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Language Barriers in the U.S.: Exploring the protection of human trafficking victims whose native language is Spanish

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An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in the Department of World Languages and Cultures.

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ABSTRACT

Human trafficking exists as a multi-billion-dollar industry that impacts millions of people around the world, mainly targeting vulnerable populations. In the United States, one vulnerable population includes non-English speaking victims trafficked for labor, agriculture, domestic, or sex purposes. Protecting trafficking victims involves providing justice, medical assistance, identification, therapy, rehabilitation, and reintegration tools which often falls within the purview of nonprofit organizations. Research on human trafficking has underscored language barriers as a key obstacle in the protection of trafficking victims. However, little is known about the role of language barriers in the nonprofit sector, and specifically the experiences of nonprofit organizations when dealing with non-English speaking victims.

To explore the impact of language barriers in the protection of trafficking victims, I used an online survey and conducted virtual interviews with representatives of U.S. nonprofit organizations who assist, and have experience working with, Spanish-speaking victims. In total, 40 participants completed an online survey via *Qualtrics*, five representatives agreed to meet for a virtual interview via Zoom. The survey and interviews sought to investigate the impact of language barriers within nonprofit organizations when working with Spanish-speaking victims.

In this study, I found that 75% of organizations who "almost never" see Spanish-speaking victims seek their services have an interpreter available. Despite these services, 66% of organizations state that language barriers pose difficulties to fulfilling their mission. Furthermore, the present study exposes various needs related to language barriers including collaboration among nonprofit organizations, awareness of language services being available, bilingual materials, and cultural literacy.

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Introduction

The issue of human trafficking has been prevalent for centuries. Since 2000 until present day, leaders worldwide have been discussing trafficking while attempting to decrease the prevalence of the injustice in their nations. Essentially, human trafficking refers to "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of people through force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit" (UNODC, 2021). Moreover, trafficking represents a "multi-billion-dollar criminal industry that denies freedom to 24.9 million people around the world" (Polaris, 2021). This modern slavery impacts people globally, it can often be difficult to detect, and the exploitation can occur through labor, sex, and organ trafficking. Each of the causes and effects can be intricate and challenging to recognize, particularly within the United States. The U.S., for example, witnesses over 50,000 people trafficked into the country each year, and the majority of the cases originate from Mexico (Clawson et al., 2009). Trafficking greatly impacts people whose native language is Spanish; Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and other South American and Caribbean countries are major source countries of trafficking (Polaris, 2021). These victims[1] of trafficking must not only navigate the challenges of trafficking, but they must also face the unique obstacles that language barriers present.

The present study aims to examine the impact language barriers have on human trafficking victims. Specifically, my goal is to explore how nonprofit organizations fulfill

[1] The term, "victims," is commonly found in the existing literature and in conversations with those working closely with this population. Recently, however, the sector has made efforts to move towards the term, "survivors." In the present work, I will use the term, "victims," but I acknowledge that the use of these terms is part of a lengthy discussion that, unfortunately, falls beyond the scope of this thesis.

their missions when working with Spanish-speaking victims. This study also adds to the existing literature by exploring the effects of language barriers on the protection of victims (from a nonprofit organization standpoint), an unexplored area in human trafficking. Through an online survey and virtual interviews with nonprofit organizations that work in this field, I was able to see trends that point to various observations. It became evident that Spanish-speaking victims are accessing services made available by nonprofit organizations as 69% of organizations interact with this population in some capacity. Meanwhile, 31% of organizations do not engage with Spanish-speaking victims. The present study explains that this lack of connection could be due to a need for greater awareness of language/ interpretation services or cultural competence. Overall, 66% of organizations attest that language barriers pose difficulties to their organizations. To combat these barriers, this research demonstrates a need and hope for more bilingual and bicultural materials as well as greater collaboration among nonprofit organizations.

Literature Review

As a whole, language barriers present major obstacles for victims of human trafficking, not only in the United States but also around the world. Language barriers, for instance, can deprive victims of access to the resources and support made available and created particularly for people like themselves. Before proceeding, it is important to explain what is meant by "language barriers" in the present study. Language barriers are defined as “semantic problems that arise during the process of encoding and/or decoding the message into words and ideas…limit[ing] effective communication” (Abuarqoub, 2019, p. 69). Moreover, language barriers “indicate difficulties that two people, who do not share a common language, face when they are trying to communicate with each

other" (Abuarqoub, 2019, p. 69). Throughout the present study, language barriers will be explored in the ways they impact trafficking victims' access to services.

In what follows, I provide some background about language barriers in the realm of human trafficking. Specifically, I focus on the 3P framework which is widely utilized throughout anti-trafficking efforts. I also center on nonprofits' challenges in overcoming language barriers as well as the needs that victims of trafficking who speak languages other than English face.

Language barriers can pose dangers of victims not seeking services, never receiving legal, mental health, or reintegration assistance, or even returning to their trafficker. By and large, there is an unintentional, undesired, and unfortunate lack of diversity in the people whom many anti-trafficking nonprofit organizations serve. Nonprofits must overcome budget, marketing, staffing, bicultural and bilingual education, and outreach challenges in order to provide greater accessibility to Spanish-speaking victims.

Overall, this section will inform the goals of the present study and will help situate my research questions within the larger discussion of language barriers among human trafficking victims.

The 3P Framework

Researchers, legislators, advocates, and other invested parties often utilize the 3P framework outlined in the Palermo Protocol (UN, 2000) when dealing with the topic of human trafficking. This protocol declares that signing nations vow to combat trafficking and measure their progress by their capacity to accomplish the 3Ps: *prevent*, *protect,* and *prosecute*. Essentially, the first "P," *prevention*, refers to "spreading awareness and

information" to decrease the risk of various populations becoming trapped in the trafficking industry (Perry, 2020). The second "P," *protection*, refers to the ability to "support victims with legal and medical assistance, help identify victims, and assist victims in reintegration to a post-trafficking life" (Perry, 2020). The final "P," *prosecution*, describes the "writ[ing] and enforc[ing] laws against trafficking, train[ing] law enforcement to recognize the signs, and punish[ing] traffickers" (Perry, 2020). The research question of the present study, which will be outlined below, focuses on *protection* within the 3P framework. Generally, nonprofit organizations, medical professionals, and law enforcement serve in this area.

Out of the three pillars of the 3P framework, countries struggle most with *protection*. *Protection* is also the main area in which trafficking victims encounter language barriers. While leaders within the media and public primarily emphasize the rescue of trafficking victims, the reintegration and continued assistance including legal, medical, identification, and professional services for these people are just as crucial. In saying this, if the people engaging with the victims at this stage are not able to communicate due to language barriers, the protection will not fully occur. In some instances, the language barrier and lack of communication could result in victims returning to their trafficker as a means to survive (Byrne, Parsh, & Ghilain, 2017, p. 50).

As a whole, this framework gives a basis of understanding of the *protection* pillar, a crucial piece to providing holistic care for victims of human trafficking. Nonprofit organizations and social service agencies find themselves in the *protection* pillar. These groups and their interactions with victims of trafficking whose native language is Spanish will be the focus of the present study.

Accessibility Challenges

Researchers have found general correlations between language barriers and the difficulty of achieving protection goals. For instance, "victims may not learn about available services if information about these services is not provided in their native language" (Clawson et al., 2009). Additionally, a study conducted by researchers at the University of Nebraska found that about 26.3% of trafficking victims will not seek services due to the lack of knowledge about available services and language barriers (Duong et al., 2008, p. 23). The lack of knowledge about services can stem from an inability to receive communication regarding the organization and its services. If the organization distributes all information in English, yet their target population speaks other languages, there will be a barrier in receiving the necessary knowledge to access services.

Barriers in Nonprofits

In previous studies, researchers have explored the role of nonprofits serving trafficking victims along with the needs for organizations to understand physical and mental health issues, collaboration, and language services.

If the victim was among the remaining 73.7% from the Duong et. al (2008) study seeking assistance from nonprofits, they may need English literacy and language training. This training and these services would assist victims in assimilating into a reintegrated lifestyle, working a job and performing typical life skills like writing checks, scheduling appointments, or reading, and signing forms (Logan et al., 2009, p. 17).

Both physical and mental health of trafficking victims is crucial to consider. Trafficking experiences typically include verbal, physical abuse, isolation, threats, and

limiting movement (Owens et al., 2014). Many victims also experience dehumanizing, intimidation, controlling documentation, and immigration threats (Owens et al., 2014). Additionally, many traffickers may accompany the victim for necessary medical treatment (Byrne, Parsh, & Ghilain, 2017, p. 51). There may also be communication barriers in that "traffickers won't allow victims to speak for themselves" (Byrne, Parsh, & Ghilain, 2017, p. 50) and many require "the use of interpreters during assessments" (Byrne, Parsh, & Ghilain, 2017, p. 53). Traffickers can also exist as barriers as many victims are too "fearful of their trafficker to use services...[or feel] afraid using services would embarrass their families" (Logan et. al, 2009, p. 23).

Services to assist in the recovery and rehabilitation of trafficked victims are essential to their protection and reintegration. However, when certified, physical interpreters are not present in-person, many facilities will utilize a phone-interpreter which has proven to be minimally helpful to victims, particularly to trafficked youth (Garg et al., 2020, p. 8). Generally, nonprofit organizations do not offer in-person interpreters because most do not include this role as a full-time paid position in their organization. Some suggestions, though, include knowing the right questions to ask, and "exhibiting cultural competence," and regard to one's culture to establish trust (Byrne, Parsh, & Ghilain, 2017, p. 53). Without nonprofit organizations developing a vast cultural awareness, cultural barriers and a lack of understanding can create discomfort for victims accessing and participating in counseling services (Davy, 2015, p. 18).

Additionally, in terms of mental health, if there is an absence of providers trained in trauma sensitive care that can speak to the victim in their own language, victims are not likely to participate in the care (Garg et al., 2020, p. 10). Even "the presence of a third

party" like an interpreter can create greater challenges for the healthcare provider to develop trust with the victim (Clawson et al., 2009). Additionally, for questioning sessions or "therapy to be properly administered, and for the safety of victims, interpreters should be independent" (Pascual et al., 2017, p. 55), without other parties present. Moreover, current trends toward medical services offered online result in more difficulties for Spanish-speaking victims as "those individuals who are not familiar with the language or may not be computer literate [demonstrate] even less engagement with needed services" (Pascual et al., 2017, p. 55).

The unity among the members that work in the protection area of trafficking is essential to bettering the treatment of victims. Essentially, "collaborative approach[es] to service delivery across agencies" (Davy, 2015, p. 333) are necessary for success. For instance, law enforcement and community or nonprofit partners including "the medical industry, the mental health industry, the shelters, the servicing groups, [and] the homeless groups" need to work together to understand trafficking and report instances to law enforcement (Farrell & Pfeffer, 2014, p. 55).

Overall, it has been suggested that organizations provide "interpretation/ translation…[and] intensive one-on-one case management" for victims (Davy, 2015, p. 329). Organizations should also offer resources "to facilitate language access at every point of service for victims" (Logan et al., 2009, p. 22). Additionally, they should provide bilingual and bicultural staff to conduct outreach efforts (Logan et al., 2009, p. 22). However, this attention can be difficult due to funding restraints as "many agencies lack a budget for this" (De Angelis, 2016, p. 70).

In Logan et al.'s (2009) study, the goals were to define human trafficking, descibe

factors that contribute to vulnerability, examine the crime of trafficking, explore identificaiton of victims, and provide recommendations. In this study, 65% of organizations stated that language issues exist as barriers to serving victims. Nonetheless, ongoing language support is central to successful service delivery for trafficking victims (Davy, 2015, p. 334).

Victim Needs

In Clawson & Dutch's (2008) study, service providers and law enforcement professionals "were asked to describe the needs of victims of human trafficking" (p. 1). Their immediate response was not to list the needs of trafficking victims, but rather to ask "what don't they need?", as the variety of needs for victims are expansive. More specific needs include safety, housing, legal assistance, advocacy, childcare, education, life skills training, financial management, and mental health assistance. Additionally, housing and medical accessibility are major needs for victims of trafficking (Davy, 2015, p. 321). On top of these struggles, "other needs that were difficult to meet included dental care, job placement, and translation services" (Davy, 2015, p. 333).

First, victims require emergency attention, and then "as basic survival needs are met, the focus shifts toward recovering from the trafficking experience and beginning to build autonomous lives" (Davy, 2015, p. 329). The research in Clawson & Dutch's (2008) study reflects that "international victims often express a greater and more urgent need to obtain employment than domestic victims do" (p. 1). This need is attributed to their determination to send money back home to support their families. While many services through nonprofit organizations exist to meet these needs, there is a major "lack of knowledge and understanding of what services are available" (Clawson & Dutch,

2008, p. 5). In addition to victims not knowing what services are available, language and transportation barriers persist. While there is relatively easy access to providers that speak English and Spanish, "clients that speak other languages…have difficulty accessing services" (Clawson & Dutch, 2008, p. 5). In Logan et al.'s (2009) study, for instance, 85% of victims surveyed stated that victims remain entrapped due to "language issues" (p. 13). With these poor language skills, victims struggle to learn about their rights, and "they do not know the institutions to turn to for help" (Logan et al., 2009, p. 13).

Role of Spanish Language & Terminology

Last, but not least, translations, interpretations, and specific phrases often pose major challenges for victims as well. Professionals in the field of trafficking often find that many of the concepts and wording associated with trafficking have specific meanings and various implications in English (Perry, 2020). For example, terms like "consent and coercion" hold deep-rooted meanings in English that would likely not be fully communicated to a non-English speaking victim. De Angelis (2016) notes that a major stereotype exists that all trafficking is completely forced every time. In reality, the term "consent" carries a more complex definition than this stereotype offers, and any hint of admitted consent can lead to less protection for the victim of trafficking (De Angelis, 2016). There are areas of ambiguity where some consent may have occurred, but the situation still constitutes trafficking. In English, defining the line of consent can be difficult, but then after interpretation occurs, the line can grow even blurrier. The term "coercion" presents the same ambiguity when discussing a potential instance of trafficking. Coercion "requires evidence that a 'reasonable person' would feel coerced under specific circumstances" (Perry, 2020). However, like consent, simply defining

coercion is not so simple. Even in English, coercion can look different depending on the individual and their experience (De Angelis, 2016). Because of the difficulty understanding a concept in one language, it is clear that communicating the fullness of the word would be extremely challenging for nonprofit providers when working with non-English speaking victims.

This same interpretation difficulty can also be described for typical keywords used in trafficking situations like “trafficking” versus “exploitation” versus “smuggling.” The term “trafficking” refers to an involuntary crime against a person that is exploitational with no movement required. On the other hand, “exploitation” indicates the denial of worker rights under labor laws (Perry, 2020). Finally, “smuggling” refers to the transportation-based voluntary crime against a border (Perry, 2020). In English, the meanings and definitions for each of these words get jumbled, and they are important to specify. Then, when translated into another language, the meanings grow more mixed, misused, and vague. Victims, then, may not communicate what they intend to share. Meanwhile, the translator or person speaking to the victim may unknowingly communicate the incorrect term. Overall, these words and their different meanings are crucial to distinguish and understand to better the protection of non-English speaking victims, including Spanish-speaking victims, in the U.S.

This section has provided background information on some of the existing research about human trafficking victims and their experiences with regard to their protection. The studies presented here show that language barriers pose difficulties for victims of trafficking in accessing legal, medical, and professional services from nonprofit organizations. The research within this section highlights the importance of

viewing human trafficking through the lens of the 3P framework in order to understand the changes needed to improve injustices faced by trafficking, particularly for victims in the U.S. whose native language is not English. In saying this, and to the best of my knowledge, no study has yet explored how language barriers are dealt with among nonprofit organizations in the U.S. The present study aims to fill this gap by examining how nonprofits interact with and assist Spanish-speaking trafficking victims in the U.S.

Research Question

As shown in the previous section, the existing literature highlights the important role of nonprofit organizations in the protection area of assisting human trafficking victims. Studies also explain that one reason victims may not access services provided by nonprofit organizations is the presence of language barriers. While the response to this problem would be for more nonprofits to develop language services, existing research demonstrates the unique challenges nonprofits face in providing necessary language services. Some of those unique challenges include lack of funding for interpretation or translation services, staffing shortages, and high client demand seeking free assistance. Furthemore, the literature also highlights victims' needs for these crucial services and the negative effects that can occur if they cannot access them.

With this in mind, my research question is as follows: "What is the impact of language barriers on the protection of human trafficking victims in the United States whose native language is Spanish?" This question seeks to examine the role of nonprofit organizations as they interact and provide services for victims of human trafficking, particularly those who speak Spanish.

Additionally, this research question aims to explore the effects of language

barriers on human trafficking victims. After experiencing a trafficking situation, whether labor or sex trafficking, a person generally feels hesitant to share details or information regarding their circumstance. If a victim already feels uncertain about sharing, and then they are met with misunderstandings and difficulty communicating due to language barriers, their frustration will only grow. Language barriers can also affect the amount, detail, quality, and accuracy of a victim's testimony. Victims also may not fully understand what services exist for them through nonprofit organizations. Moreover, these language barriers may even impact the amount of victims who are able to be recognized as victims of trafficking. As the conversations surrounding issues of human trafficking become more prevalent, it is crucial to focus on underrepresented groups impacted by the injustice that may otherwise be overlooked, like Spanish-speaking victims.

The present study also sheds light on the role of nonprofit organizations as they can be among the first to encounter a victim of trafficking. Shelters, food distribution areas, or even medical assistance organizations may serve these victims without knowing it. In those instances, nonprofit representatives must be able to communicate effectively regardless of who seeks services from them. As there are over 1.5 million nonprofit organizations registered in the U.S. (Perry, 2020), this large population of stakeholders who interact with trafficking victims remains unexplored.

Methodology

For this study, I obtained data from nonprofits who work closely with trafficking victims after receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). To investigate the impacts of language barriers in human trafficking among Spanish-speaking victims, I collected data from nonprofit organizations located

throughout various regions across the United States. Some of the benefits of hearing from these organizations are the first-hand, personal perspectives from professionals who work closely with trafficking victims, the wide range of experiences from various regions, and the practical needs expressed from the people doing the daily work of fighting human trafficking. In this section, I describe the specific research design, the sample population, and the data collection process used in this research.

Research design

In the early stages of this research, my plan was to reach a large number of nonprofits in the U.S. and simultaneously learn about their first-hand experiences with Spanish-speaking victims. For that reason, I decided to use a mixed-methodology approach, where both quantitative and qualitative data would be collected. I considered this approach as the most effective path because quantitative data offers a broad, expansive look at nonprofits in general throughout the U.S. Meanwhile, the qualitative data adds depth, personal experiences, and practicality to the quantitative findings. Overall, the mixed-methodology approach contributes to a holistic investigation.

Self-administered voluntary surveys were used to collect quantitative data. These surveys provided information regarding the population of Spanish-speaking victims, the number of Spanish-speaking victims who seek services, the availability of interpreters at nonprofit organizations, the availability of physical resources in Spanish, the phrases that would be helpful to know when communicating with Spanish-speaking victims, and the existence of other like-minded organizations who offer language services.

A survey was chosen because of the wide accessibility the tool offers. Online surveys through platforms like *Qualtrics* can be easily self-administered. Respondents

can move at their own pace throughout the survey. Also, a 10-question survey takes approximately 10 minutes to complete, and it allows for greater participation. Additionally, this platform allowed for the distribution of the survey and collected information across a broader, more diverse audience. Surveys provide clear, workable quantitative data to analyze.

A virtual interview was chosen to follow the survey. These 20-30 minute interviews took place via *Zoom*. The interviews encouraged more open discussion with respondents while allowing them to expand upon their answers from the survey. Many of the respondents shared that the survey provoked deeper thinking and reminded them of specific instances. Because of this, they expressed enjoyment for having an additional way to share their perspective in the interview. Moreover, the interviews allowed for time to ask additional questions that relate more specifically to an organization's scope of work that were not originally included in the survey or planning process.

Population and sampling

As mentioned above, the study targeted nonprofit organizations who work with human trafficking victims across the United States in the areas of labor and sex trafficking. The goal of this study was to establish a general, broad understanding of the issue across the country rather than in one specific region. Because of this, the study targeted six main areas of the United States including the West, South, Midwest, Northeast, and Central regions.

Specifically, in the present study, the West region includes Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, and every state to the west of these states listed. The South includes Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia,

Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, and Georgia. Originally, Georgia was isolated as its own region due to the high volume of nonprofit organizations in the state. However, the lack of respondents propelled us to include Georgia within the South region during the analysis. The Midwest includes North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Ohio. The Northeast includes Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. The Central region includes Illinois, Iowa, Idaho, Nebraska, Indiana, Kansas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri.

About 300 randomly selected nonprofit organizations across these regions were chosen based on three main factors: (1) mission (i.e assisting victims); (2) accessibility (i.e. contact information available online), and (3) status (i.e. nonprofit organizations had to be active, currently implementing programs to support their mission).

"End Slavery Now," an online antislavery directory served as a tool in gathering this information about the organizations. These organizations were publicly listed along with their location, contact information, and websites. After these nonprofit organizations were selected, they were categorized by region. The number of organizations in each region differed depending on the prevalence of this specific kind of nonprofit in the area.

Survey data collection method and process

The research was conducted through surveys and virtual interviews with anti-trafficking or aftercare nonprofit organization representatives. The survey was developed and self-administered through *Qualtrics,* a secure online questionnaire program. Through discussions and peer-revisions, a 10-question survey was developed. Suggestions and revisions from professionals in the field Human Trafficking and Spanish

provided helpful feedback to be implemented in the final survey. The amount of 10 questions was intentionally developed so as to not appear intimidating or time consuming to potential participants. The goal was to encourage the greatest participation possible. Participation in the survey was voluntary and could be discontinued at any time.

The data collection process began by inviting the 300 randomly selected nonprofit organizations who qualified for the study to participate in the 10-question survey on *Qualtrics.* Respondents were sent a private email invitation explaining the scope of the research and survey. This email message included an anonymous link to the survey. No identifying or personal data was collected. The first prompt in the survey was a consent form. If the participant chose to consent, *Qualtrics* allowed them to continue the survey. If the participant refrained from consenting, the survey immediately closed.

Following consent, respondents were guided through the 10 questions (for a complete list of the questions included in the survey, see Appendix A). The survey included eight multiple-choice style questions and two open-ended responses. Each question was formulated to draw responses that would help answer the research question. The questions sought information regarding the prevalence of Spanish-speaking victims compared with the victims who seek assistance and the resources available to serve them in their primary language. The questions also inquired about trainings, other organizations, and tools that would be helpful to the nonprofit.

The survey was available for 10 weeks starting on December 7, 2021, and continued until its closure on February 18, 2022. One reminder for participants to complete the survey was sent on January 26, 2022.

Interview data collection method and process

Data collection continued by inviting the nonprofit organization representatives to participate in a voluntary interview. This invitation was privately sent to all 300 contacts due to the survey's lack of collecting identifying information. The invitation to participate in the interview was targeted but not limited to those who completed the survey and desired to expound upon their answers. The email expressed gratitude for those who completed the survey and then invited those participants to complete a Google Form if they were interested in expounding upon their survey responses in an interview format. Seven respondents completed the Google Form expressing their interest and availability for an interview. One respondent directly emailed us to coordinate an interview time. Five of these participants completed an interview.

Interviews were conducted at times convenient for both myself and the participant. The 20-30 minute virtual interviews took place over a private *Zoom* room, secured with a passcode and invitation. I began the interview by explaining and reading the Informed Consent to the participant. If the participant consented, I proceeded with the interview questions. However, if the participant chose not to consent, I would express gratitude and conclude the meeting. Each participant consented and completed the interview. The audio of the *Zoom* interview was recorded with a phone application to be used as a reference strictly during the analysis. Participation in the interview was voluntary and could be discontinued at any time.

It is worth mentioning that not every question was used for each participant as each interview was unique in timing, responses, and fluid conversation. For a complete list of the pre-planned questions included in the interview, see Appendix B.

The invitation to be considered for the interview was first sent on February 10, 2022. Interviews were then scheduled, coordinated, and conducted throughout the following 4 weeks. A follow-up thank you message was sent to each interview participant. There were no forms of experimental manipulation or compensation involved in the survey or interview. Data collection began following the IRB approval.

Results

In this section, I first present some of the patterns extracted from the online survey data, and then continue with a detailed analysis of the interviews. Overall, the participants from both the online survey and the interview describe the current state, needs, and practical hope for moving forward. Throughout this process numerous topics and trends arose highlighting the need for collaboration between organizations, bilingual materials, and greater awareness of the services provided. For instance, 75% of organizations surveyed have interpreters available. Meanwhile, 25% of respondents shared that Spanish-speaking victims “almost never” access services. Interview participants shared that the reason for respondents rarely accessing services could be attributed to fear related to cultural expectations, distrust regarding documentation, or doubt of available, credible language services. With these difficulties, 66% of the surveyed organizations from every region in the U.S. attest that language barriers pose problems to their organization’s ability to provide services.

Survey Results

Of the 300 nonprofit organizations, 40 of them completed the online survey (13% response rate). Participation included 10 organizations from the West region, 10 from the Northeast, nine from the South, four from the Midwest, three from the Central region,

and four were miscellaneous being internationally based or unstated. The four miscellaneous participants are still included in the analysis, but they are not categorized with a region. This participation somewhat mirrors the distribution of nonprofits in the U.S. As the figure in Appendix C (Maciag, 2019) shows, the Northeast region has the most concentration of nonprofits. The northeastern region with "older, more established communities…tend[s] to possess more legacy wealth and established institutions, so they generally have far more nonprofits than more newly developed regions do" (Maciag, 2019). Behind the Northeast, is the South, then the West, then the Central Region, and lastly the Midwest.

As a basis, out of the organizations who participated, 69% work with Spanish-speaking victims while 31% do not. Additionally, six organizations (15%) work with people who speak languages other than Spanish. Most of these organizations offer services in the Midwest, and they work with people who speak Russian, Indian languages, Portuguese, and other languages. Within the organizations who interact with Spanish-speaking victims, 42% shared that language barriers do pose difficulties for their organization while 58% do not think language barriers are a problem.

When organizations were asked "about how many trafficking victims in your area do you think primarily speak Spanish?", 33% of organizations said they believe that 25% of the trafficking victims in their area speak Spanish. Additionally, 29% believe that 50% of the trafficking population are Spanish speakers. Then, 14% shared that they thought 10% of the trafficking population primarily speaks Spanish. Nineteen percent of respondents believe that the population of Spanish-speaking victims is only 5%. Lastly, just 5% of respondents believe that Spanish-speaking victims make up less than 1% of

the trafficking population. Overall, well over half of respondents say that Spanish-speaking victims comprise 25-50% of trafficked victims in their area. These responses highlight that at least 76% of the respondents are aware of the presence of Spanish-speaking victims in their area.

Following this question, respondents were asked how often these Spanish-speaking victims seek assistance: 0% selected never, 18% selected almost never, 50% selected sometimes, 23% selected often, and 9% selected very often. Essentially, 82% of respondents say that Spanish-speaking victims do seek assistance in some capacity.

When asked if their organization trained them on language barriers or if language barriers were mentioned in their orientation, respondents were split in their answers: 27% were unsure, 36% said that language barriers were not included in their training, and 36% said that language barriers were included in their training. The group who had training in language barriers also largely utilize bilingual materials. Specifically, all but one organization who said language barriers were included in their training also utilize bilingual materials. In terms of bilingual materials, 68% of organizations utilize and/or provide bilingual materials like pamphlets, brochures, website content, or social media while 32% do not. Of that 32%, one organization from the northern region shared that they "could do a lot better on the materials." The interview data (presented below) provides further insight into the use of bilingual materials among nonprofit organizations.

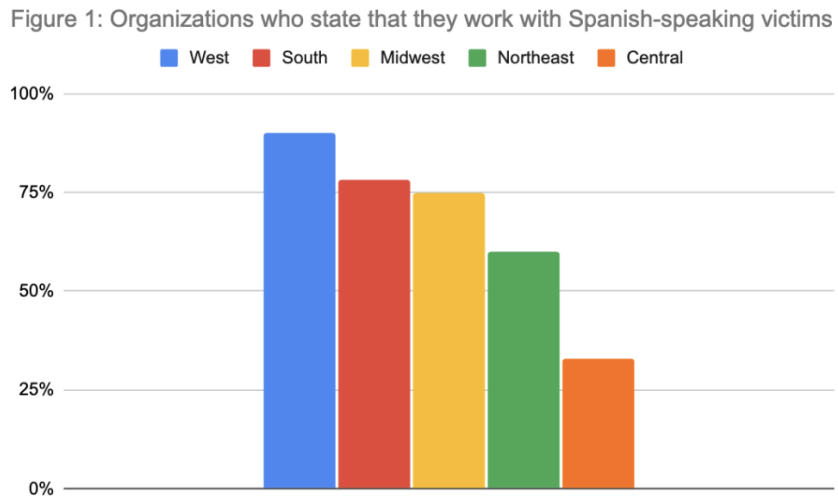
Furthermore, eight participants shared that "almost none" of other like-minded organizations provide accessibility for Spanish-speaking victims. Another eight respondents said they were "unsure," while one respondent said "none" of other

like-minded organizations provide accessibility. Four respondents said “half,” and one participant selected “almost all”[2]. Essentially, 77% of respondents feel unsure about the accessibility other organizations provide or believe that “almost none” or “none” of the organizations provide accessibility for Spanish-speaking victims. Meanwhile, 23% believe that “half,” or “almost all,” organizations offer accessibility. This topic of collaboration and partnerships with other nonprofit organizations is also explored more thoroughly in the interviews.

Survey Trends

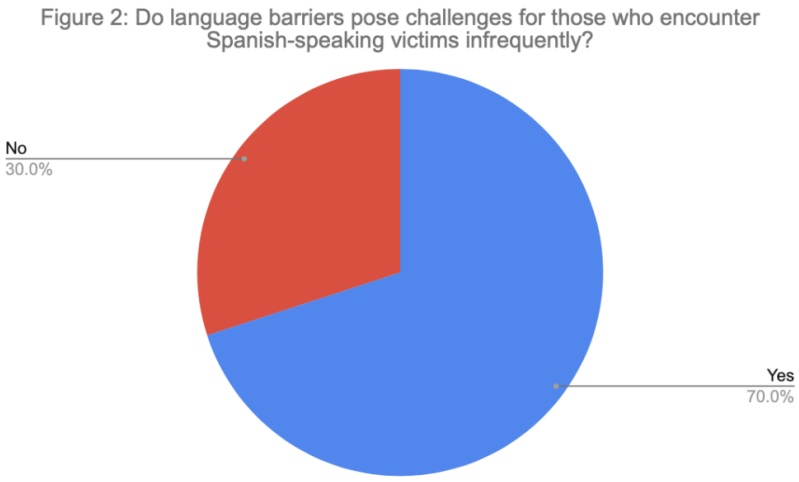
With the main findings in mind, we can identify some emerging trends in the survey data. For example, it is helpful to see the breakdown of which regions work with the most Spanish-speaking victims. Specifically, the West works with the most Spanish-speaking victims (90%), followed by the South (78%). These regions are then followed by the Midwest (75%) and the Northeast (60%). Central region respondents, on the other hand, report the lowest percentage (33%). See Figure 1 for reference.

[2] This question only received responses from 22 participants. Participants were not required to answer every question in the online survey. Because of this, several respondents did not finish the survey or chose to skip various questions. This can explain why some of the results include less than 40 respondents.

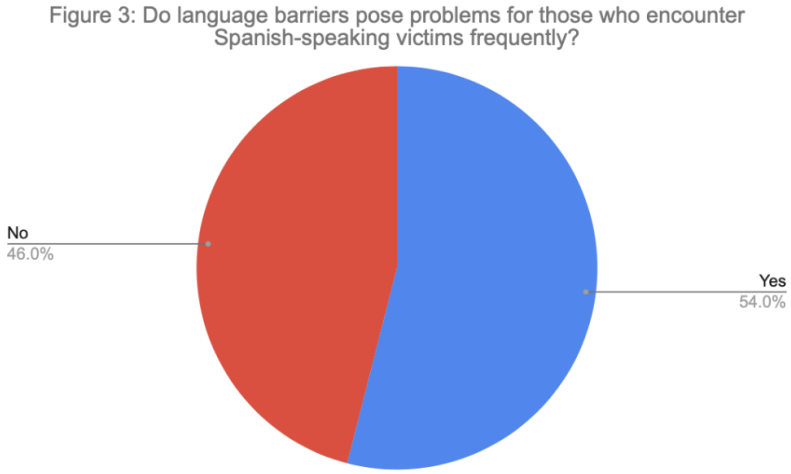


This representation is relatively consistent with the proportion of trafficking numbers throughout the U.S. as seen on the map in Appendix D. For example, the western states of Nevada (#1) and California (#7) are in the top 10 states with the highest rates of trafficking. Then, the southern states follow with Mississippi (#2), Florida (#3), Georgia (#5), and Texas (#10). Following this, a variation from the present study occurs as the World Population Review includes the Midwest with Ohio as #4 and Michigran as #9 of states with the highest rates of trafficking. Then, Delaware (#6) represents the Northeast region. Finally, Missouri (#8) represents the Central region (World Population Review).

Additionally, when representatives from each region were asked if language barriers pose challenges to their organization, their responses differed depending on the frequency in which they encounter victims. For instance, 70% of the organizations who encounter Spanish-speaking victims infrequently (once a month, a few times a year) say that language barriers still pose challenges to their organization. Meanwhile, only 30% say that language barriers do not pose challenges. See Figure 2.



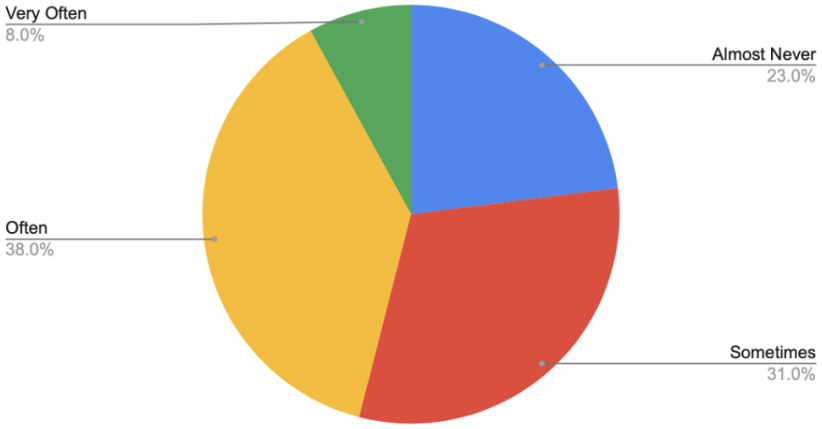
Possibly more striking, though, 54% of the organizations who do frequently encounter Spanish-speaking victims say that language barriers still pose problems while 46% say that they do not pose difficulties. See Figure 3. Overall, 66% of all respondents say that language barriers are a struggle. The data from the present study mirrors the findings of Logan et al.'s (2009) study which attests that 65% of organizations say that language issues exist as barriers to serving victims.



Furthermore, those who share that 25-50% of the trafficked population in their area primarily speak Spanish also say that a portion of that population remains unserved

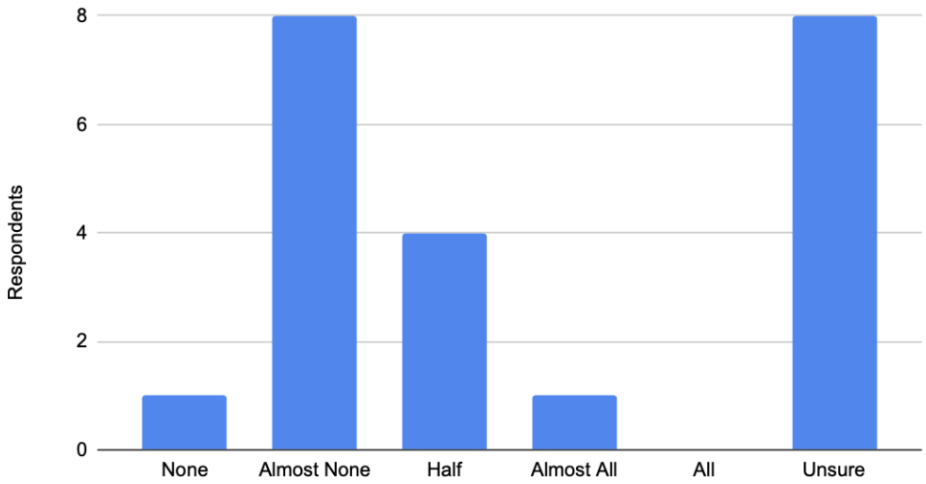
or unreached. While these respondents believe 25-50% of the population primarily speaks Spanish, 23% say that Spanish-speaking victims "almost never" seek services. Only 8% shared that Spanish-speaking victims seek services "very often." This finding suggests that there are more Spanish-speaking trafficking victims near nonprofit organizations than those who are currently seeking services. This data also highlights that almost one out of four Spanish-speaking victims "almost never" seek services. See Figure 4.

Figure 4: Of those who said that 25-50% of trafficked population speaks Spanish, how often do Spanish-speaking victims seek services?



Because nonprofit organizations generally serve their area's community in a particular sector like trafficking, they often develop a general understanding of their sector's environment and other active organizations. In saying this, respondents were split on how many other like-minded organizations offer accessibility. About 36% of respondents were unsure of how many other like-minded organizations provide accessibility for Spanish-speakers. The rest of the respondents were distributed in their answers with 36% saying "almost none", 5% saying "none", 18% saying "half", and 5% saying "almost all." Relatively speaking, 95% of respondents shared that only half of like-minded organizations or less provide accessibility for Spanish-speaking victims. This finding will be explored in greater depth throughout the Discussion section. See Figure 5.

Figure 5: How many other like-minded organizations provide accessibility for Spanish-speaking victims?



While many organizations "almost never" see Spanish-speaking victims seeking services, these organizations have interesting perspectives to share regarding their interpretation services. Out of the organizations who "almost never" see Spanish-speaking victims seeking services, 75% do have an interpreter available. While 25% explained that they unfortunately do not have an interpreter available, they expressed many alternatives throughout the open-ended response section of the survey and the open-ended interview. These organizations who do not have an interpreter available, though, explained their willingness to find creative avenues to communicate with victims of trafficking who speak languages other than the representatives' native language. For example, one organization shared that they use online translation tools. Additionally, another organization shared that they try "to write [their] questions in Spanish so they have a very clear understanding of the questions." This organization also finds tutors to help victims learn English. Another organization explained their strategy for equipping their English-speaking staff to communicate with speakers of other languages. This organization has created "language access cards that have common

phrases such as ‘I don’t speak Spanish,’ ‘Do you speak English’ to assist with possible communication barriers” early on. This nonprofit also asks survivors and staff “if different phrases need to be translated and put into a language access card when needed.”

Overall, though, the common thread and recurring theme of each organization who shared an open-response includes the desire to communicate to victims that they are safe and the organization is there to help. See Table 1 below to view the phrases that organizations say would be helpful to know how to communicate.

Table 1	
What are some common phrases that you use while working at your organization that would be helpful to know in Spanish? (You can answer in English.)	
English:	Spanish:
How can I help you? What kind of services are you looking for?	¿Cómo te puedo ayudar? ¿Qué tipo de servicios estás buscando?
How are you feeling? What do you need? How can I help you? Are you hungry? Who do you want to speak to? It is time for school, time for bed, time to wake up, time to eat, etc.	¿Cómo te sientes? ¿Qué necesitas? ¿Cómo te puedo ayudar? ¿Tienes hambre? ¿Con quién quieres hablar? Es hora de ir a la escuela, de acostarse, de despertarse, de comer, etc.
Are you safe?	¿Estás a salvo?
How can we help you? Are you in a dangerous situation? Do you have family nearby?	¿Cómo podemos ayudarte? ¿Estás en una situación peligrosa? ¿Tienes familia cerca?
What can I help you with? What are your current needs?	¿Con qué puedo ayudarte? ¿Cuáles son tus necesidades actuales?
We are here to help you. Your information is confidential. How can I help?	Estamos aquí para ayudarte. Tu información es confidencial. ¿Cómo puedo ayudar?
What would you like help with? What services did they (other providers) say we could provide?	¿En qué te gustaría recibir ayuda? ¿Qué servicios dijeron ellos (otros proveedores) que podíamos proporcionar?
How can I help? Has anyone taken your documents from you? Do you feel free to move and communicate? Is anyone forcing you to do something against your will? Is anyone threatening to harm you or a member of your family? How did you arrive in this country? What did they promise you?	¿Cómo puedo ayudar? ¿Alguien te ha quitado tus documentos? ¿Te sientes libre de moverte y comunicarte? ¿Está alguien forzándote a hacer algo en contra de tu voluntad? ¿Alguien está amenazándote con hacerte daño o amenazando a un miembro de tu familia? ¿Cómo llegaste a este país? ¿Qué te prometieron?
You are safe, and we are here to help	Estás a salvo, y estamos aquí para ayudarte.
Empowered and trauma	Empoderamiento y trauma

The direct translations of these words alone, though, may not be helpful in communicating the meaning. For example, one organization thoughtfully suggested that people should understand how to speak about trafficking and exploitation rather than simply knowing the word or term. This is an interesting insight and will be unpacked further in the discussion section. The theme of understanding how to communicate a topic that is challenging even in English consistently reoccurs throughout the survey and interview results.

A common question to ask in response to these results is "why?" Among many others, a representative shared one suggestion in the survey as to why Spanish-speaking victims do not seek services. They proposed that "clients are unsure if social service agencies have language capacity" or unsure about services provided in general. Similarly, Clawson et al. (2009), Duong et. al (2008), and Logan et al. (2009), all affirm that many victims have a lack of knowledge about available services due to information not being provided in their native language. Additionally, this survey respondent explained the barriers that cultural issues can pose like colloquial terms or even the use of "Spanglish."[3] The interviews shed light on this question by providing personal experiences from the nonprofit professionals working in this field daily.

Another common question in the face of this problem is "what is being done?" or "what can be done?" One nonprofit organization realized the difficulty of providing educational, therapeutic, and enrichment to speakers of other languages. They found it much easier to have access to a full-time interpreter to communicate with the participant.

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[3] In its most basic terms, "Spanglish" refers to the use of Spanish and English in the same sentence/phrase. Lexical adaptations and code-switching, for example, are characteristic of Spanglish. Having said that, I use the term "Spanglish" here since it was brought up by some participants, but I acknowledge that this term, and its use, is a controversial topic (see Otheguy & Stern 2010 for a thorough discussion).

However, this interpreter took 5 days to be assigned by the Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS) for the organization. The organization is now committed to hiring bilingual staff and requiring teaching staff to obtain an ESOL certification. As explained by another respondent, victims "feel relieved when someone speaks to them in their language."

Interview Results

Each of the five interviews highlighted the current state of their organizations as it relates to Spanish-speaking victims of trafficking. They continued to explain the depth of the problems they see with providing accessibility and language services to speakers of other languages. Finally, each interviewee offered genuine hopes and tangible action steps for moving forward to better serve an underrepresented and underreached population impacted by human trafficking. In what follows, I present some of the remarks from the participants who completed the interview. I have divided this section into recurring themes as a way to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the interview data. For the purposes of the following subsections, we will refer to respondents by letters that correspond with their region. See Table 2 below for a reference of the respondents corresponding with their region.

Table 2

Respondent	Region
Respondent A	Midwest
Respondent B	South
Respondent C	South
Respondent D	South
Respondent E	South

Current state of collaboration

As respondents from the South and Midwest regions offered insight from their experiences as professionals working for nonprofits who serve victims of trafficking, a general picture of the current state of the anti-trafficking nonprofits developed. Some of these findings may lack representation of the entire U.S. as four out of the five respondents work in the South region. Each organization, though, regardless of region, bears different strengths and weaknesses. Each of their perspectives are helpful to gain a general baseline understanding.

For instance, some organizations are thriving in collaboration, providing for needs, prioritizing awareness, and ensuring sound, trusted translation services. One of these organizations was described by Respondent A who explained that collaboration is essential to holistic care. This respondent then stated that their organization "recommends providers often because [they] have so many partners with other services in the area, so if [they] don't know what to do or don't offer it in the office, [they] know who to call." Typically, one organization does not have a large enough scope to fulfill every need present in complex trafficking cases. However, Respondent A shared their surprise at the wide range of available "therapy, housing, covid-relief, and food bank [agencies]" because they did not know about these resources as a community member. They now see that there are options "to help people. It doesn't mean that it's a perfect situation, but there is help out there."

Another organization added that it is necessary to have partnerships with shelters and other organizations whose missions and resources may offer different or additional

services. Respondent B shared that one of the main ways organizations serve victims of trafficking is through referrals. They shared that "referrals require other agencies to be familiar with your organization." Then, the more connections happening, the more people will be served, and the more word will spread, and the more victims will hear about services. Respondent B even explained their close relationship to another nearby organization. The two like-minded agencies work to build a strong relationship with each other where collaboration, rather than competition reigns.

These connections also serve as an important piece to reaching diverse clients. For instance, Respondent A also noted that they "get referrals from law enforcement, shelters, homeland security, community members/ neighbors, and other organizations." These partnerships hold great importance as organizations have different scopes of work and available resources. Respondent A works for an organization who provides holistic care for victims including "housing, food, medical services, clothing, childcare, schooling…resume writing, interview tips, and occupational therapy." Similarly, Respondent C's organization provides housing and long-term case management. Respondent B offers bereavement counseling, legal aid, and interpretation services. Respondent D prioritizes education and intervention. Respondent E does not work in direct services but rather provides training, advocacy, and education for other organizations. Each organization provides unique services, resources, and perspectives. Therefore, collaborating will benefit the people they serve.

While these connections can be easy to form for some, Respondent C expressed greater difficulty in establishing these relationships. This respondent shared that they

have not been able to craft extensive partnerships. There is another major organization nearby that works with Hispanic victims, but many attempts at connecting have resulted in no response, referrals, or partnerships. While it remains a "mystery" to this respondent, they did explain that the large workload may be a reason for not considering other organizations as partners. This respondent added that organizations tend to have better luck with church partnerships who have congregations that speak other languages. They continued by explaining the potential for joining a task force to develop partnerships if their efforts are not met with results.

This need for collaboration is echoed in existing literature as Davy (2015) explains that "collaborative approach[es] to service delivery across agencies…is essential" (p. 331) along with forming a network "to provide wide-ranging care to victims" (p. 328).

Strengths in awareness

Like collaboration, awareness is also a key theme for anti-trafficking nonprofit organizations. Some organizations interviewed have found their stride in this area while others are still struggling, and some find themselves somewhere in the middle. For example, Respondent A approaches awareness through advertising, flyers in restrooms, billboards, and maintaining a clear presence at major events in their community like motorcycle rallies and other large gatherings. Respondent D also highlighted their organizations' strengths in awareness by explaining that "reportings have been rising because more awareness is happening." This organization approaches awareness through "outreach and education for youth, parents, and professionals." They also "go into places

where people are most vulnerable like detention centers, homeless centers, and strip clubs" (Respondent D) to explain what trafficking and vulnerable situations look like. In this form of intervention awareness, having language services is crucial to reaching people who may be victims of trafficking. Respondent D shared that many of the girls at the strip clubs speak Spanish, so during outreach they "always try to have a volunteer or someone on staff who can communicate" in their language. Existing literature affirms this need as Logan et al.'s (2009) study highlights the need for organizations to provide bilingual and bicultural staff when conducting outreach efforts.

Respondent D continued by explaining that having someone who can truly communicate with the girls while they are in the trafficked situation allows them "to feel that they are seen and cared for." They already feel vulnerable and misunderstood because they "are not able to communicate or understand, and they are in trauma." Victims "need consistency because of what they've seen and been through with different buyers, different traffickers, [etc.]" This consistency needs to come in the form of "being on their level" and speaking their language so "they do not feel like they have to stumble over broken English," Respondent D shared.

Respondent B also shared their organization's strategic approach to awareness. This organization prints every pamphlet in English and Spanish. All outreach efforts feature their promotional posters written in English and Spanish, "to let victims know that they can be understood and served." They also share social media posts in both languages to show equity. Additionally, Respondent B's organization strives to attend Spanish-speaking events and "know the pockets of the community with

Spanish-speakers." In this respondent's region they believe about "45% of the trafficked community speaks Spanish and a lot of them don't realize what is going on to them." With this in mind, their organization focuses intentional awareness efforts into the farming community. They even "have events specifically geared toward Spanish-speaking migrant communities." However, "it doesn't matter how much awareness you have," other barriers can still impede victims from accessing services.

Challenges in awareness

While there is some success in awareness of the Spanish-speaking community, even greater difficulties persist. For instance, Respondent D shared that "so much can be lost in translation or even tone." Respondent C explained that their organization struggles to offer language services due to understaffing, lack of resources, and minimal requests from clients who speak other languages. This organization shared that if they needed to serve a client who spoke another language, they would find a creative avenue. For instance, the Respondent C's team "heavily relied on Google Translate to translate for a Hungarian woman" who came for help. However, Google Translate fails at providing reliable, quality translations. The existing literature supports this idea that when "certified, physical interpreters are not present in-person," (Garg et al., 2020, p. 8) other services are minimally helpful.

Respondent C's organization continued by sharing that they "have a very low percentage of Spanish-speakers that come in… and it has always [been] concerning." They offered a reason as to why that may be the case. From her experience, she believes that there is a lack of awareness and a lack of calls from victims or referrals from other

organizations. Even well-established and well-known organizations, like Respondent A's organization, face some difficulties. For example, "other organizations have a general idea about [them], but language services are not on the general person's radar."

Challenges in serving: materials

Materials typically go hand-in-hand with awareness as pamphlets, flyers, and other materials are a main form of generating awareness. However, from the survey and interviews this has proved to be a main struggle. Respondent D expressed there being a small, local Spanish-speaking community, but there is still a community. Currently, this respondent's organization only has access to one translated resource from many years ago. Presentations and informational sessions have been offered as a source of help to many. However, those presentations have only been available in English. We need to "write better education materials for each place, knowing that English is not the only language that people speak," Respondent D explained. They continued by sharing that "even presentations need to be offered in the languages of the people we want to serve."

Respondent C expressed their concerns in providing bilingual materials. First, finances and budgeting create major limitations. Respondent C shared that they "would need another grant to afford translating and translating well." This respondent also feared prioritizing translation because "it's intimidating, and you want to get it right." Respondent C concluded that in regard to the bilingual materials they haven't ventured into the task, but they "need to." The struggles indicated here further confirm the difficulties outlined in the survey as only 25% provide bilingual materials.

Challenges in serving: translation is not enough

While each organization interviewed and many surveyed echoed the same message that they would find a way to communicate, some respondents highlighted that translation alone is not enough. Simply having access to Google Translate, translated materials, or even interpreters in some cases falls short of breaking down the linguistic and cultural barriers that Spanish-speaking victims face.

For instance, communicating a term, phrase, or idea in another language extends beyond saying the associated words. Instead, tone, culture, prior understanding, and source of translation among other aspects need to be considered and addressed.

For example, the "tone you say a word or phrase can change the meaning," Respondent D shared. Because of this, interpreters must apply the appropriate tone of voice and body language when speaking with victims. Culture is another key aspect required for effective interpretation and communication with Spanish-speaking victims. For instance, the interpreter needs understanding of Hispanic family culture. Respondent E highlighted that people may be hesitant to speak out about trafficking or even understand that they are being trafficked because it is being done to them by their family. Culturally, Hispanic family ties hold significant importance. As mentioned in Logan et. al's (2009) study, many victims are "afraid using services would embarrass their families" (p. 23). Additionally, many South American cultures can attach "shame to talking about bodies" (Respondent E). Therefore, the victim may know the words to express their experience, but their culture may inhibit them from sharing. This need is also echoed in existing literature as Davy's (2015) study shares that various limitations,

reservations, and discomfort will occur for victims if nonprofit organizations do not develop a vast cultural awareness.

It is also crucial for interpreters to understand an immigrant's culture living in the U.S. Respondent E highlighted that Spanish-speaking victims have different cultures "around work, family, boss relationships, and law from their country of origin vs. law from the U.S." First, "they do not see work or laws the same way." Respondent E shared that they may not realize that working "17 hours and being paid minimum amounts is illegal." Another cultural barrier to sharing is often the fear of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Respondent E explained various instances in which the victims' "lives and their children's lives are endangered, but they won't report because they are so afraid of ICE," and documentation limitations. Victims are often "too afraid of accessing care because it exposes their immigration status, so they will not report" (Respondent E). Likewise, Owens et al. (2014) mentions that many victims have already faced immigration threats by their trafficker, and the fear would continue in most cases when considering to report the problem or seek assistance.

Establishing understanding is another crucial element beyond direct translation. Respondent C explained that some words relating to trafficking, exploitation, and injustice can be challenging to understand in English as a native speaker without the correct context. Simply saying the word "survivor," may mean nothing to the victim, Respondent C explained. Therefore, translating "survivor," alone may not accomplish the desired communication. Rather, a person must be trained on how to explain a "survivor

as someone that was forced, defrauded, or coerced into exploitation for commercial use," Respondent C added.

Furthermore, this respondent shared that a "trafficker," needs additional explanation as well, and the term cannot be used in isolation without understanding. It is important to be able to communicate that a "trafficker is someone that collaborated with the survivor in selling sex while abusing, threatening, and controlling." This topic can often require the most explaining as traffickers can often be people close to the survivor. Because of this, it is important to have the language to further explain a "trafficker." Respondent E explained that the trafficker could be a family member or best friend, but they have taken your money, threatened you, and exploited you. They continued by sharing that "clinical language, and any kind of language specific to sexual assault" is necessary for the interpreter to know as well as be able to explain.

Another essential aspect of interpretation is found in who is doing the interpreting. Respondent E has considered this need in depth and shared their insightful thoughts. To start, the respondent shared that there is a great need for access to people who do not just know the language, but they also know how to speak in the midst of trauma. Too often, there have been instances where the interpreter "knew the Spanish but did not know the trauma" and could not effectively communicate with the victims.

Also, Respondent C shared that "there is a need for outside, non-family, non-system interpreters who are not connected to DFCS or the legal system." While court-appointed interpreters, bilingual police officers, school-appointed interpreters, or family members or children acting as interpreters may appear to be helpful tools, they can

inhibit the amount a victim is willing to share simply because of who they are. Also, Respondent E shared that when a 14-year-old girl is asked to share her story with a law enforcement officer, she may be hesitant to explain what has happened. Even if that officer speaks Spanish, she is likely "scared of the officer" because she doesn't see them as "just someone who speaks Spanish, but it is *who* is speaking (the) Spanish" (Respondent E). When victims are given a court-appointed interpreter or encounter bilingual officers, they only see the system and they wonder if those interpreters are really there for them or for the system. Respondent E shared that victims wonder if "the interpreter is another tool that [they're] going to use to hurt me or if it is really to help me." Many wonder how what they are going to say will be used against them and who will get to hear it. Because of this, it is "important to share what you are going to do with the information," Respondent E emphasized. Additionally, using family or child interpreters can involve too much personal biases, or a trafficker could be "putting pressure on the interpreter" if it is someone close to their community (De Angelis, 2016, p. 70). Respondent E also shared that "language lines to rape crisis centers are not the best," because the source of the interpretation is an unknown, impersonal voice from a phone. This principle is also mirrored in Garg et al.'s (2020) study as they found that "phone-interpreter[s] [have] proven to be minimally helpful to victims" (p. 8).

Another essential element to factor into interpretation efforts is consideration of various dialects. Respondent E shared that "there are a lot of dialects in the U.S. that are not familiar to Spanish-speakers including various regions of Mexico, Guatemala, and El Salvador." In saying that, Respondent B shared that "indigenous languages are huge

barriers." Sometimes these less common languages resemble Spanish, and the victims who speak these languages will say "yes, mhm, even if they don't understand," Respondent B explained.

Overall, simply offering interpretation is not enough. Many victims will not know that language services are offered, or even if they do know there are other barriers inhibiting them from accessing these services. Respondent B's organization will often refer Spanish-speaking clients to other nonprofits who provide services and language accessibility. However, these clients often doubt that the organization has someone who can truly communicate in Spanish. Even when they call the organization, if they pick up the phone and hear the recording saying press one for English, they will end the call before even hearing "presione dos para el español," Respondent B shared. Demonstrating accessibility to Spanish-speakers will require demonstrating trust and consistent, reliable services.

Tangible steps for moving forward

The path to providing interpretation, providing it well, and providing it from the right source is challenging. However, the interviewees explained some of the steps they are taking to better serve Spanish-speaking victims of trafficking. They also offered tangible tools for organizations seeking to serve the Hispanic community.

As Respondent E shared, expanding the diversity of the clients served should be a goal for all because "if your program only serves white women, you are not serving everyone." Respondent A explained that their organization is "working on more active outreach…meeting with other organizations to develop new strategies…[and] building

relationships when events come to town, giving waters, and letting people know what they can do if they need help." Respondent C is also prioritizing outreach as they are creating a team that "will be more proactive in finding people rather than [being found] by people." Respondent D is "working on getting their materials translated into Spanish to serve the community at large" while developing a "presence in police offices, law offices, legislation, and many other organizations." Respondent D expressed a newfound motivation to serve the Spanish-speaking population. They reflected that "the goal of their intervention programs is to give language to what is happening to [the victims]." However, their organization was giving this language in English. They shared that now, they "want to give the language to all people it's happening to," which includes Spanish-speakers.

Respondent C expressed a mindset change as well saying that they want to eliminate fear as a reason for not trying to serve Spanish speakers. This respondent said, "we're always nervous about it, [trying to communicate with speakers of other languages], but we are always able to." Respondent C then reflected on a time when their organization served a young woman from China. Early on, no one could effectively speak to her. However, over a three-year period, they learned ways to completely understand each other even though neither were fluent in the others' language. Respondent C shared that they need to refocus on this area because there "are people that we're missing."

Respondents B and D encourage organizations to get creative. Respondent D's organization has a "number of volunteers who speak fluently and rotate." They try to bring in these volunteers when language services may be needed. They even started a

"program to write letters with clients in detention centers." In this program, "survivors would write in Spanish," and the volunteers started replying in Spanish to establish a relationship, Respondent D shared. Respondent B suggests "having social media posts, voicemail inboxes, or pamphlets that are fully in Spanish." They also suggest focusing resources and goals on "helping staff learn basic Spanish like, I'm going to help you find an interpreter, or I have access to a language line." While not ideal, Respondent B also offered a very tangible tool by suggesting organizations without many language service options use "Voyce," a quality interpretation service through video or phone.

In response to many organizations wondering the reason Spanish-speaking victims do not seek services, Respondent E encourages all organizations to "let it be an environment that caters to the cultures you hope to serve." They continued encouraging people to "think of signage across the facility." This respondent suggested translating verbiage on bathrooms, displaying magazines in various languages in the waiting room, and other subtle ways that "don't seem important." Respondent E shared that it is, in fact, important because the small details communicate that "we are serving Spanish-speaking folks here." Within existing literature it is evident that "exhibiting cultural competence," and regard to one's culture establishes trust (Byrne, Parsh, & Ghilhain, 2017, p. 53).

Additionally, Respondent E explained that "real cross-cultural relationships would help everything," even if you can't speak Spanish or don't have the resources to hire someone who speaks Spanish. Practically, they suggested that organizations "work hard to call victims' names the way that they are supposed to be pronounced" or learn the name of the victims' home village or community. These small efforts can go a long way.

The interviews shed more light on the why behind the lack of victims seeking services. In many cases, there is a lack of awareness, bilingual materials, collaboration, and outreach. There also is a fear of there not being language services available, fear of being misunderstood, fear of sharing the information with ill-intended sources, and fear of cultural repercussions. Language barriers are a complex issue, but there are also a range of creative options for bettering this obstacle.

Discussion

Overall, this study sought to answer the question of "what is the impact of language barriers on the protection of human trafficking victims in the United States whose native language is Spanish?" The goal was to contribute to existing literature by solely exploring language barriers. My original hypothesis predicted that Spanish-speaking victims would feel unheard, confused, or hesitant to share about their experiences with nonprofit organizations who offer assistance due to several factors. I suspected the main hesitation would come from believing that nonprofit organizations may not have language services available to communicate with them. I predicted that most nonprofit organizations who have services to assist victims do not have interpretation services available, training on language barriers, or connections to other organizations who can meet this need.

Mainly, I suspected that before victims can even enter the organization, there are already accessibility barriers due to language. Most of the literature supports this thought. In doing this study, though, it seems that the barrier is much more complex than simply a language barrier. This study highlights the principle that language barriers cannot be

dissociated with cultural barriers. While it seems many victims of trafficking have a fear that the nonprofit will not have language services available, other barriers also include fear of deportation or making immigration status known, culturally feeling shame for exploitation, lack of interpretation that understands the victim's dialect, and other factors.

Many organizations do have a way to communicate or interpret for the victim in areas with a dense population of Spanish-speakers. For example, out of the organizations who "almost never" see Spanish-speaking victims, 75% have an interpreter available. However, victims and other like-minded entities who might refer victims are not aware of this available service. Respondent A shared in the interview that "other organizations have a general idea about [them], but language services are not on the general person's radar." This can result in less victims seeking services when there are efforts in place to serve them and their language needs.

Moreover, even when the language service is provided, organizations still struggle as 54% of the organizations who frequently encounter Spanish-speaking victims (once a day, a few times per day, and a few times a week) say that language barriers still pose difficulties in their organization. As shown in the interviews, this could be attributed to dialect variations, need for holistic understanding rather than direct translation, or other cultural differences. Also, in areas that have 25-50% of the trafficked population speaking Spanish, 23% of organizations say that Spanish-speaking victims "almost never" seek their services. Also, 54% say that these victims "almost never" or "sometimes" seek services.

Another reason as to why areas densely populated with Spanish-speaking victims may not be seeking services is the lack of bilingual materials. 32% of organizations surveyed do not utilize bilingual materials. However, from responses in the interviews it seems that this number may be higher. Some interviewed organizations shared that they selected, “yes, we use bilingual materials,” when they only have access to one or two outdated documents. While these materials can be helpful in showing victims that they are seen and their language will be accommodated, these efforts cannot stand alone. Likewise, as described by interviewees, solely incorporating training on language barriers may not be enough to change an organization’s accessibility for Spanish-speaking victims. Further research could explore the way trainings could be incorporated into nonprofit work along with the amount and the topics these trainings should cover.

Even having interpreters does not completely solve the problem of language barriers as 60% of organizations who have an interpreter available still say that language barriers pose difficulties. These issues could be due to the lack of cultural literacy or the lack of fluency in various dialects as several interviewees shared. While the presence of bilingual materials, interpreters, or even trainings alone may not be enough to tear down language barriers, the combination and integration of each of these efforts can improve the current service of Spanish-speaking victims and spur more positive growth. The effectiveness of this combination or the success of prioritizing one of these areas could be developed for future research as well.

Also, there is a great lack of collaboration between organizations. The survey reflected an array of perspectives on whether other like-minded organizations provide

accessibility for Spanish-speakers. Most said, though, that they are unsure. The interviews also highlighted the immense workload of each organization, the desire to collaborate, but the lack of actually creating partnerships. Also, this research highlights the need for collaboration and partnerships among organizations. Connections can help each other with referrals, wider range of services, reaching more people, being able to meet higher demands and spread the workload.

There are tangible, practical steps for nonprofit organizations moving forward who desire to serve Spanish-speaking victims. This underserved group should be prioritized as they are arguably the largest group trafficked to the U.S. While existing research lacks an exact number of Spanish-speaking victims trafficked to the U.S., Clawson et. al's (2009) study found that the U.S. witnesses over 50,000 people trafficked into the country each year, and the majority of the cases originate from Mexico, a predominantly Spanish-speaking country. Additionally, other Spanish-speaking countries like Guatemala, Honduras, and other South American and Caribbean countries are major source countries of trafficking (Polaris, 2021).

To better prioritize serving Spanish-speaking victims, organizations should market the availability of an interpreter or publicly acknowledge ways that they can serve the Spanish-speaking population. Additionally, it is crucial for materials to be displayed in English and Spanish. The first impression victims have of the organization is that they are making efforts to accommodate their needs and have considered them. Also, if an interpreter is not or cannot be present, it is important to have important key phrases or training in place. As mentioned in Byrne, Parsh, & Ghilain's (2017) study, knowing the

right questions to ask is crucial.

Moreover, greater collaboration should occur among nonprofit organizations to offer the widest range of services with the greatest number of staff. As numerous interviewees mentioned, attending events that cater to Spanish-speakers is a valuable way to reach that population. Respondent E shared that knowing the community brings an opportunity to learn which events will draw the Spanish-speaking portion of the population. Respondent D also suggested incorporating Spanish-speaking volunteers or even empowering Spanish-speaking victims who are at a point in their recovery to join in helping or volunteering. Finally, Respondent E encouraged nonprofit organizations to get creative. Even if the budget does not allow for a full-time interpreter, they suggested doing contract work for translating materials or other resources.

Reflecting on this research process, I note that there are various limitations. To start, the survey received a 13% response rate (40 out of 300 organizations replied). Also, these organizations were only a sample of the anti-trafficking organizations in the U.S. as there is not one comprehensive list of every organization acting in this field. A more comprehensive, organized list is another area for improvement in the future to better serve trafficking victims and support collaboration. Some explanations to the low response rate could be COVID-19 decreasing or halting the work or organizations' scope of work being more focused on domestic abuse or domestic violence than trafficking.

Also, for this study, I did not collect email addresses or identifying information from the survey. However, I view this as a limitation because it caused greater difficulties comparing and matching answers from the survey with the responses from the interviews.

Another limitation would be the wording of question nine in the survey. The question asked, "About how many other organizations that offer services similar to your entity also provide language services to victims?" The responses reflected confusion over this question. The wording would have been improved if it would have clarified like-minded organizations as other local entities who provide similar services. Similarly, I think that question seven of the survey could have been more specific about the utilization and provision of bilingual materials as some respondents selected yes, they use them, when they use outdated, minimal translated resources.

Looking ahead, this study exposed numerous other avenues for further research. For example, it would be helpful to explore the impact of Hispanic culture and values on trafficking victims accessing services. Some of these cultural aspects could include the role and view of work, bosses, emotions, family relationships, and shame. Additionally, it could be interesting to explore the use of the more formal "usted" form versus the more familiar "tú" form when communicating with Spanish-speaking victims. This seemingly small change could have effects on the willingness or openess for Spanish-speaking victims to communicate or trust the nonprofit organization.

Another interesting point of study could be exploring the impact of the identity of the interpreter or service provider on victims seeking services or sharing about the injustice done to them. This study touched on the limitations of law enforcement officers, court-appointed interpreters, and school-appointed interpreters. It also would be interesting to examine the role of the gender of the interpreter or service provider. A commonality between nearly every organization researched, contacted, surveyed, and

interviewed for this study was that their leadership and staff teams were primarily composed of women. As noted throughout the existing literature, a common myth is that "only women and girls can be victims and survivors of sex trafficking, [while] men and boys are also victimized" (Polaris, 2021). This myth can often translate into the organizations who serve victims. Many organizations primarily serve women and "advocates report a lack of services available for men [and] boys" (U.S. Department of State, 2020). It would be interesting to explore the effect more male service providers could have on more diverse victims accessing services from nonprofit organizations.

Conclusion

In this study, my goal was to explore the impact of language barriers on Spanish-speaking victims of human trafficking acessing services from nonprofit organizations. I chose to examine this topic through an online survey and virtual interview. I then obtained information from a selection of nonprofit representatives who offer services for victims of trafficking. In the study, we found various observations that shed light on nonprofit organizations' work with Spanish-speaking victims.

We found that many Spanish-speaking victims are seeking services from organizations who offer accessibility. For example, 69% of organizations interact with Spanish-speaking victims. Although, within that number, language barriers still largely pose difficulties. However, 31% of organizations do not interact with Spanish-speaking victims. This figure could simply be due to a lack of Spanish-speaking victims. As interviewees elaborated, though, it also could be due to various other factors like a lack of awareness of language services being available, bilingual materials, or comprehensive

cultural and language understanding.

While this need persists, nonprofit organizations offered tangible hope for moving forward in better serving Spanish-speaking victims of trafficking. Organizations can take steps toward fostering greater collaboration among other nonprofit organizations to increase resources and accessibility. Moreover, nonprofits can develop and train their team of volunteers, contracted staff, and full-time staff to be aware of language barriers, develop bilingual materials, practice pronunciations, and learn key phrases or cultural principles. The need is great, and the road is long, but small actions forward from each organization can begin to grow the number of Spanish-speaking victims served as well as the quality at which they are served.

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Appendix A

Survey:

1. How often do you encounter Spanish-speaking trafficking victims?
    a. A few times per day
    b. Once a day
    c. Once a week
    d. Once a month
    e. A few times per year
    f. Never
    g. Other _____
2. Would you say that language barriers, or communication difficulties due to language, pose challenges for your organization?
    a. Yes
    b. No
3. About how many trafficking victims in your area do you think primarily speak Spanish?
    a. Less than 1%
    b. 5%
    c. 10%
    d. 25%
    e. 50%
4. How often do you think Spanish-speaking victims seek assistance from your organization?
    a. Very often
    b. Often
    c. Sometimes
    d. Almost never
    e. Never
5. Do you have an interpreter, or someone who speaks or understands Spanish, as part of your organization?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Part-time
6. What are some common phrases that you use while working at your organization that would be helpful to know in Spanish? (You can answer in English)
    a. _____

7. When you joined your organization as a staff member, was information about language barriers, or communication difficulties due to language, incorporated or mentioned in your orientation experience?
    a. Yes
    b. No
8. Does your organization utilize or provide bilingual (English/Spanish) materials like pamphlets, brochures, website content, or social media?
    a. Yes
    b. No
9. About how many other organizations that offer services similar to your entity also provide language services to victims?
    a. All
    b. Almost all
    c. Half
    d. Almost none
    e. None
    f. Uncertain
10. Is there anything you would like to add?

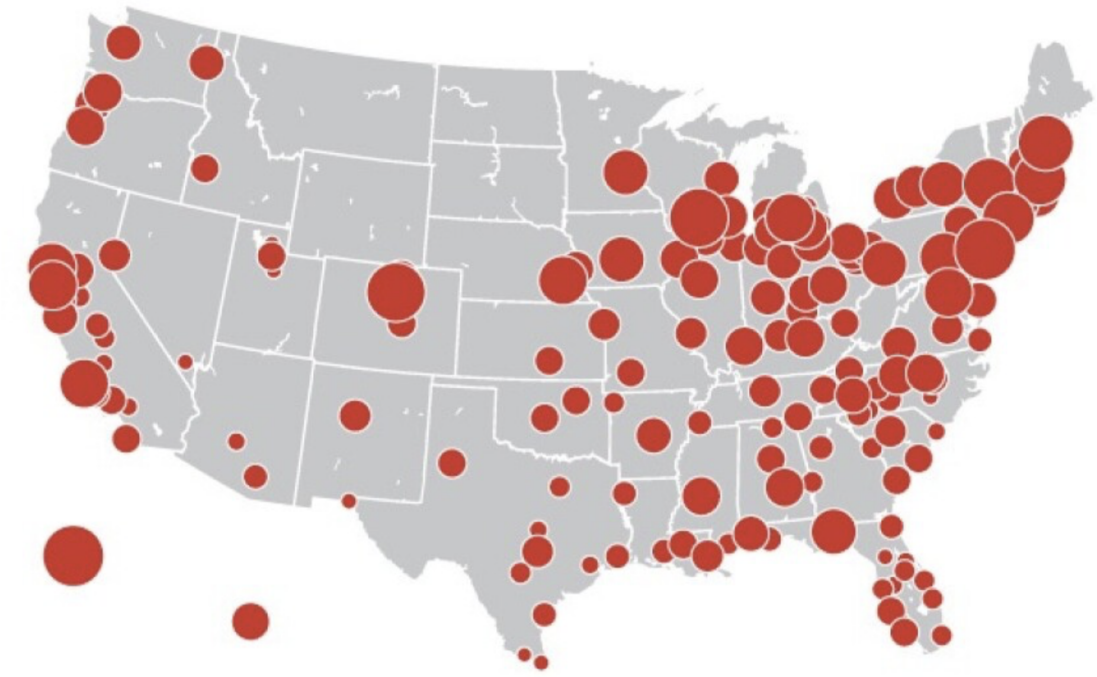
a. _____

Appendix B

Interview:

A. What is your main role/ responsibilities for your job?
B. In what ways do you think people who speak Spanish may struggle to access the programs/ assistance that your organization offers?
C. Have you seen a difference in people who speak Spanish seeking assistance from your organization from before the pandemic until now?
D. Do you think people in the community know you offer interpretation services? How do you guys send that message to the community?
E. Describe an experience(s) you or your organization has encountered with language barriers, or communication difficulties due to language.
F. In your training for your position, were language barriers mentioned or addressed? If yes, what did the training entail?
G. Do you partner with any other organizations with similar missions and/or programs (in your area or in general)?
H. Do you attend conferences or meetings with other similarly mission-minded organizations?
    a. No
    b. If yes, are language barriers discussed?
I. How would you like to see your organization develop in the area of serving people who speak Spanish?

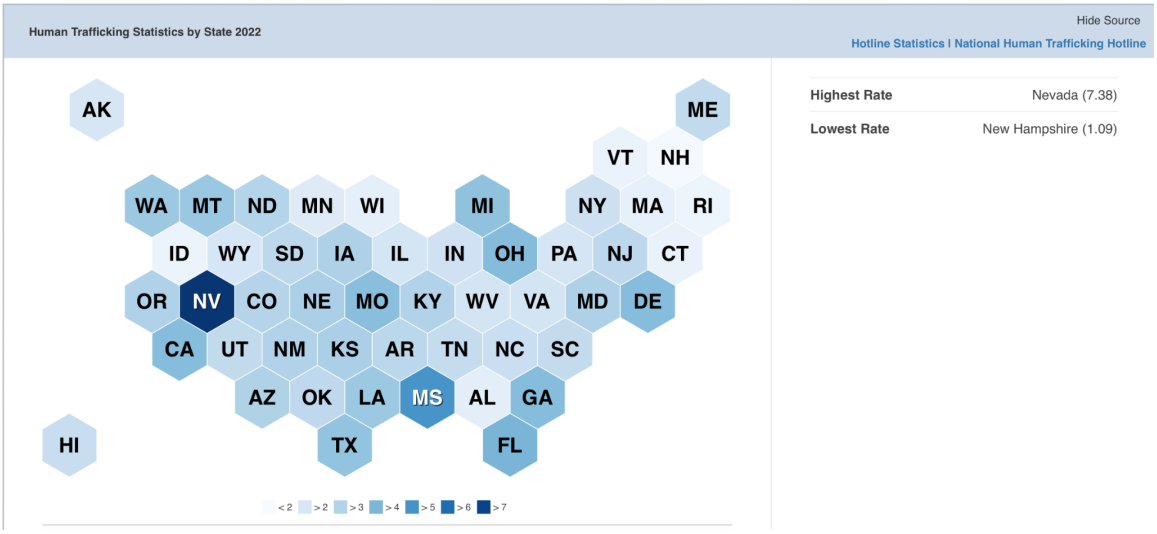
Appendix C



Larger icons represent more locally focused nonprofits per capita for metro areas.

(Maciag 2019)

Appendix D



(World Population Review)