue to move the conversation. The first style is to utilize *gatekeeping* (Fleischer & Zumeta, 1999). In this case, the facilitator may ask people to share their thoughts and ideas or to channel others toward reflective listening. The facilitator may also seek to *harmonize* the group by addressing emotions within the group or deescalating bad behaviors (Fleischer & Zumeta, 1999). The facilitator must pay attention to verbal cues and watch for

nonverbal cues. Body language can indicate that people are tired, distracted, or frustrated. Acknowledging these signs, the facilitator can offer breaks or even acknowledge outside interference that prevents parties from being able to be fully engaged in the facilitation (Fleischer & Zumeta, 1999).

When it is time to conclude the facilitation, the facilitator should offer a debriefing session (Fleischer & Zumeta, 1999). Debriefing can last anywhere from 5–10 minutes but can be flexible depending on the group's needs. In the debriefing, the facilitator can offer time for each person to share any last thoughts without interruption. In the case there are parties who do not want to participate in this portion, they may choose to not speak. This is the time the group can decide what next steps they want to take with the key points from the conversation. During this time, they may wish to set up a meeting to continue the conversation or they may decide to work together on issues. The important takeaway is that everyone's voice has been heard and they can now begin to address their needs. While it is not required, some facilitators offer a final report for the parties to have as documentation. This will contain an introduction, a background on the issue, written process, and procedures, notes from the flip chart (as well as other notes), and information regarding end results (Fleischer & Zumeta, 1999).

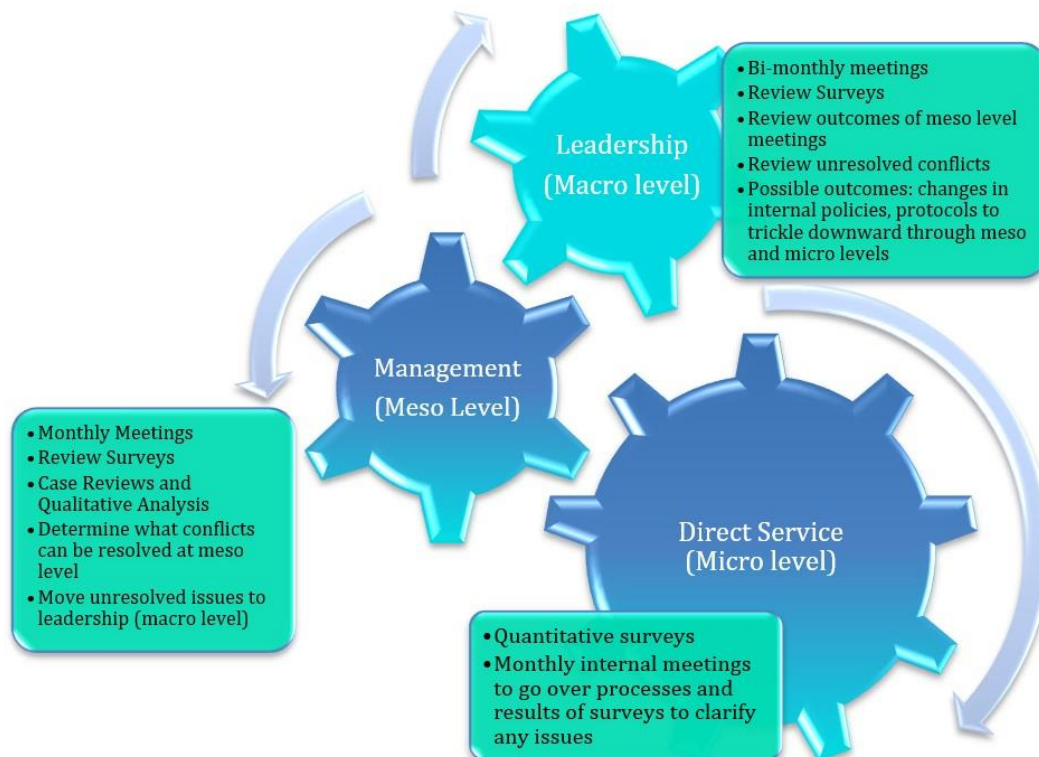
Providing a third-party facilitator with a research background provides the best option for SART development and maintenance. Facilitation, unlike other methods of alternative dispute resolution, does not ask participants for a finalized agreement after discussion. The goal is to bring parties together to discuss the successes and challenges within the SART. Facilitation is specifically designed to work with groups that are ineffectively communicating. The SART as a whole cannot continue to implement best



practices when there is internal conflict. This does not mean that everyone must agree upon every suggested resolution. More importantly, when it comes to the larger conversation with policymakers, many of the actors within the institutions that make up the SART are left out of the conversation.

### **Proposed Systems Design for Information Sharing**

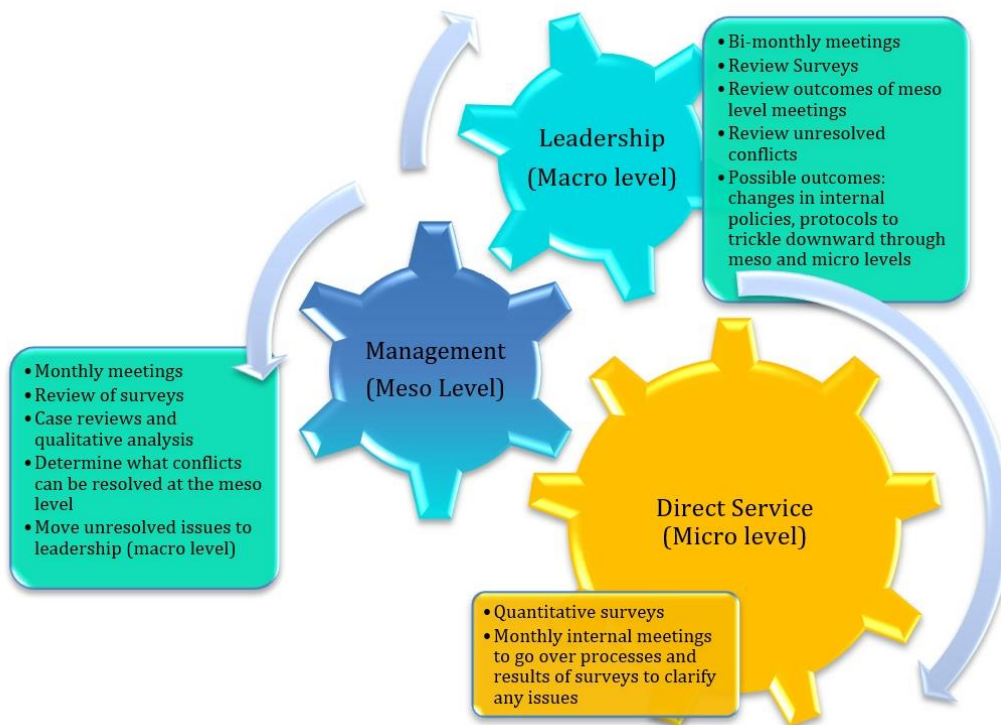
A mixed methods research design, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods, provides the best framework for information sharing within SARTs in a systematic manner. There are various forms of mixed methods approaches. In this instance, the facilitator will embrace a sequential explanatory design (Figure 10). This method functions in a two-phase design: quantitative methods followed by qualitative methods. Using this approach provides collection and analysis of quantitative measurements, where the quantitative data serve as a basis for further in-depth analysis and interpretation. This approach embraces both the statistical and analytical approaches, step-by-step, to create harmonious social science research findings (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). An inquiry facilitated by mixed methods allows for depth into the complexity of understanding actors within systems, thus addressing systems theory and the strategy of game theory and allows for a realistic transition from theory to practice.

**Figure 10***Proposed Systems Design*

Mixed methods approach falls into two main schemes: random (probabilistic sampling) schemes or nonrandom sampling (nonprobabilistic sampling) schemes (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). Quantitative components for the proposed systems design would utilize an occasional combination sample scheme. The sampling would consist of a random sampling for the quantitative component, followed by a nonrandom sampling for the qualitative component. In choosing random sampling for the quantitative approach, the researcher would adhere to the simple sampling scheme, in which every participant is equally and independently chosen to engage in the study. This part of the research is also known as multistage purposeful random sampling, in that it has chosen

participants who represent a target group. The first phase of the research is random selection, while the following phase is a nonrandom purposive selection of participants (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007).

Qualitative components in the mixed methods system design use non-random qualitative sampling, meaning that the sample is based on specific elements, rather than being chosen at random (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). Sampling is performed with a much smaller selection of predetermined participants. The goal is to acquire the “information rich” (p. 287) knowledge by those selected individuals toward the observed phenomenon. The information will then be synthesized and introduced to a smaller group from those same agencies, particularly those in meso and macro leadership. Within the qualitative phase of the study, those members in leadership participate with the facilitator through monthly meetings where they are asked about their involvement and understanding of the SART, and then later presented with the findings from the quantitative data collection (Figure 11). This approach will allow participants to explain their perspectives on the findings, as well as facilitate a further probe into participants’ perspectives on how to move forward with SART initiatives (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007).

**Figure 11***Micro Level Tasks*

The first phase of the model employs a descriptive survey. This particular method of surveying focuses on the how, rather than the why (Jann & Hinz, 2016). Moreover, the data are aggregated from the target population one point in time only. This preliminary survey serves as the foundation of SART evaluation, providing insight on to how those on the ground (or in direct service to those experiencing sexual violence) understand sexual violence and the laws within their community. This collection will come from a larger group based in the micro level operations of institutions. The group will be made up of actors who work in direct service victim advocacy, law enforcement agents on the ground, and ADAs. In this first phase, the researcher will implement a simple quantitative survey data collection. To address the need for clean data that can lead to more effective

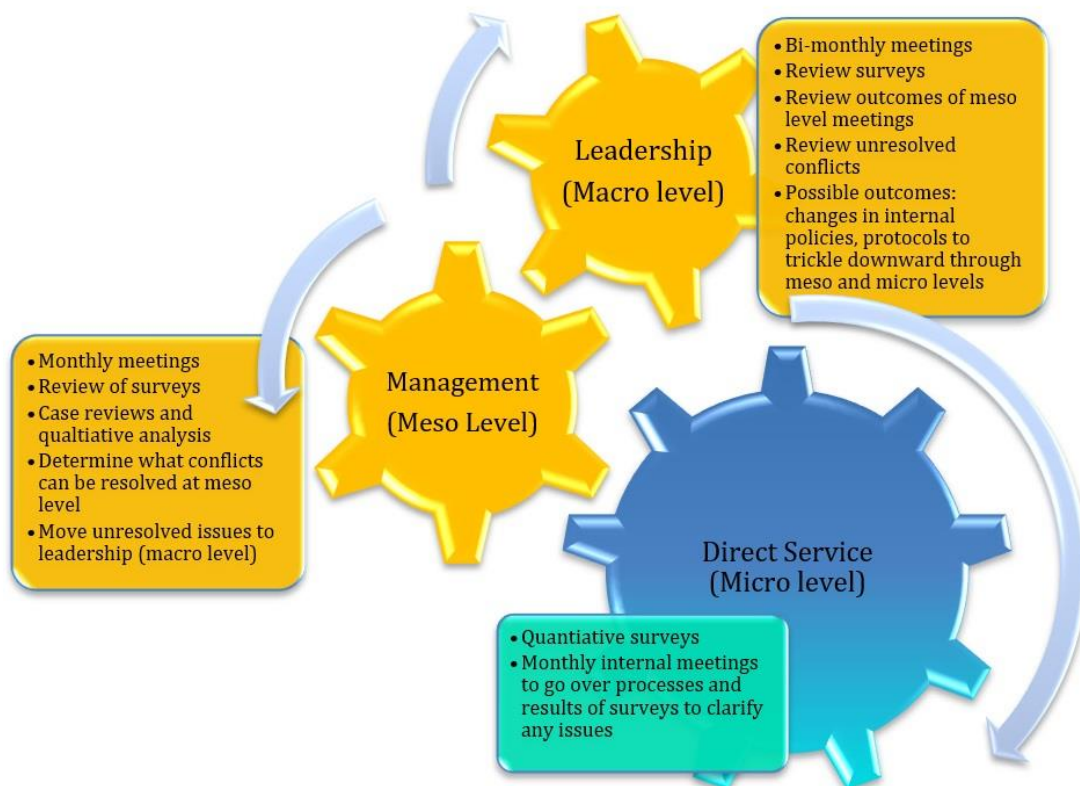
and comprehensive results, this process will reflect the standard that has already been approved by the national and state levels of SART implementation and mitigation. Data evaluation and analysis has been called for by SART developers to assess SART effectiveness (Jann & Hinz, 2016). Findings from the data will determine a correlation between attitudes and behaviors of those who come into direct contact with victims and perpetrators of sexual violence. As the survey process continues, it will also be able to determine how the participants would consider new approaches to coordinated community response teams (Jann & Hinz, 2016).

In order to look at current intervention practices, survey data collection will support the need to examine how sexual violence is currently being addressed by those working on the ground level, in direct contact with victims and perpetrators. The data collection method will be a structured questionnaire. Through the development of personal relationships with leaders within the organizations, the researcher requested that those in supervisory positions ask their subordinates to participate in a simple anonymous survey to help the agency and the researcher explore the efficiency of the SART. The survey will take less than 10 minutes to complete so it can be done at the beginning or end of a shift. The assumption is that with the support of leadership, engagement is more likely as it relates to the work of those participating in the SART.

The survey will follow standard guidelines (biographic and demographic details of those responding), as well as 10 questions answered in a Likert scale format (Nardi, 2018). The Likert scale will correspond a numerical value to points on a continuum from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Questions within the survey will measure participants' opinions on current policies and procedures of the agency, as well as

participants' opinions on how other agencies respond to sexual violence. Because participants will remain anonymous, the hope will be that participants' answers will remain truthful and accurate to the realities of community culture and agency dynamics. The collected data collected will be coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics utilizing Survey Monkey to conduct and analyze the survey. The researcher chose this method of surveying as it allows for convenience for both participants and participating agencies. Essentially, the survey will be formatted through the online portal, generating a link that will be emailed to those in leadership within law enforcement, the district attorney's office, and the local sexual violence center. The link will then be sent to staff for participation. The survey will be accessed through work on computers and phones; answers from participants will be sent directly to the researcher upon completion.

Questions within the survey will measure the participants' opinions on the current comprehension of local sexual violence laws, internal policies, and procedures, and will also seek to ascertain how participants engage with coordinated community response teams. Because participants will remain anonymous, the hope is that participants' answers will remain truthful and accurate to the realities of the job and will also determine key factors regarding any bias or how participants interpret current trends in their fields around sexual violence. The facilitator will provide a monthly meeting, to allow participants to come together to clarify any opinions they had about the survey. This data can be collected and further analyzed.

**Figure 12***Meso and Macro Level Tasks*

The second phase of the qualitative approach is to collect data within the respective agencies' meso and macro leadership. The purpose of qualitative research is to observe and evaluate nonnumerical data. With regard to this research, the second phase consisting of qualitative methods focuses on data. The phase will follow the foundations of interpretivist research in that reality is socially constructed and requires reflective understanding in order to analyze the phenomenon of conflict with actors in any complex system. This approach differs from traditional qualitative approaches like positivism and postpositivism. Unlike postpositivism, which only accepts scientific methods and tests theory, interpretivism accepts subjective and objective research methods (Willis, 2007).

The epistemological positions of positivism and postpositivism see the reality from the outside looking in, that social norms construct the action of an individual. Interpretivism sees reality as objective in that the actions of an individual are based in personal experiences, not only social norms. It is for this reason that interpretive approaches prefer qualitative methods of interviewing and observing. Therefore, the purpose of the research is to understand a particular context. It is important to note that the interpretivist position is that any form of research is considered acceptable for intelligential progress. As positivists believe in structured guidelines to research, interpretivists accept standards but do not believe standards are universal for the sake of research. More importantly, interpretivists understand that data sources closer to subject of research provide better interpretation of data and context (Willis, 2007).

The interpretivist approach is important, as it is understood by the researcher that the problem of SART efficiency will vary from county to county. Therefore, the dynamics of the actors, institutions, and systems will differ on a variety of factors. Within this research, the second phase will be conducted to understand how leadership understands the current objective of the SART and leaders' specific role within the program. The phase will also be conducted to understand how leadership understands sexual violence within their community, thereby revealing how leadership participates within the SART. By understanding how these actors operate inside their institutions, the researcher can then compare and contrast the context of their participation to that of those on the direct service level (those who were surveyed in the first phase of the research).

With this batch of data, the researcher will be able to approach those within meso and macro leadership positions in law enforcement, the district attorney's offices, and the



local victim advocacy organization to perform the qualitative portion of the research. The importance of the qualitative research is to understand the experiences of those in leadership when being tasked with reducing violence in their communities, specifically when combating sexual violence. Leaders are not members who work directly in the field, although some individuals may have worked in the field at some point during their career. Participants' current status in leadership must consider not only the strategic components of the job, but also how they manage their staff in the most effective ways

This process will utilize an ethnographic approach. Ethnographic research allows the researcher to be placed into the context of interest. In this research, an ethnographic approach will allow the researcher to participate with the leadership actors within the SART. Ethnography requires that the researcher analyze and interpret the data (Angrosino, 2007). The process of interviewing will be utilized through monthly meetings in order to collect the data. This type of collection is something that statistics and survey outcomes cannot measure. Interviews with the heads of law enforcement, nonprofit sexual violence organizations, and district/state attorneys will provide insight into the beliefs and assumptions by those in leadership regarding the process of the SART in their county. This qualitative approach addresses one side of the problem. Interviews will address leaders' understanding of the process for SART (who attends, what is discussed, anticipated outcomes). In order to see how these agencies, execute ideas and outcomes from these meetings, it is important to understand how individual agencies have interpreted policies and procedures within their own agency and by legislation (Angrosino, 2007).

Individuals within leadership will have an opportunity to ask questions regarding the nature of questions as well as provide information about the current status of the SART and their perspectives. The data will be collected through field notes by the researcher as well as the use of a tape recorder, in order to ensure accuracy of data collection. The researcher will spend time with leadership in the county's law enforcement agency, the district attorney's office, and the local sexual violence agency. The importance of the ethnographic process is to build relationships with participants while spending time within the environment (Angrosino, 2007). By doing so, trust will be developed, making communication more fluid and candid. As part of the process, the researcher's field notes will indicate verbal and nonverbal cues. The goal is that through open dialogue with the presentation of data from the micro and meso levels, macro leadership can work with one another to address policies and procedures that impact the coordinated community response, as well as encourage leadership to reflect upon their own institutional policies.

Ethnographic data can be determined in a variety of ways. Descriptive analysis breaks down the data. It can look at patterns, themes, regularities, or words (Angrosino, 2007). The researcher can review patterns through the shared information to review all of the statements made by participants. As demonstrated in this study, the facilitator will want to look for consistencies and inconsistencies and examine the actors' behaviors to see how they correlate with cultural norms of the area (Angrosino, 2007). The researcher must be able to manage the data collected in the study. Computer files offer an appropriate level of storage for the qualitative data. Having the ability to come back to the data will help the researcher see the sequence of events occurring in the phenomenon.

Ethnographic data is well-suited for categories. It is best to not develop more than six themes (Angrosino, 2007). Through exploration, researchers may go back to revisit areas of the process to determine new information.

These coordinated response team will continue to meet regularly, as suggested in all of the SART toolkits (national, state, and local). This process is intended to be continuous, while archiving past information for review when necessary. These data sets can be used as learning tools, to improve upon processes. That data will also serve as reference points in future dialogues.

By following this proposed formula, all actors and institutions will have the ability to engage in coordinated community response teams equally and with transparency. Information will be funneled to appropriate personnel who can utilize the information to promote or enhance responses effectively. The proposed method of information sharing allows for all those participating in violence prevention at the direct service level to be heard. That information is carried up to the mezzo level of leadership to be workshopped and resolved for effectiveness at the mezzo and micro levels, and that which must be resolved at the macro level will be elevated to that leadership. Those operating in macro leadership will be able to focus on the issues that are designated to them. Because this information sharing will be supported by a trained facilitator of conflict resolution, teams will also be provided additional tools for effective communication. This method can assist community coordinated response teams in reducing violence in their communities and promote healthier relationships within institutions.

### Summary

In order to develop a justice for all, every voice needs to be considered. The processes described in this study provide a more formal and protective flow of information that reaches the correct parties at the appropriate time. The use of these processes allows for a rich method of data collection and analysis. By pursuing quantitative methods as a base, researcher may provide feedback to those in leadership to assist with the qualitative portion of data collection. The quantitative data also serve as a talking point to give leadership perspective on what is currently happening within their agencies. The results of this research will have a two-fold purpose. The first purpose is to see the differences of understanding regarding purpose of the SART by those in direct services and leadership, as well as their understanding of the laws surrounding sexual violence. Second, the research will be conducted to see how conflict resolution can play a role in resolving issues within agency and interagency relationships. More importantly, the removal of responsibility of facilitating the SART from the members to a third party allows for actors to participate fully. It also allows for an unbiased coordination, helping to remove conflict that can occur with existing relationships because the facilitator is equipped with the dispute resolution skills to deescalate interpersonal conflict.

Each actor and membership agency who participates in coordinated response teams takes on an important role. Their dedication to ending violence in their communities is commendable. They each play a specific role within their community. It is sometimes difficult to find a balance in order to reach a common goal. These new methods serve as a recommendation to alleviate stressors that contribute to misbalancing

the dynamics. The model is intended to create harmony and structure to the foundation that SART committees have developed.

While communities may never completely eliminate violence in their communities, they work endlessly to reduce violence. This research provided a fresh perspective on an issue that many communities face when seeking to work together for the common good. This research offers insight on one SART's successes and challenges. It may serve as an example for others to look into and help communities reflect on their own processes and procedures. The work to resolve conflict never ends. We only evaluate and evolve our process for the betterment of those we serve. It is hoped that armed with understanding from this case study, the community may employ the proposed ideas for further research to assist victims in the best way possible.

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## Appendix A: List of Acronyms

ACT	Alliance for Conflict Transformation
ADA	Assistant District Attorney
AVDA	Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse, Inc.
BJS	Bureau of Justice Statistics
CCRT	Coordinated Community Response Team
CDC	Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIEMSAR	Culturally Inclusive Ecological Model of Sexual Assault Recovery
CPS	Child Protective Services
DART	Domestic Abuse Report Team
DCA	Directed Content Analysis
DCF	Department of Children and Families
DOJ	U.S. Department of Justice
FCADV	Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence
FCASV	Florida Council Against Sexual Violence
FVPSA	Family Violence Prevention & Services Act
HHS	U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
IACP	International Association of Chiefs of Police
MDT	Multidisciplinary Team
MNCASA	Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCADV	National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
NCVS	National Crime Victimization Survey
NNEDV	National Network to End Domestic Violence
NSVRC	National Sexual Violence Resource Centers
OAGSATF	Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force
OVAW	Office of Violence Against Women
OVC	Office for Victims of Crime
PBC	Palm Beach County
PBCVS	Palm Beach County Victim Services
PCAR	Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape
PTSD	Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
QCA	Qualitative Content Analysis
SANE	Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners
SART	Sexual Assault Response Team
SPAN	Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence
STOP	Services, Training, Officers, & Prosecutors Program

TMT	Top Management Team
UCR	Unified Crimes Report
VAWA	Violence Against Women Act
VESPAC	Victim Empowerment, Safety, and Perpetrator Accountability Through Collaboration Model
VOCA	Victims of Crimes Act
WHO	World Health Organization