

Portfolio Volume 1: Major Research Project

**The Role of Oath-taking in Human Trafficking:
Experiences of Survivors**

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Acknowledgements

“Human trafficking is a scourge, a crime against the whole of humanity. It is time to join forces and work together to free its victims and to eradicate this crime that affects all of us, from individual families to the worldwide community.” - Pope Francis

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Abstract

Every year an unknown number of people are trafficked to the UK for the purpose of exploitation. The literature identifies numerous psychological methods traffickers use to exert power and control over individuals (e.g. UNODC, 2021). Oath-taking ceremonies form part of a traditional spiritual belief system and have been identified as a method of psychological control within human trafficking through the exploitation of this existing belief system (Millett-Barrett, 2019; Ikeora, 2016). A systematic review of the literature showed a gap for research exploring survivors' relationship to oath-taking as part of being trafficked and the subsequent impact it has had on their lives. This study takes a qualitative approach using inductive thematic analysis to explore survivors' accounts of their relationship to oath-taking. Ten West African women who have accessed and engaged with support following being trafficked were interviewed. Four main themes were identified through analysis: (1) The shifting of power, (2) The use of fear of "Juju" within human trafficking, (3) Loss, and (4) Moving on whilst living with the impact of "Juju" and the oath. The principal finding was the significant harm survivors have endured due to oath-taking as part of being trafficked and the devastating impact it has had on their lives. Findings are discussed in relation to past research and within the context of psychological theory, including the operation of power (Hagan and Smail, 1997). The clinical implications and recommendations which arise from this study are relevant for all professionals who encounter survivors who have experienced oath-taking as part of being trafficked and could lead to better support provided to survivors going forward.

1.0 Introduction

This research uses thematic analysis to explore survivors' experiences of the use of oath-taking ceremonies by human traffickers.

This chapter introduces the researcher and her relationship to the research including her epistemological positioning. This is followed by a broad overview of human trafficking and a brief outline of methods of physical and psychological control used within human trafficking. The role of oath-taking within the context of spiritual belief systems including African Traditional Religion (ATR) is then discussed. The exploitation of oath-taking ceremonies by human traffickers is outlined. Finally, a brief overview of the support available within the UK to survivors of human trafficking is given.

The chapter then presents a systematic review of the literature on oath-taking within the context of human trafficking highlighting the current gaps in the literature. Lastly, the rationale and aims of this qualitative study are defined.

I use the term 'oath-taking' throughout the first part of this report when referring to the spiritual practice in which an individual makes an oath or promise. However, I recognise that many individuals use different words to describe this practice such as "Juju" or "Voodoo." The debate around this is addressed in section 1.3.1 and the rationale for this choice is outlined. When presenting the experiences of survivors within the results chapter I use their preferred term "Juju".

1.1 Situating the Researcher

Maintaining a self-reflexive position throughout qualitative research is considered crucial (Watt, 2007) as it enables the researcher to consider and reflect on the many ways their position may impact on the outcomes from research (Elliott et al., 1999). I therefore start this report by outlining my own position in relation to the research, from both a personal and epistemological perspective.

1.1.1 Context and Relationship to the Research

My reasons for being drawn to this research are complex and raise a number of highly debated issues around allyship and antiracist practice. However, before commenting on these issues and my positioning as a 'outsider-researcher' (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009), I want to briefly outline my context, and personal connections to this area.

I was born and raised in a white-British working-class family in rural Yorkshire. There is a history in my family of people working to support marginalised individuals, with my maternal grandma working within sexual health as a nurse during the AIDS crisis and my father supporting unaccompanied refugee children as a social care support worker. Consequently, values of justice, equality, acceptance and compassion were voiced in my family. These values and their work influenced my choice in career and my passion to work in support of, and to advocate for, those whose voices are less heard.

This motivation has since been further reinforced by my maternal aunt's work as a Crown Prosecutor, specifically of note, her more recent successful prosecutions of human trafficking and modern slavery. This was when I first became drawn to the

stories and experiences of survivors and it fostered an interest in this area. During my clinical psychology training I have developed an interest in working with survivors of trauma, opting for a specialist placement in this area during my final year.

I believe that working with survivors of trauma and human cruelty, is and should be political, agreeing with Gergen and Ness (2016) who argue that “therapeutic work is necessarily a form of social/political activism” (p. 10). Within my clinical practice, I hold dear those values described above influenced by my upbringing. In addition, I identify that feminist, antiracist and socialist values shape the work that I do. Specifically, I believe that power, privilege and oppression are intrinsically linked to distress and the biases that people and systems hold have profound impact on the understanding we give to someone’s distress and how support is provided (Sue & Sue, 2016).

When presented with the idea for this research I was struck specifically by the lack of knowledge in this area, the limited understanding held by those in positions of power and how survivors’ testimony and distress can be dismissed resulting in further oppression by the legal systems meant to protect them.

1.1.2 Allyship, Emotional labour and Researcher Positioning

Whilst I felt drawn to this area of research, I started this process asking myself whether as a white-British woman in a position of power, I should be the one to lead this research. There has been considerable debate about the role of white researchers in multicultural research (e.g. Mio & Iwamasa, 1993, Spanierman & Smith, 2017) and serious questions raised as to whether researchers from the dominant racial group can effectively work towards racial equality and justice whilst

benefiting from 'whiteness' themselves. The risk of paternalism (Trepagnier, 2010) can lead to white-allies supporting individuals from less-dominant groups to live with their circumstances. Rather, allyship should be about undertaking meaningful work to challenge and change systems through highlighting injustice and working alongside those with less privilege. Allyship is recognised to be imperfect and difficult (Reynolds, 2013), and I knew that if I were to undertake this research, I would need to be mindful of, and try to mitigate these limitations.

However, there were other positions that I thought crucial in relation to this research which taken together led me to go ahead with the study. The first followed conversations within my own training cohort in which minority identifying members of the cohort have spoken about the "emotional labour" of having to highlight racial injustices. Emotional labour is defined as being relied upon to conjure emotional states in others or repress our own (Hochschild, 1979). This term highlights how exploring the experiences of those of minority racial, ethnic and religious groups should not be the sole burden of those from that minority group and the risk of being an 'insider-researcher' (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) is the emotional impact the work can have on the researcher.

Secondly on reflection, I have recognised that whilst I do not hold the same religious beliefs and am neither black, from Western Africa, nor a refugee; I am a woman. This work had a huge emotional impact on me, specifically when acts of male violence were dominant within the news. Insiderness and outsidership are not discrete and polarised and identities are often more fluid and may overlap or intersect (Wray & Bartholomew, 2010). In addition, insiderness can presume 'sameness' and consequently 'trust,' however, participants may feel threatened by

issues of confidentiality and shame when the researcher shares a greater number of identities (Wary & Bartholomew, 2010). Given the nature of this topic, this could have been of particular concern for participants.

Finally, I was struck by reading the literature and policy documentation the lack of 'voice' that survivors themselves had. This is something I felt was worrying when most researchers and policy makers do not necessarily share the same belief system. I believe that psychologists, with both knowledge and power, have a responsibility to amplify the voices of those less heard.

1.1.3 Epistemological Positioning

This study is informed by a critical realist epistemology which states the existence of a real world and reality exists independent of our constructions, beliefs and theories. We can seek theories to get closer to this reality, but these are socially constructed through discourse (Magill, 1994) and impact on the meaning that we make from our lived experience. Oliver describes critical realism as marrying "the positivist's search for evidence of a reality external to human consciousness with the insistence that all meaning to be made of that reality is socially constructed" (Oliver, 2011, p2). Unlike social constructionism which takes the stance that reality is entirely constructed by discourse and social interactions and rejects the notion of an objectively 'true' reality, a critical realist perspective holds the view that our 'truths' are shaped by the lens in which we interpret them.

From a critical realist perspective the distress, loss, agency and power discussed by participants exists independently from their accounts and the researcher's interpretations of these. Individuals, whilst shaped by discourse,

experience their own lived reality in an embodied way (Smail, 2005). At the same time, as a researcher, I can never truly know their full “embodied” experience and unique reality, as my interpretations of their narratives will be shaped by my own Western lens and viewpoint (Fernando, 2002). So, whilst attempting to amplify their voices throughout the research, I do not believe that I am giving full ‘voice’ to their embodied experiences or as Braun and Clarke (2006) call; ‘naïve realism’.

I therefore see this research as a partial representation of my participants’ experiences of oath-taking within human trafficking, being both influenced by my own context and the context of my participants. By taking a reflexive stance, (Maxwell, 2012) I will attempt to acknowledge my role in shaping it. My interpretations need to be carefully managed through this reflexive process (Maxwell, 2012), and my biases such as my Western upbringing, psychological knowledge, religious beliefs and feminist, antiracist and socialist values considered throughout and presented in italics.

1.2 Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery

1.2.1 Definition of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery

In October 2000, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly established a global consensus on human trafficking as a particular form of modern slavery. The UN's Palermo Protocol, defined human trafficking as:

the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation (UN, 2000, Article 3).

This definition has become commonly accepted within international law (Human Trafficking Foundation, 2018) and the protocol identifies an open-ended list of different forms of exploitation trafficked people are subjected to including; sexual exploitation, servitude, forced labour, removal of organs and all forms of slavery. The broad definition recognises that exploitation can vary considerably in nature. Importantly, the Protocol criminalises human trafficking and calls on state parties to uphold this. To date, 178 state parties including the UK have signed the protocol and it has had a significant impact on the detection, prosecution and prevention of human trafficking worldwide (UNODC, 2021).

Whilst 'human trafficking' and 'modern slavery' are often used interchangeably, in the UK the Modern Slavery Act 2015 differentiates between the two. The definition of trafficking requires an element of transport in addition to the

exploitation that happens thereafter; whether slavery, servitude or forced labour, sexual exploitation or any other form of exploitation within the Act (see Home Office, 2020).

1.2.2 Nature and Scale of Human Trafficking

The true scale of human trafficking worldwide is not known. In 2018 there were 49,032 ‘detected victims’ as reported in the UN’s Global Report on Trafficking Persons 2020 (UNODC, 2021). The real number is likely to be significantly higher with the International Labour Organization (ILO: 2017) estimating that there were on average 40.3 million people trapped in modern slavery in 2016 of which many will be trafficked persons¹. The ILO figures suggest 71% of all those trapped in modern slavery internationally are women and girls and they make up 99% of the total of individuals who are sexually exploited and 58% of individuals exploited for other means (ILO, 2017).

Those who have been trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation may be coerced, deceived or forced to engage in various sexual activities. Forced labour is the second most common form of exploitation with 38% of ‘detected victims’ trafficked for this purpose (UNODC, 2021). Those trafficked for the purpose of labour exploitation are often coerced or threatened into various forms of work for little or no pay.

Within the UK the exact number of survivors of human trafficking and modern slavery is also unknown. In 2020, 10,613 possible victims were referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), the UK’s organisation for identifying and

¹ The report does not provide specific statistics for human trafficking, as a form of modern slavery.

supporting survivors of modern slavery who come to attention of 'First Responder Organisations'² (Home Office, 2021). However, due to the nature of the exploitation survivors experience, they may be reluctant or unable to communicate and engage with authorities. Consequently, significant numbers of survivors decline referral to services or remain unidentified (Human Trafficking Foundation, 2018).

Exploitation may have followed existing individual and structural factors which may also impact on detection and help seeking. The UN's Global Report on Trafficking Persons 2020³ (UNODC, 2021) identifies a number of such factors which traffickers have taken advantage of, the most frequently noted of which is poverty or economic need (50% of all cases). Other factors include immigration status or displacement, limited or no education, mental and physical disability, discrimination, political instability or conflict in the country of origin, being a child from a 'dysfunctional' family or deprived of parental care, and finally an intimate partner or family member acting as the trafficker (Farrell et al., 2010; Millett-Barrett, 2019; UNODC, 2021; Zimmerman, Hossain, & Watts, 2011). These vulnerability factors are argued to be intrinsically linked to cultural oppression and these factors sustain human trafficking (Bryant-Davis & Tummala-Narra, 2017).

1.2.3 Control and Power in Human Trafficking

Academics and policy makers have attempted to understand the process of human trafficking through looking specifically at the use of coercion or control by

² These organisations include non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the police force or other government organisations.

³ Based on data from worldwide court cases.

traffickers. Among this research, there tends to be a focus on the traffickers' power with 'victims' positioned as powerless until they are finally able to resist or are 'rescued' (Bromfield, 2016), if they escape at all. Consequently, the research has identified numerous methods, both physical and psychological, which traffickers use to assert power over individuals. Researchers have conceptualised stages or phases in which methods of control are used (e.g. Bales, 2005; Sanchez & Stark, 2014) and methods are likely to overlap or be used concurrently (UNODC, 2021; van der Watt & Kruger, 2020).

The vulnerabilities listed above (section 1.2.2), are also referred to as entrapment factors impacting on the "recruitment phase", one of two phases of human trafficking identified by Sanchez and Stark (2014). Migration, poverty and intimate partner violence are the most frequently cited entrapment factors (e.g. Bales, 2005; Zimmerman et al., 2008) which are argued to be important in understanding how traffickers are able to assert power over 'victims' (Preble, 2019).

Preble (2019) suggests that traffickers exert their power through the illusionary offer of a better life, exploiting the vulnerability factors within an individual's difficult circumstances. This can lead an individual to resort to perceived risky behaviour to improve these circumstances (Logan et al., 2009). This deception is well documented within the literature (e.g. UNODC, 2021; van der Watt & Kruger, 2020) and is a key method of psychological control used during the entrapment phase.

In addition to deception, there are numerous other methods of control utilised by traffickers (van der Watt & Kruger, 2020; UNODC, 2021). These include debt

bondage (UNODC, 2021), isolation and disorientation⁴ (Jeter, 2016), degradation and shaming (Logan, 2007), and the use of close personal relationships⁵ or threats made to harm an individual's family (Jeter, 2016). Debt bondage (which can include individuals agreeing to reimburse the trafficker for the expense of travel to another country), is especially common and is experienced by an estimated 50% of those within modern slavery (ILO, 2017). Often debts are large and inflated by traffickers, thus ensuring the debt cannot be repaid (UNODC, 2021), and threats might be made to ensure individuals keep up with 'repayments'.

Control methods often become more overt and violent during the period of exploitation referred to by Sanchez and Stark (2014) as the "maintenance phase" (UNODC, 2021). Physical forms of coercion and violence, such as the removal of identification documents, threat or use of force, surveillance and physical confinement (van der Watt & Kruger, 2020), are utilised more frequently during this phase.

However, even in the absence of physical control, psychological forms of coercion have been found to be effective means for the trafficker to exert power over the 'victim' and force them into submission (Baldwin et al., 2015).

Biderman's theory of coercion (Biderman, 1957) was initially developed to explain interrogators' manipulation of the behaviour of prisoners without the use of physical force.⁶ Baldwin et al. (2015) applied this framework to interviews with survivors of human trafficking. They found most elements of the framework present in the survivors' testimony, notably isolation, monopolisation of perception, induced

⁴ The process of constantly moving the person.

⁵ The trafficker becoming the 'boyfriend' of the person is common.

⁶ The prisoners were American prisoners of war during the Korean War

debility or exhaustion, threats, occasional indulgences, demonstration of omnipotence, degradation, and enforcement of trivial demands. This process can leave the trafficked individual hopeless, helpless, experiencing a loss of 'personhood' and free will (Hopper and Hidalgo, 2006) and can have profound and chronic physical and psychological consequences (Baldwin et al., 2015).

1.3 Oath-taking and Human Trafficking

1.3.1 Defining Oath-taking and "Juju"

Oath-taking is a long recognised feature of traditional law and aids the resolve of disputes in certain parts of Africa. Within Nigeria, for example, it is part of accepted judicial practice within Nigerian law (Ikeora, 2016). It forms part of a wider traditional spiritual belief system which takes "diverse forms and practices in different cultures and traditions" (Ikeora, 2016 p. 10). Ikeora further describes the practice of oath-taking:

Parties to the oath-taking directly submit to the supernatural tribunal to settle disputes brought before the deity. The tribunal's verdict is final. The oaths are worded in such a way that the swearer invokes a conditional curse upon himself/herself which may include death or illness. It is often the belief of the swearers that should they default, the misfortune they agreed to will befall them through the powers of the 'gods'. (Ikeora, 2016, p. 10)

"Juju" is also used to describe this practice and is just one of many names that is given (Ikeora, 2016; Millett-Barratt, 2019; van der Watt & Kruger, 2017). More accurately "Juju" is also used to refer more widely to practices which go beyond

oath-taking, to an traditional spiritual belief system present in particular regions in Western Africa.⁷ (Ikeora, 2016).

Additionally, the use of the term 'Juju' has been critiqued in terms of negative stereotypes and accuracy by Ikeora (2016), one of the few researchers to have written on this in relation to human trafficking. The imported monotheistic religions (Islam and Christianity) are represented within culture and discourse as superior and of more value than traditional belief systems:

'Juju' as depicted in many Nollywood⁸ movies nurtures the negative stereotype often ascribed to ATR [African Traditional Religion] reflecting belief systems rooted in the fear of destructive spiritual forces within a perverted cosmology. Additionally, it recuperates a discourse that denies anything of value in ATR, whose moral positioning in terms of what it really is 'good versus evil', 'God versus the Devil' is no less sacred than those religions that assault it. (Ikeora, 2016, p.10)

1.3.2 The Use of Oath-taking within Human Trafficking

In recent times, a small body of literature has grown (e.g. Ikeora, 2016; Millett-Barrett, 2019; van der Watt & Kruger, 2017), in addition to numerous case studies within law and the media (e.g. BBC, 2014; Nwaubani, 2018; Tondo & Kelly, 2017), showing the use of oath-taking as a form of psychological control within human trafficking. Oath-taking, is now documented in national and regional policy

⁷ Not specifically Nigeria and this study extends inclusion criteria to any place of origin. However, Ikeora's study looked specifically at Nigeria.

⁸ Nollywood is the Nigerian film industry.

addressing human trafficking specifically within the Nigerian context (e.g. EASO, 2015; Home Office, 2016) but the abuse of an existing religious or cultural belief system as a means of psychological control is recognised more broadly within international policy (e.g. UNODC, 2009). It is important to note that oath-taking as part of an African traditional belief system, is just one of many existing regional belief systems that traffickers might take advantage of (e.g. Heil, 2017⁹). Jeter (2016) states that traffickers often have the “cultural knowledge to control” (p. 112) as often they may share the same nationality, culture and religious belief system as those who become trafficked.

In the context of trafficking, the oath-taking ceremony usually involves the individual making an oath that forms a lasting connection between the individual and the trafficker under the threat of some form of harm by a spiritual power. This may include a promise of silence and secrecy about the oath, or promising to work for or repay any debt to the trafficker. The threatened harm can include sickness, misfortune or even death for either the trafficked person or their family (Opara, 2007). Ceremonies are often violent in order to subjugate individuals through generating increased levels of fear (Opara, 2007; OSCE, 2013).

Ikeroa (2016) states oath-taking ceremonies often happen as part of the recruitment process in order to create a contractual agreement between the trafficker and the person being trafficked and most ceremonies take place within the place of origin rather than the country of destination. Whilst the ceremony itself may happen during the recruitment process, the nature of the oath means that the fear is long-

⁹ Heil's study focused on the examples of Islam, House of Judah and Scientology, as belief systems which have been exploited as a means of psychological coercion within human trafficking.

lasting. The involvement of a spiritual power means the individual cannot escape the threatened consequences of violating the oath simply by 'running away' from the trafficker. Seeking help by reporting the oath to another person may in itself be perceived as a violation of the oath (Opara, 2007). This hinders detection, prosecution and help-seeking, due to the fear individuals have in speaking about their experiences of oath-taking (Ikeora, 2016). Other forms of psychological coercion, outlined above (section 1.2.3), are often used in tandem. Deception is often behind an individual's participation in the oath-taking ceremony (Ikeora, 2016; Opara, 2007). For example, the individual may be deceived about the type of work they will be expected to engage in, or deceived about the size of the 'debt' that will be incurred (laying the foundation for debt bondage).

Many individuals who have been trafficked refer to these oaths-taking rituals as 'Juju' (EASO, 2015), despite Ikeora (2016) arguing that oath-taking rather than "Juju" more accurately describes the specific oath-taking ceremony that is often undertaken during human trafficking.

As a white-British researcher it is important to understand and acknowledge these arguments and consequently I made the decision to use the term 'oath-taking' throughout the majority of this thesis. However, this research is looking at participants' experience of 'oath-taking' within human trafficking and, in line with a critical realist epistemological positioning, it will be shaped by their own lens and ways of viewing this cultural and religious practice. Therefore, 'Juju' may be used interchangeably throughout the result section where participants are using the term

to speak about their experiences.¹⁰ Furthermore, the position of this research is not to question the belief system but to focus on how traffickers use the existing belief system to exploit people.

1.4 Psychological Impact of Human Trafficking

Oath-taking¹¹ used by traffickers might just be one of a multitude of traumas and adverse experiences that survivors of human trafficking have been subjected to as part of inhumane treatment, including other forms of extreme violence and psychological abuse (e.g. EASO, 2015; Ottisova et al., 2016; UNODC, 2021; Wilson & Butler, 2014). Alongside the vulnerability factors discussed above (section 1.2.2) which as part of oppression serve to exacerbate existing psychological trauma (De la Cruz & Gomez, 2011), the literature reports high rates of pre-trafficking childhood trauma, including physical, sexual and emotional abuse (Baldwin et al., 2015; Gibbs et al., 2015). Research looking at the impact of these experiences has found that survivors of trafficking report significant psychological distress, and may meet criteria for mental health diagnoses such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Katona et al., 2015; Ottisova et al., 2016; Zimmerman et al., 2011). Distress may manifest in multiple ways including guilt and shame, dissociation, self-harming behaviour, suicidality, substance abuse, memory problems, somatic experiences, issues with sleep and difficulties with trusting others (Hopper et al., 2018; OSCE, 2013).

¹⁰ Clarification will be given to the reader during these sections to prevent confusion.

¹¹ Not all survivors of human trafficking experience oath-taking or the exploitation of an existing religious or spiritual belief system.

Despite the high levels of distress reported and one study reporting that recovery from PTSD for those who have not received an intervention is rare (Hossain et al., 2010), research looking into the mental health impact on survivors of human trafficking and subsequent interventions is still limited (Hopper et al., 2018). Robjant et al. (2017) found Narrative Exposure Therapy¹² to be a feasible intervention for PTSD within this population, reporting a significant reduction in PTSD symptoms. They recommend further research and suggest additional psychological interventions may be necessary as an adjunct for the additional psychological difficulties presenting within this population. In addition, a culturally adapted Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (TF-CBT) (O'Callaghan et al., 2013)¹³ may show promise for this population, though again further research is needed as the sample were not specifically those who had experienced trafficking. There is even less research looking at alternative interventions (e.g. creative arts, drama etc.) (see Hopper et al., 2018 for a summary). However, the need for researching other areas of difficulty has been highlighted, such as problems with decision-making and assertiveness, common for those who present with complex trauma which might prevent full recovery and integration (Hopper et al., 2018; Robjant et al., 2017).

The research above is informed by Western models of distress which use psychiatric diagnostic constructs such as PTSD to define trauma. Through the process of psychiatric diagnosis there is the suggestion that PTSD is an individual phenomena. In contrast more recently there has been a shift to broaden the definition of trauma and acknowledge that trauma is never experienced

¹² Survivors were female foreign national trafficking survivors in the UK

¹³ Survivors were war-affected Congolese girls aged 12–17

independently from someone's cultural, societal or political context (Ranjbar et al., 2020). The profession now recognises constructs such as racial trauma or Race-based Traumatic Stress (Brynant-Davis, 2007; Ranjbar et al., 2020) when people and/or communities experience cumulative distress through consistent racial discrimination and micro-aggressions. Human trafficking is intrinsically linked to cultural and racial oppression (Bryant-Davis & Tummala-Narra, 2017) and therefore a PTSD framework may not adequately capture distress within this population.

Outside the diagnostic framework, there have been developments in guidance for working effectively with survivors of trafficking which involve additional considerations such as housing issues, social isolation and exclusion, legal issues such as immigration status, language barriers and employment, education and training. These guidelines tend to be holistic in nature, advocating for a wide range of supportive services to meet the needs of survivors, for example The Slavery and Trafficking Survivor Care Standards (Human Trafficking Foundation, 2015, 2018). Researchers have drawn on the Ecological Systems Model (e.g. Bronfenbrenner, 1992) to help to better understand human trafficking (Hopper, 2017) using the individual, interpersonal, community and societal levels to highlight the complex interplay between these different systems and how they impact on the individual. This model is for professionals to effectively tailor supportive interventions at the different levels for each individual (Salami' et al., 2021).

Another example is the Helen Bamber Foundation's Trauma Informed Code of Conduct (TICC), aimed at all professionals working with survivors of human trafficking (Witkin & Robjant, 2018). The TICC notes the importance of understanding survivors' traumatic experiences and their impact, creating calm

welcoming environments and communicating safety. It advises professionals on how to sensitively and effectively support survivors in recounting their experiences, especially as this is necessary for many of the legal processes they may be involved with (such as the NRM or asylum system). This document is one of few which provide specific guidance on working with trafficking survivors who have experienced oath-taking as part of trafficking. It emphasises the need for the professional first building trust with the individual, allowing for (and expecting) gradual disclosure, communicating understanding and empathy, providing regular follow-up appointments to address isolation (and the potential risk of re-exploitation) and highlighting any achievements or small gains. Modern Slavery: Statutory Guidance for England and Wales (Home Office, 2021), also provides some guidance for supporting survivors of trafficking, for which oath-taking is mentioned as a possible means of control used by the trafficker. However, this guidance is limited and more focused around sign-posting and pathways rather than specific interventions.

1.5 Systematic Literature Review

So far this thesis has provided a broad overview of human trafficking, the methods of psychological control used within human trafficking, the role of oath-taking within the context of the traditional spiritual belief system and how this is used as a means of exploitation within human trafficking. Whilst there is evidence that oath-taking is used by traffickers as a means of psychological control within human trafficking, most of the sources outlined so far have come from outside academic research. There is a lack of research which includes the testimony of survivors

themselves and their relationship to oath-taking in the context of being trafficked and its impact on their lives.

Systematic reviews are an effective way of highlighting gaps within existing research, alongside reviewing the evidence base and synthesising and critiquing the literature in order to establish more robust conclusions in relation to the research question or topic (Siddaway et al., 2019). Searching The Cochrane Library and the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination databases, I found no current published reviews of this literature.

1.5.1 Search Strategy

The search strategy aimed to find papers which investigated the use of oath-taking within the context of human trafficking. Through previous searching I knew that the majority of papers related to the research question were most likely from outside the field of clinical psychology. Relevant journals were more likely to be from the fields of sociology, criminal justice, law, qualitative health, feminist studies, international studies and public policy. I took this into consideration when choosing relevant databases after initial searches using PubMed, Medline and Cochrane all yielded zero results.

The literature search was carried out between October 2020 and January 2021. Details of the search process and databases used can be found in Appendix 2, 3 and 4. Multiple searches were conducted using SCOPUS, JSTOR and Google Scholar. The decision was also made to search through Grey Literature databases, OpenGray and Wonder, however neither of these yielded any results. All databases were limited to papers published since 2010.

I focused specifically on three individual concepts; 'human trafficking', 'oath-taking' and 'psychological control.' Breaking a research question into individual concepts is the methodology recommended by Siddaway et al. (2019). After searching SCOPUS, I then reduced my search terms to two concepts; 'human trafficking' and 'oath-taking'. This was because JSTOR did not yield any results when the three concepts were used together. Additionally, key journals in the field; Forced Migration Review, Anti-trafficking Review and the Journal of Human Trafficking were searched online from 2010 onwards for the concept 'oath-taking'.

All papers were screened for inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Table 1). Only papers published in English could be included within the review as there was not the financial resource for translation. Given oath-taking is a diverse cultural practice across Africa where English is just one of hundreds of languages spoken, it might be that papers on the topic written from outside of a Western 'English' lens have been missed which could have provided further insight.

Following screening of titles and abstracts, any duplicates were removed, before screening of the full article. The papers screened were then checked to see if there were any relevant papers within the reference list and Google Scholar was used to check whether these papers had been cited by other relevant papers. Six articles were then removed following full screening. Of these, four had no research design, one related to oath-taking outside of human trafficking and the final made no mention of oath-taking within the context of human trafficking.

Table 1 Inclusion and Exclusion criteria for Systematic Literature Review

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research focuses on human trafficking • Research focused on the use of 'oath-taking' (or similar concept by different term) within the context of human trafficking • Qualitative and quantitative research • Peer-reviewed journals and grey literature • Research in and outside of the UK • Published in English • Published since 2010 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of oath-taking outside of human trafficking • Methods of control but does not focus on oath-taking/ no mention of oath-taking • Commentary and opinion pieces, editorials, and book chapters (no study design) • Not published in English • Published before 2010

1.5.2 Assessing Study Quality

There are limited tools designed for the synthesis of qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research¹⁴ (Heyvaert et al., 2011). Most tools for assessing study quality in systematic reviews have tended to focus on assessing the quality of qualitative and quantitative research separately (e.g. Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP), 2018; Elliott et al. 1999). Following paper screening, whilst six out of the seven papers were qualitative in design, one paper used mixed methods. I therefore required a tool which would enable comparison across papers in terms of quality assessment.

¹⁴ Across all research disciplines, not specifically related to human trafficking.

Heyvaert et al. (2013) synthesised thirteen quality assessment tools to establish a list of nine criteria which could be applied to qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research. I have used these criteria to quality assess all the seven papers included in the review to provide a robust appraisal and critique of the existing literature (see Appendix 4). These nine generic criteria, whilst still providing research rigour (i.e. appropriate sampling methods, transparency and ethics), allowed for the additional flexibility necessary when researching extremely sensitive topics where the most rigorous research methods may not be practical and/or ethical. Additionally, I wanted to take into consideration any attempts researchers may have made to bridge the gap between Western research methods and what is appropriate and beneficial for the local community in line with decolonising practices (Datta, 2018). However, it should be acknowledged that whilst this was a consideration, widely used critical appraisal tools such as the one used in this study tend to be developed from a positivist paradigm (Williams et al., 2020). They tend to emphasise objective constructs such as validity, reliability and specific methodological rigor rather than considering epistemological positioning, ethics and credibility of findings which are particularly important in qualitative research (Williams et al., 2020). These are Western constructs and subsequently research written from a Western lens is given greater value by critical appraisal tools.

1.5.3 Systematic Review Findings

A total of seven papers were including in the systematic review (Table 2). They were written by researchers in the fields of sociology, women's studies, criminology and criminal justice, law and human rights. Six papers used qualitative

methods with one using mixed methods and researchers utilised survey data, observations, interviews and secondary data (predominantly pre-existing interviews and wire-traps from criminal investigations). One study was from the UK, two from the Netherlands, two from Italy, one from South Africa and one from a UK and Nigerian context.

Five papers looked directly at the use of oath-taking within the context of human trafficking. Four of these included interviews with survivors of human trafficking alongside interviews with health and social care workers, law enforcement agents and other stakeholders (Baarda, 2016; Ikeora, 2016; Millett-Barrett, 2019; van der Watt & Kruger 2017). Millett-Barrett (2019) and Ikeora (2016) collected data directly from survivors and other stakeholders for the sole purpose of investigating their research question. Baarda (2016) analysed secondary data from a police human trafficking investigation and van der watt & Kruger (2017) analysed primary data from a much larger study investigating human trafficking for sexual exploitation. A fifth paper, Dunkerley (2018) looked at oath-taking within the context of human trafficking but only explored the perspective of criminal investigators.

Two further articles were included in the review which evidenced oath-taking within human trafficking, however, the research questions looked at broader aspects of the trafficking of Nigerian women (Lo lacono, 2015) and the experiences of care and legal professionals and spiritual leaders working with West African survivors of human trafficking (ten Kate et al., 2020). These were included as they provided alternative perspectives to the use of oath-taking within the context of human trafficking, highlighting broader issues less developed within the other papers.

Language. In Chapter 1.3.1 I discussed the language used to describe oath-taking practices part of a traditional spiritual belief system which may have taken place as part of a person's experience of being trafficked. I took the view that the term 'oath-taking' was most accurate (Ikeora, 2016). However, the papers in this review use "Juju" (Dunkerley 2018; Millett-Barrett, 2019; van der Watt & Kruger 2017) and 'Voodoo' or 'voodoo rites' (Baarda, 2016; Lo Iacono, 2015; ten Kate et al., 2020). I will use 'oath-taking' unless referring to a specific quote.

Table 2 *Summary and Evaluation of Studies in the Systematic Literature Review*

Author Year and Title	Methodology	Participants	Key Findings and conclusions	Strengths and limitations
<p>Anthony W. Dunkerley (2018) Exploring the use of juju in Nigerian human trafficking networks: considerations for criminal investigators</p>	<p>Qualitative study. Used face-to-face semi-structured interviews which were explorative utilising open-ended questioning. Only 6 key questions were asked to each participant. Transcribed and manually coded for themes but does not state which specific methodology.</p>	<p>UK context Two police detectives (male), one National Crime Agency specialist interviewer (female), one NGO specialist (female), one safe-house provider (female), and two anthropological expert witnesses (female). All participants were involved in investigations into the trafficking of survivors who had undergone a 'Juju' ritual. Purposive sampling involved to identify officers involved in cases where 'Juju' was mentioned. Specifically looked at Nigerian traffickers.</p>	<p>Evidence 'Juju' rituals are used as a means of control through instilling fear, and this becomes an obstacle for survivors giving testimony. Situates beliefs in spiritual retribution alongside other methods of instilling fear and how this is reinforced by the oath itself. Recommendations made for how investigators identify and interview survivors and how existing best-practice needs to be adapted. Emphasis given to empathising with survivors, building rapport, involving other agencies and supporting survivors to gain access to psychological and spiritual counselling.</p>	<p>Strengths: highlights how juju becomes an obstacle for survivors giving testimony, provides a model for how different methods of instilling fear interact, useful recommendations for professionals within the context which is sensitive to the needs of survivors</p> <p>Limitations: themes derived from the interview schedule questions, data analysis method not stated or clearly explained, small sample (7 professionals), did not interview survivors</p>

<p>Marcel van der Watt and Beatri Kruger (2017) Exploring 'Jujū' and Human Trafficking: Towards a demystified perspective and response</p>	<p>Qualitative study. Data taken from 23 phenomenological interviews where Jujū was a theme from a larger study of 71 interviews. Creswell (2013: 180) methodology for coding qualitative data.</p>	<p>South African context social workers and shelter personnel (n = 7); law enforcement officers (n = 6); NGO representatives (n = 3); prosecutors (n = 2); victims (n = 2); a journalist (n = 1); a trafficker (n = 1); and a member of civil society (n = 1)</p>	<p>6 themes were constructed from the data: (1) jujū ritual and ceremony; (2) jujū as a control mechanism; (3) victim profile and identification; (4) context, culture and belief systems; (5) South African knowledge, awareness and experience; and (6) anti-trafficking and criminal justice response.</p>	<p>Strengths: clear methodology and data analysis procedures with clear themes identified, exploratory in nature and culturally curious with the emphasis of embedded belief systems, takes a critical lens on previous narratives</p> <p>Limitations: data derived from a larger study, themes were not explored in depth rather an overview was provided, small number of survivors and traffickers interviewed</p>
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<p>Jennifer Millett-Barrett (2019) Bound by Silence: Psychological Effects of the Traditional Oath Ceremony Used in the Sex Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls</p>	<p>Mixed methods. 51 surveys, observations, 28 interview with survivors and 15 interview with key experts. Deductive data analysis - theory driven. Quantitative data reports only frequencies/ descriptive statistics.</p>	<p>Italian context. Participants were Nigerian female survivors of sex trafficking (n=51, n-28), Cultural Mediators, Doctors, and Experts (n=15).</p>	<p>Data used to support the following themes: (1) the traditional religion that provides the foundation and gives the oath power; (2) deceptive methods used to recruit women and girls and coerce them to swear the oath; (3) the discussion of free will in participating in the oath ceremony; (4) the oath as a control mechanism; (5) continued threats using the influence of the oath; (6) the vow of silence as infringement on freedom of speech and expression in international and domestic laws; (7) the psychological effects of the oath; (8) the role of the priest; (9) the definition of torture under international law; and (10) non-State actors and torture.</p>	<p>Strengths: sensitively designed study; different data collection methods allowing for breadth and depth; survivors' voices amplified and their quotes given prominence</p> <p>Limitations: Unclear exactly how the data was analysed/triangulated and key themes identified therefore limited data analysis to back to implications/recommendations; internet access needed for the survey may have been a barrier; unclear how participants were supported following interviews</p>
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<p>Eva Lo Iacono (2015) Victims, sex workers and perpetrators: Gray areas in the trafficking of Nigerian women</p>	<p>Qualitative study. Uses interviews and content analysis of secondary sources. Method of data analysis not stated.</p>	<p>Italian context. Secondary data (personal accounts from survivors and madams); interview participants were Italian public officials and non-governmental social providers working</p>	<p>Critiques the "sex work" view which ignores the psychological coercion that the girls' experience through 'voodoo' rites. Role of women in the trafficking business – 'victim' to madam. Voodoo rites used for 'protection' as well as coercion. Evidence of instilling fear and threats of retribution by the spirit. Reinforce the roles of those involved within the trafficking process with the trafficked woman bound for life to her traffickers.</p>	<p>Strengths: documents the perspective of madams on oath-taking; secondary data (blogs and websites) may allow for more open and honest accounts</p> <p>Limitations: Unclear exactly how the data was analysed/triangulated therefore limited data analysis to back to implications/conclusions; unclear how consent was gained due to use of secondary data; do not report how secondary data was obtained or sampling procedures for interviews</p>
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<p>C.S. Baarda (2016) Human trafficking for sexual exploitation from Nigeria into Western Europe: The role of voodoo rituals in the functioning of a criminal network</p>	<p>Qualitative study. Content analysis of wire traps and police interviews. Theory driven - rationale choice theory and transactional cost economics.</p>	<p>Netherlands context. Secondary data. 65 case files from one investigation with 11 suspects. Includes interviews with victims (n=6). Purposive sampling.</p>	<p>Four main themes constructed around how voodoo is used in a Nigerian human trafficking ring under investigation: voodoo as a coercive mechanism, voodoo used cynically between traffickers i.e. oath-taking used to create contracts between different traffickers, voodoo used non-cynically i.e. the wider belief system and use in everyday life and voodoo priests enforcing contracts</p>	<p>Strengths: detailed data analysis procedures, study designs allows for multiple perspectives (victims and traffickers), contextualises the belief system</p> <p>Limitations: one specific human trafficking ring so findings might not be generalisable, ethical issues - not clear how consent was gained</p>
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<p>Laurens ten Kate , Arjan W. Braam , Rijk van Dijk , Jette van Ravesteyn & Fenna Bergmans (2020) Professional and Religious Approaches to Care for West African Victims of Human Trafficking in The Netherlands: The Challenge of New Pentecostalism</p>	<p>Qualitative study. Semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis.</p>	<p>Netherlands context. 21 Care and legal professionals interviewed. 7 religious leaders (Christian).</p>	<p>Themes capture the prominence of 'voodoo' beliefs held by women who have been trafficked from the perspective of professionals and religious leaders, 'voodoo' seen as a superstition by professionals, themes further highlight the 'immense pressure' the rituals hold over the women and the difficulties they have experienced in challenging these views, faith in God (Christian faith) helps women to escape 'voodoo' and religion identified by religious leaders as a preferred means of coping</p>	<p>Strengths: well defined methodology and detailed analysis procedures, perspective of professionals and religions (Christian faith) leaders, Limitations: survivors not interviewed, the focus of the study was broader than oath-taking and human trafficking</p>
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<p>May Ikeora (2016) The Role of African Traditional Religion and 'Juju' in Human Trafficking: Implications for Anti-trafficking</p>	<p>Qualitative study. Field research. Interviews. Method of data analysis not stated.</p>	<p>UK and Nigerian context. 46 anti-trafficking stakeholders including victims were interviewed</p>	<p>Evidence that oath-taking can be used as a means of control through the creation of fear was the creation of 'fear' either through the specific nature of the oath or the ceremony itself. Argues for exploitation of existing beliefs systems rather than 'brainwashing.' Critiques the use of 'Juju.' Creation of 'fear' consequentially leads to failures to prosecute and protect victims.</p>	<p>Strengths: most comprehensive account of oath-taking as a control mechanism, cultural curiosity and critical lens applied to existing narratives around the use of oath-taking</p> <p>Limitations: Unclear exactly how the data was analysed therefore limited data analysis to back to implications/conclusions; don't know how many participants were 'victims' vs other stakeholders or anything about the recruitment and consent/ethical considerations</p>
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1.5.4 Evaluation of overall quality of the literature

Analysis of the overall quality of the studies included in this review identifies some key areas of weakness. While themes were identified, the quality of the research is low and therefore appropriate weight should be given to the conclusions. For four of the seven studies identified it was unclear whether appropriate data analysis methods had been applied. In the most part, this was either due to data analysis procedures either not being reported, or only being reported in brief and were integrated into the discussion. This makes it difficult for the reader to decipher which information came from the study data and which from secondary sources. Subsequently, few studies met criteria for transparency adequately.

Only one of the seven studies adequately acknowledged the impact the researcher may have had on the research process and outcomes. This is particularly important within qualitative research which aims to amplify the voice of an individual or specific group, whilst acknowledging the impact the researcher has on this process. From an ethical stand point, given the extreme marginalisation and oppression experienced by this population, there was no consideration of the power or privilege held by the researchers. Moreover, for studies which used primary data from interviews with survivors, consent procedures were not outlined and no details were given on any support offered to survivors prior to, during or post interview. Similarly, for the papers which used secondary data (e.g. police tape recordings) no details were given of any considerations of confidentiality or consent.

Despite these limitations, the studies demonstrated an appropriate research design. Given the sensitive nature and obvious difficulties with recruiting from this population, secondary data and interviews with professionals were an appropriate

first step. For those studies which were able to recruit survivors, recruitment was sensitive through partnering with other organisations which supported survivors. Only two studies did not provide adequate information around recruitment and sampling methods.

1.5.5 Synthesis of main findings

The following section synthesises the key themes identified as part of this systematic literatures review on oath-taking within the context of human trafficking. The synthesis followed Thomas and Harden's (2008) thematic synthesis three stage process: i) coding of text ii) development of descriptive themes and iii) generating analytical themes. Four main themes are discussed; means of control, wider systemic context, the perception of professionals and religious leaders, and the consequences of the oath.

Means of control. Six of the papers explicitly identified themes of oath-taking as a form of psychological control or coercion utilised by human traffickers. The papers consistently detailed how many survivors are coerced through swearing an oath that they will pay off their debt to the trafficker. In addition, survivors may be sworn to promise that they will obey the trafficker, not leave the trafficker nor speak out about their experiences following swearing the oath. To break the oath would mean risking the consequences of the spiritual curse, with death being the most common reported feared consequence of breaking the oath (Millett-Barrett, 2019). Other misfortunes such as harm coming to their family or more general misfortune were reported across studies (Dunkerley, 2017; Ikeora, 2016; van der Watt & Kruger,

2017). Findings also indicate traffickers themselves tell fear-inducing narratives about stories of others who broke the oath and detail the frightening consequences they experienced due to breaking the spiritual curse (van der Watt & Kruger, 2017).

Of these papers, Ikeora (2016) and Dunkerley (2017) found psychological coercion or control occurs through instilling fear into survivors. Ikeora's findings indicate two specific mechanisms through which fear is instilled: firstly through fear of 'Juju' or the retribution of the spirit if the oath were to be broken and secondly through the spiritual ceremony itself in which the survivors swear the oath. Millett-Barrett (2019) specifically found that survivors found the ceremony itself terrifying with multiple accounts documented of the different types of fear-inducing rituals designed to coerce survivors into submission.

Whilst studies found that there were no consistent patterns across ceremonies (Dunkerley, 2017; van der Watt & Kruger, 2017), some details of the ceremonies were reported across studies. Details included the use of human tissue samples, chanting, prayer, animal sacrifice, sexual intercourse, use of oils and powders and the consumption of substances. Baarda (2016) and van der Watt and Kruger (2017) found survivors experienced uncertainty and confusion during these ceremonies and Baarda argues that this creates feelings of powerlessness within survivors making it easier for them to be exploited.

Furthermore, both Ikeora and Millett-Barrett's findings showed elements of deception leading up to the ceremony with survivors being unaware of the upcoming ceremony until it was happening. Millett-Barrett found 56% of survivors felt it was not their choice to participate in the ceremony, with only 19% stating they had a choice. Whilst for some survivors it might have been perceived as a choice to participate in

the ceremony, of those, many thought they would be going to Europe for work and did not know that it would lead to sexual exploitation.

For some survivors who felt forced to take part in the ceremony, the pressure came from their own family (Millett-Barrett, 2019). Control was exercised through family members in contact with the 'Juju' priest. Family members also fear the spiritual consequences of breaking the oath and may in addition receive threats from the trafficker reminding them of those consequences (Baarda, 2016). Oath-taking interacts with and reinforces other psychological methods of control utilised by the trafficker such as threats of harm and deportation and telling false accounts about the dangers of the police (Dunkerley, 2017; van der Watt & Kruger, 2017).

Wider systemic context. The research reviewed found specific systemic factors which impacted on the use of oath-taking within the context of human trafficking. Findings showed that oath-taking did not take place only between survivors and traffickers, but was used more "cynically", with traffickers using the oath to create bonds and contracts with different members of a Nigerian trafficking ring, including other traffickers (Baarda, 2016 p. 257). Lo Iacono (2015) found that previously trafficked women who remained bound by the oath also used oath-taking and the power of the spirit when becoming 'Madams' themselves.

Many papers identified a theme situating oath-taking within the context of trafficking as part of a wider belief system and that ATR provides the foundation for this practice (Baarda, 2016; Ikeora, 2016; Millett-Barrett, 2019; van der Watt & Kruger, 2017). Several papers found that within the context of human trafficking, the oath derives its power through the exploitation of this existing belief system (Ikeora,

2016; Millett-Barrett, 2019). The research found survivors frequently told narratives and stories they had heard prior to being trafficked of people whose misfortunes were understood to be the work of 'spirits' or the 'spiritual world'. This meaning making and belief system was found to be a pre-disposing factor to being vulnerable to this form of control by traffickers (Ikeora, 2016; van der Watt & Kruger, 2017).

Strong ATR beliefs were found to be shared by traffickers; the 'spirits' and priests would be called upon by traffickers in the event that a survivor escapes (van der Watt & Kruger, 2017). Whilst under the control of the trafficker, trafficked individuals themselves reported that they would call upon the 'spiritual world' for protection or to help them succeed in business. Priests in a Nigerian state report that women use the power of the spirit when working in the sex industry to 'put men under their spell' (Lo Iacono, 2015).

Perception of professionals and religious leaders. Another theme identified within the literature was professionals and religious leaders' perception of oath-taking, particularly within Western countries. Watt and Kruger (2017) found oath-taking remains a practice the Western world struggles to understand. Several papers identified how oath-taking can be reduced to being perceived by the Western world as "brainwashing" or "superstition" (Ikeora, 2016; ten Kate et al., 2020), using phrases such as "evil spiritual powers".

Kate et al., (2020) found that whilst legal and care professionals and religious leaders in the Netherlands expressed concern towards survivors about the suffering they experienced due to the oath, it tended to be religious leaders who had greater understanding around the context of oath-taking and its significance for survivors. In

contrast, legal and care professionals did not tend to contextualise oath-taking, focusing more on the continuing impact it has on the lives of survivors without understanding its full significance. By contrast van der Watt & Kruger (2017) found some evidence professionals in South Africa were able to contextualise oath-taking as part of ATR and recognise its full significance for survivors.

Both van der Watt and Kruger (2017) and Ikerora (2016) reported that both professionals¹⁵ and survivors spoke about the worries they hold about other professionals not understanding the power of the oath and the importance of the spiritual world and wider ATR beliefs. They argue that these negative perceptions and the lack of wider understanding can impede criminal investigations and leads to a failure to effectively protect survivors. Rather, what is required is more understanding of the extent to which a survivor's belief system has been exploited by the trafficker which could then lead to more meaningful support and protection being developed (Ikeora, 2016).

Consequences of the oath. The final theme identified was the profound consequences of the oath in terms of the impact that it had on survivors, the difficulties experienced by professionals when working with survivors, and wider consequences for the need to bring human traffickers to justice.

All papers found some evidence in varying detail of the extreme psychological impacts that the oath had on survivors. Millett-Barrett (2019) discussed this in most detail, reporting that survivors experienced severe psychological trauma as a result

¹⁵ Professionals who declared experience in supporting individuals who have been through oath-taking ceremonies.

of taking the oath, with 70% of survivors thinking about the oath every day. This demonstrates the long-lasting psychological impact it can have even once the survivor is no longer directly controlled by the trafficker. The study further found that distressing events in a survivor's life, particularly linked to family members, can re-awaken the fear of the oath with survivors attributing the event to retribution from the spirit.

As well as the psychological consequences, Lo Iacono (2015) found that for some survivors the oath has left them socially isolated and marginalised. This is a risk factor for re-exploitation, including one specific form of exploitation where their trafficker enlists their help in the trafficking of others.

Several studies reported how faith in another religion (predominantly Christianity or Islam) can help survivors cope with or re-evaluate the impact of the oath (Dunkerley, 2017; Millett-Barrett, 2017; ten Kate et al., 2020; van der Watt & Kruger, 2017). Referrals are often made for psychological support (Dunkerley, 2017; Millett-Barrett, 2017; ten Kate et al., 2020), however, studies report barriers to access. A particular barrier was the lack of cultural understanding from professionals (Millett-Barrett, 2017). Ikeora (2016) found that condemning the abuse rather than condemning the belief system is an important distinction for professionals to make. Challenging and increasing psychological flexibility to the oath's control can be extremely difficult (Millett-Barrett, 2017; ten Kate et al., 2020).

Finally, several studies focused more on the legal and criminal consequences that the oath has. It can impede criminal investigations because survivors are afraid to disclose their experiences and the authorities lack understanding or experience in

sensitively eliciting information from survivors. As a consequence human traffickers escape justice (Dunkerley; 2017; Ikeora, 2016; van der Watt & Kruger, 2017).

1.5.6 Summary of findings

There is evidence across papers for the use of oath-taking within the context of human trafficking. There is evidence that one function is as an effective control mechanism used by traffickers to silence and exploit survivors. In addition, particular important systemic factors were identified which were found to be crucial in understanding the power of oath-taking within human trafficking and its interaction with an existing spiritual belief system. The third conclusion, was that oath-taking may not be adequately understood by others who do not share the same belief system, particularly within Western health and legal institutions. Reluctance to share their experiences due to fears that oath-taking may not be adequately understood by professionals has the potential to impede criminal investigations and can lead to a failure for survivors to be adequately protected or supported. The final conclusion was that oath-taking within the context of human trafficking can have profound negative psychological consequences on the lives of survivors.

1.6 Rationale for current research project

The current systematic literature review revealed that there is little research available which looks at the role of oath-taking within the context of human trafficking. The evidence which exists scores low across quality assessment criteria evaluating research methodology, with the addition of some key ethical considerations being raised regarding the lack of consent, support or consideration

of power and risk of harm to an already marginalised and oppressed group of survivors.

Whilst oath-taking has been widely documented throughout the literature as a means of psychological control used within human trafficking, due to the low quality of the research, it is unclear to what extent this is the experience of survivors. Little is known about survivors' experience of their relationship to oath-taking within human trafficking and the factors which influence the strength of their belief in the power of the oath over time. Additionally, further understanding is needed of the complex psychological processes, as experienced by survivors, which may influence the extent to which survivors feel coerced by traffickers through the use of oath-taking and how these processes are experienced by survivors in relation to other methods of control that traffickers might utilise. The current study may provide insight into methods which may prevent further exploitation.

Furthermore, there is very little research looking specifically at the psychological impact of oath-taking on survivors over time. This includes the period of being trafficked and exploited but also little is known about the extent to which the oath-taking continues to impact on survivors' wider lives when they are no longer under the direct control of the trafficker.

Finally an additional rationale for this project is to increase Western professionals' limited understanding of oath-taking. This was highlighted within the systematic review as a barrier to successful criminal prosecutions and survivors' obtaining immigration status. More understanding of how oath-taking is used as a means of psychological control in trafficking from the perspective of survivors could help in giving validity to individual accounts within the immigration legal system.

Beyond the legal system, gaps in the existing research prevent the development of knowledge and understanding amongst professionals providing support to survivors, including psychological interventions. The current project attempts to address this gap in professionals' understanding of survivors' experiences of oath-taking in order to improve the support available to survivors.

1.7 Research Aims and Questions

This study looks at survivors' experiences of oath-taking within human trafficking. The principal aim is to develop an understanding of survivors' experiences of their relationship to oath-taking within human trafficking over time. The study further aims to understand survivors' experience of oath-taking as a coercive method utilised by traffickers within this context, as well as the psychological and wider impact of oath-taking on the lives of survivors from their own perspective.

The research therefore aimed to answer the following question:

What are survivors' accounts of their relationship to oath-taking when used within human trafficking?

The question had three further sub-questions:

1) What are survivors' experiences of oath-taking as a coercive method utilised by traffickers within human trafficking?

- 2) What are survivors' accounts of the impact of oath-taking within human trafficking on their lives and over time?
- 3) What are survivors' experiences of what has been helpful following oath-taking as part of being trafficked?

2.0 Method

In this chapter I outline my rationale for undertaking qualitative research. I provide an overview of my chosen method of Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clark, 2006) situated within my epistemological stance. I then provide a description of my participants and recruitment strategy, and reflect on the key ethical considerations. I go on to outline my service user involvement strategy and the impact that this had on the research, before describing my data collection, analysis and qualitative quality assurance procedures.

2.1 Design

2.1.1 *Qualitative research*

Qualitative research is concerned with human experience, and how people make sense of these experiences. It gives power to the researcher to explore 'phenomena' from the perspective of individuals who have experienced it (Lapan et al., 2012). A qualitative approach allows for the consideration of the complexity of individual experience and the exploration of contextual factors, such as history, culture, language and other social processes, which intersect with the meaning that individuals give to their experiences. It allows for greater understanding of people's evaluation of their own lives and experiences (Roberts & Boardman, 2014).

Importantly, qualitative research is also well suited for exploratory research in areas which are under researched such as this topic (Barker et al., 2015), providing opportunities for theorising and generating hypotheses which may lead to further discovery in the future.

The approach fits with a general trend in clinical psychology towards more 'pluralistic' methods of research as a means of studying human experience and distress (Harper, 2007). Rather than searching for causality the emphasis is placed on the impact of human perception (Cromby et al., 2013). This contrasts with quantitative approaches where the 'voice' of the individual or group is hidden beneath statistics and general population trends (Roberts, 2014) and the process of objectification and striving for neutrality risks subjugating individual experiences creating complex ethical issues which can lead to further oppression of marginalised groups (Ussher, 1992). Instead, qualitative approaches aim to amplify people's voices and experiences, arguably an important process for those who have been marginalised or experienced extreme human cruelty at the hands of others.

Ethical issues can arise in all forms of research with vulnerable groups, qualitative included (Jacobsen & Landau, 2003; Pittaway et al., 2010). Therefore, a careful, considered approach would be required through maintaining a reflexive position throughout the research process, acknowledging the power and privilege I held as a researcher through endeavouring to openness and transparency around my beliefs and assumptions.

2.1.2 Epistemological approach

The taking of a critical and reflexive stance to my role as a researcher and the qualitative research process was underpinned by my critical realist epistemological approach. Qualitative research is compatible with critical realist social enquiry (Maxwell, 2012). In section 1.1.3 I described how critical realism holds onto the position of both realism, and constructivism (Oliver, 2011) taking the stance that the

meanings people attribute to their experience are viewed as reality whilst also acknowledging that these meanings are shaped by the lenses an individual holds which impacts on their interpretations. Given this stance, a critical realist social enquiry would position the researcher as having a range of lenses, which are likely different to those of their participants and the role their interpretations have on the research process and outcomes needs to be carefully managed (Maxwell, 2012).

I attempted this in several ways; firstly through trying to reduce the impact of my own beliefs and biases through consultation with a survivor. Secondly, through keeping a reflective diary to encourage reflexivity and transparency throughout every stage of the research process.

2.1.3 Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis was chosen instead of other qualitative methods as the research question was looking for repeated and consistent patterns of meaning amongst participants (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Given the exploratory nature of the research, the focus was on how participants understood their relationship to oath-taking, their experiences of oath-taking as a coercive method and any impact they perceived it to have had on their lives more broadly. Initially *how* oath-taking was used in human trafficking was the point of focus and therefore a grounded theory approach was considered (Oliver, 2011). However, as highlighted within the systematic review, there is a gap in the literature researching the meaning survivors attribute to oath-taking as part of their trafficking journey. It is unclear whether survivors experience oath-taking as a coercive method or whether this interpretation of oath-taking within this context is solely the perspective of researchers and other

professionals. Therefore, *how* traffickers use oath-taking as a means as psychological control may be something to be explored in a subsequent study. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was considered due to its emphasis on *meaning making*. However, its focus is on the subjective experience of individuals, rather than the organising and summarising consistent patterns of meaning across groups.

Thematic analysis adapts to incorporate a critical realist stance that the meanings individuals make from their experiences are influenced by the context in which they are situated and further, that the implications of this can be critically evaluated (Clarke and Braun, 2017). Whilst there is debate in the literature about whether thematic analysis is a method in its own right (e.g. Boyatzis, 1998; Ryan & Bernard, 2000), Clarke and Braun (2017) argue its strength is that no specific theory or epistemology underpins the approach, allowing it to lend itself to a wide variety of research enquiries. It can be used to analyse smaller datasets, particularly important for this study given it was anticipated relatively small numbers of survivors would be willing to talk about their experiences. Thematic analysis allows for 'inductive' or data-driven analysis and deductive (theory-driven) analysis and takes into consideration both explicit (manifest) and underlying (latent) meanings. Inductive analysis was privileged in this study to fit within a critical realist stance and the aim of 'giving voice' or at least partial representation to participants experiences. Therefore analysis needs to be driven by survivors' words, not the theories of others. Additionally, latent meanings held value when exploring the meaning participants attribute to their experiences and the social context underpinning this.

Finally, during discussions around service user co-production and de-colonisation with my trainee cohort, I considered the idea of Participatory Action Research (PAR: van der Velde et al., 2009), holding in mind that Western research methods can minimise or, even dehumanise, individuals' experiences from different cultures. PAR involves co-creation with survivors taking an active role in designing the research to meet the needs of the population rather than being traditional 'subjects' of the research. Sadly, full PAR was not possible due to the project's timescale and the lack of remuneration available for additional researchers with lived experience.

2.1.4 Interviews

Giving voice to survivors' experiences is particularly important for marginalised and unheard groups (Hiller & DiLuzio, 2004). This focus within the study highlighted the need to provide a way for their experiences to be heard in their entirety.

Focus groups can be perceived to be a less threatening method for many participants than individual interviews (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). However there is greater risk of certain participants feeling 'unheard' if their experiences do not match those of others in the group. As the systematic review found there to be few consistent patterns across oath-taking ceremonies, within a focus group setting there was obvious potential for the full variety of perspectives to be lost. Individual interviews were therefore chosen for data collection.

Individual interviews can be described as a conversation with purpose (Lune & Berg, 1989) and allow participants to talk freely about emotionally difficult topics to

gain insight into the meaning that they make of their experiences (Roberts, 2014). Semi-structured interviews specifically allow for flexibility and sensitivity, particularly important for vulnerable groups (Aldridge, 2014) and place the participant as an 'expert' of their experiences.

For survivors who have had the potentially traumatic experience of immigration interviews, I was mindful of how they may respond to being asked multiple questions. However, some structure was important as survivors' experiences of oath-taking were likely to be intertwined with other experiences of trauma, and an informal, unstructured interview could lack the containment needed for survivors to feel safe when talking about their experiences.

Consequently, the semi-structured interview topic guide needed to give maximum flexibility to allow for the survivor's voice to be heard, whilst maintaining some element of predicted and safe conversation as part of the structure to allow the researcher to guide the conversation.

The interview schedule (see Appendix 5) was developed carefully in conjunction with research supervisors¹⁶ and reviewed with a survivor in the capacity as service user consultant following their research interview (see section 2.4).

¹⁶ Both research supervisors have extensive experience of working with survivors of human trafficking.

2.2 Participants

2.2.1 Recruitment

Partnership with a UK-based charity. The research took place within a UK-based charity¹⁷ that supports migrants including survivors of human trafficking¹⁸. The charity has longstanding experience supporting survivors for whom oath-taking had formed a part of their experiences.

The principal challenges to the recruitment were firstly the identification of individuals affected by oath-taking (see section 1.2.2). Secondly, the significant challenge of professionals being able to build trusting relationships with such individuals due to fears survivors have of not being believed (see section 1.5.5). As a result, this study used convenience sampling, with all participants being recruited through this charity who have existing trusting relationships with survivors who have experienced oath-taking.

Recruitment through other organisations was considered, however, due to resource constraints, concerns about difficulties engaging individuals with whom the organisation had no ongoing relationship and considering the ongoing emotional needs of clients, it was felt recruiting through one adequately resourced organisation was preferable.

Inviting participation. Recruitment took place between September 2020 – January 2021. Following ethical approval, staff at the charity were approached and

¹⁷ The name of the charity has been omitted to protect participants anonymity.

¹⁸ The charity supports survivors holistically through therapy, legal and housing support, advocacy and community and integration support.

asked to speak to any individuals who had experienced oath-taking, and who would be willing to discuss their experiences with the researcher.

Whilst seeking to be as inclusive as possible, it was recognised that many of the clients whom the charity work with are extremely vulnerable and may have multiple complex needs (as outlined in section 1.4). Many potential participants were experiencing ongoing and immediate needs such as unstable housing, risk of destitution and further exploitation, and the risk of exposure to immigration enforcement.

In addition, many survivors may be experiencing extreme distress in line with a diagnosis of PTSD or depression. As it was possible that oath-taking was connected to their traumatic experiences, it was recognised that particular sensitivity was required when asking individuals to consider participating in this project. From an ethical standpoint, the decision was therefore made for clinicians at the charity to make a clinical judgement of any risk to the individual prior to approaching them regarding participation in the research.

Staff approached potential participants either via telephone or during other scheduled sessions. Participant information sheets were provided to aid this discussion (see Appendix 6). Following an initial conversation with their clinician, if the person expressed interest in taking part in the study, their details were passed on to the lead researcher who contacted the individual via telephone to have a longer conversation about the focus of the project (and other issues such as confidentiality and informed consent) and to allow space for participants to ask questions or express any concerns. Participants were given the option of doing the interview alone with the lead researcher, or with a clinician from the charity present. No

participants requested that the clinician conduct the interview alone with them (i.e. without the researcher present), although this was offered in acknowledgement the difficulty of discussing oath-taking and to encourage participation from as many individuals as possible. All interviews were conducted virtually (via Zoom) due to the pandemic.

In reality, these conversations were challenging as many survivors wished to start talking about their oath-taking and trafficking experiences. I had to strike the balance between being validating, curious and understanding whilst not wanting them to disclose too much at this stage as I was aware talking about their experiences could be painful and I wished to avoid asking them to repeat themselves for the research interview itself.

If verbal consent was given to participate in the study, consent forms were then sent by post to be signed by participants and then returned.

2.2.2 Participation Criteria: An inclusive approach

Given the limits of existing research I wanted to give voice to as wide range of experiences as was possible. I therefore kept the inclusion criteria as open and inclusive as possible.

Table 3 Participant Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion	Exclusion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult survivors of human trafficking (age 18+) • Experienced oath-taking as part of being trafficked • Living in the UK • Supported by the partnered charity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people under the age of 18 • Those who have not experienced oath-taking as part of being trafficked • At risk of significant distress during interview • Living outside of the UK • Not supported by the partnered charity

Place of origin. Oath-taking practices vary widely across the African continent¹⁹ so multiple places of origin would have increased the depth and richness of the data. However, as this was an exploratory study and with the anticipated pool of potential participants being small, no limit was placed on the place of origin.

Immigration status. There is an argument that for ethical reasons recruitment, should be limited to those who had been granted refugee status in order to protect vulnerable asylum seekers who may feel forced to participate due to their marginalisation and indeterminate status (De Haene et al., 2010). However, due to reports (see section 1.5.5) that survivors were frequently not believed during immigration interviews, the diversity in survivors' experiences would potentially provide an opportunity to explore some of the challenges that individuals may have encountered when recounting their experiences of oath-taking within a legal or

¹⁹ ATR can also be found outside of the African continent and this was held in mind.

immigration context. Therefore immigration status was not chosen as an exclusionary criteria.

Use of an interpreter. Another important consideration was whether to open up the study to those who were not able to participate through the English language.

The reluctance on the part of researchers in qualitative research in using interpreters is well known; as a cause of both logistical and funding difficulties and challenges with conducting the analysis. (Harper, 2007). This has clear exclusionary and discriminatory consequences.

It was agreed that interpreters could be arranged via the charity if this were required. Whilst I considered the impact on reflexivity and the use of cultural advocates (Reynolds, 2010a), ultimately no participant required an interpreter to take part in this study.

Gender. The intention was to recruit both male and female survivors to the study. However, no men were recruited into the study, predominantly due to the fact that there were fewer eligible men. Of those who were eligible, clinicians considered the risk of distress to be too high for them to be approached.

I was unable to explore why so few men were perceived as ineligible for the research due to the time constraints for this particular study. I was curious about the rationale provided by clinicians for not approaching men and would have been interested to explore this further. I was mindful of narratives about 'strong black women' and wondered whether women are perceived by clinicians as more able to tolerate distress. I was also aware that statistically men are more likely to succeed in

ending their own life than women and wondered whether this leads to clinicians being more risk averse in response to male distress. Finally, I considered that there were fewer men in the service who reported to have experienced oath-taking as part of being trafficked. I was aware men are often less likely to access services and wondered what systemic and psychological processes might influence this.

Received therapy. It was recognised that many survivors report re-experiencing symptoms related to the oath-taking ceremony, and that talking about these experiences may trigger re-experiencing or dissociative symptoms for the individual. However, for the sample to be representative, it was agreed that we would not exclude those who had not yet received psychological therapy. Participant safety was ensured through the clinicians' screening of participants, and the researcher also received training in how to effectively support and respond to individuals should they experience any intrusive or dissociative symptoms during the interview.

2.2.3 Participant Demographics

Ten female survivors participated in the research. The place of origin of nine participants was Nigeria, the other being Liberia. Nine participants identified as Christian and one as Muslim. Half of the participants had refugee status and half (at the time of participation) had no formal leave to remain in the UK. Three of the participants had children of whom two had children in the UK, with one woman's children still residing in her place of origin. Of the ten participants who participated, eight had completed a course of evidence-based trauma-focused therapy (i.e. Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR), NET or trauma-focused CBT) and

two participants had completed a stabilisation phase (i.e. symptom management prior to engaging in trauma-focused therapy; see Chessell et al., 2019; Herman, 1992). All participants had previously met, or still meet, criteria for a diagnosis of PTSD.

Table 4 *Participant's collective demographics*

Demographics	Number of participants
Place of Origin	
Nigeria	9
Liberia	1
Age range	
18 - 29	1
30s	2
40s	3
50s	4
Immigration status	
Refugee status	5
No formal leave to remain	5
Religion	
Christian	9
Muslim	1
Children/dependants	
No children	7
Children in the UK	2
Children in place of origin	1
Therapy	
Completed trauma-focused therapy	8
Completed stabilisation phase	2

Sample size and recruiting during the pandemic. The study had originally aimed to recruit twelve survivors. It was only possible to recruit ten survivors during the time available, in part due to the challenges of recruitment during the Covid-19 pandemic. A sample size of ten is well within the guidelines for a 'small' project using thematic analysis (Braun and Clark, 2013, p. 50).

2.3 Ethics

2.3.1 Ethical Approval

The study was approved by the University of Hertfordshire Health, Science, Engineering & Technology Ethics Committee with Delegated Authority (Appendix 7). The key ethical considerations are outlined below.

2.3.2 Research with Survivors of Human Trafficking: Researching from a Position of Power and Curiosity

There is some literature relating to the methodological and ethical challenges of conducting research with survivors of human trafficking (e.g. Duong, 2015; Siegel & De Wildt, 2015). The literature highlights the difficult balance to be struck between conducting research with the aim of gaining knowledge to improve the lives of those who are marginalised, whilst risking causing harm in doing so. The researcher's context is of paramount importance in that ethical codes in themselves are contextual and reflect the morals and attitudes of the dominant culture (Siegel & De Wildt, 2015). As well as adhering to ethical standards and procedures, dictated by the dominant culture of which I am a part, it was also crucial to consider 'ethical

reflexivity' throughout (Block et al., 2013) with the aim of reducing the risk of re-enacting existed power structures.

Chapter 1.1.2 introduced the concept of 'researcher positioning' (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) and how as a white British woman I am an 'outsider' researcher. This difference was 'voiced' and 'visible' (Burnham, 2012) to participants, through my appearance and accent. I acknowledged to participants that whilst I did not share the same cultural and spiritual beliefs, I was coming from a place of belief in their experiences and curiosity to understand more. This was a crucial part of conducting myself in ways that reduced the risk of harm to my participants or those who might identify with their experiences.

I was aware I could never know how survivors experienced me, but it was important to be aware of the power dynamic and how this might shape our interactions. Furthermore, I was aware of the trust being placed in me by the charity, and mindful of conducting myself in ways that reflected the ethos and values of the organisation, not wanting to compromise its integrity with clients.

2.3.3 Consent

Careful consideration of consent procedures needed to be given as my participants came from a minority status (Farooq & Abbas, 2013). As well as giving written information via the participant information sheet (Appendix 8), I also spoke with participants over the phone, checking and re-checking they understood the research process and potential consequences.

I also spoke with participants about receiving ‘a token of thanks’.²⁰ It was considered that providing compensation for their time was extremely important; there is anecdotal evidence that suggests that ethnic minority groups are expected to give up their time to participate in research for free, whilst white individuals are not. Given my participants all had experiences of being exploited during trafficking this took careful consideration.

2.3.4 Confidentiality and Anonymity

The virtual interviews were recorded using an external recording device²¹ and downloaded and stored on the University of Hertfordshire’s secure computer network, along with anonymised transcripts and demographic data. The interviews were sent via a secure network to a transcriber who had signed a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix 9). No personal data such as the contact information for each participant was kept by the researcher. This data was all accessed via the charity’s existing secure care note system.

2.3.5 Managing Potential Distress

Careful consideration was given to managing potential distress due to my participants’ experiences of trauma and exploitation (De Haene et al., 2010). A number of steps were taken to try to mitigate this.

²⁰ The cash value of the token of thanks was not disclosed at the information giving/consent stage to avoid the prospect of this becoming a financial incentive to take part in the study.

²¹ This is more secure than using the video conferencing recording functions.

1) Participants were informed that their clinician could be present for the interviews to increase perceived safety whilst talking about their experiences. Five participants opted for this.

2) Participants were informed of my experience of working clinically with individuals thinking about traumatic events. Following feedback from my service user consultant, it was suggested that I ask individuals who had already received therapeutic support at the start of the interview which 'grounding' techniques²² they had found most helpful. It was suggested that I state that I would stop the interview if they dissociated and use grounding strategies to help them reorient to their present circumstances.²³ Participants would then be invited to continue the interview if they wished. For those who had not received trauma-focused therapy, a similar agreement was made following a brief outline of a basic grounding strategy.

3) The interview schedule was created to focus more on the *impact* of the oath-taking ceremony, rather than asking participants to go into detail about the harm inflicted during the trafficking. This was outlined at the start of each interview, although participants could choose to give further detail if they wished. If they did start to give any details about the ceremony itself, they were reminded that this was not necessary and they could move on to discuss other things if they preferred to.

4) I regularly checked in with participants through the interview to gain feedback about their level of distress. Following feedback from a service user consultant, I did this after every section of the interview. At the end of each interview, time was spent having a more 'general conversation' as a way of supporting

²² Sensory techniques to help re-orientate people to the present when dissociating.

²³ If the clinician was present they took on this role.

participants with re-focusing on their present situation (rather than their past traumatic experiences). This was to ensure that all participants felt sufficiently calm and stable at the end of the interview, before it was concluded. Any concerns about distress were reported to a senior clinician working at the charity who would arrange a follow-up with the participant.²⁴

2.4 Data Collection

Data collection took place between October 2020 and January 2021. Interviews were carried out virtually (on Zoom) with nine participants. The offer was made to send the main interview questions to participants in advance of the interview and seven participants took up this offer. The final participant contributed in writing. Further ethical consent was obtained for this to allow her to participate in a meaningful way following her concerns that the interview in verbal format may be too distressing. Of the nine participants who did the interview orally, four participants had a clinician from the charity present. Interviews with participants also varied in length from 30mins to 70mins.

Distress was experienced by participants throughout the interviews. Two participants started to dissociate and the interview was paused and grounding techniques were used. Other participants became tearful. Offers were made to pause or terminate the interview but all participants wished to continue.

²⁴ This procedure had been previously agreed to by participants as part of the confidentiality and consent process.

2.5 Service User Consultation

Service user consultation was important with this study, given the power dynamic and my positioning as an ‘outsider’ researcher (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) already discussed.

A potential participant was approached to provide initial consultation on the study, and following participation to provide feedback on each stage of the recruitment and data collection procedures based on her experiences. This way she would not lose the opportunity to contribute to the study as a participant when the pool of potential participants was so limited, but feedback could also be given to inform improvements as the study progressed.

2.5.1 Initial Consultation

The project supervisor received feedback from the pilot participant / service user consultant around the initial aims and design for the study.²⁵ The service user consultant was extremely enthusiastic towards the study and supported the proposal of individual interviews. On reflecting on the amount of therapy she had received and the time it had taken her to be able to talk about her experiences, she expressed concerns about whether survivors would feel able to share their experiences. She was confident that survivors would decline participation if the idea of doing so felt too distressing.

²⁵ The study supervisor was also the service user consultant’s therapist and it was felt that any impact of the inherent power imbalance was balanced out by the likelihood that if she had concerns she would be able to voice them within the context of a trusting therapeutic relationship compared to a stranger (given the trust issues identified in section 1.4).

2.5.2 Consultation following the Initial Conversation and Consent Procedures

The service user consultant felt the aims of the study and the process for the participants were clearly outlined and space was given for questions and concerns to be raised.

2.5.3 Consultation following the Interview

Following consultation with the service user consultant after her participant interview, her feedback centred around three themes:

1) She reported an increase in intrusions following the interview. Whilst she felt these were unavoidable, she suggested that for other participants the offer of doing the interview with their clinician should be strongly recommended. She reported that for her, the intrusions were manageable and she was able to use her coping strategies. She also appreciated the check-in by her clinician following the interview. She suggested that I remind participants of their grounding strategies at the start of the interview and check in with participants after every section.

2) I asked her about her experience of talking about “Juju”²⁶ with a white British woman and whether she felt understood, recognising that power differences may not enable her to be fully open on this subject. Her feedback was that she was reassured by the fact I was working in collaboration with the charity and therefore she knew that I understood and believed her. Her understanding was that many white British people hold beliefs in ‘voodoo’ or other spiritual powers and she therefore no longer worries about stigma.

²⁶ This was her preferred term for oath-taking.

3) Finally she gave feedback on the interview schedule. She felt she had been asked everything that was, from her perspective, important about her experience of “Juju” and its impact. Her only suggestion was to focus more on feelings of relative safety in the UK compared with their place of origin. I held this in mind, whilst recognising that for some participants, safety in the UK should not be assumed.

2.5.4 Consultation during Analysis and Dissemination

Following data analysis the service user consultant provided feedback on whether the resulting themes and narratives made sense and fitted with their experience. This was to try and minimise the impact of my interpretations and ensure the themes align with my participants’ lived realities. No changes were suggested and the service user consultant remarked that she was pleased by the narrative being told by the results. She proceeded to give further testimony relating to each theme.²⁷ At the time of submission, options for service user involvement as part of dissemination were evolving.

2.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis involved an inductive thematic analysis (as discussed in section 2.1.3). Braun and Clarke’s (2006) guidelines were followed and its application to this project is outlined below.

²⁷ As this consultation was not part of the formal interview process and ethics protocol, her additional testimony was not included in the quotes as part of the results section.

2.6.1 Familiarisation with the dataset

As advised by Braun and Clarke (2006) as part of the immersion process, I re-read all of my transcripts. I chose to listen to the recordings at the same time to make notes of changes in emotion, tone and expression made by participants. For example, I took notes of points at which participants became distressed as this creates an additional layer of meaning.

2.6.2 Initial line-by-line coding

All transcripts were analysed through initial line-by-line coding (Appendix 10). I opted to do this by hand on paper copies. I followed Braun and Clarke's method, coding each segment in turn for all potentially applicable themes. Codes were then copied onto post-it notes for the next stage of the analysis. One transcript was separately coded by my supervisor to enable further reflective discussions concerning what was coded and why.

2.6.3 Searching for themes

Following the initial coding, the codes were grouped together to identify broad themes. This process was experiential with some themes discarded at points or moved to subthemes. The process ended with the development of an initial thematic map (Appendix 11) showing broad master themes connecting with smaller subthemes. At this stage the thematic map was still quite 'messy' with 'themes' and 'master themes' connecting through 'subthemes'. However, given this was a 'data-driven' and 'inductive' process, this was to be expected at this stage as I was trying to not let myself be influenced by the existing literature.

2.6.4 Reviewing and refining themes

After generating my initial thematic map, I consulted with my supervisors. This reflective conversation facilitated the upgrade of several subthemes to master themes and the bracketing together of some initial master themes into subthemes. The new candidate master themes and corresponding text from the data were then checked for coherence and whether each theme captured the data accurately. The post-it notes with the codes from each transcript were kept together labelled to ease this process and the identification of the text. A second thematic map was then developed (Appendix 12). This was then compared with the original dataset through the read through of the text and re-examining of the original codes to check that it was representative of participants' narratives.

2.6.5 Defining and finalising themes

The final part of the analysis involved further refinement of the master themes and subthemes to form what Braun and Clarke refer to as a 'story' or a coherent analytic narrative. At this point I chose to find a way of representing the themes diagrammatically to present this narrative and demonstrate how each theme is part of a larger narrative running across the dataset.

2.7 Methodological rigour

The quality and validity of this research was assessed using Tracy's (2010) Eight "BigTent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research (see Table 5).

Table 5 Assessment of the quality of this research using Tracy's (2010) Eight "BigTent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research

Quality Criteria	Application to current research
<p>Worthy topic</p> <p>The topic of the research is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant • Timely • Significant • Interesting 	<p>The research is highly significant, timely and relevant given the lack of research into this area highlighted in the literature review. It will be of interest to those within and outside academia, specifically the wide range of organisations supporting survivors of human trafficking.</p>
<p>Rich rigor</p> <p>The study uses sufficient, abundant, appropriate, and complex:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theoretical constructs • Data and time in the field • Sample(s) • Context(s) • Data collection and analysis processes 	<p>The research uses sufficient data (Braun and Clark, 2013, p. 50). Thorough recruitment processes (partnership working) resulted in an abundant dataset given the small pool of potential participants and data analysis procedures were adhered to with consistency checks carried out.</p>
<p>Sincerity</p> <p>The study is characterized by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-reflexivity about subjective values, biases, and inclinations of the researcher(s) • Transparency about the methods and challenges 	<p>The study includes self-reflexivity, with the researcher being reflexive around epistemology, researcher positioning, power and researcher bias. The methods and challenges are clearly outlined showing transparency.</p>
<p>Credibility</p> <p>The research is marked by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thick description, concrete detail, explication of tacit (nontextual) 	<p>Interviews contained rich detail about participants experiences. The study write up includes a large number of participant quotations from all</p>

<p>knowledge, and showing rather than telling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Triangulation or crystallization • Multivocality • Member reflections 	<p>participants to thicken description and provided concrete detail. Participants were able to comment on the analysis and findings.</p>
<p>Resonance</p> <p>The research influences, affects, or moves particular readers or a variety of audiences through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aesthetic, evocative representation • Naturalistic generalizations • Transferable findings 	<p>Given the topic, it can be argued that this research is highly evocative and is likely to move the audience substantially given the extreme contexts and distress caused by trafficking and the lack of knowledge most people hold in this area. The research has transferable findings across multiple academic disciplines but also outside of academia to supportive agencies and the authorities involved in supporting survivors of human trafficking. It has limited extrapolation to other areas given how specific the participants experiences are.</p>
<p>Significant contribution</p> <p>The research provides a significant contribution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptually/theoretically • Practically • Morally • Methodologically • Heuristically 	<p>Whilst the research has limited theoretical and conceptual contributions, it has the potential to offer significant contributions morally, heuristically and practically through highlighting participants' experiences, and providing useful insight which can help support survivors of human trafficking and lead to potential policy changes.</p>
<p>Ethical</p>	<p>The ethics are discussed in detail during</p>

<p>The research considers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedural ethics (such as human subjects) • Situational and culturally specific ethics • Relational ethics • Exiting ethics (leaving the scene and sharing the research) 	<p>the report. Situational and culturally specific ethical issues were reflected on through the researcher’s reflexive stance and the work of the service user consultant.</p>
<p>Meaningful coherence</p> <p>The study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieves what it purports to be about • Uses methods and procedures that fit its stated goals • Meaningfully interconnects literature, research questions/foci, findings, and interpretations with each other 	<p>The research reflects the aims of the study and answers the research questions posed. The methods and procedures fit with the aims of the study and there is meaningful coherence throughout.</p>

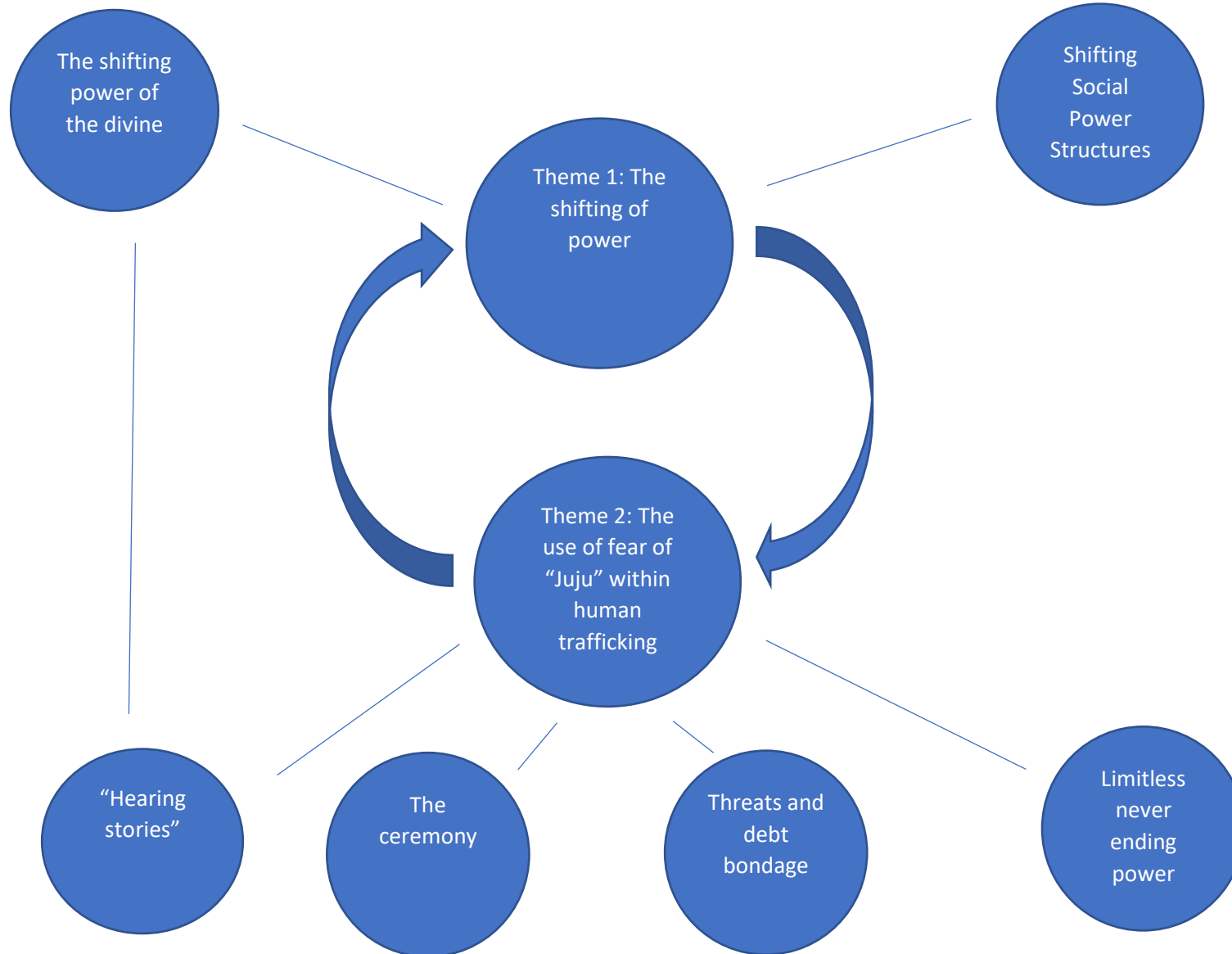
3.0 Analysis

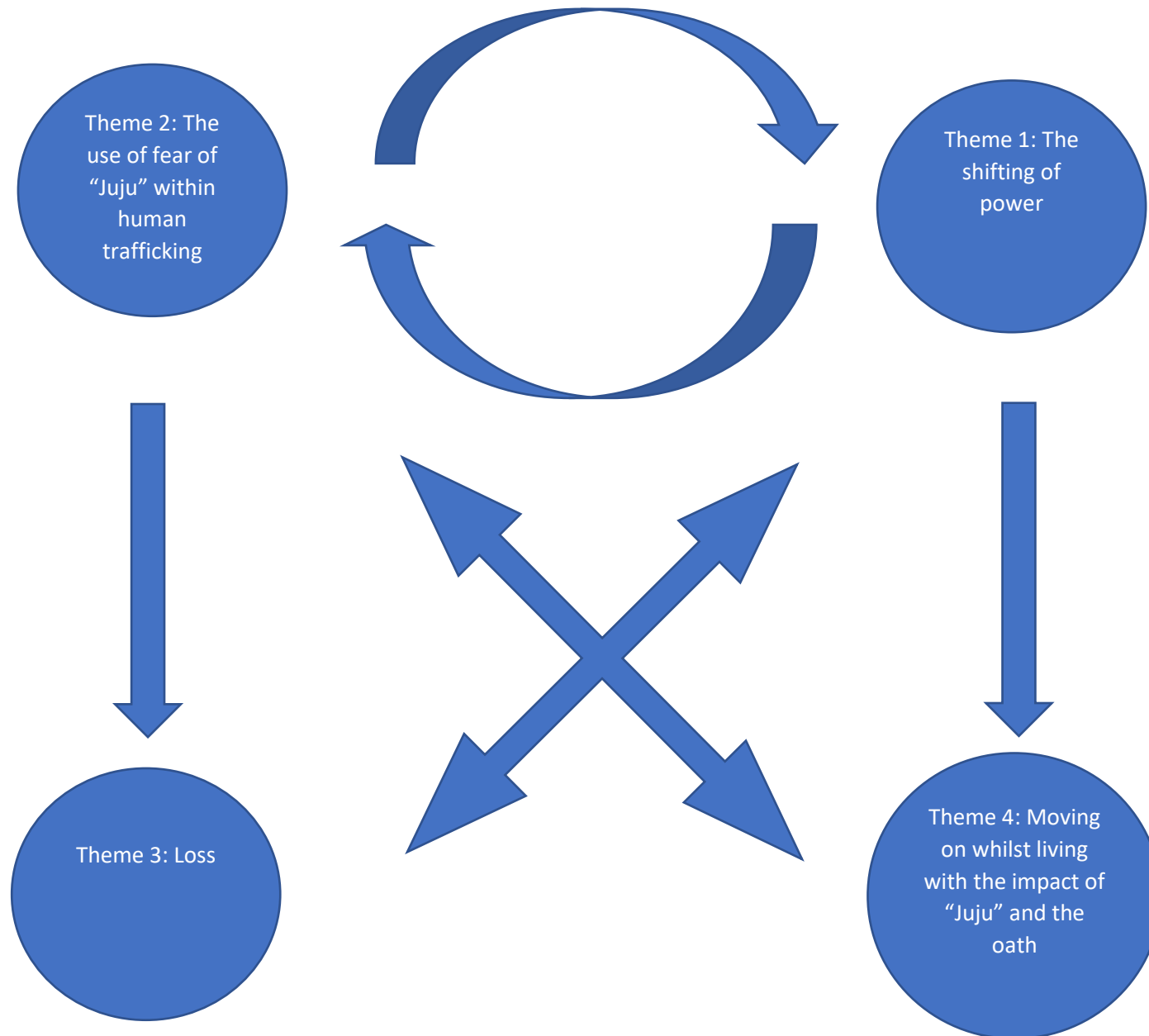
We do fear it [“Juju”] so much. Any African person will tell you they fear it because it is real. It is very real. So, if you happen to be a victim, you will fear it. You will never go beyond what it has to do because it is very real. (P3)

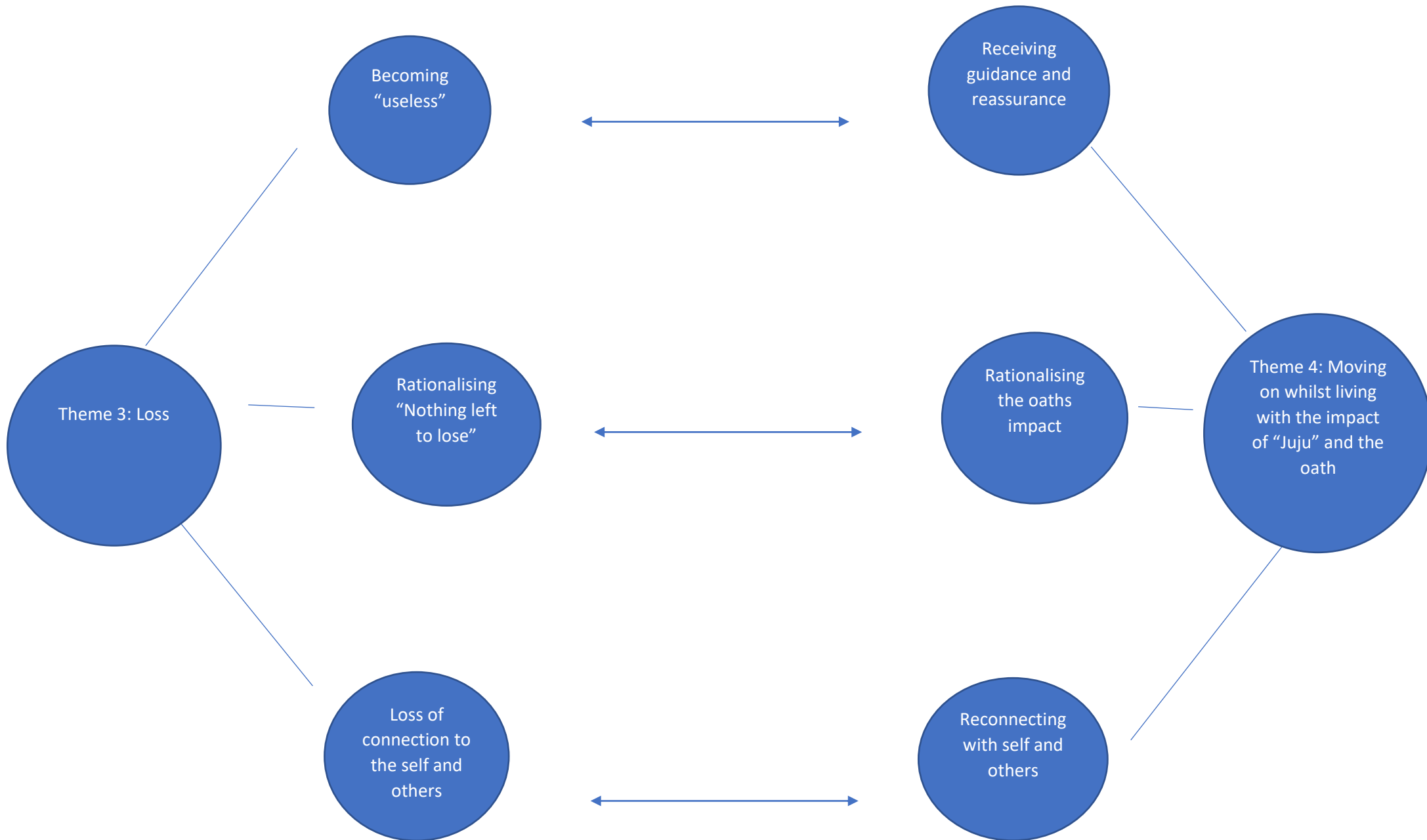
Four main themes were identified through the analytic process described in the previous chapter. These were: (1) *The shifting of power*, (2) *The use of fear of “Juju” within human trafficking*, (3) *Loss*, and (4) *Moving on whilst living with the impact of “Juju” and the oath*. These themes constitute my interpretation of the meaning that participants attributed to their experience of oath-taking as part of their trafficking experiences. It is therefore, their ‘reality’ that I have tried to capture through the analytic process, including as P3 describes the “*very real*” nature of the oath and the subsequent impact it has had on their lives.

The master themes and their subthemes are presented diagrammatically, rather than in the traditional manner of a table. This is to show the complex interactions, fluidity and parallel processes which exist between the different themes identified which better represent the ‘reality’ of experiencing and living with the oath. A narrative account of the results incorporating textual examples is then provided. All names and identifiable information have been removed.

3.1 Figure 1 Diagrammatical representation of master themes and subthemes







3.2 The shifting of power

The master theme, *The shifting of power*, speaks to the intersection of 'divine' powers and social power structures and participants' perception of where 'power' is held at different points during their life.

'Who' holds the most power was described by participants to be constantly shifting. However, the belief that power over the participant can be held by multiple different entities remained constant. A powerful 'other' might be the spiritual power forming part of "Juju"²⁸ or the Christian concept of God, but it also might be that in the immediate moment the most powerful 'other' was identified in an existing social power structure, for example the Home Office or the Police. *The shifting of power* encapsulates the interpsychic process of how power manifests in the interaction between the participant and the minds of others, be that spiritual or a physical other, system, group or individual. The theme further captures the nuance and uniqueness of this dynamic process, which can vary significantly between participants.

Finally, this theme intersects strongly with the second master theme: *The use of fear of "Juju" within human trafficking*, as represented diagrammatically above. Whilst Theme 1 speaks more on the belief system of "Juju" and how this interacts with other powers throughout a participant's life, including the period of human trafficking, *The use of fear of "Juju" within human trafficking* captures more the driving forces of fear of the oath when it is used in human trafficking. However, the two themes do interact. Participants' locating of the most dominant power at a particular point of time has a consequential impact on their relative level of fear of "Juju" as part of human trafficking.

²⁸ Many participants refer to the spiritual power as "Juju" or the "Juju God"

3.2.1 The shifting power of the divine

This subtheme speaks to participants' beliefs in "Juju" and the spiritual forces as part of the belief system as all powerful and that "Juju" can remain powerful alongside the power held by the Christian God. Participants described how the spiritual belief system of which "Juju" is a part, is commonly practiced alongside the Christian religion within their place of origin:

Well I know the fact that the Juju has power. It has effect. They can actually send the Juju to go and kill someone in their sleep and it will happen. So it is something that shouldn't be looked over because it is real and it is tradition in Nigeria, and Africa as a whole. So it is something they cannot eradicate. (P2)

Outside the context of human trafficking, the subtheme captures the idea that, there is a choice involving the giving over of power to a specific spiritual power. There is the idea that you may choose to worship one spiritual power. For many participants this was the Christian God, but this did not mean that belief in other spiritual powers do not exist:

That is the case because, as I said, Juju is a general God. It depends on who you give to him because it is like everyone wants to know who they are serving. I am a Christian. If I have a problem, I will take it to the altar of God [Christian]. (P9)

The spiritual powers, both "Juju" and the Christian God subsequently give power to human individuals in relation to the participant. As one participant described, such individuals have significant power through their ability to connect to the Gods:

There is somebody who is, is the big man who is there who is doing the incantation ... He is the power to talk to the Gods... He has the power. He is the one who is doing the voodoo... So I think he is hearing the voice. (P1)

Despite participants being able to hold multiple belief systems and subsequently acknowledge the power of both “Juju” and the Christian God, often the holding of multiple beliefs is not comfortable and can conflict, particularly during periods in which “Juju” has held more power:

I was thinking of breaking the Juju within myself whenever I was by myself or in the church. I was always praying, ‘God, forgive me. God, break every Juju, every curse I have gone through. (P10)

In contrast, at later points in some participants’ lives when settled in the UK, the power shifts for individuals, with more power being attributed to the Christian God. Many participants explicitly stated that the Christian God holds more power than “Juju” to the extent that committing to the Christian faith is seen as a way to hold the power of “Juju” at bay:

But I think the pastor who I confided in told me that, as long as you have given your life to Christ, God’s power is greater than any other power. Even though Juju’s power is great, God’s power is greater. (P7)

Some participants described the Christian God as having the power to release them from the oath and protect them from the spiritual power if they have broken the oath:

And living a Christian life. I know that way will help me most, because it is only through God we can be free. It is only through Jesus we can be free. Apart from that, there is no freedom. So, when you know God and dedicate yourself, give your life to God, you will be free. So, I know I am free from that Juju because now I am a new person. I am no longer on that Juju. So, I am now different from where I was before. I was living a sinful life before. (P10)

However, this shifting of divine powers can be a constantly changing process, despite participants making a strong re-commitment to following the Christian faith. Several participants described points at which “Juju” may hold more power, for example, periods of personal misfortune or illness.

Finally, for some participants, “Juju’s” power is specifically connected to their place of origin. Although the power of “Juju” may have diminished thanks to their being in the UK, some believed that if they were to return home, that “Juju” will hold more power again as the trafficker might more easily be able to find them.

3.2.2 Shifting social power structures

This subtheme captures how social power structures impact on participants’ lives and interact with the “Juju’s” power during and following the period of being trafficked. The subtheme particularly speaks to participants’ perceived positioning within society and the oppression that they may have experienced at different points in their lives.

An example of this is participants speaking about their experiences prior to being trafficked, and the position in society they held within their place of origin.

Many participants described living in desperate or destitute circumstances with little money and few prospects. Some participants identified their lack of power as leaving them vulnerable to exploitation. One participant described her first meeting with the individual who later became her trafficker:

So the first time you go, someone takes you there, like an office, to see and then the person will assess you to see about your family background. That will determine if they will help you because they are an institution whereby most of the people they try to help are people who are very naïve and very vulnerable. (P2)

They described being viewed by others as a “nobody” and felt that they would not be believed if they were to seek help in leaving the trafficker or to disclose their experiences of being forced to take the “Juju” oath. The trafficker in contrast was perceived to hold more power, as were the other social structures around the trafficker, such as the “Juju” priests and their networks. The authorities were also viewed as oppressive:

If you say to people, nobody is going to help you, but here [UK] they help. They [the UK state] give you little money. They don't do that in Nigeria. Nobody cares about you. Nobody. If I go to Nigeria and I say this to them, they will lock me up. If the person who bought me would say I am lying, they will believe him not me. (P1)

When in the UK, participants often continue to fear social power structures, such as the Police and the Home Office whom the traffickers have told them would harm them if they were to be caught:

If I saw the police, I would be running because I didn't want to get involved with the police because I didn't want to say things like that. I was really in that fear. I was living in fear. (P10)

For some participants the power these social structures hold outweighs the power of "Juju". The UK authorities often become the more immediate perceived threat due to fears of being arrested and/or deported or because the traffickers have told them they would be harmed by the authorities if they were to get caught:

But, when I went for caution with the police, when they found out I was working as well, they wanted to know why I was working. So, it was then that I had to tell about the juju ... It is difficult to say it out. If I had not been under that caution and they began to ask questions, so then I had to say it. (P5)

In contrast, other participants described how "Juju's" power was experienced as greater than these social power structures. They either avoided going to the Home Office or the Police altogether, or spoke with them but did not disclose "Juju":

Yes. I didn't go. I stood in front of the Home Office in [place omitted] and I went back. I didn't go. I was scared to say that because the Home Office ask you to share the story and maybe they are going to believe you or not and, by sharing it, maybe you are going to die or they are going to take you away. (P4)

Finally, this subtheme also captures the power that participants identified within supporting organisations in the UK, specifically the power participants located

within the Supportive Circle.²⁹ Some participants spoke of the Supportive Circle's power to convince the Home Office that the impact of "Juju" is 'real' and is something which should be taken into consideration during asylum applications. Others spoke of how the perceived power held by the Supportive Circle allowed them to share their experiences:

So, it was then that I had to tell them [police] about the juju, because now the power that I was having was the Supportive Circle ... So, when I had to say it, I now had a shoulder, I now had somebody I was leaning on with the Supportive Circle, which I was now leaning on, that, if anything happened, I would let them know that this was what he [trafficker] did – that I should be working... So, because I had the Supportive Circle, I had now had to tell the police. (P5)

3.3 The use of fear of "Juju" within human trafficking

The master theme, *The use of fear of "Juju" within human trafficking* speaks to how fear of "Juju" is driven and reinforced when used within human trafficking.

The theme captures the way in which the use of "Juju" oaths and rituals was terrifying within the context of human trafficking. It describes from the perspective of participants how oath-taking was used by traffickers as a means of control. The use of fear of "Juju" was perceived by participants to be a process intentionally used by traffickers to assert their control leading them to have little choice over future decisions:

So, they [the trafficker and priest] are already putting fear in you already, so you don't have a choice. They tell you, 'If you don't do it, this is what is going to

²⁹ This is a pseudonym, for the charity mentioned in section 3.0 (methods) and will continue to be used throughout. The real name of the charity has been omitted to protect the anonymity of participants.

happen. If you do it, this is what is going to happen.’ So, if you go or you stay, something is going to happen. (P1)

The theme further captures how traffickers reinforce the fear in “Juju”. It also speaks to how participants’ beliefs in “Juju” and the fear they experience in relation to breaking the oath are exploited to the traffickers’ gain:

The Juju was not created because of the traffickers. But, even though the traffickers use it as a weapon, as an instrument to remove the ladies or anyone they are trafficking... (P9)

Traffickers exploit participants’ fear of “Juju” at various points during the trafficking process, with certain tactics of exploitation being more dominant during the recruitment process. Other tactics might be used to reinforce the fear of “Juju” whilst participants were being exploited.

Finally, the theme captures the nuance and differences between participants with certain tactics used by traffickers being more successful than others in exploiting their fear in “Juju.

3.3.1 “Hearing stories”

The subtheme “*Hearing stories*” speaks to the wider cultural and religious narratives that participants had heard growing up in Western Africa which form part of their spiritual beliefs:

So, if you grow up there, you get to know that it is part of the culture, it is part of the people culture, like we have people’s beliefs, so people do what they want, do

what they say, and then they get to do what they want to do. So, it is real. A lot of the time it is real. (P6)

Participants described the prevalence of these beliefs in their place of origin with some having experienced “Juju” rituals in the past and many described witnessing first-hand the experiences of those who had become victims to “Juju” practices:

Because I am from Africa, because African people, if you are not a Christian, some of them do that ritual a lot. So, I know how they do it... To be honest, I know some people who have taken some oath with Juju and their life became useless – they will never do good things, they will never become good in life. (P10)

Whilst not all participants had direct experience of “Juju” practices, common across all participants’ accounts were the stories they had heard growing up which reinforced their belief in the power that “Juju” can have over people’s lives. The perceived impact of “Juju” on people’s lives could be extensive, with participants attributing to the spiritual power a wide variety of powers, including the power to kill people:

In my country or maybe in Africa, if they want a pregnancy, even seven months, in a minute they can do it. If they want a big tree with leaves, everything to wipe off, they can do it in a minute. If they want someone to be ill, it will happen. If they want somebody to die, it will happen. (P3)

The stories that participants’ described having heard or seen were often very detailed, referring to painful and terrifying practices:

People in Nigeria took some girls – on TV they showed that they go out with a rich man, like some young girl goes out with a rich man and sleeps with them, because these people, they use humans for rituals, for money, and they took their breasts – they cut off their breasts, they removed their eye, they cut off their clitoris, they cut off their nails and put it in the Juju. (P1)

Participants also described how this knowledge led them to recognise the seriousness of the situation that they were in, leading to an unquestionable belief in the power of “Juju” which was then exploited by the trafficker. One participant described not questioning the oath due to this prior knowledge:

So, I guess that was why I really did believe that it was really going to happen, because it was something I know does happen. (P6)

Some participants described trying to resist, knowing that taking the oath was not a positive step because of their prior exposure and experience of such practices or ceremonies. The fact of the trafficker trying to force them to take the oath not only increased their fear in “Juju” but also in the trafficker themselves; because of the power that they perceived that complying with the oath-taking would then give to the trafficker:

So many things were running through my mind because I was scared. I was thinking, ‘How will I take this oath now?’ forcing me to take the oath I did not want to take, that she wanted to harm me, she wanted to kill me. She wanted to destroy my life. They were the things that were coming to my mind. (P10)

3.3.2 *The ceremony*

The subtheme *The ceremony* captures the different aspects of the ceremony which serve to increase and reinforce participants' fear and belief in the power and lasting nature of the ritualised oath.

Many participants described the ceremony happening suddenly, without warning, and being taken to an unknown place without any information. This increased their anxiety and they described how their minds ran through a number of frightening outcomes including death:

So, you just travel through this journey, somebody driving you, you don't know where they are taking you, you just know you are travelling in between the bush. You can hardly see a car coming or anything. And then, all of a sudden, they are now parked in front of a small hut. Then, at that moment, that fear steps in, like, 'Oh my God, are we here to be killed or what is going on? Why are we here?' (P2)

Many participants spoke of the location of the ceremony and described how just seeing the place was terrifying both in sensory terms, but also the sense of isolation they felt whilst there. The feeling of being alone reinforced their fear in the oath; those in control of the ceremony had this overwhelming and unlimited power over them in that moment:

Yeah. It is the kind of place that, where you go, you see a lot of things that you see in the movies. They have that kind of place and I am seeing them in real life. Like you see that it is true, it is happening. You see other people sitting down, the people who walk there, with their dress, what they look like. So, you feel you are

alone. They can kill you there and nobody will care for you. It is a forest, a forest with a big river that has a lot of trees. It is a forest. So, whatever they do to you there, nobody can find you. They can throw you inside the water and crocodiles can eat you. Nobody will look for you. (P1)

As well as the location, there were other visual elements to the ceremony which increased participants' fear. A common theme across participants was a difficulty in describing the visual details of the ceremony:

Yes, because I thought maybe they were going to use me for sacrifice because the shrine looked very scary. There were so many things and it looked very scary. (P7)

In contrast, there were some participants who either did not go through a ceremony or who participated in a ceremony when they had already arrived in the UK. For these participants, the location and visual elements to the ceremony were very different. Any ceremony that did happen took place in the location (usually a house) in which they were being held captive:

So, he asked me to place my hand on it, to swear on an oath. That is when I arrived here in the United Kingdom. I never did it when back when I was with him. So, when I came in, in 2006, it was then he did it with me in the house. (P5)

The final aspect to the ceremonies which participants described as increasing the fear they felt towards "Juju", were the rituals themselves. Often rituals involved the participant's own body:

So, I couldn't say anything because of the oath I took, because it was scary – they bathed me with blood, they slaughtered an animal to put inside the water to bath me and they used a sharp object to cut my forehead and my chest – I still have the mark there. (P7)

Terrifying sensory experiences were common for all ceremonies whether within the place of origin or the UK:

It is like an African bow. It was tied with a red cloth. So, she asked me to lick it three times. Then she changed her voice. She didn't change her voice, it was a commanding voice. Her voice would change. It was like she was in another world, another spirit. (P4)

It was giving me a slap all over me, like slapping my body, to make you feel like dancing, all that kind of stuff. I was so terrified. (P5)

You know when you are in a place and you feel cold, like you are cold, a kind of different environment. And you are looking into the water and you see fish running. So many people are coming here and are putting like bread in. Nobody kills fish in that water. If you kill a fish, the person will die. (P1)

Finally, some participants described feelings of disgust in response to these rituals and how this increased their fear:

Because she used a red cloth and a white cloth. She spread the cloth onto the floor... But she put the red cloth on the floor and then she placed an item on it, a very disgusting item. It was scary. (P10)

3.3.3 Threats and debt bondage

The next sub-theme, *Threats and debt bondage*, speaks to participants' experiences of these control methods used by traffickers to drive their fear in the "Juju" oath and continuously reinforce this fear whilst participants were exploited following being trafficked to the UK.

Many participants described very specific threats made by the traffickers both before and during the ceremony. Threats of violence and death were used to scare them into participating in the ceremony and as reminders reinforcing their fear during the ceremony:

So, he decided to use that to intimidate me and to put fear into me, saying to me that I might go crazy, go mad or even die or my mum might even die in the process if I didn't agree to do it. It is an agreement between us. He forced me to do it in the sense that, if I didn't do it, I might go mad or I might die in the process if I related it to anybody, if I had to tell or if I had to discuss anything that we had done there. During the ceremony he told me not to tell anybody, not to tell even the clients or whoever, that I shouldn't disclose anything to anyone. I didn't want to go mad and I didn't want to die, so the Juju might harm me if I disclosed it to anyone. (P5)

For some participants similar threats were made after the ceremony with the trafficker giving them constant reminders of the consequences of not following their orders:

I was constantly reminded it cost something: 'You can't do this unless you want to die. You can't do this because, if you do, we will find you.' It just went on and on and on for years and I couldn't talk to anybody. (P6)

Several participants reported being deceived prior to the ceremony about the nature of the 'work' they would be expected to do. Following the ceremony there was the perception that it was too late as they had already taken the "Juju" oath:

After I had taken the oath, he said, if I ran, I would die. So, I was scared and I said to myself, 'I wish I knew.' I said, 'I will not run,' but he said, 'If you run, if you treat us as bad, you will die. (P7)

Participants described a complex interplay between their fear of "Juju" and the threats and physical abuse used by the trafficker. Many felt that the trafficker has control over them through the power within the oath, and it is the control of this power which is most terrifying. As one participant described, the source of fear is the spiritual side of "Juju" and the emphasis that traffickers gave that the spirit would be the one who pursued them in the event that they broke their promise:

It is a threat, a verbal threat and the circumstances and the they use on it, the threat of anyone – I don't need to drive, I don't need to pursue, but something will pursue you. The threat of death. The threat of where someone lives, they should forget about life. That is the threat. They are not even ready to pursue us physically. Everything is done in the spirit only physical. The beating, yes, verbal assault, abuse and everything physically, but the ritual side of it was great [more powerful]. I cannot

see it, I cannot control it. They are the ones controlling it, so whatever they say goes.
(P9)

Finally, debt bondage was described as a common and powerful tool used to reinforce the fear of the oath through specific demands and a tangible outcome. It was often put quite simply to participants that if they paid the money owed, they would be released from the conditions of the oath:

So, she said, if I paid her, nothing would happen to me, but, if I refused to pay her, that was when the Juju would affect me. (P10)

3.3.4 Limitless, never ending power

The final sub-theme captures what participants described as one of the most terrifying aspects of “Juju” and a significant driver for fear throughout recruitment and later exploitation: the limitless, never ending power “Juju” has.

It is something that has been a part of me for a long time and I was trying to push it off, trying to move on, but it is there. (P4)

As a consequence, the oath was experienced as never ending, and the participants described an ongoing impact of the oath over a period of many years:

It just went on and on and on for years and I couldn't talk to anybody. I couldn't find help, even though I wanted to, I was scared of my life as well. I didn't want to die. (P6)

Many participants spoke of uncertainty this created, and never truly knowing whether they were 'free' from the oath out of a fear for not wanting to test its power:

You wouldn't want to put yourself in a position to try to see if it is real or not, because you might end up dying. (P6)

For many participants, the practices involved in the ceremony itself led to reminders in the future which maintained the fear they experienced. This may be physical reminders:

That very day I didn't feel relieved. I was still scared, because every time I opened my clothes I saw the mark on me and it made me feel bad and very scared. (P7)

Finally, a significant driver reinforcing the fear in the oath over time, are the PTSD symptoms that many participants described experiencing that relate to the events of the oath-taking ceremony or the person's other traumatic experiences during the period of time that they were trafficked. The frequent nightmares and flashbacks remind participants that the oath's power continues to have an influence on their life:

So, when I watch TV or hear about it, then that flashback comes, 'Oh yes, this thing is true. It did happen or it does happen.' It is still happening and it is still existing. It is something that they can't eradicate just like that. It can't be. (P2)

3.4 Loss

The master theme *Loss* speaks to the sense of loss that participants experienced throughout their lives, but specifically during the period in which they were trafficked and/or exploited.

The theme captures how participants' loss was multi-faceted encompassing a wide range of human experience. The loss was so extensive for many that they described feeling as if they were no longer living:

It affects all parts of you. All parts of you are dead. (P5)

As with master themes, *The shifting of power* and *The use of fear of "Juju" within human trafficking*, this theme illustrates a dynamic process. Whilst there was an overall trend of gradual losses throughout the difficult period in which they were trafficked, participants experiences varied and they reported multiple losses at differing points in time. The theme captures the limited points of resistance in which some participants at various points fought to regain some of what had been lost.

This master theme interacts significantly with the master theme, *Fear of "Juju" within human trafficking*, with the losses reported by participants to be a direct consequence of their fear of "Juju".

3.4.1 Becoming "useless"

For 15 years I forgot myself. For 15 years I did not even remember that I needed any United Kingdom papers. I forgot myself completely. In short, I forgot everything. That is how far it can go, because Juju, when they are working spiritually

against someone, that is exactly the symptoms of it: the person will just be useless.
(P9)

This sub-theme captures the loss of control, freedom, liberty and personal agency that participants described experiencing during trafficking and further exploitation. They described being suddenly at the mercy of another and unable to take control over their own life. One participant described it like being in prison:

I couldn't talk to anybody. I couldn't get help. I was just there. It was like I was in prison. I didn't have a life of my own; someone else was actually in control of my life and I just had to do whatever the person said. (P6)

The sub-theme speaks to this idea of participants being 'paralysed' as they described themselves losing their ability to move, speak or simply do anything:

I'm still in the bondage. I'm still under those people, like somebody who is captive: I wasn't able to speak out, I wasn't able to move, I wasn't able to do anything... She would be saying it and then I would repeat after her, because I didn't know what to say. She would say, if I said to anybody or called the police, this thing would affect me. So, I would say that. Whatever she said, I would repeat it. (P10)

When describing the process of losing control, participants spoke of feeling robotic; as if they were controlled by the trafficker through spiritual means. Participants described being dehumanised, and feeling as if they were remote controlled or having lost control of their own mind:

The loss of mind is when someone is spiritually lost in their mind, which means that they don't have their say. I don't have my say, because you said I should direct it to myself – I don't have my say whatsoever. I was like someone remoting me. So, it is like a remote: it is like you changing your TV channels from one station to the other; you have the authority over your TV. So, that is how we are in the traffickers' hands or madam's hands. That is how we are. (P9)

This sub-theme captures the later physical loss of autonomy over their own body following this loss of spiritual control and ability to make choices. One participant described her body being exploited by others with her losing all sense of power to prevent this from happening:

But for me to be beaten and still sitting down, sitting down with different men, having sex with different men, bigger, smaller, different sizes and see me pay the money to the madam, unable to say no, do you think that was physical? No, it wasn't. It was the spiritual remote. (P9)

Another participant described a sense of total loss of reality and the ability to remain present as she frequently entered a dream like state:

Often I felt like I was dreaming and somebody could actually wake me up. (P2)

Finally, the sub-theme captures the attempts of some participants to resist the loss of control. For those participants who reported resistance, these attempts tended to come at the point at which participants realised that they are going to lose autonomy of their bodies when sexually exploited. Their resistance also represented

an attempt to avoiding losing both control of their bodies but also to regain the loss in their ability to voice their choices:

So, after two weeks, I came, 'When am I going to start the job?' and he told me that, 'Oh, there is no job. This is what I am coming here to do [prostitution].'
Then I was crying, 'I won't do it. (P1)

3.4.2 Rationalising nothing left to lose

This sub-theme speaks to the ongoing internal dialogue which participants described when faced with the perception of 'choices' during the period of time that they were trafficked. It captures the constant weighing up of options and the avoidance of the most extensive losses to the participants and/or their family. Commonly across accounts, participants described three key points of time when a perceived 'choice' was available. The first point described was when participants considered what they might lose when asked to take the oath. They described the difficulties they were already facing due to family circumstances and spoke of the desperation they felt to go abroad for a new and better life. For these participants, when asked to take the oath, the most significant potential loss in that moment was the possibility of missing out on the opportunity of a 'new life':

So, now you are now left in between, 'Oh, if I don't take the oath, that means I won't have an opportunity to get a better life.' So, the only option left is now to do the oath, to show them that, 'Yes, I'm not going to run away. These people are helping me. Why would I want to run away or deceive them?' (P2)

The second point of choice for many participants was the realisation they had been deceived about the 'new life' that had been promised, and the discovery that the reality of their situation was to be exploited (often sexually). At this point, loss of life was again perceived to be the greatest threat:

Finally, when I got here, I was going to be doing something different from what I was told before. I was told that I had to start working as a prostitute. I didn't want to, but I had to because I was there I was going to do whatever I was told to do, if not I was going to die. So, I had no other choice. (P6)

The third key point in time for some participants (not all) was when they described feeling too much had already been lost and their circumstances had become so dire, that even death no longer felt like a threat. At this point they described making the decision to escape:

You know when you say you escape but then you escape, you run away. Why I ran away was because the things I was doing, it was too much for me. You're kind of dead already. You meet kind of men, horrible men, smelly and they curse you, they call you names. They kind of sleep with you with different kinds of objects that you have never known before, never. And the day I escaped is the day that they wanted me to drink urine. (P1)

3.4.3 Loss of connection to self and others

This sub-theme speaks to participants' descriptions of the gradual loss in connection they experienced, both to other people through withdrawal from social

relationships, but also to their sense of themselves and what was important to them in life.

It destroys relationships, it destroys child-bearing, it destroys everything in life. It is not an easy thing. (P9)

There was the sense that following the oath, they are alone in the world without any social support:

And, at that point, there is no turning back, because now you are having flashbacks of the oath you have taken and then you don't know where you are. You don't know anybody, you don't have any relatives. So, it is more like just you in the desert standing all alone waiting for help to come, and then you are thinking, 'Oh my God, what have I done?' (P2)

For some participants, the sense of being alone in the world was described as a physical reality following escape from the trafficker. People described coping with learning of the death of or loss of contact with relatives or friends, and ongoing separation from loved ones living in another country. There is a huge sense of grief for the loss of the ability to be able to say goodbye to loved ones due to being trafficked:

So, that is the thing, because I would actually love to visit my mum's grave because, since she passed away, I haven't really gone there. I don't know where she was buried. I have never been there. I have never seen it. So, these are some of the things that sometimes really make me feel emotional and they are things that break me down. (P2)

For many participants, this isolation and loss of connection to others, was reinforced by the erosion of trust they experienced following the realisation that the trafficker had deceived them into taking the oath. Where previously participants might have seen the trafficker as a helper or 'saviour' who would help them find a better life, they described the realisation this person was responsible for forcing them into exploitation and ruining their hopes for their future:

He was a big man, a rich man, that I thought he could give me everything I wanted. So, I was so confident with him – he was very nice, he treated me very nicely. He said he was going to take me all over the world, he was going to take me to places, he was going to give me any job I wanted. He promised everything.... I was so naïve. I just believed him.... I said, 'I was told that I have to do a job in this. I don't understand.' He said, 'Yes, you have to listen to him. Whatever he asks you to do, you have to do it.' I said, 'What are you talking about?' He just changed. (P4)

Consequently the trafficker was viewed by participants as someone who was bad, who could not be believed or trusted:

I was thinking that he was a bad person. He didn't come for the first time like that, but, when he took me there, I knew that something was going to happen, something was wrong. I couldn't believe him anymore. (P1)

Whilst being exploited, participants reported withdrawing into themselves following the loss of trust in others. This sometimes resulted in them feeling unable to form relationships with other people who were trafficked with them:

And one thing about the whole thing is that most of the women prefer to just keep to themselves, not say anything, because already most of them are going through maybe emotional pain, they are going through a lot, they can't trust anyone because probably they feel that the trust is already betrayed by not telling them what exactly they are coming to face. So, now everyone keeps in their shell; nobody is talking to anyone, nobody is saying anything. (P2)

In relation to how participants viewed themselves during this period, the sub-theme captures this sense of loss in how they now view themselves as a person. Participants described losing the ability to see themselves in a positive way:

It was really, really bad for me. It was terrible. It was terrifying. I hated myself at some points, doing what I didn't want to do, but I had to do it. (P6)

Participants described the pain of losing the ability to live in line with their values and moral principles and this was something that they had struggled to accept:

It was a difficult experience, a very sad and difficult experience because all my life I have been a Christian with my family... It made me not tell the truth, so it made me a liar for not telling anybody my situation, my circumstances and I was not happy in those circumstances, but I had nobody to tell, no one. I had no one to discuss it with. I felt bad. I felt so bad about myself because I couldn't accept myself that all he did was to force me to do things I didn't want to do. So, he made me feel so bad. (P5)

Finally, the sub-theme speaks to a sense of a future lost. Participants reflected on the hopes and dreams that they had had for the future and how the life they had envisaged previously had been taken away from them:

I felt very bad and very, very low. It really affected my life. Now look at me, nothing good has come out of me at the age of 30-something and I am going to 40. No good education, no husband, no children. It has really affected my life. (P10)

3.5 Moving on whilst living with the impact of “Juju” and the oath

The final master theme, *Moving on whilst living with the impact of “Juju” and the oath*, speaks to the participants reflections on trying to move on from the circumstances of their exploitation and their attempts to build a new life in the UK whilst living with the impact of “Juju”.

As with the previous master themes, this is a dynamic process and the extent to which participants feel able to move beyond exploitation varies significantly between participants and over time. This theme intersects significantly with the master theme, *Use of fear of “Juju” in human trafficking* as factors which this theme identifies as being supportive in the process of moving on are constantly held in balance with the fear of “Juju” participants still experience. The theme captures this dynamic process, highlighting how at any point in time participants can experience certain triggers which can increase their fear in “Juju”, despite having spent time making sense of their experiences and learning to manage their fear.

This master theme captures the mirroring between this theme and the master theme, *Loss*. Many of the experiences that participants lost having been trafficked

(e.g. hopes and dreams for the future) due to their fears of the impact of breaking the oath, become the things which participants work towards regaining, and which support them in moving on and building a new life.

Finally, this theme also intersects significantly with master theme one, *The shifting of power*, as the extent to which participants are able to utilise the supportive processes which help with moving on, depends also on where they perceive the location of power in that moment. Depending on participants' perspectives, the meaning they make from their experiences of finding safety in the UK can influence the extent to which "Juju" holds power.

3.5.1 Receiving guidance and reassurance

This sub-theme speaks to the guidance and reassurance which participants reported to be important in helping them to move on and feel safe. Some participants described searching for some form of guidance or "*a solution*", and felt that this was what they needed to help support them to regain mental control from "Juju":

Because I knew there were problems, I knew there was something going on that I could not understand and I could not solve on my own, so I started seeking for a solution. I went as far as a palm reading to see if I could be free from everything that I was going through, because it is like a semi-madness. Not even dementia, but it is like someone is out of their minds. So, I was looking for a solution. (P9)

The sub-theme further captures that for many participants it was perceived that moving on was not a process that they achieve alone and that they needed the guidance and reassurance of others throughout. One participant reflected on her

experience of needing their therapist to regularly reassure them following flashbacks and nightmares which triggered an increase in their fear in the power of the oath:

I had a series of nightmares, I couldn't sleep. I was so terrified, I had to run back to the Supportive Circle. Every time I was going to them, so they told me, during my counselling, that he just wanted to put fear into me, not to report him to the police and that I was not going to die, I was not going to go mad, my mother was not going to be harmed. (P5)

For many participants, this reassurance came from their therapist or worker at the Supportive Circle. Their reassurance and guidance enabled them to speak more about their experiences, regaining their loss of voice and agency over their story:

The first time I spoke to somebody about it, I think it was when I came out of the Supportive Circle. I spoke to [my therapist] and he said, no, that I should not be scared, I should not be afraid, that I am free now. That was when I was able to speak out. I was speaking out. Before that I wasn't able to speak out. (P10)

For other participants, it was guidance and reassurance from their Christian faith and through attending church and receiving spiritual guidance that has felt more supportive:

So, that makes me through a bit away from the impact of any cause or any Juju or anything, because my bible has told me what to do and how to do it. So, I follow the instructions of the bible. So, that has given me a clear picture and given me a bit of healing that I am still trying to get... I don't want to do it because in

therapy they can't help it. So, let me stick with my Jesus. My Jesus can help me, therapy cannot help me. (P9)

For one participant, she described how reassurance had come from another individual who shared her experience of ritualised oath-taking and he helped her to escape her situation. She reflected on how his reassurance had helped her to move on:

After a couple of years, it was broken; they need to renew it [he told me]. They have to as much as you are no longer with them. They can't renew it, so it is broken. (P4)

Participants found it helpful for others to reassure them that the trafficker was a 'bad person' and that they were not 'bad' people:

So, she [the therapist] worked with me so much. She taught me and stood by me before the other therapy came in. She was the one who really brought these to my head. So, sometimes I think what she told me, 'You are OK. You are fine. Don't think about those people. They are the bad people. You are not a bad person.' So, kind of making me be OK. (P1)

Participants described finding it helpful to hear from professionals about their experiences of working with survivors with similar experiences of oath-taking were now safe in the UK:

She said that she had dealt with people like me before; that they are free now and that I should not be scared to speak out. That is when I thought, 'OK, I'm free'.

(P10)

Reassurance and guidance support participants by giving them hope and strength to keep moving forward:

He really tried so hard to talk to me, to tell me that, 'Look, you don't have to feel alone. You don't have to feel guilty of anything,' that I was only ignorant about what was going to happen. So, all those things encouraged me and gave me the strength to keep pushing forward. (P2)

I see people around and they are all people, like [my therapist] and the admin women. They are a kind of group, they are good women and they support us. They give you hope. Even if you do something wrong, they say, 'Oh, you're great,' kind of calm me down a little bit. So, I believe that my future is going to be OK. (P1)

Finally, the sub-theme speaks to this process as being dynamic and how the reassurance and guidance they have experienced in the past stays with them as a tool which they utilise at the points in the future when their fear of "Juju" increases:

Then the therapy kicks in that, 'Look, you were only used. They only played with your emotions and your mind, thinking they wanted to help you,' me not knowing that they actually wanted to exploit me, to use me to make money for themselves.

(P2)

3.5.2 Rationalising the oath's impact

Participants try to make sense of their experiences in relation to “Juju.” This subtheme captures the wide range of meanings participants derive from their fear of “Juju” and the oath. Particularly participants discussed their theories of why the “Juju” oath has not resulted in their deaths, contrary to the warnings of their traffickers. Several participants felt that the trafficker cannot have known that they had spoken about their experiences and disclosed the ‘secret’ and this must be why they had not experienced any adverse consequences:

But I was just thinking maybe I wasn't sure of what I was saying directly, if he knows maybe he would have done something to me. But it was not the way that I leaked the secret or something. That's why it's not affecting me. I think you get me .(P3)

Some participants reported that because the oath had been taken or forced under false pretences, or because the traffickers' lies had invalidated the oath, that this provided an explanation for their safety:

So, I now believe that he just did it to make me be afraid. I am not going to die. I am not going to go mad. My mother is not going to be harmed. It was just so I would begin to do that. (P5)

Similarly another participant explained that her particular oath-taking ceremony cannot have been legitimate or valid because she is a ‘good’ person and the trafficker was ‘bad’. She also drew encouragement from the fact she has not suffered the consequences of the oath that she had originally been threatened with:

I now think about juju that what they did, everything was not real to me. What they did to me was not real because I didn't die. But, where I come from, some juju does kill people. Yes, it kills people, damages people's lives, a lot of people. But, I don't know with this one, maybe what [the trafficker] told me was not true, as I didn't die. So, maybe I was lucky with this one, because I was not a bad person. He forced me to do what I was doing. It was not my intention to do it. It was under duress. I was pushed to do it. But some juju, where I come from in Nigeria, kills people. (P7)

The same participant also spoke about no longer believing in the consequences of the oath, due to her strong Christian beliefs (as evidenced in Theme 1).

Other ways in which participants try to make sense of why they are still alive despite the oath they have taken include:

i) the oath having expired:

Yes, because he said that some of the oaths might not be everlasting. Some of them expire in a few years, maybe like 18 years. (P4)

ii) because they have already paid back the money they were told that they owed³⁰:

I worked for three years. So, I think my mind was, 'I have paid. (P1)

³⁰ The oath is often tied up with debt bondage in that survivors are asked to commit to pay back the money as part of oath-taking

iii) that they never told the secret (because they were found by the authorities rather than escaping):

Even though I escaped, I didn't say to anybody what I did. (P1)

iv) that they are safe only in the UK, but would receive the retribution of the spirit if they were to return to their place of origin:

But, when they said they were going to take me back, that is when I said, 'Oh my God! I'm going to die. This is going to happen to me. I have to not let them take me back. I have to talk to somebody. (P1)

Although many participants tried to make sense of their experiences and described feeling to some degree safe now, this feeling can shift and their fear in the power and consequences of the oath can increase. It is recognised that *Moving on whilst living with the impact of "Juju" and the oath* is not a straightforward linear process and particular triggers can influence the strength of belief in the consequences of breaking the oath. Multiple participants attributed periods of physical ill-health to the consequences of breaking the oath:

I always tell myself that it is not real, it is not going to happen, they just did it to me to make me feel scared. Even though I am out of it, because sometimes, when I find myself being sick a bit, I get scared that it is maybe the impact of the juju, that is why I am sick; maybe I am not going to survive and that I might just die. (P6)

Other participants questioned whether being involved with oath-taking had impacted on their general misfortune, making it harder for them to move on with their

lives and have the life that they had wished for. One participant described her inability to have a long-term relationship or have children:

I will be thinking, 'Maybe is this Juju that is causing me to have a disappointment?' I am always falling for the wrong men. So, I will be thinking, 'I'm not that bad. Why are men treating me bad if I'm trying to be good? Or maybe because I am not working to support the relationship?' I don't know. That one is having an impact on me because I always think about it. I would love to have had children, to have had a family of my own, but now I don't know where to start. I don't know what to do, because I am an only child of my parents. So, if I didn't have any children with me, the family is just closed like that. The impact it is having on me, I will be thinking, 'Is it because of this Juju that I am having this kind of life?' (P10)

3.5.3 Reconnecting with the self and others

The final sub-theme speaks to how as part of *Moving on whilst living with the impact of "Juju" and the oath* participants speak about starting to reconnect with the self and others. It should be noted that not all participants shared these reflections and most reflected on how moving on was challenging. However, this sub-theme captures some participants' accounts of the importance of reconnecting with both themselves, their hopes, wishes, dreams and also with other people. Many participants spoke about sharing their experiences with others and how this has supported them with moving on. Other people demonstrating empathy and understanding for their experiences was felt to be an important part of moving on through reconnecting:

Initially, it was difficult me talking about it, but I think, the more I talked about it, the more I became a bit free... But then, as time went on, I said to one or two people and they understood, after that, everything left my mind; it was no longer a burden to me. So, sometimes not speaking out can cause a lot of damage. So, the more you say things out, the more you express how you feel, the lighter you become, the more free you become. So, I think that was what happened in my own case. (P2)

Other participants reflected how simply being around people and having people in their lives to support them enabled them to reconnect and to 'forget' about the oath.

Actually, I feel safe and I feel happy because I know I am safe with the help of people surrounding me. Yes, with the support and my friend and my church, a lot of prayer, a lot of counselling, a lot of advice... people around me, they do surround me, they do talk to me, they always want to be with me to help. So, that is how I forget about the juju. (P3)

One participant spoke about being able to get into a romantic relationship and the positive impact that this was having on her life:

This place I am safe and I am with my partner. When I moved in with him, I was saying a lot of things in my dreams: I was shouting sometimes when I sleep. So, he didn't really know what was happening before I told him. That is when I started telling him what was happening. (P1)

However, for other participants, there was a sense that their trust in men had been shattered.³¹

So, why would I be looking for a man when I know that they are not going to help me without them getting something from me. (P10)

The sub-theme also captures participants starting to think about reconnecting with their wants, wishes and dreams for the future. These might be dreams they have retained from the past which they are now able to pursue:

I wanted to be a chef in my life, I cooked with my mum when I was in Nigeria. So, people are supporting me to do that... So, I look forward to these things. (P1)

For others connecting with the self and others involves starting to reconnect with the past and what was lost. One participant spoke about the death of her mother and how she is now in a position where she might consider visiting her country of origin to see the place where she was buried:

So, I just try to be as positive as I can and believing and hoping that someday I will go and visit her grave, probably just talk to her, because I know she watches as well. (P2)

³¹ This was not specifically attributed to oath taking, rather their experience of sexual exploitation. However, it is important to acknowledge that for many survivors' romantic relationships may never form part of the healing process and forming a sense of safety whilst living with the impact of the oath.

4.0 Discussion

This chapter begins by summarising the key findings of the study with regard to the original aims of the project and research question/s. These results are then discussed in relation to existing literature and psychological theory. Next, clinical implications which arose from the study are outlined alongside subsequent recommendations which have emerged. The chapter then moves on to highlighting the strengths and limitations of the study, suggests ideas for future research before offering some final conclusions.

4.1 Summary of findings

This research set out to provide a platform for survivors' experiences and accounts of oath-taking within human trafficking with the aim of increasing understanding of survivors' relationship to oath-taking over time. The study identified four main themes: *(1) The shifting of power, (2) The use of fear of "Juju" within human trafficking, (3) Loss, and (4) Moving on whilst living with the impact "Juju" and the oath.*

These themes highlighted participants' perceptions of the intersection between 'divine' powers (including the oath as part of a spiritual belief system) and social power structures at different points in time. From their perspective this intersection influences their relationship to oath-taking within human trafficking at different points in time by influencing the power that the oath holds in participants' minds, the dominance it has over their lives and the way this influences the decisions that they make. The relationship with oath-taking, from their perspective, is one

which is dynamic and constantly shifting, contingent on how these external powers are positioned in participants' minds.

The themes highlight how the participants' subjective relationship with the oath is one defined by fear. Their accounts demonstrate how they experience oath-taking within human trafficking as a means through which traffickers exploit their pre-existing beliefs and fears surrounding oath-taking, for example its power to destroy people's lives and its longevity. Various other psychological methods of control such as debt bondage and physical threats used alongside oath-taking, strengthening the feelings of fear that participants reported during (and after) the time that they were trafficked.

The themes highlight how participants' accounts describe a relationship with oath-taking in human trafficking as one characterised by loss. At points they experienced a loss of control, freedom and personal agency, a disconnection from the self and others and, at times, the feeling that their circumstances were so hopeless that there was little left to lose.

Finally, the themes highlight participants' experiences of moving on whilst living with the impact of "Juju" and the oath. This highlights participants' experiences of making sense of their relationship to oath-taking now, the impact oath-taking still has on their lives, the support systems which have influenced their relationship with the oath or have helped them to cope, and how their relationship with oath-taking still impacts on their ability to reconnect to both themselves and others.

The main research question was broken down into three secondary research questions:

- 1) What are survivors' experiences of oath-taking as a coercive method utilised by traffickers within human trafficking?
- 2) What are survivors' accounts of the impact of oath-taking within human trafficking on their lives and over time?
- 3) What are survivors' experiences of what has been helpful following oath-taking as part of being trafficked?

These will now be discussed in relation to theoretical and empirical literature.

4.2 Survivors' experiences of oath-taking as a coercive method utilised by traffickers within human trafficking

Survivors' accounts reflect that oath-taking is perceived as a coercive method which is utilised by traffickers within human trafficking through the exploitation of their pre-existing beliefs and fears around oath-taking. This supports previous research (Dunkerley; 2017; Ikeora, 2016; Millett-Barrett, 2019; van der Watt & Kruger, 2017). Due to high levels of fear, survivors reported that they no longer felt able to resist the demands of the trafficker and were therefore vulnerable to further exploitation and abuse due to their belief in the power of the oath. Survivors identified how their own pre-existing perceptions around the nature or consequences of violating the oath generate fear. This builds on similar findings (Ikeora, 2016; van der Watt & Kruger, 2017).

Fear is then exploited by traffickers as an effective method of psychological control of the individual. Survivors accounts outline how it prevents the trafficked

person from feeling able to resist the trafficker's demands or feeling able to escape, or from seeking help from law enforcement or other authorities, agencies or people who might be in a position to provide assistance. This builds on existing research (Dunkerley; 2017; Ikeora, 2016; van der Watt & Kruger, 2017). The 'dramatic' and sometimes frightening nature of the rituals that individuals are asked to participate in during the oath-taking ceremony can sometimes be inherently traumatic as described in previous research (Baarda, 2016; van der Watt & Kruger, 2017) and were identified by survivors as creating uncertainty and confusion and exacerbating their feelings of fear.

Furthermore, due to survivors' pre-existing perceptions of the longevity of the oath due to the all-powerful, omnipotent and omnipresent spirits, this method of control continued to remain powerful long after the individual had escaped their traffickers, to the extent that several participants described still being unable to speak completely candidly about experiences. Survivors' accounts describe how their pre-existing perceptions were reinforced by other control methods used by traffickers to drive their fear in the oath. These included the use of threats of violence and death as a way of scaring them into participating in the ceremony, deception, reminders of the consequence of breaking the oath and its longevity. Debt bondage was a powerful tool used in combination with the oath to identify specific demands and a tangible outcome were the oath to be broken. These findings support previous literature outlining the use of multiple methods of coercion used by traffickers (e.g. Jeter, 2016; Logan, 2007; UNODC, 2021; van der Watt & Kruger, 2020) and how psychological forms of coercion alone (in the absence of extensive physical control

or violence) are sufficient for the trafficker to exert power over the 'victim' and force them into submission (Baldwin et al., 2015).

Survivors' accounts of the threats and constant reminders of the consequences of breaking used by the trafficker can be understood in the framework of Biderman's theory of coercion³² (Biderman, 1957) which states such methods are a means of cultivating anxiety and despair. This is reflected in survivors' accounts of loss and previous accounts of 'powerlessness' identified in the literature (Baarda, 2016). Additionally, the reminders of the consequences of breaking the oath and its longevity were used for the purpose of "monopolising perception" (Biderman, 1957), with survivors' accounts reflecting how the fear of breaking the oath became their sole predicament and focus during trafficking. This is demonstrated by their accounts of their process of rationalisation as they eliminate the other possible threats when making decisions e.g. consequences of breaking the oath are considered to be worse than potential fears of exploitation.

Furthermore, survivors speak of being unable to share these fears of breaking the oath and internal processes with others, except those trafficked with them who had also experienced oath-taking. This increased their sense of isolation, another important aspect of Biderman's theory, which as well as depriving them of social support, also creates dependency. Finally, survivors describe the sense that if they were to break the oath, it would be known due to the omniscient quality of the spiritual power. The trafficker in turn has the control as they set the initial terms of

³² A theory initially developed to explain how interrogators could manipulate the behaviour of American military prisoners within the Korean War without the use of physical force (see section 1.2.3)

the oath. In this way the trafficker is perceived as all powerful or as Biderman refers to as the demonstration of omnipotence.

Whilst Biderman's theory can be useful for thinking about potential psychological processes which might explain how oath-taking can be an effective coercive method used by traffickers, as a Western theory it individualises survivors' distress and does not fully account for the cultural and spiritual significance of the oath. *As a white, western researcher this is where my 'whiteness' and viewing things through my own lens may mean I am blinkered to other ways of understanding my participants' experiences. This theory cannot fully explain participants' embodied experience of oath-taking within the context of trafficking and should not be used in a reductionistic way which would have the potential for harm. I have tried to centre my participants' experiences in relation to the theory and their beliefs that oath-taking is purposefully used by traffickers for coercive means.*

4.2.1 Power

Survivors' experiences of oath-taking as a coercive method used by human traffickers intersects with their experiences of 'divine' powers (including the oath as part of a spiritual belief system), and social power structures in terms of where participants identify the immediate threat or power at different points in time. This supports previous findings that the spiritual belief system gives power to the oath within the context of human trafficking (Ikeora, 2016; Millett-Barrett, 2019). It is therefore, important that survivors' experiences of oath-taking as a coercive method are understood within the context of wider systemic and environmental influences

such as cultural, religious, political and societal values (Smail, 2005) rather than focusing solely on the trafficker and the survivor's internal world (Preble, 2019).

Survivors' accounts detail their perceived social positioning and the oppression that they experienced prior to being trafficked, including how their lack of power left them vulnerable to exploitation. The trafficker, in contrast, is perceived to hold more power, as are the other social structures around the trafficker, such as the spiritual priests and their networks and the authorities. The power differential between the trafficker and trafficked is perceived by participants to be well understood by the trafficker as reason the individual is unlikely to resist the oath-taking ceremony and agree to it as a means of escaping desperate circumstances or destitution. This is something reflected in previous findings (Preble, 2019) and reflects the larger literature on individual and structural 'vulnerability' or entrapment factors that are common in human trafficking (Farrell et al., 2010; Millett-Barrett, 2019; UNODC, 2021; Zimmerman et al., 2011). The findings also support the existing literature which argues cultural oppression is systemic and intrinsically linked to such vulnerability factors in the context of human trafficking (Bryant-Davis & Tummala-Narra, 2017).

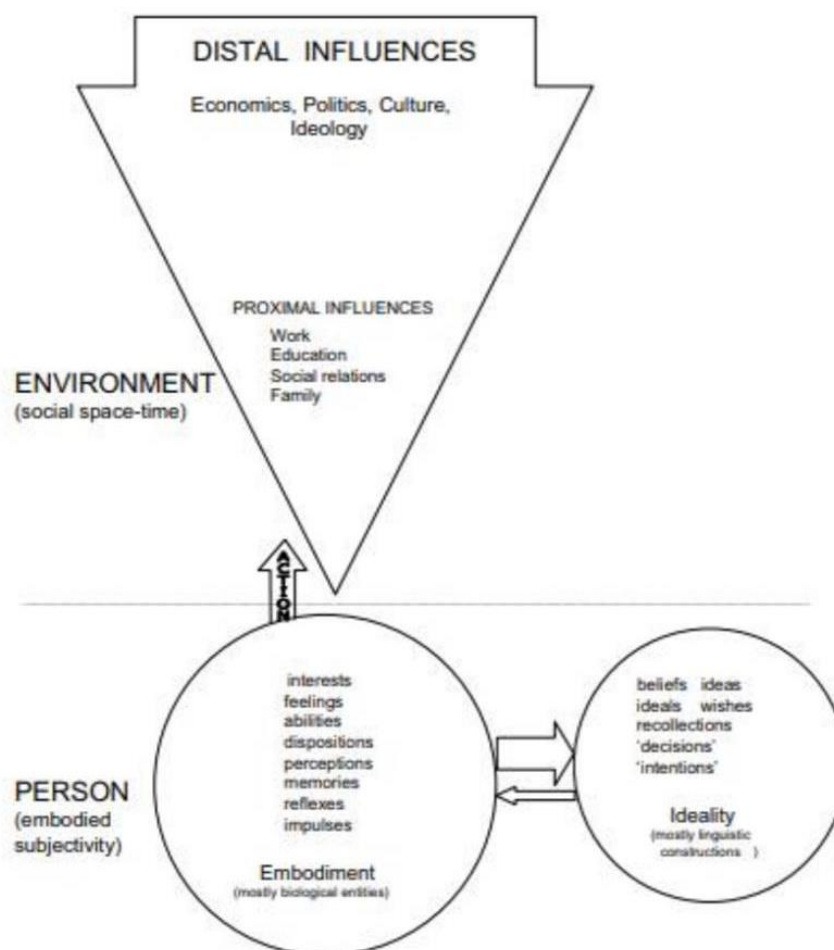


Figure 2 Hagan and Smail (1997) *The Impress of Power*

Hagan and Smail's (1997) impress of power mapping theory (see Figure 1), refers to these wider systemic and environmental influences or external powers as "distal influences". They emphasise the role of these influences in altering an individual's perceptions and subjective embodied experiences and how they can be coercive in nature (Smail, 2005). From this theory one can contextualise further survivors' experiences and perceptions of the location of power at the point of taking the oath as part of being trafficked. The spiritual forces as part of oath-taking and the underlying belief system can be conceptualised as a distal influence alongside

Christianity (or an alternative belief system). The political, cultural and economic factors within their place of origin all served as distal influences at the point of being trafficked. These included i) their perceived positioning or marginalisation in society as a “nobody”, ii) oppression and the destitute circumstances they experienced, and iii) the political structure and suggested corruption of the police in terms of the perception the trafficker would be believed over them (linked to culturally oppression and their marginalised status).

By identifying these distal influences, one can better understand survivors’ experiences of feeling powerless to resist taking the oath (although a few survivors did report some resistance at this stage but were subsequently forced to participate in the ceremony through physical forms of coercion). One can also better understand survivors’ accounts of their subsequent powerlessness to resist following oath-taking due to the spiritual belief system holding most power and influence at this point in time, subsequently giving power to the trafficker through the oath.

4.3 Survivors’ accounts of the impact of oath-taking within human trafficking on their lives

Survivors report that oath-taking within human trafficking has had a substantial impact on their lives. Their experiences of being exploited are characterised by a loss of control and personal agency, loss of connection to themselves, their values and wants and wishes, loss of connection to others and of always feeling like they needed to make the ‘least worst’ choice when decisions or ‘choices’ were presented to them. This reflects Dunmore et al.’s (1999, 2001) model of mental defeat: a state of loss of autonomy, dignity and free will with survivors often

reporting associated feelings of not being human anymore. Whilst these experiences reported in the wider body of research looking at the use of control and power in human trafficking (Hopper and Hidalgo, 2006), uniquely in this study survivors descriptions of their experiences of loss are specifically tied to the oath and the power that it holds at that point in time. This generates fear and subsequent paralysis and loss of control, which is then exploited by the trafficker.

The debilitating effects on individuals of a lack of control when they are placed in a situation which is unchangeable and there is no escape, has been captured by Seligman's theory of learned helplessness (Miller & Seligman, 1975). This then leads to subsequent withdrawal, depression, agitation and passiveness. Survivors describe limited resistance, as this is perceived to be hopeless due to the fear of the oath. This is in contrast to previous research with survivors of human trafficking who have not experienced oath-taking, when a trafficked person attempts to try to change their circumstances through directly opposing the trafficking at numerous points before this is perceived to be futile (Tudorache, 2004). Survivors in this study describe how almost immediately they develop a feeling of powerlessness and inability to change their circumstances due to the omnipotent and omnipresent spirits which consequently keep them trapped under the influence of the trafficker. The only exception is the point at which some survivors report to have escaped in which their accounts reflect the state of mental defeat (Dunmore et al., 1999, 2001) as they describe no longer feeling alive so 'real' death is seen as the only escape.

Following this period, they describe their experiences of moving on whilst living with the impact of the oath, when they are no longer under the control of the trafficker. They report significant challenges, despite many having received

substantial support from various agencies. Many survivors described the psychological impact, including re-experiencing symptoms (such as flashbacks) of the oath-taking ceremony. For some there was a sense that the hopes and dreams they used to have for themselves are now forever lost, whilst others felt more positively about building a new future. These findings build on previous research findings on the significant, wide ranging and long-lasting impact oath-taking has on survivors (e.g. Lo Iacono, 2015; Millett-Barrett, 2019). Whilst previous research from the wider literature on human trafficking, has identified how distress for survivors of human trafficking can manifest in multiple ways (Hopper et al., 2018; Katona et al., 2015; Ottisova et al., 2016; Zimmerman et al., 2011), this study provides greater insight into psychological impact specifically for survivors who have experienced oath-taking as part of being trafficked.

Specifically, survivors described avoiding social relationships and struggling to form connections with others, including romantic relationships or wanting to have children, reflecting previous findings identifying the risk of social isolation and marginalised (Lo Iacono, 2015). Whilst this is widely recognised as a difficulty for individuals who have been trafficked (even where oath-taking is not a feature of their experiences, Hopper et al., 2018), survivors in this study link these difficulties to the fear of the oath which leaves them feeling stuck in the past and living under the perceived constant threat of death, illness or harm coming to those whom they love (the consequences of breaking the oath). In addition, many described that their lives have been beset by general misfortune and illness, all of which is attributed from their perspective to be a consequence of violating the conditions of the oath, as found in previous research (Millett-Barrett, 2019).

The ongoing impact of oath-taking appeared to be tied closely to the perception that the individual had about the power that the oath still has on their lives in relation to other significant powers, both social powers and the power of a God from another religious belief system (e.g. Christianity or Islam). Whilst previous studies have highlighted the importance of Christianity in helping survivors overcome the power of the oath following being trafficked and/or exploited (Dunkerley, 2017; Millett-Barrett, 2017; ten Kate et al., 2020; van der Watt & Kruger, 2017), this study uniquely provides insight into how these beliefs systems co-exist and interact in terms of the power they hold in the minds of participants.

This impact is cyclical with the meaning that survivors make from the impact of oath-taking subsequently influencing the power that the oath still holds for them in their lives. One can understand this when we think about how distal influences (e.g. oath-taking as part of a spiritual belief system) interact with an individual's embodied experience (meaning making) as part of how power operates on the individual (Hagan and Smail, 1997). Furthermore, survivors accounts highlight how the impact of oath-taking is tied closely to the shifting of power between 'divine powers' and social power structure e.g. wider distal influences (Hagan and Smail, 1997). Findings indicate that changes in the relationship between these distal influences and where the survivor perceives the most power to be held has the most influence on changing the survivor's relationship with the oath. For example, when Christianity or a supportive agency (the charity) is perceived as the greater power, their relationship to the oath, in terms of the perceived power it holds, weakens.

Finally, it is important to note in relation to understanding survivors' distress following oath-taking, Seligman and Dunmore's theories are Western theories (as

with Biderman's) which serve to individualise distress and therefore may not be the most relevant theories to draw upon for contextualising the distress within this population. They are discussed to provide the reader with a reference to the gravity of distress experienced by participants and to link to existing literature within the field of trauma and human trafficking. Both theories do not take into account the cultural and spiritual significance of the oath to participants. They assume that distress can be reduced to predominantly cognitive processes. In contrast some participants spoke about *distress* or how their *psychological misfortune* was understood to be the work of 'spirits.'

I was mindful to centre these perspectives and not question them throughout the research despite holding different cultural and spiritual views myself. I did not want their testimony to be 'white-washed' and at no point do I want to question the validity of participants' beliefs through reducing their experiences down to Western theory. The theory therefore should only ever be viewed as one possible way of understanding the gravity of their distress rather than applying Western perspectives on causality.

4.4 Survivors' experiences of what has been helpful following experiencing oath-taking as part of being trafficked

Survivors identified positive experiences of receiving support following oath-taking as part of being trafficked. Specifically, they recounted helpful experiences of receiving guidance and reassurance from professionals or spiritual leaders that they were now safe and helping participants reflect on information around oath-taking being exploited by traffickers as a means to install fear and how this related to their

unique circumstances. These findings contrast slightly with some previous research; with studies suggesting survivors experienced numerous barriers to accessing psychological support (Dunkerley, 2017; Millett-Barrett, 2019; ten Kate et al., 2020), which was often connected to the lack of cultural understanding from professionals (Ikeora, 2016; Millett-Barrett, 2019; ten Kate et al., 2020).

Survivors describe the benefits in hearing about others who had experienced oath-taking. This speaks to the idea of social solidarity which Smail argues is a positive power or distal influence (Smail, 2005). Additionally, it was identified by survivors that they received benefit from the holistic support offered by multiple professionals, and that such guidance and useful conversations was not limited to therapy. The holistic approach taken by the charity, mirror previous recommendations and guidance (Hopper, 2017; Witkin & Robjant, 2018; Human Trafficking Foundation, 2018). However, this approach is perhaps unique and not necessarily replicated in other legal or healthcare settings in the UK such as NHS services, where professionals might lack experience or confidence in addressing these complex issues with survivors.

Survivors reported to have some beneficial effects of therapy (particularly in terms of helping the individual to feel validated, supported and to build a trusting relationship with another person). This mirrors the small research base demonstrating efficacy of trauma-informed therapeutic interventions in treating survivors of human trafficking (Robjant et al., 2017). However, there was variability in terms of whether survivors felt that therapy had had any influence in changing their relationship with the oath specifically, supporting previous findings (Millett-Barrett, 2017; ten Kate et al., 2020). This may not be surprising given there is no specific

intervention for working with survivors of oath-taking and more exploration is needed in this area with findings suggesting that there is promise for existing trauma-focused interventions.

Whilst trauma-focused therapy may be helpful, survivors felt strongly that re-connecting with an alternative spiritual belief system, such as Christianity or Islam, was particularly helpful. For many, being engaged in an alternative religious belief system, and the belief in the power of another God, and subsequent guidance and reassurance from spiritual leaders was also perceived to have been important in the participants re-evaluating the ongoing power of the oath in their lives. As documented above, this supports previous studies (Dunkerley, 2017; Millett-Barrett, 2017; ten Kate et al., 2020; van der Watt and Kruger, 2017) and fits with the theory of how power operates (Hagan & Smail, 1997).

4.5 Clinical Implications and Recommendations

The findings from this study are useful for all professionals who encounter survivors who have experienced oath-taking as part of being trafficked. This covers a range of professionals, from those working within a supportive capacity, either within the charity sector, housing, social care and NHS, to therapists helping to alleviate psychological distress. Findings are also relevant to professionals working within criminal justice, immigration services and the Home Office and they inform us on potential changes which need to be made to support survivors.

4.5.1 For professionals and agencies working within a supportive capacity with survivors

The findings from the study highlight the important role that professionals working within supportive organisations have in supporting survivors with moving on with their lives whilst living with “Juju” and the oath. The research suggests that support should be holistic and, in line with Hopper (2017), should be offered at the individual, interpersonal, community and societal levels.

Individual. The research suggests that survivors are searching for solutions, reassurance and guidance particularly during the period immediately after they leave the control of the trafficker. In considering survivors’ needs in those early contacts with supportive agencies, a key finding was reassurance of their safety. This can be done by providing empathy, understanding and validation around the fear that survivors experience. Specifically, drawing on evidence of working with other people who have experienced oath-taking who are now safe and starting to rebuild their lives was reported to be helpful for survivors. This may include sign posting survivors to any existing published stories.

It is important that professionals do not attempt to reassure survivors by questioning the validity of oath-taking as part of wider spiritual belief system, in line with previous findings (e.g. Ikeora, 2016). Neither should professionals question a survivor’s belief in the power of oath-taking and spiritual belief system more generally as this risks being unhelpful and could contribute to further cultural oppression potentially exacerbating existing psychological trauma (De la Cruz & Gomez, 2011). Rather, survivors might find it helpful for professionals, given the

potentially negative view they might hold towards themselves, to condemn the traffickers *use* of oath-taking as exploitative within this context. Some explanation as to how traffickers specifically use oath-taking to generate fear and prevent survivors from escaping, could also be helpful as it moves responsibility away from the survivor and towards the perpetrator. This fits with a social justice approach to support, in which acts of human cruelty and oppression are named by professionals.

Furthermore, findings suggest the importance of organisations and professionals demonstrating that they can provide consistent, reliable and dependable support, counteracting the isolation that survivors experienced due to the oath. Findings further suggest that support may need to be given over a significant period as it can take time for survivors to build trust, following this being eroded by the trafficker. For those who have experienced oath-taking, disclosure about such experiences may be particularly difficult; consistency and the opportunity to build up a longer-term trusting relationship with professionals who have experience in this area is therefore particularly important. Given the nature of the power of the oath constantly fluctuating and the finding that participants perception of misfortune as being a consequence of the oath, regular follow-ups should be offered to survivors. Where possible, professionals should enquire tentatively, but directly about whether a trafficking survivor has experienced oath-taking as part of their trafficking experiences; this can help to build trust in the professional's knowledge and standpoint on oath-taking, which may facilitate disclosure about any oath-taking experiences. These recommendations support guidance offered by the TICC (Witkin & Robjant, 2018).

Interpersonal and community levels. At an interpersonal and community level, this research advocates the need for helping survivors in building connections with others and gradually supporting survivors with integrating within the community. This is likely to be a long and gradual process due to the impact and lasting power of the oath which serves to isolate individuals through them being unable to share their fears of breaking the oath and internal processes with others. It might be that the first stage of building connection takes place within a 1:1 supportive relationship (e.g. key worker or therapist), when the professional has the opportunity of giving the survivor a different experience by following the recommendations above and providing an understanding, safe, non-judgemental and calm space. Activity groups (see Hopper et al., 2018 for a summary) may also have the additional benefits of helping survivors to reconnect to their values, interests and ideals.

Professionals may also support clients in finding meaningful peer relationships and support networks, either through existing refugee social and activity groups, and/or the development new groups to connect those who specifically have experienced oath-taking as part of being trafficked. This might help build social solidarity which Smail argues is a positive power or distal influence (Smail, 2005), and could be particularly important in undermining the social isolation described by survivors in this study and the lack of connection they were able to have with other survivors at the time in which they were being trafficked. This reflects the idea of building on cultural strengths (Bryant-Davis & Tummala-Narra, 2017) and the importance of developing positive racial and ethnic identities through social connection.

Crucially at the community level, this research suggests that professionals should connect survivors with faith organisations, where they have an existing religious belief. A loving and affirming divine power may help to lessen distress (Bryant-Davis & Tummala-Narra, 2017). Findings of this study suggest this may be very influential for survivors in helping them to move forwards after oath-taking. This may be through employing a pastor within the organisation or through creating meaningful partnerships with faith organisations within the community. Whilst Christianity was the main faith discussed by participants within this study, other faiths, particularly Islam, are practiced within Western Africa, and therefore professionals should not assume faith beliefs.

In addition to the recommendations above, the debilitating effects of oath-taking in human trafficking on survivors' of lack of control and the need for guidance and support around making decisions, suggest that survivors might need support with all aspects of building their lives, from immigration applications and housing through to work and education. Whether this is understood as a consequence of the impress of power (Hagan & Smail, 1997) or learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975) and mental defeat (Dunmore et al., 1999, 2001), findings suggest survivors' experience a detachment from their ideals, beliefs, decision making capacity and intentionality. Consequently, facilitating survivors' access to proximal influences of power e.g. work, education, social connection (Hagan & Smail, 1997) through connecting survivors with agencies to support them with building all aspects of their lives could be crucial in supporting them in moving forward whilst living with the oath. Reclaiming life through this process, is an important phase for all survivors of trauma (Chessell et al., 2019; Herman, 1992).

Societal, legal and political. The research suggests the importance of the role of oath-taking within human trafficking becoming part of a wider discourse within society and state organisations which hold the most power. Whilst there is some acknowledgement of the role of oath-taking within human trafficking within numerous case study examples within law and the media (e.g. BBC, 2014; Nwaubani, 2018; Tondo & Kelly, 2017) and in national and regional policy addressing human trafficking specifically within the Nigerian context (e.g. EASO, 2015; Home Office, 2016, 2021), findings suggest that more needs to be done to ensure that this knowledge is disseminated to all individuals who might potentially have contact with survivors who have experienced oath-taking e.g. Home Office interviewers and the police. For example, whilst the Home Office are aware of the role of oath-taking and how the underlying belief system is exploited by traffickers for the purpose of control as it is included as an example of psychological coercion within the Modern Slavery: Statutory Guidance for England and Wales (Home Office, 2021). However, the research highlights that survivors often have had experiences where the validity of their experiences of oath-taking is doubted and the credibility of their belief in such ceremonies is questioned. As outlined in this study, this lack of validation has an additional psychological impact on survivors and may contribute to them being more reluctant to discuss or explore their experiences in other contexts. Additional training or other dissemination of research in this area is needed to reduce the additional psychological impact on survivors.

Finally, these findings can be used to support survivors claims for refugee status, demonstrating the psychological impact of the oath during trafficking in terms

of them being afforded legal recognition as survivors of trafficking, and consideration of risks of return. If they were to return to their place of origin they may risk further exploitation given the mental defeat (Dunmore et al., 1999, 2001) and the lack of power survivors experience. The research suggests existing vulnerability factors and marginalisation would remain (e.g. poverty etc.), with fear of oath-taking further increasing their vulnerability with traffickers being able to easily exploit this.

4.5.2 For therapists

Whilst many of the recommendations above apply to those working psychologically with survivors who have experienced oath-taking as part of being trafficked, there are some additional implications of the study specifically relevant to therapists' work alleviating psychological distress.

Research tentatively indicates that existing trauma-focused therapies (e.g. Robjant et al., 2017) can be useful for survivors who have experienced oath-taking as part of being trafficked; however, more research is needed that specifically explores what aspects of these existing interventions might be beneficial for those who have experienced oath-taking ceremonies as part of their trafficking experiences. Whilst it might not bring about any change in their relationship to the oath, trauma-focused therapies were reported to be helpful for alleviating PTSD symptoms, which might be of particular relevance if the oath-taking ceremony itself was experienced as traumatic, or if reminders of the oath-taking serve as triggers for an individual's re-experiencing symptoms.

As outlined above, NET has been demonstrated to be a promising intervention for survivors of trafficking (Robjant et al., 2017), and might be useful

specifically for those who have experienced oath-taking because in this model therapists are encouraged to actively name acts of human cruelty and oppression as part of this intervention. TF-CBT (see O'Callaghan et al., 2013 as an example of culturally adapted TF-CBT) may also be a useful intervention, but there is currently no clear evidence for its usefulness specifically with trafficking survivors. For both interventions, it is important to attend to the cultural acceptability and generalisability of interventions developed and delivered within a Western context. There is a need to consider and reflect on how particular narratives might impact on individuals who might identify or be perceived as oppressed and marginalised which would involve high levels of reflection and self-awareness on behalf of the therapist and a willingness to attend to difficult issues, such as discrimination, racism and oppression (Bryant-Davis & Tummala-Narra, 2017).

Beyond trauma-focused therapy, other types of therapy might also be useful in supporting survivors to contextualise their distress and reconnect with their personal values, wants and wishes which have been eroded following oath-taking as part of being trafficked. Narrative Therapy (Epston & White, 1990) takes this contextualised position; unpicking and challenging dominant discourses and externalising distress. Through these deconstructing and reconstructing conversations participants could start to align themselves with their preferred identify and values and restore a sense of the continuity of self (Denborough, 2005). An alternative therapeutic approach might be Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT, Hayes et al., 1999) which also takes a contextualised approach to an individual's distress, and aims to connect people to their values in the hope of starting to build a life which is more meaningful for them. Both approaches have

been argued to foster hope; something which participants reported to begin to find following their interactions with professionals.

It is important to acknowledge that the approaches above are underpinned by Western understandings of distress. Participants described a disconnection to their countries of origin and traditions and there is the risk of potential idealisation of the West in response to this. Western therapies could risk reinforcing this further. Afrikan Psychology (e.g. Karenga, 2010) argues that African people cannot solve their problems using the same concepts which created them (e.g. exploitation with routes in colonisation and white supremacy). As a healing practice it honours African traditions, group unity through ideology and African spiritual practices and could contribute to further understanding of oath-taking and its impact going forward. Findings from this study demonstrate the importance of reconnecting with both the self and others following oath-taking and therefore Afrikan Psychology practices centring community healing could be helpful for survivors. The complexities around ceremonial practices, however, should be acknowledged as there could be risk of re-traumatisation specifically for this population.

4.6 Strengths and limitations of the project

4.6.1 Strengths

Although only a partial representation of participants' experiences of oath-taking within human trafficking (being influenced both by my own context and the context of the participants themselves), this project has attempted to amplify the voices of survivors and highlight the complexity of their relationship to oath-taking as

part their trafficking experiences. Through inductive thematic analysis, themes were able to emerge from bottom-up thus minimising preconceptions to some extent. The study design also included service user consultation which influenced the design, recruitment and analysis to make sure the study was relevant, robust and reflected their experiences as much as possible. The methodology allowed for a reflexive stance, increasing transparency using a reflective diary. Unlike the studies included in the systematic review, this study scored well on a quality assessment, as assessed by Tracy's (2010) Eight "BigTent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research. As the first study of this nature with previous studies lacking in transparency and using deductive methodologies, it fills a gap within the literature placing survivors' lived experiences at the centre.

Given the highly sensitive nature of the topic and, as the results demonstrated, the significant difficulties that survivors face in been able to speak about their experiences of oath-taking as part of being trafficked, the sample size, although on the smaller side for a thematic analysis, is a significant strength. It demonstrates not only the strong supportive relationships that the organisation used for recruitment has with survivors, but also the sensitive way the study was conducted. The study allowed time for the researcher to build trust with survivors, gave participants the option of being interviewed by their clinician and included follow up wellbeing calls with clinicians.

Additionally, the rationale for the study was perceived to be strong from the point of view of participants and this was something that was cited as their main reason for taking part: the opportunity to increase knowledge in this area and challenge the existing westernised discourse on oath-taking. In line with this, the

findings from the study providing novel insights into survivors' relationship to oath-taking as part of being trafficked and the impact it has had on their lives. Much of these insights had only been speculated previously with findings leading to numerous significant clinical recommendations for supporting this population going forward.

4.6.2 Limitations

This study was able to engage several individuals in conversations about a highly sensitive topic. The study could be improved by a larger and more diverse sample. Interviews with participants also varied in length from 30mins to 70mins, with some being relatively short due to participants becoming distressed at points in the interview. Furthermore, due to the intense shame and distress felt by one participant, she preferred to provide a written account, which provided less rich responses compared to the interviews. However, this should be considered as a potentially alternative way of individuals' participating in future studies, if it feels more acceptable and would mean that more individuals felt able to participate in research in this area.

The main limitation of the study, however, is related to the recruitment of participants. All participants were recruited through one organisation. Whilst this helped with recruitment due to the trust survivors placed within this organisation, it does mean that the results around survivors' experiences of support following oath-taking come only from a small pool of potential survivors, all of which have received robust and highly specialist support. This sample is therefore biased and reflects the workings and support on offer at this organisation. It might be that survivors who

have not had contact with this organisation could hold different perspectives and may describe a different relationship to oath-taking, particularly over the longer-term. Further research should seek to explore ways in which participants could be recruited and sensitively engaged through a wider range of contexts.

Furthermore, all participants recruited to the study were women. There were men identified by the organisation as having experienced oath-taking as part of being trafficked, however, none of these men were recruited into the study, reducing the heterogeneity of the sample and subsequent generalisability of findings. Similarly, no participants were recruited who did not speak English, even though this was not an exclusion criteria. Another limitation was the recruitment strategy put in place to mitigate potential client distress, whereby clinicians essentially served as gatekeepers to select those approached to participate in the study. Whilst this was done for sound ethical reasons and with survivors' safety in mind, it does not control for clinician bias in who is 'deemed' suitable for the study.

Additionally, all survivors recruited into the study, had already disclosed their experiences of oath-taking within human trafficking and were therefore identified by the organisation as potential participants. The majority had also received trauma-focused therapy which may have influenced their ability to reflect on their experiences. This also limits the generalisability of findings, in that survivors who had not previously disclosed their experiences of oath-taking may hold different perspectives around their relationship to the oath.

4.7 Recommendations for future research

This project has generated numerous ideas for future research projects to help support survivors who have experienced oath-taking as part of being trafficked. The first idea would be to explore the cultural acceptability and generalisability of existing trauma-focused therapeutic interventions for this population. Survivors described trauma-focused therapies as helpful for alleviating PTSD symptoms, however further research is required to establish which interventions specifically (e.g. NET, TF-CBT, EMDR) might be most helpful for this population and explore which adaptations (if any) may need to be made to address survivors relationship to oath-taking specifically. For example, given survivors' experiences of the importance of an alternative power based on a different belief system (e.g. the Christian God), it may be helpful to explore how existing interventions can be adapted to incorporate this belief system perhaps through existing techniques such as the use of imagery and re-scripting (TF-CBT) or "here and now" updates and contextualisation (NET).

Linked to this, research is also needed to understand the cumulative effects of oath-taking and the multiple additional traumas experienced by this population and the impact that these then have on survivors at various points during their lives. This further research would then impact on how these varying traumas are addressed within therapy. As there is little research available on survivors of human trafficking more broadly, we do not know the extent to which this population need further adaptations to intervention compared with the survivors of human trafficking who have not experienced oath-taking as part of being trafficked.

Survivors reported struggling with reconnecting to their embodied self (their hopes, wants, wishes, dreams, decisions) as well as reconnecting with others.

Further research is also needed to explore if other psychology therapies could be of benefit in helping survivors with this process (e.g. Narrative Therapy, ACT).

Additionally, whether other more holistic interventions, such as peer support groups, activity and social groups, faith support groups and work and education interventions, show any reduction in these areas of difficulty. Similarly the potential benefits of Afrikan Psychology practices could be explored.

Finally, this study explored the experiences of women who had experienced oath-taking as part of being trafficked. Most of these women were trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. It would be instructive to research the experiences of men who had experienced trafficking. This may provide additional insights into the complex psychological processes (both on an individual level but also part of the religious and cultural belief system) which underpin survivors relationship to the oath and the power it holds. Men are also positioned differently in society so when considering the role of power and the distal influences on the individual, it would offer greater insight to explore any differences between these groups which might then impact of their relationship with oath-taking within the context of being trafficked.

4.8 Concluding comments

This study has made a significant contribution to the limited research on oath-taking within human trafficking. It is the first comprehensive and methodologically rigorous study to provide a platform for survivors' experiences and accounts of oath-taking within trafficking. The study reports findings from ten West African women who have accessed and engaged with support following being trafficked. Whilst this limits the generalisability of findings, they are consistent with the limited research in

this area and the study provides novel insights into the relationship that survivors have with the oath. The themes identified highlight the significant harm survivors have endured due to oath-taking as part of being trafficked and the devastating impact it has had on their lives. It provides important clinical implications and recommendations for supporting survivors and these findings are important for all professionals who encounter survivors who have experienced oath-taking as part of being trafficked. The hope is that this study contributes in increasing professionals' understanding of this issue so that better support for survivors can be provided, which could prevent further distress, harm and exploitation in the future.

5.0 References

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6.0 Appendices

6.1 Appendix 1: Reflective diary excerpts

Reflections on Data Collection

Following the outbreak of COVID-19, I realised that I would need to change my data collection procedures. I would now have to do the interviews virtually rather than in person. For my ethics procedures, I had to then think about how I could manage risk. I felt anxious about this as I was worried that managing participant distress could be more difficult virtually than when the person is in the room with you. I was aware that this reflected wider anxieties at the time around moving to work virtually with similar worries coming up on placement. I wondered whether this method of data collection would yield the same richness in data as it might face to face. I also had concerns about whether or not participants would have the means to do the interviews digitally given the precarious living and monetary circumstances many of them might be in.

I brought these worries to a supervision meeting with both my supervisors. We thought about how this could affect the research data collection more broadly. They encouraged me to think about the possible benefits for participants. For example, I realised that for some participants virtual interviews may provide more distance for participants allowing them to talk about a topic in which they may fear judgment, marginalisation, and blame. I also thought about my role as a researcher, not a clinician, and wondered whether some of these fears came more from a clinical perspective, rather than the perspective of a researcher where the same level of

human connection isn't necessarily required. Finally, I was reassured that the charity was helping people with digital exclusion and would be moving to do sessions online too. Therefore, by the time I would be ready to interview participants to digital exclusion should have been addressed.

Following my first interview, I was surprised by how well it went virtually. There were no technical issues. The participant, who was also my service user consultant, reported that she found the interview more comfortable virtually, in that she could do it from the safety of her bedroom. It had also meant she didn't need to worry about travelling that this was ok to manage. By this time I had begun doing trauma-focused therapy on placement virtually, so I was much more used to looking out for and managing distress and dissociation. I was able to notice her distress and direct her straight to some grounding techniques from the safety of her room.

Further interviews also continued to go well virtually. The format also allowed clinicians to join the interview easily if this was the preference of the participant. I think this was much more convenient for clinicians than it might have been had the interviews took place in person. Again, participants were now used to seeing their clinicians on screen in this format, as most contact the charity was having with their clients was through virtual means.

Reflections on Data collection and the Emotional intensity

I have just finished my final interview today. I wasn't quite prepared for how exhausted I would be following the interview. I feel incredibly sad and angry concerning the story that my first participant told. I was particularly struck by her desperation for people to understand oath-taking, particularly the Home Office.

Whilst I have always known that this research is political and indeed I don't think you can work with refugees and not hold particular views, I am overwhelmed by anger towards the Home Office for how this person was treated. It has left me feeling that I need to do this research justice and tell my participants stories to the best of my ability. Increasing understanding in this area just feels so crucial. Although I struggle to understand how you could hear her story and feel that she was lying.

In contrast, I was struck by her strength. It made me think about White's ideas and how 'problem saturated' my participant's story is. I did find myself as a researcher having to battle to not go into clinician mode as I noticed my desire to want to ask more around exceptions and her strength etc. I wonder if doing trauma-focused therapy on placement at the same time and working with survivors of extreme human cruelty, makes it particularly challenging to ensure I keep my researchers hat on. The drive to say "this should not have happened to you" and to validate etc. was strong. I think on reflection I was able to position myself as a researcher and show validation through curiosity and the desire to understand more. I need to keep this reflexive position in my interviews going forward. I was able to at the end of the interview when she asked me more about the research going forward (plans for dissemination etc.) call out the atrocity that has happened to her and others. I think that this is incredibly important when taking an ethical approach to the research. I made it clear to her that I am learning from her and trying to create a coherent story across all participants' accounts, rather than analysing or questioning their testimony. I want to make sure that I make opportunities for this in all future interviews.

Having just finished my final interview, I feel exhausted. I have commented on the specific emotional intensity of each interview, but to be honest, there was little difference between them and I am left with a range of emotions. I have been struck by participants' willingness to speak about their experiences and the trust that they have placed in me. My hypothesis this is 100% of the amazing work that the charity does and the huge level of trust participants place in them.

Reflections on Analysis

I've just finished coding my first three interviews. Already I am starting to feel quite overwhelmed by the number of codes. I think the hardest challenge has been trying to be interpretive, whilst also holding a critical realistic stance and asking constantly what is my participant lens and what is mine. I've found holding onto their language has been helpful with this process. I am so aware of my different context and keep double-checking that I am not imposing this on the data. I know that however hard I try this can only ever be a partial representation of their accounts, as I can't completely control for this but I do feel a huge amount of pressure to make sure I get their stories 'right.' I don't think I have felt this quite as much with other qualitative research I have done in the past. I am sure that this is partly because this is my doctoral thesis and there is the inevitable drive for perfection. However, I also do think that it is to do with the population, as I have felt a drive throughout this at nearly every stage this need to "do it justice." It feels that it has peaked at this stage, however. It is bringing up for me the critiques around why white-researchers should not do this research. At the same time, I am holding in mind how rich the data is and

how novel and new it is. It feels that their testimony will lead to such important clinical implications and recommendations even at this early stage.

I am at the generating themes stage of the analysis and have decided to take a break. I have been so immersed in the data but recent events in the news around the murder of a woman mean I need to take a step back. I feel so overwhelmed by anger towards men at present that it wouldn't be conducive to continue the analysis, which would be so heavily shaped by this lens and my current context. My current feelings of powerless and feeling trapped due to this context (and the wider pandemic) are being exacerbated by my participants' accounts of this exact process but one million times worse. It is making me think about how the emotional burden of this work so often falls on those from oppressed populations and how unfair this is. However, my identity does intersect with that of my participants in one way, through being a woman. Whilst, I think this is helpful in many ways, I have also learned through this process when I need to take a step back to make sure my stuff doesn't impact the analysis.

Reflections on Clinical Implications

I spoke with my supervisors about the clinical implications of the results in our recent supervision. This was an exciting conversation. I was pleased to hear from my supervisor that there were lots of novel ideas in the results which even given her experience with working with survivors who have experienced oath-taking, she had not considered before. It was important to reflect that some of the ideas around support were inevitably going to represent some of the existing support on offer at

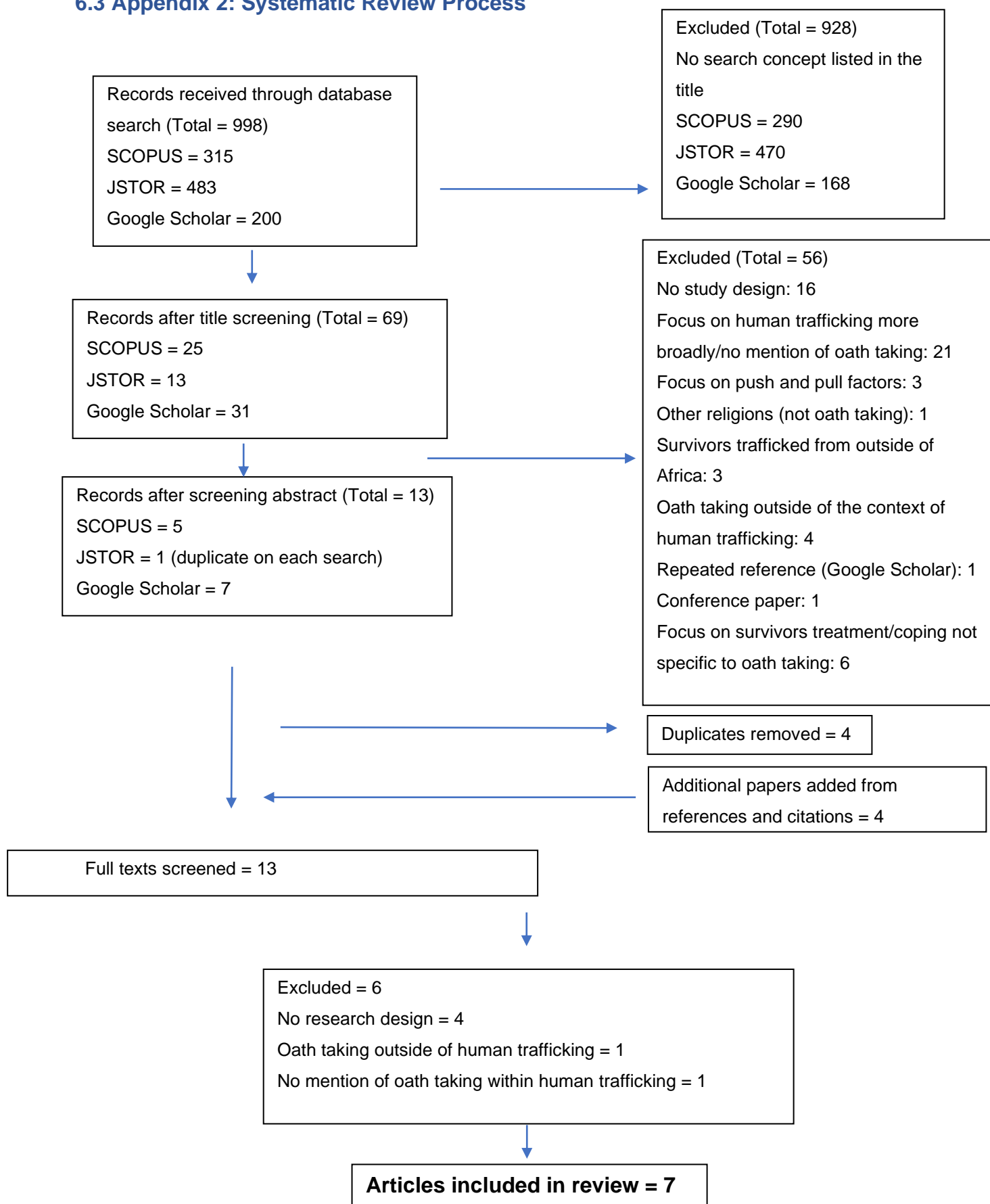
the charity given the population were recruited through the charity. However, there several additional recommendations. I realised when planning following this meeting, that despite my initial excitement there was some sadness as I knew that resources may not allow for several of the ideas recommended. I also noted my slight feeling of hopelessness towards more systemic change involving criminal justice and the Home Office. However, I tried to hold in the mind this is the first step as no study of this nature has been undertaken before. I also decided that it is better to aim big regardless.

6.2 Appendix 2: Strategy for searching databases

Database	Search Criteria (each search concept connected by AND)			Number of papers found at search	Number of papers after titles screen	Number of papers after abstracts screened
SCOPUS	"human trafficking" OR "people trafficking" OR "sex trafficking" OR "trafficking in people" OR "victim* of trafficking" OR "survivor* of trafficking" OR "trafficking victim*" OR "trafficking survivor*" OR "trafficking for sexual exploitation" OR "trafficking for labour exploitation" OR "trafficked people" OR "trafficked women" OR "trafficked men" OR "trafficked person*" OR "domestic servitude" OR "domestic slavery" OR "forced labour" OR "forced labor" OR "forced prostitution" OR "sexual slavery" OR "sex slave" OR "trafficker*"	"oath taking" OR "rituals" OR "J uju" OR "Voodoo" OR "c eremony" OR "spirit*" OR "spiritual oath" OR "spiritual ceremony" OR "oath-taking" OR "ATR" OR "af rican traditional religion" OR "african religion" OR "religious ceremony" OR "religious practice" OR "spirits" OR "supernatural"	"psychological control" OR "psychological coercion" OR "psychologically bound" OR "psychologically constrained" OR "psychological manipulation" OR "manipulation" O R "manipulated" OR "controlled" O R "psychologically controlled" OR "psychological control method*" OR "control method*" OR "method* of control" OR "method* of coercion" OR " psychological method*" OR "psychological practices" OR "psychological dynamics" OR "psychological process*" OR "means of control"	315	25	7
JSTOR	trafficking OR human trafficking	oath taking OR Juju		393 29	4 6	1 1

		Or Voodoo	61	3	1
Google Scholar	Use of oath taking in human trafficking Since 2010 (Searched first 200 references)		200	32	7

6.3 Appendix 2: Systematic Review Process



6.4 Appendix 3: Quality Assessment - Critical Appraisal of the Quality of papers included in the Systematic Literature Review using Nine criteria for assessing the quality of quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods research, adapted from Heyvaert et al. (2013).

<i>XX = Criteria not met x = Criteria partly met ? = Unclear √ = Criteria met √√ = Criteria met to high standard</i>	<i>1) Stating the theoretical framework of the study</i>	<i>2) Stating the research aims and questions</i>	<i>3) Using an appropriate design</i>	<i>4) Applying appropriate sampling and data collection methods</i>	<i>5) Applying appropriate data analysis methods</i>	<i>6) Stating the interpretation, conclusions, inferences, and implications of the study</i>	<i>7) Stating the context of the research</i>	<i>8) Stating the impact of the researchers</i>	<i>9) Being transparent in the reporting of the study</i>
<i>Dunkerley (2018)</i>	x	√	√√	√	x	√	√	√	x
<i>Van Der Watt and Kruger (2017)</i>	√	√	√	√	?	√	√	xx	x
<i>Millett-Barrett (2019)</i>	√	√	√	√√	?	√	√	x	x
<i>Lo Iacono (2015)</i>	√	x	√	?	?	x	x	xx	x
<i>Baarda (2016)</i>	√√	√√	√√	√√	√√	√√	√	x	√
<i>Ten Katea et al. (2020)</i>	x	√	√	√	√	√	√	x	√
<i>Ikeora (2016)</i>	x	x	√	?	?	x	√	x	x

6.5 Appendix 5: Interview schedule

The use of oath taking as a means of psychological control in human trafficking

Reminder for interviewer: Questions to be kept short for interpreters – check they don't put words into the clients mouth – set up with the interpreter first (if you think we have misunderstood each other, please do point it out but otherwise it needs to be the words that they come up with)

Interviewer blurb: What we are going to talk about today is something that happened as a part of being trafficked. We are thinking about the spiritual ceremony involving the trafficking where you had to make a promise or an oath.

1) What would you call that experience?

Interviewer: We are aware that Juju may be a normal experience for people. It may form an important part of their culture and day to day lives. This research, however, is looking just at people's experiences of Juju as part of being trafficked by the person or people who brought you to the UK. What do you want them to be called in the Interview?

We want to understand the impact of this on you, if any. We don't need to know the detail of exactly what happened unless you think it's important to tell me that in order for me to understand how it has impacted you. So you do not need to tell me any of those details unless you want to. We will start by thinking about the impact the ceremony had on you at the time and then we will move to thinking more about how it affects you now.

2) Did you voluntarily take part in this ceremony?

- Did anyone force you to take part?
- How did you come to that decision? What were the things you considered?
- What were you expecting? What led up to you agreeing?
- Did it seem like a good idea at the time?

3) What did this ceremony mean to you at the time?

- What effect did the ceremony have on you at the time?
- How did it make you feel?
- What were you thinking at the time of the ceremony? What about afterwards? Did anything feel different to you?
- What was it about how the ceremony happened that made it clear to you that what you were promising was important/serious?
- What were you told to promise during the ceremony?
- Was your trafficker involved themselves in the oath taking ceremony?
- How did you feel about your trafficker after the ceremony (state that you understand that you know that they might not have known then that the person intended to traffic them at that time)?

4) What would happen if you didn't agree to/go along with the plans for the ceremony?

- What did you think/were you told would happen if you refused to take the oath?
- How did this affect your decision about taking part in the oath-taking ceremony?

5) Just a reminder that you don't need to tell me anything specific about the ceremony, but were you told about any particular bad things that might happen if you did not sticking to the oath at the time of the ceremony?

- What about after the ceremony, did anyone else tell you about what might happen if you broke the oath the oath?
- Who told you about those consequences?
- Did you believe them?
- If yes, what made you believe them?
- When you heard about these potential consequences, how did it make you feel? What impact did it have on you?
- Were there any other bad things that could happen? Anything else?

5) Later on, (when you were trafficked) what was the impact of the oath?

- Did it stop you doing anything you wanted to do, or did it make you feel like you had to do things you didn't want to do (give a reminder that they don't need to say what they had to do – they just need to tell you how the oath made them feel about what the traffickers told them to do)?
- Did it affect how you felt about yourself, or the situation you were in?
- Did you ever think about breaking the oath?
- What did you think at the time would happen to you if you had broken the oath?
- Was it possible to break the oath even if you wanted to?
- Did you ever take action to break the oath? If yes, how/what did you do and why? If no, why didn't you break it?
- Did you ever question or doubt the power of the oath or the promises you had made?

6) You have just told me ... where are you now in how you feel about the impact this ceremony has had on you?

- (if there are any changes explore these in a bit more detail):
 - what does the oath make them think/feel about their trafficking situation or their current situation).
 - Were there ups and downs along the way in terms of changes in how much the oath has influenced them or felt more/less powerful
- What do you think has influenced or changed this?
- If no evident changes – do you feel that anything about your life, circumstances, or the people you have met since you escaped your trafficker has influenced how you feel about the oath ceremony? (explore as above if yes)
- Do you still feel that the oath has an influence or control over you? in what ways does it influence you? How does it affect your day-to-day life?

7)) Could you tell me about when you first spoke to someone about your experience of the ceremony?

- When was this?
- How did you feel leading up to the conversation?
- Did you ever feel scared about telling someone about what happened? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Did you know in advance that you were going to tell that person about the oath taking ceremony?
- What made you decide to talk to that person about it? Was there anything special about that person or how they behaved that made you feel more able to talk to them?
- Was there anything else that helped you to speak about your experiences?
- How did you feel after talking to someone about the oath taking ceremony? Did it make you feel more/less afraid?

8) What are your experiences of receiving support around what happened when you were trafficked?

- Did you have any therapy yet? If not, why not?
- Did you talk about the oath taking at all with X [ie therapist, support worker etc]?
- Has talking with X helped?
- Why? What makes you say this? What helps?

6.6 Appendix 6: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

The use of oath taking as a means of psychological control in human trafficking

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to know why the research is being done and what it will involve.

What is the research about?

Every year people are trafficked to the UK from their home country. As part of the journey to the UK, some people might have also been asked or forced to take part in an oath-taking ceremony (sometimes referred to as 'voodoo' or 'juju').

Oath-taking may mean different things to different people and is a very important part of life for many people in different parts of the world. However, for some people, oath-taking can be a part of the trafficking. It can be extremely difficult for individuals to tell people about what has happened to them and how this has affected them. Individuals may feel that other people might not believe them or that they will be judged, particularly by authorities in the UK or other people who do not share the same belief system.

This research seeks to understand more about the use of oath-taking ceremonies in trafficking and the impact of it on the lives of survivors. The hope is that by understanding more about this, it might help us to educate others, and may also help us better support individuals who have had similar experiences. Currently this lack of understanding often prevents individuals from seeking support from services that might be able to assist them.

Why have I been asked to take part?

You may be eligible to participate in the study if you:

- (1) are an adult survivor of human trafficking
- (2) experienced oath-taking as part of your experiences of being trafficked

Deciding to take part?

- Before taking part in the research, a member of staff from the [REDACTED] will discuss with you what participation in the research will involve and help you to come to a decision as to whether participation is the right choice for you.

- You will then speak with the researcher, who is a trainee clinical psychologist from the University of Hertfordshire. This meeting will happen either via video conferencing or telephone. She will go through this participant information sheet with you and give you opportunities to ask any further questions about the research.
- If you are still happy to participate, the researcher will then ask you to sign a consent form. It should be noted that even after signing the consent form, you are still free to withdraw from the research at any time up until the 31st March 2021. We know that talking about oath-taking/juju can be very difficult for people, particularly if you don't know the person very well. Given this you will be offered the opportunity to meet with the researcher via video conferencing or telephone several times before the interview if you feel that this would help you to feel more comfortable.

What will happen in the interview?

- *Activity and purpose:* If you are eligible and would like to take part, a researcher will arrange another meeting for the research interview to learn more about your experiences of oath-taking. This may take place via video conferencing or by telephone.
- *Time commitment:* The interview will last approximately 1 hour. You will receive a small token of thanks for giving up your time to participate in the study.
- *What will happen:* The researcher will ask you questions about your experience and relationship to oath-taking when it was used during trafficking. These might include how you feel about the oath-taking, how you decided to talk to people about it and the impact that oath-taking in the context of trafficking has had on your life. You will be asked to consent to the interviews being audio recorded. You can refuse to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable to answer. You can request a break in the interview at any time.

What other information will be collected in the research?

We will ask you to fill out a form that requests basic non identifiable background information about you such as whether you have any children, your age, your country of origin, ethnicity, your immigration status and your gender.

Can any other adults join me for the interview?

- We know that talking about this topic can be very difficult for people. Given this, there will be the opportunity for your therapist to support you during the interview or ask you the research questions.
- If it would be helpful, an interpreter through the [REDACTED] can be arranged.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you whether or not to take part in this study. You can still change your mind at any time up until the 31st March 2021 and leave the study without giving a reason. If you wish to withdraw from the study, then this will not affect any other care you receive and you will not be judged for doing so.

Will my taking part be kept confidential?

Yes. We will follow ethical and legal practice guidelines, so that all information about you will be handled in confidence. The only exception would be if there is a disclosure of serious harm. This would be disclosed to [REDACTED] in case further support or action is required in keeping with [REDACTED] procedures. No personal information that could identify any individual will be included in the writing up or presentations of the research.

What will happen with the information that I provide?

All information that is collected about you during the research will be kept strictly confidential in line with the Data Protection Act. Specific details from the interview will only be shared with others under exceptional circumstances; for example, if your safety, or that of someone else is at immediate risk. Your name and other personal details will be kept separately from anonymised transcripts of the interview that we will use in our analysis and reports. The information that you provide in the interview will be stored securely at the University of Hertfordshire in locked filing cabinets and secure computer network. Only members of the research team will be able to access the data. All data will be destroyed after a period of seven years, consistent with the policy of the University of Hertfordshire.

What happens at the end of the study?

A summary of our results will be made available to everyone who has taken part and wishes to receive it. There will also be the opportunity for you to attend a presentation of the results at the [REDACTED], if you wish. The results form part of the researcher's doctoral thesis in clinical psychology. They will also be written up and published in one or more journals read by health professionals and researchers.

What if something goes wrong?

If you feel concerned or upset at any point during the interview then please let the researcher know. If needed, the interview can be concluded, paused or rearranged. The researcher may also discuss the possibility of seeking outside support (e.g. from a staff member at [REDACTED]) if appropriate.

Who is organising and funding the project?

The person leading the research is Ruth Wilson, who is a Trainee Clinical Psychologist at the University of Hertfordshire. The principal supervisor of the project at the University of Hertfordshire is Dr Jacqui Gratton (Clinical Psychologist). Dr Francesca Brady (Clinical Psychologist and Co-Head of Therapies) from the [REDACTED] who is also supervising the project.

Who has reviewed this project?

All proposals for research are reviewed by Health, Science, Engineering & Technology Ethics Committee with Delegated Authority at the University of Hertfordshire.

Who do I contact for further information?

Ruth Wilson is happy to talk to you to discuss the research further. Her email is rw18abh@herts.ac.uk. Alternatively, you can speak Dr Francesca Brady at [REDACTED] who can put you in touch with the research team.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

If you decide to participant in the research, you will be given a copy of the information sheet and a signed consent form to keep.



HEALTH, SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY ECDA

ETHICS APPROVAL NOTIFICATION

TO Ruth Wilson
CC Dr Jacqui Gratton
FROM Dr Rosemary Godbold, Health, Science, Engineering & Technology ECDA Vice Chair
DATE 23/07/2020

Protocol number: **LMS/PGT/UH/04208**

Title of study: The use of oath taking as a means of psychological control in human trafficking

Your application for ethics approval has been accepted and approved with the following conditions by the ECDA for your School and includes work undertaken for this study by the named additional workers below:

no additional workers named

General conditions of approval:

Ethics approval has been granted subject to the standard conditions below:

Permissions: Any necessary permissions for the use of premises/location and accessing participants for your study must be obtained in writing prior to any data collection commencing. Failure to obtain adequate permissions may be considered a breach of this protocol.

External communications: Ensure you quote the UH protocol number and the name of the approving Committee on all paperwork, including recruitment advertisements/online requests, for this study.

Invasive procedures: If your research involves invasive procedures you are required to complete and submit an EC7 Protocol Monitoring Form, and copies of your completed consent paperwork to this ECDA once your study is complete.

Submission: Students must include this Approval Notification with their submission.

Validity:

This approval is valid:

From: 23/07/2020

To: 01/03/2021

6.7 Appendix 7: Ethical approval



HEALTH, SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY ECDA

ETHICS APPROVAL NOTIFICATION

TO Ruth Wilson
CC Dr Jacqui Gratton
FROM Dr Simon Trainis, Health, Science, Engineering & Technology ECDA Chair
DATE 11/08/2020

Protocol number: **aLMS/PGT/UH/04208(1)**

Title of study: The use of oath taking as a means of psychological control in human trafficking

Your application to modify and extend the existing protocol as detailed below has been accepted and approved by the ECDA for your School and includes work undertaken for this study by the named additional workers below:

no additional workers named

Modification: Detailed in EC2

General conditions of approval:

Ethics approval has been granted subject to the standard conditions below:

Original protocol: Any conditions relating to the original protocol approval remain and must be complied with.

Permissions: Any necessary permissions for the use of premises/location and accessing participants for your study must be obtained in writing prior to any data collection commencing. Failure to obtain adequate permissions may be considered a breach of this protocol.

External communications: Ensure you quote the UH protocol number and the name of the approving Committee on all paperwork, including recruitment advertisements/online requests, for this study.

Invasive procedures: If your research involves invasive procedures you are required to complete and submit an EC7 Protocol Monitoring Form, and copies of your completed consent paperwork to this ECDA once your study is complete.

Submission: Students must include this Approval Notification with their submission.

Validity:

This approval is valid:

From: 11/08/2020



HEALTH, SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY ECDA

ETHICS APPROVAL NOTIFICATION

TO Ruth Wilson
CC: Dr Jacqui Gratton
FROM Dr Simon Trainis, Health, Science, Engineering & Technology ECDA Chair
DATE 26/11/2020

Protocol number: **aLMS/PGT/UH/04208(2)**

Title of study: The use of oath taking as a means of psychological control in human trafficking

Your application to modify and extend the existing protocol as detailed below has been accepted and approved by the ECDA for your School and includes work undertaken for this study by the named additional workers below:

Modification: Detailed in EC2.

General conditions of approval:

Ethics approval has been granted subject to the standard conditions below:

Original protocol: Any conditions relating to the original protocol approval remain and must be complied with.

Permissions: Any necessary permissions for the use of premises/location and accessing participants for your study must be obtained in writing prior to any data collection commencing. Failure to obtain adequate permissions may be considered a breach of this protocol.

External communications: Ensure you quote the UH protocol number and the name of the approving Committee on all paperwork, including recruitment advertisements/online requests, for this study.

Invasive procedures: If your research involves invasive procedures you are required to complete and submit an EC7 Protocol Monitoring Form, and copies of your completed consent paperwork to this ECDA once your study is complete.

Submission: Students must include this Approval Notification with their submission.

Validity:

This approval is valid:

From: 26/11/2020

To: 01/03/2021

6.8 Appendix 8: Consent Form

The use of oath taking as a means of psychological control in human trafficking

The researcher promises to anonymise any contributions that participants make towards the study.

Participant Identification number _____

1. I agree that I have read the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I agree to take part in the above study and understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time up until 31st March, without giving any reason. Withdrawal from the research will not affect my legal rights or the quality of care received by me or my family.

3. I agree that my interview can be audiotaped.

4. I consent for the Researcher to contact [REDACTED] if they feel I need further support following the interview or in the event of disclosure of serious harm to self/or others.

OPTIONAL

Information I wish to receive following my participation in the study (tick which apply):

A summary of the research

Invitation to attend a presentation at the [REDACTED]

Agreed by (name of the participant)

Signature

Date

Agreed by (researcher present)

Signature

Date

6.9 Appendix 9: Confidentiality Agreement

Audio Transcription Confidentiality Agreement

THIS AGREEMENT is dated 31/12/20

BETWEEN

Protype Services located at 102 Ockford Road, Godalming GU7 1RG (**Audio Transcriber**), and,
Ruth Wilson (**Client**)

The Audio Transcriber understands that they will be hearing recordings of confidential interviews and receiving confidential data which constitutes personal data under the EU's GDPR and national Data Protection Act 2018. The information in these recordings and data is to remain strictly confidential and will be managed and stored in line with the provisions of the GDPR and national Data Protection Act 2018. The Audio Transcriber understands that they have a responsibility to honour this Agreement.

The Audio Transcriber agrees not to share any information in these recordings and data about any party with anyone except for those involved. Any violation of this and the terms detailed below will constitute a serious breach of ethical standards and the Audio Transcriber confirms that they will adhere to the Agreement in full.

The Audio Transcriber agrees to:

1. Keep all the information shared by the Client confidential by not discussing or sharing the content of the interviews or data in any form or format (e.g. WAV files, CDs, transcripts) with anyone other than those involved.
2. Keep all information in any form or format (e.g. WAV files, CDs, transcripts) secure while it is in their possession.
3. Return or destroy all information in any form or format (e.g. WAV files, CDs, transcripts) when they have completed the tasks.

The Audio Transcriber acknowledges that any disclosure pursuant to this Agreement shall not confer on the Audio Transcriber any intellectual property or other rights, whatsoever, in relation to the work carried out by the Audio Transcriber. All intellectual property rights in all transcriptions and other work carried out by the Audio Transcriber shall be assigned in full to the Client upon submission of the completed work to the Client, in consideration for the fee paid by the Client to the Audio Transcriber. No variation of this Agreement shall be effective unless it is in writing and signed by, or on behalf of, all parties.

This Agreement has been entered into on the date stated at the beginning.

Audio Transcriber:

Georgie Aronin
(print name) Georgie Aronin
(signature) 31/12/2020
(date)

Client:
Ruth Wilson
(print name) Ruth Wilson
(signature) 31/12/2020
(date)

6.10 Appendix 10: Excerpt of Coded Transcript

- knew that something was going to happen, something was wrong. So, I felt that he was a bad person and maybe he has been doing that to people. I was thinking that they were kind of scary. I don't know. I was there because it was just something that you don't know how you feel. It is just here in your mind like, 'Oh my God, what's going to happen?' because before you come, the person has already told you, 'This is what is going to happen. If you don't do this, this is what is going to happen. Whenever you do it, this is what is going to happen.' So, they are already putting fear in you already, so you don't have a choice. They tell you, 'If you don't do it, this is what is going to happen.' If you do it, this is what is going to happen.' So, if you go or you stay, something is going to happen.
- place felt wrong + increased threat
 - not just me ~~them~~
 - threat and confusion
 - difficult to put into words.
 - fear of the unknown
 - previous threats running through your mind
 - laid the foundations for coercion
 - no good outcome / rock & hard place
- I: So, you knew in one way what would happen.
- P: Yeah, it was kind of whatever they asked you to do.
- resigned to do whatever.
- I: You said that they said, 'You're not allowed to run away,' what else did they ask you to promise that you would do? What were the things you had to sign up to?
- P: You are not allowed to run away. You are not allowed to tell anybody about the president who is bringing you. You have to pay the money, you must pay the money. And you must listen to him. You don't speak to anybody when you are there in the country. You have to obey him like you are a slave to him. And, whatever you see, you have to be quiet; you don't say to anybody and, if you say this to somebody, this is going to happen. So, I was even saying, 'I'm not going to say anything to anybody, but it is going to help me.' I didn't know that, because what I was thinking, I was coming here to work. So, to work is not something that is bad - to work in the kitchen or to look after babies. Why will I not pay the money if I am working? So, I was thinking about what is going on, but I wasn't thinking about other things. I was just thinking, 'Why are they putting me through this kind of thing? Why will I have to do?' in my mind I couldn't stop or say anything to them. So, I was thinking, 'Why will I have to do this if I have to do a job that I have to pay? Why will I go through this kind of thing?'
- have to follow rules
 - sworn to secrecy
 - agree to debt bondage
 - ~~debt~~ his words
 - sworn to secrecy
 - he has complete control
 - bad things happen if you speak
 - thought it was for my benefit
 - still believed the lie
 - confused due to the deception
 - didn't understand
 - couldn't predict what would happen
 - confused why it was necessary
 - unable to speak
 - kept asking why in my head
- I: So, it is kind of confusing. So, all those things that he said you needed to do, what made you think that he was serious? Did you think he was serious about that?

P: When you are in this place and they are talking to you, you will know it is serious. It is not a play thing. It is not a movie. It is something that is real. It is happening. It is strong. It is something that is happening. It is the thing and [0:13:26] is very strong. It is not something that you play with. It is something that people [0:13:34] in that place. Even when I was a baby, my mother always told me about that: people go to look for babies if you are pregnant. But I didn't know that this is where he was taking me to, because it was not in my feelings. You have to travel to another village.

→ place so terrifying it has to be real
 → it's not a joke
 → real life not pretend
 → powerful
 → very powerful
 → it's powerful/dangerous
 → childhood stories
 → stories of its power
 → despite knowing stories, did not predict.
 → this was different

I: So, this was already a place in your mind that you knew was something quite different. So, when you ended up there, you already had this idea of what it entailed.

P: Yeah.

I: OK, that makes sense. So, did people in general in your village know about this place, then?

P: Yeah, because it is not in my village, it is another village, but people like my parents, until now he is still there, so they know that in another city that this thing is there, something that is happening to people, if you are looking for money. But I don't know the name there because I was a child there, but they were always saying all of those things, that it is there somewhere, but I didn't know that people have to go there to do that kind of a thing. I never thought of that one day that I would even go there.

→ place well known in the community
 → older generation know of this place
 → stories of what happens
 → here only a child had heard stories as
 → lots of stories about it
 → did not know the full picture
 → story not actually real life

I: It didn't even cross your mind.

P: No.

I: It makes sense that it was really scary. So, you said a little bit about what you thought would happen if you didn't go along with it. I don't know whether you could say a little bit more about that. So, you said you were worried about your brother and it felt like somebody might hold a gun to your head because it was that kind of place, but what other things went through your mind about what might happen if you didn't go along with it?

P: Because of what they said to me - that if I don't do it, this is going to happen, like if I go out, because they know that I may go out to say that never [0:15:45] or you go mad, things like that. They cannot [0:15:51] something that is scary that they are telling you, then, if you do it and you run away, then something is going to happen - my brother

→ repeated threats
 → multiple threats
 → hard to be endless bad things could happen

hard to repeat exact threats
 → level of fear

Use of stories & imagination

is going to come out [0:16:00] not me, I believe that God is protecting me, my brother is going to come out. They can say a lot of things that are going to happen, like, if you don't pay the money, if you don't do this, if you don't do that. Before they would even tell you about that; they had already put fear into you, so you will not say, 'No, I am not going to do it.' So, they already put fear into you, so you have to agree to do it, because they will say to you, 'If you don't do it, if you go, this is what is going to go.' They don't want you to go out of that [0:16:31] not doing it. That is what I understand now, when I remember all of those things. They want to put fear into you so you have to do it and they say that, if you go out, you are going to tell people, 'This is what happened,' so they want you to shut up your mouth, so they tell you, if you talk, this is what is going to happen to you.

→ general fear for brother
 → fear for family stronger than self.
 → God protects.
 → endless threats & consequences.
 → multi-layered fear process of installing fear
 → already too late to say no.
 → The ceremony is important to traffickers
 → trying to make sense of it all now
 → multi-layered process of coercion

You know when you are in a place and you feel cold, like you are cold, a kind of different environment. And you are looking into the water and you see fish running. So many people are coming here and are putting like bread in. Nobody kills fish in that water. If you kill a fish, the person will die. So, you can see this and people come there. You are seeing people, it is happening, things are happening [0:17:21]. So, you are kind of scared. I was so afraid, I was shaking and the man was telling me, 'You don't need to be afraid. If you do everything they ask you to do, nothing will happen to you.' But I couldn't turn my back. I couldn't do anything. They forced me. They will force you to do what you don't want to do because they are already putting fear into you.

→ environment increases their fear
 → even the fish are scared
 → specific rituals
 → fear example of the spirits power
 → too much to describe the terror
 → shaking as so afraid
 → they tell you your only way out
 → body shut down in fear/pardalyzed
 → forced
 → you are completely in their control

- I: So, they made all of these threats throughout, so at the beginning and on the way there.
- P: Yeah.
- I: And then you said about you already knew that, I guess from a spiritual side of things, that that was a dangerous river, that you don't feed the fish because they will die. So, there was all of that together.
- P: Yeah.
- I: OK. And was it just this one person who told you about all of those consequences or were there lots of people who were saying, 'If you don't do this, this will happen'?
- P: No, it was one person, the head of this creature – there is somebody who is [0:18:43] is the big man who is there

→ one person has the most power.

who is doing the cartation [0:18:47], but there are other boys who walk with him, but he is the only one because he is in charge of the place. He is the power to talk to the Gods and they [0:18:58]. He has the power. He is the one who is [0:19:01] the voodoo. So, it is like he is the judge in the court: he is the judge who says something. There are other people, but he is the judge. He is the one who tells you what the things say. So, I think he is hearing the voice. I don't know. Maybe he hears the words they speak. I don't understand. So, he is the boss man. He was the one who was telling me things.

→ other's give him more power
 → only I is powerful to do the voodoo
 → one with the power
 → other support him
 → the vessel for: He spent
 → mystery to his power
 → his power is not understood
 → one with the power

I: OK, that makes sense. What were your thoughts and feelings afterwards? So, directly after the ceremony, what was going through your mind then?

P: I was scared. I was so afraid because of the kinds of things that they did to me. I was afraid, really. I would say, 'Oh God, I don't know what to do these things. I have to pay this money. I have to do this. I just have [0:20:03]. Oh, what am I going to do?' I was telling myself that, 'You have to work hard, you have to, to pay this money, so all the things that they said, it is not going to happen to you.' So, I was having all those things in mind. Then, when I got home, I was crying and I was thinking a lot. That is not the only place. There were two places that they took me to.

→ another layer of fear
 → so many worries running through my mind
 → reassuring self I will be ok
 → mind spinning going over and over it
 → another layer of fear

I: OK.

P: Yeah.

I: So, there was another thing that happened afterwards, was there?

P: Yeah. After a week or two weeks, they took me to another place.

→ another place to reinforce the fear

I: Oh gosh. And did a similar thing happen there?

P: Yeah. That one is not a river. It is another [0:20:50] that is kind of the same thing but not the riverside, because the river had crocodiles inside and the chicken that they used and others that they [0:21:02] my body and stuff like that, with the chicken you can see the crocodile coming out of the water and, when they throw the chicken, if the crocodile throws it back, that means they do not accept the sacrifice, but, if he eats it, that means he accepts the sacrifice. So, you can see that is coming and, when it is coming, you can see the whole place is shaking, because

→ other place similar
 → use of animals + body
 → terrifying image
 → fear and tension increases

Wonders

it is like they build a fence in between the water and, at the back of the water, that is where the crocodile is and it is kind of a forest and there is water. That is what they think come out, like crocodiles. So, he eats the chicken and you know that it is done, it has happened, it is going to happen, whatever I say to you. So, the other place is kind of different, not the river.

→ see the spirits power over nature
→ other place different

I: OK. And did they make more threats at the other place, like, 'If you don't do this, then this will happen'?

P: Yeah, the same thing. → more of the same

I: The same. And was it the same threats each time?

P: Yeah, the same. A little bit different like, 'This is going to happen,' the same thing, or you die or you are mad or you are not going to have children or you are not going to do this. Kind of different, a little bit different, but kind of similar what they say to me.

→ slightly different to add more uncertainty
→ many different consequences
→ slightly different to add more uncertainty

I: So, those things that you will die, you will go mad, you won't have children.

P: Yeah, that is it.

I: Were there other things that they said or can you remember?

P: Yeah. They said that the maggots are going to come out of my body because they cut me, they took my hair and they cut my nails and stuff like that to put inside and they used the chicken blood to rub my hair that is tough like that, and they took my panties and stuff like that. So, it is kind of things that are similar to your body, into your body, what you use, what you [0:23:03], what you wear on your skin. Whatever they took in your body is kind of you, so your nails, your blood and stuff like that. It is your blood. So, they use it as a sacrifice for the voodoo. So, you cannot have your things with them. It is like they have your life. That is what they think: that, when they collect this, they have your life with you; they can do anything to you.

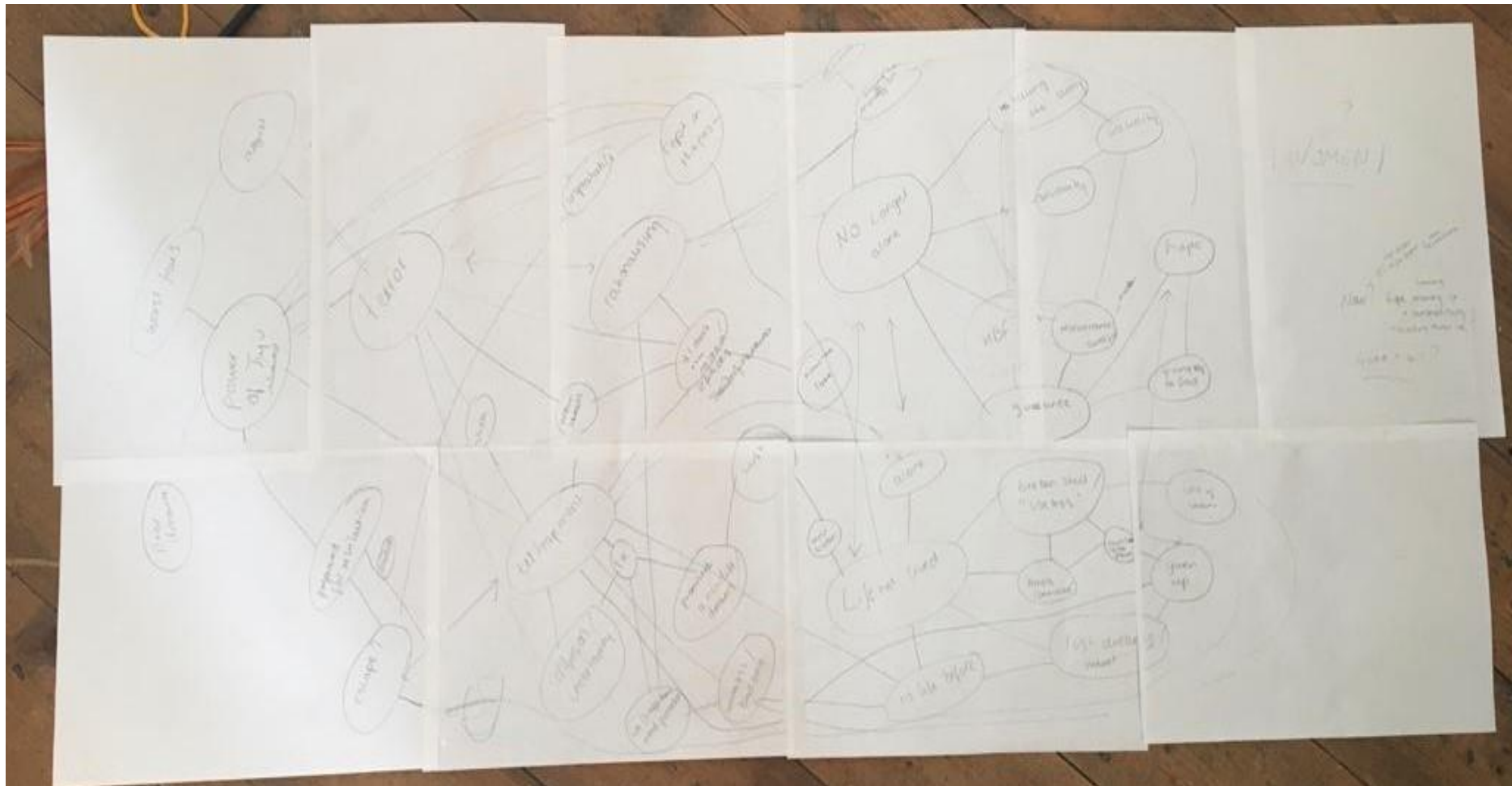
→ use grotesque imagery to instill fear
→ taking ownership over body parts
→ different body parts + possessions
→ took an essence of you
→ ownership
→ I knew they had complete control over you

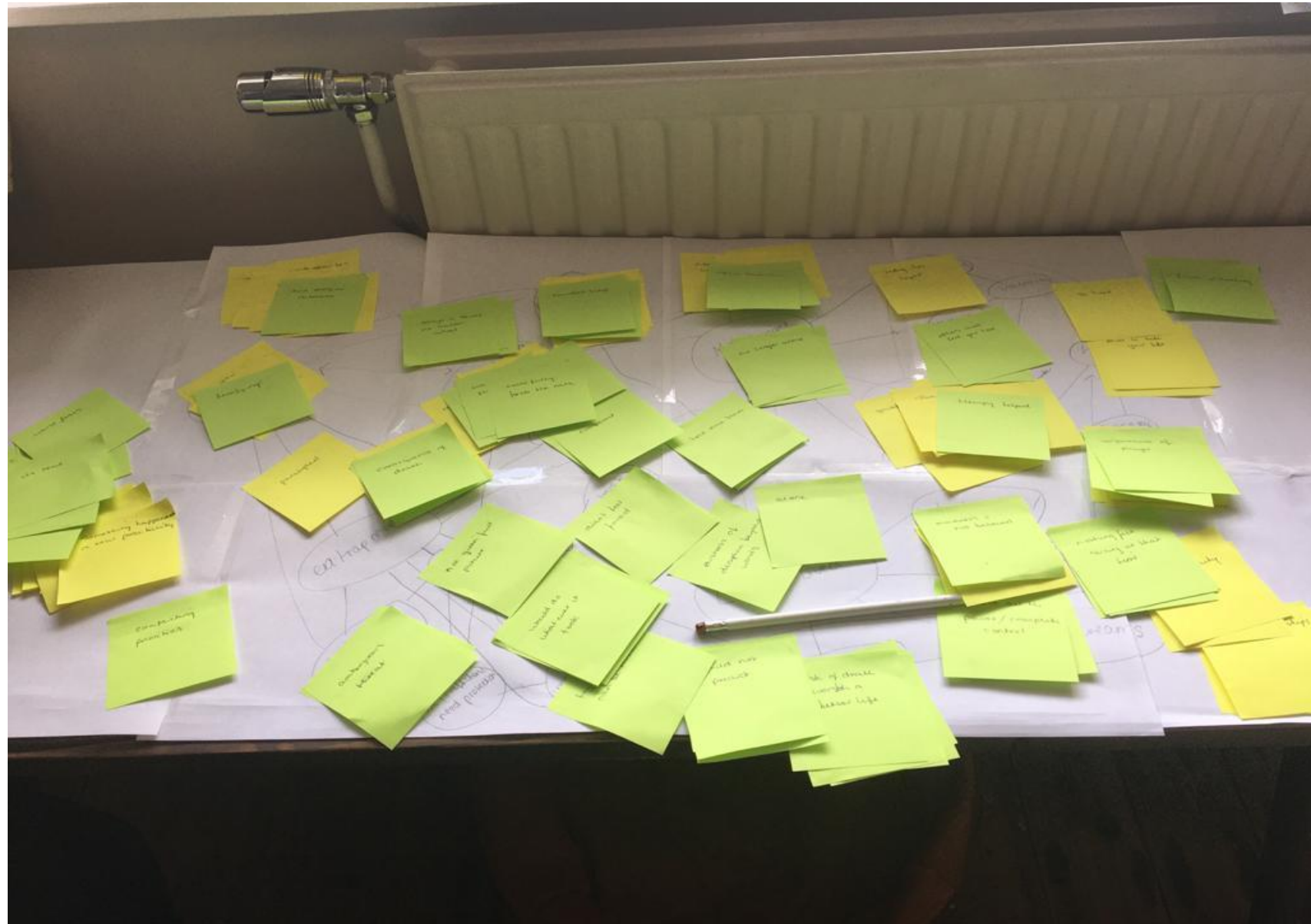
I: Gosh. Yeah. And did you feel like that at the time, that, 'They have my life'?

P: Because it is a strong thing that you have to because it is true, it is happening. It is not like it is a life. It is a very strong thing that they believe. Even my dad and my mother, they are Christian, but it is the same, like a story -

→ its real
→ its power makes you believe
→ everyone knows its true + power

6.11 Appendix 11: Initial Thematic Map





6.12 Appendix 12: Second Thematic Map

