


Editorial

Special Issue “Frontiers in Organizing Processes: Collaborating against Human Trafficking/Modern Slavery for Impact and Sustainability”

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Multiprofessional, interorganizational, and cross-sector collaboration is widely recognized as essential to counter human trafficking. Considerable effort is invested in collaborating against human trafficking, both between and within countries. Recent and long-standing illustrative examples of such efforts include the initiative by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to foster public–private partnerships [1], the “enhanced collaborative model” multidisciplinary task forces funded by the United States (US) Department of Justice [2], and technologies such as the Online Community Platform [3] recently launched by the National Freedom Network in South Africa that allows for information to be shared more easily and facilitates access to resources and opportunities for organic collaboration between organizations on the African continent.

To be sustainable, such collaborative efforts must result in positive outcomes for the collaborating partners and demonstrable progress against human trafficking. However, the processes of organizing and leading robust collaborations are complex and challenging—and understudied. This Special Issue of *Societies* helps redress this knowledge gap by presenting the work of researchers and collaboration leaders in the anti-trafficking arena on ideas and evidence-supported practices for creating, catalyzing, and sustaining collaborations to counter human trafficking. The scholarship and practices presented in this Special Issue are situated in the “3P” paradigm [4]—prosecution, protection, and prevention—that continues to serve as the global framework to combat human trafficking. The articles herein not only provide support for the importance of partnership as an addition to the original “3P” (thus, 3P+1) foci [5,6], but also for the proposed fifth ‘P’—participation—that denotes the active engagement of all multidisciplinary collaborators in efforts against human trafficking [7,8]. Furthermore, on 15 December 2022, UN resolution 77/194 (Trafficking in Women and Girls) implored governments and multi-sector stakeholders to implement a comprehensive approach to human trafficking combating efforts that is bolstered by partnerships and measures to prevent the crime; prosecute traffickers; and identify, protect, and support the victims of such trafficking. The importance of collaboration between governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and financial institutions was emphasized in the resolution [9].

The nine substantive articles that comprise this Special Issue include six research articles and three concept papers. The authors who contributed to this Special Issue include collaboration developers and coordinators, experts on law enforcement and survivorship, and scholars with a wide range of academic expertise areas including criminal justice, decision science, gender studies, history, management, politics, psychology, public affairs, social work, and sociology. Their articles address multiple kinds of collaborations that aim to counter human trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation and labor exploitation.



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As a collection, these articles employ an impressively diverse array of methods of data collection and analysis, including (in alphabetical order) agent-based modeling, case analysis, community-based participatory research, developmental analysis, interviews, meta-analysis, participant observation, predictive modeling, surveys, and thematic analysis. The methods by which the knowledge presented in the articles of this Special Issue was generated reflect distinctly different epistemological lenses: some articles use a post-positivist lens for knowledge construction, and others use an interpretive lens. All of the articles address pragmatic concerns regarding the practices, processes, and/or outcomes of collaborating. Most importantly, they illuminate understudied but important aspects of organizing and sustaining innovative forms of collaboration to counter human trafficking and ways that collaborators from diverse sectors perceive the experience of collaborating.

There are four emergent themes that tie these articles together: (1) local anti-trafficking partnerships, (2) collaborating in order to innovate, (3) collaborators' perspectives on collaboration, and (4) developing and sustaining collaboration efforts. Juliana Rinaldi-Semione's and Ben Brewster's article, "Galvanizing Local Anti-trafficking Partnership Work Using Intelligence: Profiling the Problem and Building Resilience" [10], and Derek J. Marsh's article, "Understanding and Pursuing Labor Trafficking Cases Collaboratively" [11], both engage the first theme of local anti-trafficking partnerships. Three articles, i.e., Andrea Nichols, Sarah Slutsker, Melissa Oberstaedt, and Kourtney Gilbert's article, "Team Approaches to Addressing Sex Trafficking of Minors: Promising Practices for a Collaborative Model" [12], Matt Kammer-Kerwick, Mayra Yundt-Pacheco, Nayan Vashist, Kara Takasaki, and Noel Busch-Armendariz's article, "A Framework to Develop Interventions to Address Labor Exploitation and Trafficking: Integration of Behavioral and Decision Science within a Case Study of Day Laborers" [13], and Marcel Van der Watt's article, "Discouraging the Demand that Fosters Sex Trafficking: Collaboration through Augmented Intelligence" [14], all exhibit various facets of the second theme of collaborating in order to innovate. The third theme in this Special Issue, collaborators' perspectives on collaboration, is central to the work of Tonisha Jones in "Perceptions of the Benefits and Barriers to Human Trafficking Interagency Collaboration" [15], as well as Charles Hounmenou's and Sachi Toepp's article, "Exploring Private Investigation Agencies' Experience of Collaboration with Law Enforcement in Investigations of Human Trafficking Cases" [16]. Finally, the emergent theme of developing and sustaining collaboration efforts in this Special Issue is exhibited in the work of Jennifer Paul Ray's "Conceptualizing Task Force Sustainability" [17] and Annie Miller, Julie Laser, Annjanette Alejano-Steele, Kara Napolitano, Nevita George, Natcha Connot, and Amanda Finger's article, "Lessons Learned from the Colorado Project to Comprehensively Combat Human Trafficking" [18]. Together, the articles in this Special Issue offer insight into organizing processes that foster sustainable collaborative partnerships across sectors, expertise levels, and interests through a wide variety of methods and approaches to counter human trafficking/modern slavery. We anticipate the content of this issue will be of interest to researchers, policy-makers, anti-human trafficking professionals across sectors, collaboration developers, leaders, technologists, funders, and community members who want to learn more about how to take part in this work.

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