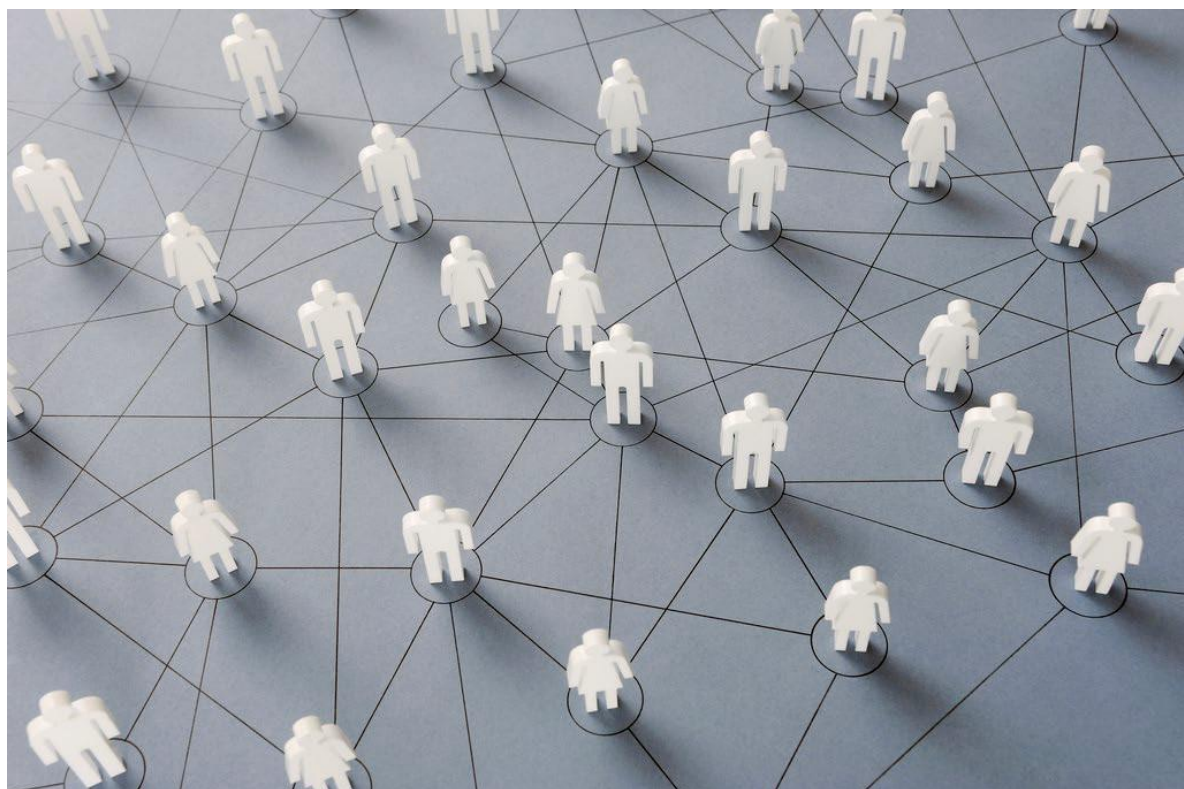**AUTHOR**

Angela Holzer, EdD

—

Topics

Human Trafficking,
Nonprofits, Collaboration

—

Research Year

2020

—

University

Aspen University,
Dissertation

Fighting Human Trafficking by Better Understanding Nonprofit Collaboration

-- by Angela Holzer, EdD

Abstract: This research study examines nonprofit organizations and how collaboration plays a part in the human trafficking efforts within the United States. A descriptive study was conducted analyzing data from a quantitative, survey-based research method. Using a sample of 29 nonprofit leaders working in fighting human trafficking, data was collected on 1) what challenges nonprofits face in collaborating, 2) what technology tools nonprofits use to collaborate, and 3) how many other groups a single nonprofit works with in combating human trafficking. The findings show that the main challenges are 1) limited time, and 2) competition and/or lack of trust.

Fighting Human Trafficking by Better Understanding Nonprofit Collaboration

By Angela Holzer, EdD

Introduction

The following research study was undertaken to better understand the challenges nonprofit organizations face as they combat human trafficking within the United States.

Research Questions

The following research question guided this study (RQ1): What are the similarities and differences in how nonprofit organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area, California and the Salt Lake Area, Utah collaborate in fighting human trafficking with other nonprofits and groups in their communities? There were also sub-research questions that continued to expand on the initial research question to better understand the workings of the collaboration that currently exists within these two areas of the United States.

RQ1a: What are the challenges nonprofit organizations face as they make an effort to collaborate with other nonprofit organizations?

RQ1b: What are the challenges nonprofit organizations face as they make an effort to collaborate with public or private sector groups?

RQ1c: What technology do nonprofits currently use in collaboration?

RQ1d: What other nonprofits and secondary groups are these nonprofit organizations collaborating with to help fight human trafficking (homelessness, foster care, addiction recover centers, law enforcement, corporations, etc.)?

RQ1e: What similarities exist between the two communities with collaboration?

RQ1f: What differences exist between the two communities with collaboration?

This study first established what was happening within one community, and then a comparison was made between the two communities. In making this comparison, there was a hope to see similar trends or different approaches that other communities can think about using in their own communities to fight human trafficking.

Literature Review

There were three areas that this literature review targeted to frame this study, 1) human trafficking, 2) nonprofit sector, and 3) collaboration.

Human Trafficking

In 2000, the United States passed the first federal law to address trafficking in persons called TVPA, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (Vanek, 2019), and a 3P strategy (prevention, prosecution, protection) was developed (U.S. Department of State, 2019). In 2009, an additional P for partnership was added (Foot, 2016). However, collaborative partnerships between state agencies and voluntary nonprofits are minimal (JHA, 2018). There are limited studies on human trafficking (Chen & Lu, 2017), and data are sparse on human trafficking crimes (United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, 2018). This is due to human trafficking being a hidden population, where no sampling frame exists and there is unknown data with the size and boundaries of this population (Chen & Lu, 2017). A study in 2013 showed the greatest need for victims is housing (Baker & Grover, 2013).

Nonprofit Sector

The majority of nonprofits within the United States are small, making under a million a year (McKeever, 2016). These small nonprofits are overlooked, while larger nonprofits have more decision-making power (Proulx, Hager & Klein, 2014). Most agencies within a community responding to victims were not aware of each other and found out about each other through word of mouth (Baker & Grover, 2013). There is a gap in documentation how nonprofits collaborate within communities (Elrod, 2015).

Collaboration

Scholars do not agree on one definition of collaboration (Felix, 2011). There are different words that can be used to describe collaboration, such as partnerships, alliances, agreements, coalitions, and nonprofit business alliances (Rathi, Given & Forcier, 2014). Collaboration could also include sharing of resources and information (Wei-Ning & Change, 2018). Collaboration is defined in this study as "a method that can be used either formally or informally by a group of individuals who can work side by side to share concerns that can bring mutual gain" (Felix, 2011, p.14). Technology is becoming more involved with the collaboration process (Raghupathi, 2016), and is often a low-cost tool to help in sharing information and learning new things (Rathi, Given & Forcier, 2014).

Benefits.

The benefits for nonprofits to collaborate include new opportunities, new information and new social capital (Park, 2006). When collaboration increases, there can be an increase of effectiveness in outcomes (Abdulkadir, Suhariadi, Wibowo, & Hadi, 2017). Greater connections are built within a community when collaboration increases (Powell, Winfield, Schatteman, & Trusty, 2018). Collaboration also brings access to more funds and resources (Chang, Seetoo, Yu, & Cheng, 2016). Sharing of resources could involve pooling or sharing finances, skills, expertise, staffing and knowledge for a collaborative purpose (Rathi, Given, & Forcier, 2014).

Challenges.

Nonprofits experience challenges when they collaborate within their own nonprofit sector and with the public and

private sectors (JHA, 2018; Chang, Seetoo, Yu, & Cheng, 2016). These challenges include having limited time and limited resources to collaborate. Nonprofits often feel a sense of competition and lack of trust with those they collaborate with. Small nonprofits face being dissolved or losing autonomy (Proulx, Hager & Klein, 2014).

Methodology

The methodology and design of this study was a quantitative, descriptive research design that used a survey-based approach to gather the data. The sample population that was used in this research study were nonprofit organizations based in two locations within the United States. The first location was the San Francisco Bay Area in California focusing specifically on four counties: San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Alameda. The second location was the Salt Lake Area in Utah focusing specifically on four counties: Weber, Davis, Salt Lake, and Utah. A criteria sampling approach was used to find nonprofits who worked in the focus area of human trafficking or any related topic in three different categories; prevention, working with current victims, and aftercare services. There were 64 related NTEE codes out of the 400 codes from the IRS database that fit in the related focus areas. Out of the 36,638 nonprofits in these 8 designated counties (Table 1), only 2,015 fit in the focus areas. Another 40% were removed due to the inability to find contact information or these nonprofits no longer being in operation, leaving a total of 915 nonprofits.

Table 1
Nonprofit Sampling and Filtering Process

States	Total # of Nonprofits in Database	% Relevant After Applying NTEE Codes	Criteria Sample	Removal of Inactive Nonprofits or No Online Presence	Final Count: Related Fields Only
UT	7,720	7%	511	361 (Removed 29%)	255
CA	28,918	5%	1,504	848 (Removed 44%)	696
CA + UT	**36,638**	**5%**	**2,015**	**1,209 (Removed 40%)**	**951**

The data were collected through SurveyMonkey, an online data collection tool. The variables in this study were categorical variables, allowing for different types, kinds, and elements of collaboration to be analyzed. There are five categorical variables in this study, 1) nonprofit organizations working in fighting human trafficking, 2) Location (San Francisco Bay Area, CA and Salt Lake Area, UT), 3) number of nonprofits and other groups working with (or collaborating with) a single nonprofit in fighting human trafficking in their community, 4) different technology or tools to collaborate that are being used, and 5) frequency of collaboration that is happening. Calculations were used to see the mean, median, and mode as well as chi-square test to see if there is a strong relationship between categorical variables.

Results

There were 29 nonprofits who participated in the survey, 22 from California and seven from Utah. The California nonprofits have an even percentage of nonprofits and services in fighting human trafficking (see Figure 1), whereas Utah nonprofits lack in the areas of prevention and awareness (see Figure 2).
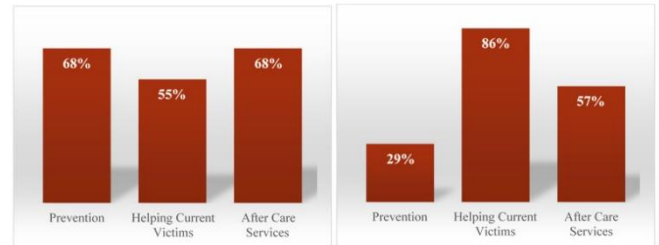

Figure 1. Percentage of California nonprofits who work in the three categories of human trafficking.

Figure 2. Percentage of Utah nonprofits who work in the three categories of human trafficking.

Size of Nonprofit vs Category
In California, the smaller nonprofits take on 67% of the efforts in prevention and awareness, 67% of the efforts in working with current victims, and providing 60% of the aftercare services. The large nonprofits in Utah take on most of the effort in all three categories.

Challenges
In California, 60% of the nonprofits stated that limited time was their number one reason they struggle to collaborate with other nonprofits. In Utah, 50% of the nonprofits indicated that limited time and competition/lack of trust with other nonprofits were the top reasons (see Figure 3). In California, most nonprofits felt they have different goals in working with other groups, while Utah shows there are few groups to work with in the same space.

Figure 3- Challenges Nonprofits Face when Working with Other Nonprofits
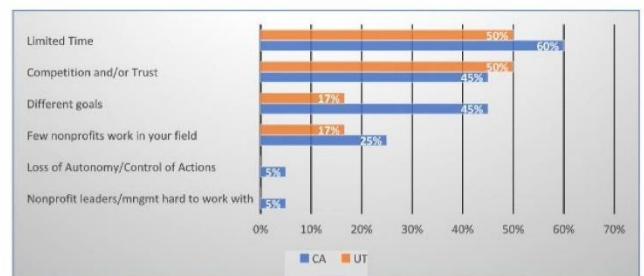
Technology
In California, 75% of participants stated email was the top tool they used to collaborate with other nonprofits. In Utah, 80% were most likely to use the phone when collaborating with other nonprofits.

Collaborating Groups
Out of the 57% of the smaller nonprofits in California, the organizations that earn less than $50,000/year take on the majority of the collaboration. Both communities collaborated

mostly with community groups, and the least amount with large corporations.

Similarities and Differences
The similarities exist in the challenges both communities face as they collaborate. The differences exist in the tools they use to collaborate and limited number of nonprofits working in Utah to fight human trafficking.

Variables
Both in California and Utah, most nonprofits collaborate weekly with other nonprofits and monthly with collaborative network. The average number of other nonprofit organizations a single nonprofit collaborates with in California is 14.8 (see Table 2). There was no significant relationship found between variables.

Table 2
Sample Variance: How Many Other Nonprofit Organizations Does Your Organization Collaborate with to Pursue your Mission?

CALIFORNIA ONLY		UTAH ONLY	
Mean	14.8	Mean	22.33333333
Standard Error	2.592093241	Standard Error	8.281170073
Median	12	Median	14
Mode	20	Mode	#N/A
Standard Deviation	11.59219338	Standard Deviation	20.28464115
Sample Variance	134.3789474	Sample Variance	411.4666667
Kurtosis	3.404555163	Kurtosis	-1.894052027
Skewness	1.612693739	Skewness	0.729667182
Range	49	Range	45
Minimum	1	Minimum	5
Maximum	50	Maximum	50
Sum	296	Sum	134
Count	20	Count	6

Conclusion

As nonprofits face challenges of having limited time in collaborating with other nonprofits, improving the use of technology tools needs to be addressed to improve efficiency (Proulx, Hager & Klein, 2014). Nonprofits also face feelings of competition and lack of trust in collaborating with other nonprofits. Future research can be pursued in addressing why competition and lack of trust is present in collaboration and how to engage small nonprofits, specifically in Utah.

As communities combat human trafficking, county and statewide coalitions are formed. In California, the San Mateo County coalition services the people in their county and has an open group approach. All meetings are public, and all community members are encouraged to get involved. Utah (UTIP) has a task force to service all people in the state and has a closed group approach. Participants are approved by application and community members are not encouraged to participate without meeting the requirements established by the governing body. Further research could be done on the benefits and struggles of different collaborative models with human trafficking task forces and coalitions, and what is the best approach to meet the needs of victims and survivors of human trafficking. This effort is "people-based", says Sergeant Juan Reveles, who runs the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force, one of the leading task forces in the nation (J.Reveles, personal interview, March 12, 2021). He states that it is important to learn to work together to help those victims and survivors of human trafficking.

References

Abdulkadir, W., Suhariadi, F., Wibowo, A., & Hadi, C. (2017). Three-party (physician-pharmacist-director) collaboration model on teamwork effectiveness improvement in hospital. *Open Access Journal of Science and Technology, 5* doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.11131/2017/101156

Baker, D. A., & Grover, E. A. (2013). Responding to victims of human trafficking: Interagency awareness, housing services, and spiritual care. Social Work and Christianity, 40(3), 308-321. Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/1491961558?accountid=34574

Chang, J., Seetoo, D., Yu, C., & Cheng, C. (2016). Relational management mechanisms for strategic alliances among nonprofit organizations. Voluntas, 27(5), 2458-2489. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11266-015-9557-3

Chen, S., & Lu, X. (2017). An immunization strategy for hidden populations. *Scientific Reports (Nature Publisher Group), 7*, 1-10. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1038/s41598-017-03379-4

Elrod, J. (2015). Filling the gap: Refining sex trafficking legislation to address the problem of pimping. Vanderbilt Law Review, 68(3), 961-996. Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/1683498344?accountid=34574

Felix, R. (2011*). Faith-based partnerships between the government and churches* (Order No. 3440049). Available from ProQuest Central. (853329838). Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/853329838?accountid=34574

Foot, K. A. (2016). *Collaborating against human trafficking: cross-sector challenges and practices.* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

JHA, A. (2018). The law on trafficking in persons: The quest for an effective model. Asian Journal of International Law, 8(1), 225-257. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S2044251316000266

McKeever, B. (2016). *Nonprofit Almanac 9th edition*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Park, C. (2006). Collaboration among human service nonprofit organizations: Mapping formal and informal networks of exchange (Order No. 3224024). Available from ProQuest Central. (305254609). Retrieved from

https://search.proquest.com/docview/305254609?accountid=34574

Powell, E., Winfield, G., Schatteman, A. M., & Trusty, K. (2018). Collaboration between practitioners and academics: Defining the pracademic experience. The Journal of Nonprofit Education and Leadership, 8(1) Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/2027725716?accountid=34574

Proulx, K. E., Hager, M. A., & Klein, K. C. (2014). Models of collaboration between nonprofit organizations. *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management, 63*(6), 746-765. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/IJPPM-06-2013-0121

Raghupathi, V. (2016). Changes in virtual team collaboration with modern collaboration tools. I-Manager's Journal on Information Technology, 5(2), 5-13. Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/1809060987?accountid=34574

Rathi, D., Given, L. M., & Forcier, E. (2014). Interorganisational partnerships and knowledge sharing: The perspective of non-profit organisations (NPOs). Journal of Knowledge Management, 18(5), 867-885. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JKM-06-2014-0256

Reveles, J. (2021). Personal communication through a phone call. Sergeant Juan Reveles leads the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force.

United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime. (2018). Retrieved from https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2018/GLOTiP_2018_BOOK_web_small.pdf

U.S. Department of State. (2019). Retrieved from https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/2019-Trafficking-in-Persons-Report.pdf

Vanek, J. (2019). *The essential abolitionist: what you need to know about human trafficking & modern slavery*. United States: Daliwal Press.

Wei-Ning, W., & Chang, S. (2018). Collaboration mechanisms of taiwan nonprofit organizations in disaster relief efforts: Drawing lessons from the wenchuan earthquake and typhoon morakot. Sustainability, 10(11) doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/su10114328