HOW DOES INTERORGANIZATIONAL COLLABORATION WORK? EXAMINING INTERORGANIZATIONAL COLLABORATION AMONG HUMAN SERVICES NONPROFITS

BY

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DISSERTATION

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**ABSTRACT**

Over the past three decades, interorganizational collaboration among human services nonprofits has dramatically increased to the point where collaborative arrangements among these organizations have become one the hallmarks of the new millennium. However, although the increasing popularity of interorganizational collaboration among human service nonprofits has generated a lot of interest and research from a variety of disciplines and greatly contributed to our knowledge on nonprofit collaborations, there are still too many unanswered questions about how nonprofit collaborative partnerships form and how the conditions and factors of their formation shape the processes sustaining those partnerships and their effectiveness.

As such, the main goal of this dissertation is to examine the connections between the antecedents, the processes, and the outcomes of nonprofit partnerships. Informed by collaboration theory, institutional theory, and an evolutionary theory of organizing which suggests that interorganizational relations are formed under particular conditions and that these conditions shape the development or evolution of the relations and their outcomes, this dissertation examined the connections between antecedents (impetus for collaboration and partner selection factors), processes (trust, communication quality, and conflict management effectiveness), and outcomes (quality and effectiveness) of 224 collaborative partnerships among nonprofits involved in the administration of human services in the State of Illinois.

The results from the comparison of 17 mandated and 17 voluntary nonprofit partnerships suggest that voluntary partnerships have less conflict and manage conflicts more effectively than mandated partnerships. Moreover, the results from the path analysis of 185 nonprofit partnerships suggest that some partner selection factors such as organizational reputation, prior experience, and homophily are directly related to trust and communicative quality, and indirectly

related to the effectiveness of those partnerships. Furthermore, conflict management effectiveness was not directly connected to any of the partner selection factors, but was directly connected to trust and to collaborative effectiveness.

Additionally, trust was the best predictor of communication quality, conflict management effectiveness, collaboration quality, and collaborative effectiveness among human services nonprofits. Overall, the results of this investigation suggest that antecedents to nonprofit partnerships are directly connected to the processes sustaining those partnerships, and only indirectly connected to the effectiveness of those partnerships.

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A dissertation is a long journey. It is a long journey that allows a scholar to grow intellectually, to identify, articulate, and live an intellectual trajectory, and to graduate from school and fully participate in the production and dissemination of knowledge in an academic field and in society. That journey is unrealizable without the assistance of special people. For the past six years, since I started the doctoral program in the fall of 2007, many people have provided me with the support, the inspiration, the wisdom, and the strength that I needed to complete that journey and begin a new one.

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**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

In the United States, nonprofit organizations have long played an important role in the administration and delivery of social and human services to the people (Sowa, 2008). In fact, according to Salamon (2002), nonprofits have at one point accounted for about 50% of social or human services that are delivered in the country. Due to the shrinking of government services and the increasing reliance on nonprofits to deliver social and human services, that percentage has increased in over the years (Boris, De Leon, Roeger, & Nikolova, 2010). That increase in the role of nonprofits in the human services sector has given rise to concerns over issues of duplication and fragmentation of services, as well as questions about the logics, the efficiency, and the effectiveness of nonprofit organizing in the provision of such services (Gazley & Brudney, 2007; Sowa, 2008). As a way of addressing these questions and concerns, policy makers, consultants, and scholars have long advocated for more interorganizational collaboration for service delivery and other forms of interorganizational networks (Gazley & Brudney, 2007; Longoria, 2005; Sowa, 2008).

As a result, over the past three decades, interorganizational collaboration among human services nonprofits has dramatically increased to the point where collaborative arrangements among these organizations have become one the hallmarks of the new millennium (Heath, 2007; Longoria, 2005; Takahashi & Smutny, 2001). Human services nonprofit partnerships have often been credited as having "powerful and lasting effects on communities" (Heath, 2007, p. 146) by facilitating the emergence of new leaders (Innes & Booher, 1999), generating alternative and innovative solutions to community problems (Lawrence, Hardy, & Phillips, 2002; Zoller, 2000), and shaping "new civic cultures" (Chrislip & Larson, 1994, p. 123).

The increasing popularity of interorganizational collaboration among human service organizations has generated significant interest and research from a variety of disciplines. Indeed, scholars have become increasingly interested in the emergence, sustainability, implications, and outcomes associated with the use of collaborative endeavors to deliver social and health services (Hill & Lynn, 2003; Page, 2003; Provan & Milward, 2001; Sandfort, 1999; Selden, Sowa, & Sandfort, 2006). In studying interorganizational collaborative service delivery endeavors, scholars have examined why nonprofits collaborate, how nonprofit collaborations or partnerships form, the challenges they face, the processes through which they sustain themselves, and the benefits and outcomes they achieve (Gray & Wood, 1991; Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001; Mulroy, 1997; Mulroy & Shay, 1998; Sowa, 2008; Thomson & Perry, 2006; Wood & Gray, 1991). However, too many unanswered questions still remain about why nonprofits work better with certain partners as opposed to others, why certain nonprofit partnerships are more effective than others, and how the ways in which nonprofit partnerships form shape the organizing processes within them, and their effectiveness (Sowa, 2008).

Thus, although the literature on nonprofit relationships is growing, relatively few empirical studies have investigated how conditions of formation of collaborative relationships among nonprofits influence the processes and outcomes of nonprofit collaborations. In other words, the current literature on nonprofits offers very little in terms of examination or explanations of how collaboration formation, partner selection, processes, and outcomes of nonprofit collaborative endeavors are related. The lack of such investigation is even more troubling when considering the various reports of the high rates of collaborative failure among human services nonprofits (Bardach & Lesser, 1996; Fyall & Garrod, 2005; Hassett & Austin, 1997; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Meyers, 1993). Thus, this dissertation will examine how

formative conditions affect the processes and outcomes of collaborative endeavors among these organizations.

| Antecedents | Processes | Outcomes |
|---|---|---|
| • High levels of interdependence (Logsdon, 1991)<br>• Need for resources and risk sharing (Alter & Hage, 1993)<br>• Resource scarcity (Levine & White, 1961)<br>• Previous history of efforts to collaborate (Radin et al., 1996)<br>• Resource complementarity (Gray, 1989; Gray & Wood, 1991; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978;Wood & Gray,1991)<br>• Complex issues (O'Toole, 1997) | • Governance<br><br>• Administration<br><br>• Organizational autonomy<br><br>• Mutuality<br><br>• Trust and reciprocity | • Achievement of goals (Bardach, 1998; Gray, 2000)<br>• Instrumental transactions among organizations become transformed into socially embedded relationships (Ring & Van de Ven, 1994)<br>• The creation of 'new value partnerships' produces capacity to leverage resources (Sagawa & Segal, 2000)<br>• Self-governing collective action to solve problems of institutional supply, commitment, and monitoring (Ostrom, 1990) |

*Figure 1*. The antecedent-process-outcome framework of interorganizational collaboration. Adapted from Wood & Gray (1991), Gray & Wood (1991), and Thomson & Perry (2006).

## Problem Statement

In their review of interorganizational collaboration research in two special issues of the

*Journal of Applied Behavioral Sciences (JABS)* two decades ago, Wood and Gray (1991) and

Gray and Wood (1991) summarize the literature in terms of preconditions, processes, and outcomes of interorganizational collaboration and they argue that, in order to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of how interorganizational collaboration works, scholars need to examine those three areas and the connections among them. Thomson and Perry (2006) echo the same sentiment and, based on Gray and Wood's (1991) arguments, propose an antecedent-process-outcome model very similar to the one depicted above (Figure 1).

However, despite those arguments, the intuitive appeal for, and the benefits of understanding how antecedents, processes, and outcomes of interorganizational collaboration are connected, there has been very little, if at all, empirical investigation of the connections among those three areas in the nonprofit literature. Most nonprofit scholars generally tend to ground their studies in one of those three areas and rarely, if ever, investigate the relationships among the three. Given the proliferation of nonprofit collaborative partnerships, their increasing importance in the human services sector, and the multitude of ways in which they form, evolve, and perform, the significance of empirically investigating the connections between how these partnerships form, the processes through which they sustain themselves, and their effectiveness, cannot be overemphasized. Indeed, most scholars agree on the strategic nature of nonprofit collaborations and many practitioner-oriented texts (e.g., Austin, 2000; Mattessich, Murray-close, & Monsey, 2001) provide various recommendations and advice on how to appropriately form partnerships to make them effective or to develop successful collaborations. Much of that advice however, is generally based on studies that have examined single case studies of nonprofit collaborations to generate conclusions about their outcomes and effectiveness (Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001; Mulroy, 1997; Mulroy & Shay, 1998; Sowa, 2008).

According to Wood and Gray (1991), any complete understanding, approach, or theory of the collaboration process must also address the role of the convener in shaping the collaboration process and its effectiveness. Although the presence of a convener is not necessary for the formation of a nonprofit partnership, many nonprofit partnerships are initiated through mandates by powerful conveners (Longoria, 2005). Thus, an important question here is whether these different initial conditions of collaborative relationship formation play a role in shaping the process and effectiveness of collaborative endeavors among nonprofits (Gray & Wood, 1991; Wood & Gray, 1991). Unfortunately, although current nonprofit collaboration literature presents some ideas on that topic (Cooper & Shumate, 2012), no firm conclusions can really be drawn about the role of the convener in shaping the process and effectiveness of nonprofit collaborative endeavors, as it has not been empirically investigated.

Moreover, communication has not received much attention as an important collaborative process in interorganizational partnerships. Despite the fact that all interorganizational relationships are, at least, partly communicative (Wigand, 1976) and that information exchange, conversations, and ideas sharing are critical interorganizational collaborative resources (Eisenberg, et al., 1985), previous nonprofit collaboration literature (Cooper & Shumate, 2012; Heath, 2007; Kasouf, Celuch, & Bantham, 2006; Thomson & Perry, 2006; Zoller, 2004) has not sufficiently considered the factors that shape communication in nonprofit partnerships and the impact of communication on the effectiveness of nonprofit partnerships. For instance, in Figure 1 above, communication is not listed in the processes that make interorganizational collaboration. However, I could argue that most of the processes listed are inherently communicative in nature or, at the very least, heavily depend on the quality of communication for their effectiveness. Therefore, more research is needed to understand how antecedents to nonprofit collaboration

affect interorganizational communication, and how interorganizational communication in turn affects collaborative effectiveness.

Furthermore, the nonprofit collaboration literature is characterized by a paucity of empirical investigations about why certain nonprofits work better with some nonprofits and not others and why some nonprofit partnerships are more effective than others. Although there are several articles and books about various difficulties and challenges that nonprofits face when collaborating, these works mostly provide lists of challenges, and are most often based on anecdotal evidence or single case studies of very few organizations (e.g., Linden, 2002; Brown & Ashman, 1996). Additionally, these works rarely offer much insight as to the likely causes or antecedents of such challenges. As such, it is often difficult to make general claims based on such works. One of the things that scholars of interorganizational collaboration seem to agree on is that interorganizational collaboration is difficult (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006; Fyall & Garrod, 2005; Huxham & Vangen, 2005). Indeed, several studies have shown that the majority of interorganizational collaborative arrangements are ineffective or end up in failure (Einbinder et al., 2000; Fyall & Garrod, 2005). However the reasons or roots of such failures and the main difficulties or challenges associated with interorganizational collaboration are still not well understood. An investigation of the difficulties or challenges of collaboration, and how these difficulties may be related to conditions of collaboration formation could help reduce the failure rate of interorganizational collaborative arrangements.

## Goals of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the connections among antecedents, processes, and outcomes of collaboration. As such, this study has three main goals. First, this study seeks to understand how antecedents to collaboration are related to processes of

collaboration. In other words, the first goal of this investigation is to understand how the ways that nonprofit partnerships form influence the organizing processes within those partnerships. To achieve that first goal, I will examine the relationships between impetus to collaboration and partner selection (antecedents) on one hand, and trust, communication, and conflict management (collaborative processes) on the other hand.

Second, this study will investigate the connection between antecedents to collaboration and the effectiveness of collaboration. The second goal of this study is therefore to provide an answer to the question of whether the ways in which nonprofit partnerships form directly impact their effectiveness. To achieve that second goal, I will examine the connections between two sets of antecedents to collaboration, impetus to collaboration and partner selection, and collaborative effectiveness.

The final goal of this study is to investigate how the organizing processes of nonprofit collaborations influence their effectiveness. Thus, this third goal is concerned with investigating the link between process and outcome of collaboration. In order to achieve that goal, I will examine how interorganizational trust, interorganizational communication, and interorganizational conflict management influence collaborative effectiveness among nonprofits.

**Guiding Questions**

Consistent with the goals of investigating the relationship between the impetus for collaborative relationship formation, partner selection, and the processes and effectiveness of collaborative endeavors among human services nonprofits, this dissertation is guided by five general questions:

**Question 1**: What is the relationship between impetus for collaborative relationship formation and collaborative/organizing processes within nonprofit partnerships?

**Question 2**: What is the relationship between partner selection factors and collaborative/organizing processes within nonprofit partnerships?

**Question 3**: What is the relationship between impetus for collaborative relationship formation and effectiveness of collaborative partnership?

**Question 4**: What is the relationship between partner selection factors and effectiveness of collaborative partnerships?

**Question 5**: what is the relationship between organizing/collaborative processes within nonprofit partnerships and their effectiveness?

These questions are very general by design, and are not intended to serve as research questions per se. Rather, they constitute the central questions guiding this investigation and they provide an outlook of what I am trying to accomplish through this dissertation. Informed by these general questions, I develop specific hypotheses about this investigation in the third chapter.

## Definitions

**What are NGOs? Defining the Concept**

The organizations generally referred to as NGOs have rapidly increased in scope, size, and influence within various spheres of local, national, and international operations (Brinkerhoff, Smith, & Teegen, 2007; Srinivas, 2009). In the U.S. for instance, the role of nonprofits in delivering human and social services within metropolitan areas has grown significantly over the past three decades (Jang & Feiock, 2007). In the academic community and popular press, several scholars and authors have argued that the unique features of nonprofit organizations as non-coercive and non-distributive entities allow them to deliver important social services neither the market nor the government is able or willing to match (Frumkin, 2002; Salamon, 2002; Weisbrod, 1998). In addition, NGOs have increasingly become important as the key means of

attaining established international developmental ends and many of them have consultative status with the United Nations (Brinkerhoff et al., 2007; Fowler, 2000; Lewis, 2003; 2005). But what *are* NGOs?

The term NGO was first used in 1945 by the United Nations to specify the role of consultants in UN activities that were not those of national governments (Lewis, 2001). It has been defined in several different ways by several different authors (Martens, 2002). NGO is an umbrella term for a variety of not-for-profit organizations including civil society-based organizations (CSOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), national NGOs, international NGOs (INGOs), social movement organizations (SMOs), and transnational social movement organizations (TSMOs). NGOs are organizational actors that do not belong to either the market/for profit/business sector or the government sector. Being non-state and non-market, NGOs are often referred to as "constituting the 'third' sector and are the organizational representatives of civil society" (Lambell, Ramia, Nyland, & Michelotti, 2008, p. 75). The United Nations (2003), as cited in Teegen, Doh, and Vachani (2004) define NGOs as follows:

> Any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group which is organized on a local, national or international level. Task-oriented and driven by people with a common interest, NGOs perform a variety of services and humanitarian functions, bring citizens' concerns to Governments, monitor policies and encourage political participation at the community level. They provide analysis and expertise, serve as early warning mechanisms and help monitor and implement international agreements. Some are organized around specific issues, such as human rights, the environment or health. (p. 466)

Teegen, Doh, and Vachani (2004) summarize and simplify the definition provided by the United Nations by focusing on the social purpose of NGOs. As such, they define them as "private, not-

for-profit organizations that aim to serve particular societal interests by focusing advocacy and/ or operational efforts on social, political and economic goals, including equity, education, health, environmental protection and human rights" (p. 466). In the American human services and public administration literatures, the terms 'nonprofit organization (NPO)' or simply 'nonprofit' are used instead of NGOs. That may be due to the fact that 'non-distribution of profit' is generally considered the most important defining feature of the United States nonprofit sector (Jang & Feiock, 2007). In sum, NGOs are different from governments because they cannot require, via the threat of legitimate coercion, that entities living in a particular territory follow their laws and rules—hence, non-governmental— and they are different from firms or business organizations because they do not distribute profits to their residual claimants—hence, non-profits.

**Why and how do NGOs emerge?**

The emergence and evolution of NGOs has been a topic of debate across disciplines for decades (Brown & Kalegaonkar, 2002). As such, there are various explanations and theories as to why NGOs emerge or exist (Worth, 2009). Most notable among them are failure theories, proposed by organizational economists and some political scientists, which essentially explain the role of NGOs by what governments and markets do not or cannot do (Hansmann, 1987; Weisbrod, 1998; Worth, 2009).

From an economic standpoint, the literature posits a 'pure' role for for-profit/business organizations in providing goods and services in situations where people are able and willing to pay enough for the goods and services for business organizations to make profits or earn adequate returns (Florini, 2003; Teegen et al., 2004). In these situations, the benefits associated with the goods and services are both sufficiently excludable and rivalrous (Teegen et al., 2004).

Excludability allows producers to restrict the consumption of a good or service to certain parties, and thus negates concerns about opportunism or free riding, that is, enjoying goods and services without paying for them (Teegen et al., 2004). Rivalry among consumers for the use of a good or service signifies that one consumer's use of the good or service decreases the potential for another to equally use the good or service (Teegen et al., 2004).

However, not all goods and services that are desirable or necessary meet these market conditions of being both sufficiently excludable and rivalrous (Teegen et al., 2004). These goods and services—that are not sufficiently excludable and rivalrous—are referred to as public goods, and governments/states are traditionally responsible for providing them (Teegen et al., 2004). In some instances, however, neither the market nor the government/state can provide all the necessary and/or desirable goods and services that the public wants or need. In such cases, "where important services, representation, and/or social cohesion are lacking, NGOs play critical roles in governance and value creation for social ends" (Teegen et al., 2004, p. 467). Political scientists, for example, have often explained the rise and evolution of NGOs as a response to the state and its power over citizens, as well as the need to keep governmental institutions accountable and to act or respond when they are perceived to have 'failed' (e.g., Berger & Neuhaus, 1977; Bratton, 1989; Brown & Kalegaonkar, 2002). Thus, according to failure theories, individuals or groups organize self-help or social policy associations to empower themselves or when they feel that either the government or the profit-making market, or both, will not or cannot adequately address their concerns, such as poverty, poor or non-existent education, environmental degradation, affordable housing, adequate distribution of resources, inequality, discrimination, and a host of other issues.

Besides the market and government failure theories, other NGO scholars have emphasized the central roles of values and ideological commitments in mobilizing resources and organizing collective action on civil society issues (Tandon & Naidoo, 1999; van Til, 2000). As such, explanations such as solidarity, religious principles of charity and "helping others", altruism and philanthropy, or collective empowerment have been offered as to why NGOs have emerged and continue to do so. Supply-side nonprofit theorists, for instance, have observed that many NGOs are outgrowths of religious congregations motivated by faith rather than primarily economic interest (Worth, 2009). Thus, according to this view, NGOs exists not just to fill the gaps left by the government and the market, but also "as organizations different from business and government that are driven by vision and values" (Worth, 2009, p. 37). Another theorist, Roger Lohmann (1992), offered the theory of the commons as another way of explaining the rise of NGOs. According to Lohmann (1992), NGOs are not just making up for the failure of the government and the market; rather, they produce a distinctive kind of good: common goods. Unlike *public goods*, *common goods* are not of interest or benefit to all people, but neither can they be consumed alone by an individual, like *private goods* (Worth, 2009).

Finally, various other scholars (Brown & Kalegaonkar, 2002; Putnam, 1993; Salamon & Anheier, 1998) have explained the emergence of NGOs as a result of complex interplays between economic, social, cultural, and political forces during long periods of time. As such, these scholars have taken a more complex approach to understanding the emergence and evolution of NGOs.

**Human Services NGOs**

Among the millions of nonprofit organizations in the United States, human service organizations "stand out as the quintessential expression of the nation's benevolent spirit" (Boris,

De Leon, Roeger, & Nikolova, 2010, p. 3). They are the organizations that most people think of when they hear the term *nonprofit*. They are a diverse group that includes local direct service providers such as child care, soup kitchens, and youth mentoring organizations, as well as large national organizations like the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, the YMCA and YWCA, and the American Red Cross. In essence, human services nonprofits feed the hungry, provide housing to the homeless, provide job training and placement to unemployed, assist crime victims and offenders, act as advocates for children, help people prepare for and recover from disasters, and offer numerous other programs and services to assist individuals, especially the needy ones, in their daily lives (Boris et al., 2010).

Human service organizations constitute a subcategory of nonprofit organizations under the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities. The National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities is the classification system for nonprofit organizations developed by the national center for charitable statistics (NCCS) at the Urban Institute and used by the Internal Revenue Service. According to Anheier (2005), the human services nonprofit field includes informal organizations such as Alcoholics Anonymous and soup kitchens, traditional agencies such as the Salvation Army, the American Red Cross and the YMCA, and recent additions to respond to current social problems and challenges such as HIV/AIDS groups and domestic violence counseling and protection centers.

**Characterizing Human Services NGOs**

Human services nonprofits are different from other nonprofits in several ways. In their book on the relationships between NGOs and corporations, Yaziji and Doh (2009) offer two important dimensions, thereby creating a two-by-two matrix, for distinguishing nonprofits. The first dimension for distinguishing NGOs is based on whom an NGO is designed to benefit.

According to that criterion, Yaziji and Doh (2009) distinguish between two types of NGOs: *other-benefiting NGOs* and *self-benefitting NGOs*. *Self-benefitting NGOs* refer to NGOs whose primary purpose is not the provision of public goods. Rather than focusing on the provision of public goods, self-benefitting NGOs focus their efforts and resources on the interests of selective members of society. Some common examples of such self-serving organizations include social and fraternal organizations, cooperatives, political organizations, labor unions, trade associations, and professional associations. Because of this scope, Yaziji and Doh (2009) argue that self-benefitting NGOs are typically viewed with less moral regard by the public.

On the other hand, *other-benefitting NGOs'* scopes are typically on common goods that "will be shared by a wide swath of society" (p. 6). The main characteristic of other-benefitting NGOs' is that their members and supporters are not primarily interested in private and personal goods for themselves or their organizations, but in the provision of public good for society. Human services nonprofits, with their focus on providing programs and services to assist individuals in their daily lives, fall under this latter category.

The second dimension for distinguishing nonprofits concerns the sort of activities they primarily undertake. Based on that criterion, Yaziji and Doh (2009) distinguish between *service NGOs* and *advocacy NGOs*. *Advocacy NGOs* engage in advocacy, that is, in activities that seek to convince other parties (e.g., governments, firms, the public) to change laws, practices, views, or policies regarding specific topics or subjects. Some examples of such organizations include many labor unions and interest groups, political organizations, and international organizations such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International.

*Service NGOs* provide services and direct assistance to people in their daily lives. As their name suggests, human services nonprofits fall in this category. Although these categories

are not mutually exclusive and there are NGOs that provide services and engage in advocacy, human services nonprofits generally focus on the provision of services and are not involved in lobbying governments. In fact, these organizations rely heavily on government funding to sustain their operations. Overall, Anheier (2005, p. 100) estimated that human services nonprofits in the US receive 37 percent of their funding from various public sector sources, 43 percent from earned income (fees, dues, and charges), and 20 percent from private giving.

## Scope of the Dissertation

Although there are dozens of thousands of human services nonprofits in the U.S., this dissertation concerns only human services nonprofits operating within the state of Illinois. In other words, this dissertation examines interorganizational collaboration among nonprofits involved in the administration of human services in the State of Illinois. I choose to only collect data on human services operating in the state of Illinois because I want all the organizations in the study to be subject to the same institutional and regulatory environment. Additionally, the state of Illinois, with its abundance of these types of organizations and the prominent role they play in people's lives, provides a unique context for the scientific study of how nonprofits work together, the challenges of such collaborations, and their potential outcomes.

## Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is comprised of six main chapters. The goal of Chapter 1 is essentially to present the topic of this investigation and to outline its background and scope. As such, in Chapter 1, I introduce the topic and subject matter of this investigation. I briefly outline the background, goals, and the guiding research questions for the study. I also examine a few key concepts related to the study.

The goal of Chapter 2 is to review the previous literature on nonprofit collaboration. Thus, I briefly examine the history of collaborative service delivery in the United States and I define interorganizational collaboration. Moreover, I review the various approaches to interorganizational collaboration, partner selection, challenges, and outcomes of nonprofit collaborative endeavors.

In Chapter 3, I develop the research questions and hypotheses of this study. First, I develop the research questions about the relationships between impetus for collaboration, collaborative processes—trust, communication, and conflict management—and collaborative effectiveness. Second, I develop the hypotheses about the connections between partner selection factors, collaborative processes, and collaborative effectiveness. Third, I develop the hypotheses about the connections among the three collaborative processes, quality of collaboration, and collaborative effectiveness.

The goal of Chapter 4 is to outline and explain the data collection and analysis methods that I used to collect and analyze the data for this investigation. As such, I discuss the sampling strategy, the procedures for data collection, the measures used in the survey and their psychometric properties, and the analytical techniques used to test the hypotheses of the study and provide answers to its research questions.

Chapter 5 presents the results and the findings of the investigation. In the first part of the chapter, I present the results of the tests comparing mandated and voluntary partnerships across process variables and collaborative effectiveness to answer the research question about the relationships between impetus for collaboration, processes of collaboration—trust, communication quality, and conflict management—and collaborative effectiveness.  In the

second part of the chapter, I present the results of the various statistical tests that were used to test the hypotheses of the study. I conclude the chapter with a summary of the results.

In Chapter 6, I discuss the relationships between conditions of partnership formation, collaborative dynamics, and collaborative effectiveness. I also provide concluding remarks and I discuss the contributions and limitations of the investigation.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

Over the past three decades, interorganizational collaboration among human services non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has dramatically increased to the point where collaborative arrangements among these NGOs have become one the hallmarks of the new millennium (Heath, 2007; Longoria, 2005). This increasing popularity of interorganizational collaboration among human service organizations has generated substantial interest and research from a variety of disciplines. Although the current literature has greatly contributed to our knowledge on nonprofit collaborations, there are still too many unanswered questions about how nonprofit collaborative networks or partnerships emerge and how the conditions of their emergence or formation shape the process of collaboration and its effectiveness (Sowa, 2008). This dissertation aims to answers those questions by making three general contributions to the current literature on nonprofit collaboration.

First, this investigation contributes to the nonprofit literature by examining the relationship between the impetus for the formation of collaborative relationships among nonprofits and the process and effectiveness of those collaborative relationships. Although the current literature is full of approaches that suggest varying degrees of organizational agency or freedom in the formation of partnerships among nonprofits, it is not known how or whether such conditions shape the process and effectiveness of these partnerships.

Second, this dissertation examines partner selection among nonprofits and the

relationships between partner selection and the process and effectiveness of collaborative

| Antecedents<br>(Preconditions,<br>convener, partner<br>selection) | → | Processes<br>(Trust,<br>communication,<br>conflict<br>management) | → | Outcomes<br>(Effectiveness) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
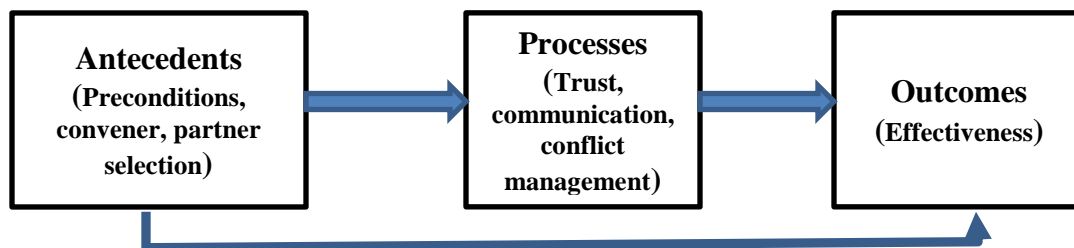
*Figure 2*. Connecting the dots in the examination of interorganizational collaboration.

relationships among nonprofits. Although the nonprofit collaboration literature contains a lot of

information about various reasons for nonprofit collaborations, nonprofit collaborative

challenges, and nonprofit collaborative outcomes, rare or virtually inexistent are the studies that

'connect the dots' (see Figure 2 above). In other words, there are very few studies in the

nonprofit collaboration literature that have examined how partner selection is related to nonprofit

collaborative challenges and nonprofit collaborative effectiveness.

Third, the nonprofit collaborative literature is overly reliant on case studies and

practitioners texts that often rely on anecdotal evidence and normative arguments to support their

claims. Although these studies and texts are important contributions to our knowledge about

nonprofit collaborative arrangements, the necessity to complement them with large scale

empirical investigations that can put claims to the test cannot be overemphasized.

In sum, the main goal of this dissertation is to investigate how the conditions for the

formation of collaborative relationships among nonprofits affect the collaborative process and

the effectiveness of collaborative endeavors. Specifically, the study examines the relationship

between the impetus for collaborative relationship formation, partner selection, and the processes and effectiveness of collaborative endeavors among human services nonprofits.

This study makes an important contribution to our understanding of how and why NGOs collaborate the way they do and the impact that the why and the how of nonprofit networks have on their ability to be effective. Such knowledge has important practical implications for the nonprofit community because it could help nonprofits collaborate in ways that make them more effective and that enable them to better serve their communities.

In the next chapter, I review approaches to nonprofit collaboration as well as the literatures on partner selection, processes, and outcomes of nonprofit collaboration. I specifically identify the gaps in the current literature on nonprofit collaboration in order to more meaningfully situate the contributions of this study.

**CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

Nonprofit collaborative ventures are increasingly being used to provide human services in the United States (Sowa, 2008). As a result, they have been the object of increased research, with many scholars seeking to understand the emergence, the operation, and the outcomes of these ventures. Nonprofit collaborative partnerships can take many forms, from large networks of nonprofits working together to generate a system of services to two nonprofits working together in a single interorganizational collaboration.

Previous research on nonprofit collaborative partnerships has examined why these partnerships form, how they operate, the various challenges that they encounter, and the benefits and other outcomes of these endeavors (Bardach, 1998; Sowa, 2008). In this chapter, I review the literature examining various approaches to nonprofit collaborations, partner selection among nonprofits, processes and challenges of nonprofit partnerships, and outcomes of nonprofit collaborative partnerships. Therefore, the goal of this chapter is to review the three areas or 'dots' of nonprofit collaboration research—antecedents, processes, and outcomes of interorganizational collaboration—as proposed by Gray and Wood (1991) and Wood and Gray (1991). In reviewing these three dots of nonprofit collaboration research, I examine important gaps and limitations in current nonprofit partnerships literature and I make the case for connecting the three 'dots' by examining how antecedents, processes, and outcomes of nonprofit collaborations are interrelated.

Before the review of the three 'dots' however, I examine the various sources or reasons for the increasing popularity of nonprofit partnerships in the provision and administration of human services in the United States. After examining these sources, I examine the various

meanings of interorganizational collaboration, what they have in common, and I provide a definition of collaboration as it is meant in this study.

## A Brief History of Collaborative Service Delivery in the U.S.

Collaborative organizing or service delivery among human services nonprofits or, more generally, across sectors (government, business, nonprofit) is not a novelty. According to Thomson and Perry (2006), nonprofit collaborative partnerships have their roots buried deep in American life and institutional practices. Indeed, in the context of American public institutionalism, the existence and multiplicity of these collaborative partnerships can be traced back to two competing political traditions: civic republicanism and classic liberalism (Perry & Thomson, 2004). Civic republicanism is a tradition of political thought that emphasizes a commitment to community, shared identity, or something larger than the individual—e.g., a neighborhood, or county, or the state. Civic republicanism views nonprofit collaborations as a key opportunities for actors to come together to deal with community issues in ways that treat differences and disagreements as the basis for deliberation and exchange in order to arrive at "mutual understanding, a collective will, trust and sympathy [and the] implementation of shared preferences" (March & Olsen, 1989, p. 126). Thus, civic republicanism views nonprofit partnerships positively as important to community building, functioning, and survival.

Classic liberalism, on the other hand, with its emphasis on individual actors pursuing their private interest, views nonprofit collaborations as opportunities for interests' articulation and interests' aggregation into collective outputs through self-interested bargaining (Perry & Thomson, 2004). In other words, according to this political tradition, nonprofits form collaborative partnerships to "achieve their own goals, negotiating among competing interests

and brokering coalitions among competing value systems, expectations, and self-interested motivations" (Thomson & Perry, 2006, p, 20).

Beyond their roots in traditional American political institutionalism, nonprofit partnerships have also become more and more common over the decades because of a variety of practical reasons such as the increasing complexity of social problems that they face and the perceived lack of coordination and efficiency in the nonprofit sector's responses to those problems. These concerns with issues of service integration and reduction of fragmentation and duplication of services since the 1960s and the 1970s have led federal, state, and local governments, as well as policy makers and scholars to call for more collaboration within and across sectors (Longoria, 2005). However, the previous reasons notwithstanding, there are three important shifts in the external environment of human services nonprofits that have led to the relatively recent intensification of calls and pressures for more collaborative partnerships, and the increasing rates of collaboration in that field.

First, financial pressure resulting from a decline of government funding and private/corporate donations, has led nonprofits to spend more time and energy on securing various revenue sources and other resources, and become more willing to work with and learn from each other (Salamon, 2002). Second, the devolution of federal, state, and local government services (Alexander, 1999) have led to increases in responsibilities for service delivery as well as workload for nonprofits. Third, social, cultural, and demographic shifts have resulted in increases in the demand for social service that nonprofits have traditionally provided (McCormak, 2001; Salamon, 1993, 1995, 2002). These three shifts have provided nonprofits with both challenges and opportunities, and in responding to them, they have increasingly relied on collaborative partnerships with other nonprofits and other organizations.

The first two environmental shifts were especially significant. Governments have traditionally been one of the most valuable partners to nonprofits as sources of material and financial resources (McCormak, 2001). However, due to the significant fiscal cutbacks in the social and human services sector by the Reagan Administration (in the early 1980's), "federal support to nonprofit organizations, outside of Medicaid and Medicare, declined by approximately 25 percent in real dollar terms in the early 1980s and returned to its 1980 level only in the late 1990s" (Salamon, 2002, p.12). Although these financial pressures eased considerably during the Clinton administration years (mid-1990s), the experience of the 1980s and the early 1990s had by then significantly shaped nonprofit behavior and stakeholders' expectations (Salamon, 2002). The early years of the new millennium culminated in a déjà vu experience by nonprofits, as a combination of tax reductions, increased military and antiterrorism spending, and economic recession led to new cutbacks in social and human services funding and hence new pressures on nonprofit to collaborate and stretch every dollar (Salamon, 2005). In fact, in recent years, many government and private foundation efforts are increasingly encouraging or mandating the use of collaborative efforts to deliver health and human services, often making engagement in collaborations a prerequisite for receipt of funding (Sandfort, 2001; Sowa, 2008).

Nonprofit collaborative service delivery arrangements or endeavors can take a variety of forms, from large networks of dozens of nonprofit human service organizations working together to produce a system of services, to small networks of nonprofit service providers targeting a particular community for services, to two nonprofits working together in a single interorganizational collaboration (Sowa, 2008). There is an important literature on nonprofit collaboration regarding why and how they form, the challenges that they face, and their

outcomes. Although much of that literature has heavily relied on case studies and anecdotal evidence and has too often been characterized by a normative bent, there has been a recent upsurge of empirical studies.

## Defining Interorganizational Collaboration

Interorganizational collaboration has been conceptualized and examined in a variety of ways, depending on approaches, fields, and authors. For instance, Wood and Gray (1991) have argued that collaboration can be both a process and an institutional arrangement. As a process, collaboration has been defined as "a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible" (Gray, 1989, p. 5). Collaboration in that sense entails joint decision making and outcomes. As an institution, collaboration refers to a concrete arrangement between two or more organizations that creates a new entity outside of each organization's existing boundaries (Sowa, 2008). In other words, collaboration as an institution creates shared norms and agreed-upon rules and standards of action between the organizations working together (Scott, 1995).

When defining collaboration, it can also be useful to distinguish it from other interorganizational relationships. Indeed, various interorganizational relationships have often been referred to as interorganizational collaboration. Such confusion over the meaning of the term has resulted in various definitions and frameworks for differentiating collaboration from other interorganizational relationships. Kagan (1991), for instance, provided a continuum of interorganizational relationships summarized in table 1 below. According to Kagan (1991), collaboration entails sharing resources, staff, and rewards.

Table 1

*Collaboration Continuum*

| Relationship | Definition and characteristics |
| --- | --- |
| Cooperation | Personal relationships between management and staff in different organizations, characterized by informality and a lack of formal structure |
| Coordination | Multiple organizations that work together to coordinate their services, yet remain fundamentally independent from each other |
| Collaboration | Where organizations share resources, staff, and rewards |
| Service integration | Where multiple organizations work together to provide a new package of services to their mutual clients |

Kagan (1991, pp. 2-3).

Other continuums of interorganizational relationships have been offered to distinguish collaboration from other relationships (Austin, 2000; Kanter, 1999; La Piana, 2001). Table 2 below presents an abbreviated general summary of previous literatures or frameworks distinguishing interorganizational collaboration from other types of interorganizational relationships. Essentially, previous literatures and collaboration continua suggest that interorganizational collaboration entails some degree of interdependence, and shared goals, norms, risks, decision making, and rewards (or losses) among the parties involved.

In general, regardless of the author, the field, the framework or the definition, there seems to be a high degree of agreement among most scholars and practitioners around four aspects of interorganizational collaboration. First, interorganizational collaboration is used as a positive term in contrast to negative interorganizational relations, such as interorganizational conflicts

Table 2

*Characteristics of Various Interorganizational Relationships*

| Characteristics | Relationship type | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Information exchange or solidarity | Collaboration | Service integration or merger |
| Shared goal/mission | Low overlapping | Moderate to high overlapping | Mission integration |
| Shared rules/norms | Yes/No | Yes | Yes |
| Autonomy | Autonomy | Interdependence | Integration |
| Decision making | Autonomous | Shared | One |
| Interaction level | Low to moderate | Moderate to high | High |
| Strategic value | Low to modest | Modest to high | High |
| Risk | Low | Medium to high/ shared | High |

(Huxham & Vangen, 2005). Second, interorganizational collaboration entails more than just information sharing (i.e., personal connections) and has to be more than resource sharing with mutual obligations (Snavely & Tracy, 2000). Third, interorganizational collaboration creates a "high degree of (perceived) opportunity for *joint value creation*" among participating organizations (Jarillo, 1988, p. 38). The joint value creation comes out of reciprocal exchanges and mutual adjustment and interactions. Fourth, interorganizational collaboration can take a multitude of forms and does not conform to just one approach or formula (O'Looney, 1994). In other words, collaborative arrangements can be more or less formalized depending on the context and the parties or actors involved.

Out of those four aspects of interorganizational collaboration around which there is a high degree of agreement among scholars, the emphasis on resource sharing and joint outcomes is the most common to definitions of collaboration. For instance, according to Gray (1985), interorganizational collaboration refers to the pooling of appreciation and/or tangible resources— information, money, material, labor, etc.—by two or more organizations to solve a set of problems which neither can solve individually. Gray's definition, and many like hers which also emphasize resource sharing and joint outcomes, while useful in understanding one of the goals of interorganizational collaboration, still encompass a lot of interorganizational activity that may not necessarily be collaborative and do not address the processes that constitute interorganizational collaboration.

Adding more precision to Gray's definition, Hardy, Phillips, and Lawrence (2003) define interorganizational collaboration as "a cooperative, interorganizational relationship that is negotiated in an ongoing communicative process, and which relies on neither market nor hierarchical mechanisms of control." (p. 323). This definition of interorganizational collaboration is sufficiently inclusive to encompass a wide range of interorganizational relationships (e.g., consortia, alliances, coalitions, networks, associations, etc.), and yet provides a set of key characteristics that distinguishes collaboration from other forms of interorganizational activity. Indeed, Hardy and colleagues' (2003) definition distinguishes interorganizational collaboration from those interorganizational relationships that are cooperative, but are either based on some form of legitimate authority, as in a relationship that might occur between a government regulatory agency and a firm operating within its jurisdiction, or where cooperation is purchased, as in a relationship that might occur between a firm and its suppliers (Hardy et al., 2003). Additionally, Hardy and colleagues' (2003) definition

acknowledge the dynamic and negotiated nature of collaboration as well as the communicative processes that produce and reproduce collaborative relationships over time. However, the definition provided by Hardy and colleagues (2003) does not directly acknowledge the centrality of individuals in the negotiations or the ongoing communicative processes that produce and reproduce collaborative relationships. After all, organizations are aggregates of individuals who are in fact the ones negotiating and communicating on behalf of their organizations to produce and reproduce interorganizational collaborative relationships.

In their communication-oriented model of collaboration, Keyton and colleagues (2008), provide a definition of interorganizational collaboration focusing attention on communicative processes among organizational representatives. In other words, unlike Hardy and colleagues (2003), Keyton and colleagues' (2008) definition directly acknowledge the centrality of individuals in the negotiations or the ongoing communicative processes that produce and reproduce collaborative relationships. They define interorganizational collaboration as "the set of communicative processes in which individuals representing multiple organizations or stakeholders engage when working interdependently to address problems outside the spheres of individuals or organizations working in isolation." (p. 381). Several features of that definition emphasize the centrality of communicative interactions among individuals representing organizations. First, organizational representatives engaging in collaboration are responsible to their organizations or constituents and they have organizational resources to draw from (or not) (Keyton et al., 2008). Second, organizational representatives work interdependently with resources from their organizations to address specific problems that, based on their perception, cannot be addressed in isolation.

In sum then, interorganizational collaboration can be defined as the set of communicative processes in which individuals representing multiple organizations or stakeholders engage when working interdependently to address problems or issues outside the spheres of individuals or organizations working in isolation and which rely on neither market nor hierarchical mechanisms of control. This conceptual definition of interorganizational collaboration is very useful because, not only is it more complete than the previous ones discussed above, but it also recognizes the fundamentally communicative nature of collaboration and the centrality of individuals (organizational representatives) in enacting it. Additionally, by emphasizing interdependence or joint activities or outcomes, that definition is consistent with the general consensus in the field around the meaning of interorganizational collaboration.

### Approaches to Interorganizational Collaboration among Nonprofits

Where do interorganizational collaborative partnerships among nonprofits come from? The previous question, which deals with the antecedents of nonprofit collaborative partnerships, has received a lot of attention from various disciplines and schools of thought. As a result, several approaches have been used to examine or understand why and how interorganizational collaboration among nonprofits occurs. Early approaches grounded in organizational economics tended to emphasize the similarities between collaborations among NGOs and collaboration and alliances among firms. As such, these economic approaches tended to focus heavily on efficiency and resources considerations as well as rational economic calculus in accounting for collaboration among nonprofits. Other approaches grounded in organizational theory and other social sciences have acknowledged differences between nonprofits and firm collaborations.

Each of these approaches or theories suggests different but not necessarily unrelated ideas about the impetus for nonprofit collaborative networks. Although most of the approaches

reviewed here are not specific to nonprofit collaborations, they seem to generate some consensus among nonprofit scholars as far as their suitability for nonprofit research is concerned. In other words, although there are a variety of approaches to interorganizational relationships in general, the approaches covered here are the ones that seem to acknowledge, or suggest, or have potential for differentiating between NGOs and firms in terms of the way they form collaborative relationships.

**Economic Approaches to Collaboration among Nonprofits**

From an organizational economics perspective, nonprofits engage in collaborative endeavors when they are the most efficient governance form, as compared with market transactions or internalization, due to issues related to specific investment, incentive alignment, or complementary assets (Mahoney, 2005; Parmigiani & Rivera-Santos, 2011). The two key economic theories that have been applied to explain nonprofit collaborations include resource dependence (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) and transaction cost economics (TCE) (Williamson, 1975, 1985, 1991). Others, such as the resource-based view (RBV) and its associated perspectives such as the knowledge-based view and agency theory, have also been used albeit not quite as extensively as the previous two. Resource dependence approaches propose that NGOs engage in collaborative endeavors in efforts to manage external dependencies and uncertainties in their resource environment. TCE on the other hand emphasizes collaboration as a mechanism to reduce transaction costs and thereby maximizing economic performance (Foster & Meinhard, 2002; Guo & Acar, 2005). In sum, the organizational economics approaches posit that nonprofit collaborations are formed when it is more efficient for a nonprofit to conduct an activity through a close partner relationship than either on its own or through the market. The

general emphasis is on obtaining complementary resources, creating an appropriate governance structure, and aligning incentives among partners (Parmigiani & Rivera-Santos, 2011).

Despite their contributions to the understanding of nonprofits collaborations, organizational economics approaches have drawn substantial criticisms for their insufficient attention to the role of values (individual, cultural, or religious) and those constraints on strategic choice that are embedded in an organization's structural context (Baum & Dutton, 1996; Galaskiewicz, 1985), its institutional environment (Galaskiewicz, 1985; Oliver, 1990), as well as other contextual and organizational process factors (Cigler, 1999). Such criticisms become even more problematic in the nonprofit collaboration context because, according to many scholars (e.g., Galaskiewicz, 1985; Guo & Acar, 2005; Longoria, 2005; Parmigiani & Rivera-Santos, 2011), a considerable number of interorganizational collaborations among nonprofits are mandated by law or promoted by funders and other societal constituencies, and that collaboration among certain types of nonprofits (e.g., human service organizations) is often explained primarily by these mandates or pressures.

**Institutional Approaches**

According to institutional approaches (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), an organization's life chances are significantly improved by its demonstrations of conformity to the norms and social expectations of the institutional environment in which it operates (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Meyer & Scott, 1992). In other words, institutional theory suggests that institutional environments impose pressures on organizations to appear legitimate and conform to prevailing social norms (Barringer & Harrison, 2000).

In the third sector, nonprofits, unlike firms, often form alliances or partnerships with other nonprofits to meet necessary legal or regulatory requirements (Guo & Acar, 2005). Indeed,

mandates from higher authorities (e.g., government agencies, donors, legislation, or professional regulatory bodies) often provide the impetus for collaborative relationships that otherwise might not have occurred voluntarily (Oliver, 1990; Provan, 1984; Snavely & Tracy, 2000). Institutional forces, especially those exercised by governmental authority, play an important role in shaping interorganizational relationships among nonprofits because a nonprofit is less likely to resist institutional pressures that constrain its action when the organization is heavily dependent on the source of these pressures (Guo & Acar, 2005; Oliver, 1990). Governments are not only the largest funders for many nonprofits, especially human services nonprofits, but they are also the most important institutional actors with their laws, regulations, decrees, and other mandates or legal requirements.

The use of governmental incentives for nonprofit collaboration as a means to promote inclusiveness and participation, building legitimacy and support, reduce duplication of efforts, cut costs, and integrate services apparently is on the rise (Guo & Acar, 2005; Longoria, 2005; Stephens et al., 2009). To get funding from governments and increasingly from foundations and other funding entities, nonprofit applicants are often asked to show or demonstrate their commitment to sharing organizational resources or formal coordination of services with other nonprofits and are also often asked to file joint grant applications (Guo & Acar, 2005; Longoria, 2005; Snavely & Tracy, 2000; Stephens et al., 2009). With the increasing institutionalization of interorganizational collaboration as a best practice in dealing with social problems and issues (Longoria, 2005), nonprofits are more likely to continue to continue to feel or experience the pressure to form collaborative relationships with other nonprofits.

As an approach to interorganizational collaboration, institutional theory has proved valuable in explaining why nonprofits take part in interorganizational collaboration. Along with

trying to obtain or increase their legitimacy as a means of enhancing their reputation, status, and image, organizations are also motivated to simply conform to their institutional environments as a means of acceptance and survival (Oliver, 1991). Conformity to institutional environments often involves imitating or mimicking industry or population norms, standards, and successful practices (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Oliver, 1991). As a result, many nonprofits often engage in interorganizational relationships simply because other successful nonprofits in their environments are doing so.

However, although institutional approaches have proved valuable in explaining why nonprofits take part in interorganizational collaboration, they have rarely been used to examine how different institutional conditions affect nonprofit collaborations' processes and their effectiveness. For instance, an interesting and important question here concerns whether there are differences in process and outcomes between nonprofit partnerships that are formed through mandates or coercive isomorphism and those that are not. In other words, there is an important need for empirical studies that investigate the impact of institutional forces on the processes and effectiveness of nonprofit collaborative partnerships.

**Stakeholder Theory**

Another approach to the formation of interorganizational relationships among nonprofits is stakeholder theory. The stakeholder approach to interorganizational alliance formation views organizations at the center of a network of stakeholders (Barringer & Harrison, 2000; Laplume, Sonpar, & Litz, 2008). Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Laplume, Sonpar, & Litz, 2008) suggests that nonprofits will partner with influential stakeholders to reduce uncertainty arising mainly from institutional or reputational concerns. Building on the theory's main assumption that the role of a manager is to balance stakeholders' interests, stakeholder theorists focus on

identifying and understanding stakeholders and on distinguishing between primary stakeholders, such as employees, clients, funders and secondary stakeholders, such as activists, legislators, or the media (Parmigiani & Rivera-Santos, 2011). An organization's stakeholders refer to any group of individuals who can affect or are affected by the organization (Freeman, 1994). These include the organization's employees/members, its funders, its clients, its competitors, the local communities in which it serves and operates, and the regulatory agencies that oversee its operations. Thus, according to stakeholder theory, organizations are vehicles for coordinating stakeholder interests (Freeman, 1994).

The stakeholder perspective is based on the idea that organizations are, by nature, cooperative systems (Barnard, 1938). As a result of their cooperative nature, organizations therefore tend to form coalitions or alliances with stakeholders to achieve common objectives (Barringer & Harrison, 2000). The stakeholder approach is very appealing to the study of nonprofit collaborations because it recognizes that various types of organizations have to reconcile or accommodate various interests and constituencies. Given the social purpose of nonprofits and their mission to tackle various social issues that are often hotly contested in various constituencies, they are often more likely than firms to develop relationships with other organizations and audiences in an attempt to build legitimacy and garner support for their causes. These cooperative relationships can serve as a powerful mechanism for aligning the interests of various stakeholders and can also help a nonprofit reduce environmental uncertainty and build legitimacy (Laplume, Sonpar, & Litz, 2008; Parmigiani & Rivera-Santos, 2011).

The stakeholder approach to interorganizational collaboration has been influential in communication studies, especially through the work of Laurie Lewis. Lewis (2006) developed a theoretical model of collaborative interactions across contexts which focused on four central

issues: the external environment, inputs to collaborative interactions, management of reciprocal interdependence, and outcomes. While Lewis (2006) never uses the term *stakeholder* and uses the terms *participants* or *collaborative interactants* instead, the theoretical model she proposes essentially views collaboration as a vehicle for coordinating various participants' interests and achieving individual and joint objectives. Such a view in consistent with the stakeholder approach and integrates important inputs, processes and outputs that are central to the understanding of interorganizational collaboration.

While stakeholder theory has received considerable attention and theoretical development over the years, researchers have barely begun to empirically test it (Harrison & Freeman, 1999; Lewis, 2006). Because of this lack of empirical testing, much of the wisdom emanating from stakeholder theory is "accepted on faith" (Barringer & Harrison, 2000, p. 377). Moreover, stakeholder theory also suffers from significant practical limitations. For instance, how can stakeholder theory be practically implemented in contexts where an organization has literally thousands of stakeholders? Additionally, stakeholder models of interorganizational relationship formation tend to be more descriptive than prescriptive (Barringer & Harrison, 2000). Indeed, these models often lead to the conclusion that interorganizational alliances can facilitate goal congruence among a set of stakeholders, but they do not offer much information with regard to the form alliances should take and they do not provide much explanations regarding the differential processes and effectiveness of various nonprofit partnerships.

**Domain Approaches**

Another approach to interorganizational collaboration among nonprofits, which can be found in domain theory, has emphasized the dynamics of interorganizational domains (e.g., Gray, 1989; Trist, 1983), which are defined there in terms of sets of common problems facing

organizations (Lawrence, Phillips, & Hardy, 1999). Domain approaches are often used in the

literature on nonprofits and cross-sectoral partnerships because they are usually applied when

examining interorganizational collaboration in addressing specific social issues or problems,

which is consistent with the social purpose of NGOs. Domain approaches draw on negotiated

order theory (e.g., Strauss, Schatzman, Bucher, Ehrlich, & Satshin, 1963) in that it emphasizes

the socially constructed nature of interorganizational collaboration and the domains in which it

takes place (Lawrence et al., 1999). This problem-centered approach also draws explicitly on the

work of Emery and Trist (1965), who introduced the notion of turbulent environments where

challenges or problems characterized by complexity, uncertainty, and unclear boundaries cannot

be addressed by single organizations operating alone (Lawrence et al., 1999). Consequently,

research within this approach has led to calls for collaborative (Gray, 1989) or inclusive (Warren,

Rose, & Bergunder, 1974) decision making where organizations pool their resources and

expertise (Lawrence et al., 1999; Trist, 1983).

Based on domain approaches, interorganizational collaboration occurs "when a group of

autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process, using shared

rules, norms, and structures, to act or decide on issues related to that domain" (Wood & Gray,

1991, p. 146). In other words, according to domain approaches, interorganizational collaboration

occurs and interorganizational domains emerge because different organizations perceive

themselves to be connected to common problems and issues (Gray, 1985; Hardy & Phillips,

1998). Collaboration is thus conceptualized as a socially negotiated order that evolves through a

process of joint appreciation about a domain (Gray, 2000; Wood & Gray, 1991). In this way,

interorganizational domains are not objective, static, predetermined structures, but processes of

negotiation, cognitive structuring, social construction, meaning creation, and sensemaking, wherein social order is constantly negotiated and enacted (Gray 1989; Hardy & Phillips, 1998).

As members of different organizations come to share a vision of the problems, issues and participants that constitute the domain, they become stakeholders (McCann, 1983). This shared perception of connection through common problems and issues leads to the creation of an identity for the domain, and mutually agreed upon rules, procedures, directions, and boundaries, which may be perceived and experienced as a permanent structure (Hardy & Phillips, 1998; McCann, 1983; Trist 1983). In this way, the development of interorganizational collaboration in a domain is a process of social construction that "enables stakeholders to communicate, to be identified and legitimated, and to acknowledge the problems they face" (Hardy & Phillips, 1998, p. 218).

While domain approaches emphasize important aspects of interorganizational collaboration among nonprofits and have often received some empirical support (see Gray, 2000 for some examples), they are not without their flaws. For instance, domain approaches to interorganizational collaboration do not adequately account for the role of power and competition for resources among organizations (Hardy & Phillips, 1998). Although domain theorists have often acknowledged the importance of power in the emergence of interorganizational domains, their explanations concerning why dominant or powerful organizations would share power with other less powerful groups in a collaborative venture have not been very convincing (Hardy & Phillips, 1998). Additionally, domain approaches provide very little explanation about why certain nonprofit partnerships operate differently or are more effective than others. Such explanation is key to any comprehensive or effective approach to nonprofit collaboration.

**Ecological Approaches**

Organizational ecology focuses on the reasons for and ways in which organizations adapt to existing environments and work to better fit their identified niches (Takahashi & Smutny, 2001). According to organizational ecology theorists, most organizations experience extensive inertia and change occurs through an evolutionary process of variation–selection–retention (Hannan & Freeman, 1978; Monge, Heiss, & Margolin, 2008). Variations, the sources of evolutionary change, refer to the change of routines, activities, or traits and could include blind (random) and intentional variations (Monge & Contractor, 2003). The selection process is performed to select optimal variations (routines or organizational traits) to help organizations better cope with environmental changes (Monge & Contractor, 2003). In response to such environmental changes then, organizations might learn how to face novel challenges and thus enhance their knowledge and capabilities (Doerfel et al. 2010). The retention process entails the standardization of the newly selected variations (Monge & Contractor, 2003).

Ecological approaches to the study of organizations and interorganizational networks have informed and generated some research in organizational studies (Aldrich & Ruef, 2006) although little of that work has influenced research on nonprofit collaborations. In recent years, however, organizational communication scholars have begun to apply evolutionary and ecological approaches to examine interorganizational communication networks among nonprofits (Monge et al., 2008; Monge & Poole, 2008). For example, Doerfel, Lai, and Chewning (2010) used a community ecology perspective to examine how interorganizational communication networks and social capital facilitated organizational recovery among nonprofits after the Hurricane Katrina disaster in New Orleans. Similarly, Shumate, Fulk, and Monge (2005) used ecological approaches to study the evolution of international nongovernmental

organization (INGO) community networks over time showing that the evolution of the

HIV/AIDS NGO community depended for survival and growth on embedded communication

linkages and preexisting links were the best predictors of future links.

In an attempt to explain why there are various organizational forms, Hannan and Freeman

(1978) postulated that a principle of "isomorphism" leads organizations to match the

characteristics of the environments in which they operate (pp. 938-939). Thus, the ecological

perspective suggests that as environments shift, inertial incumbent organizational forms are

replaced by new forms that better fit the changed context (Barnett & Carroll, 1995). This

perspective implies that collaboration is more structural than organizational since organizations

participate in collaborative endeavors to adapt to their environments. The emphasis on the

influence of environments in organizational ecology (and also in contingency theory) highlights

the notion that the processes of collaboration and the decisions to form collaborative

relationships are themselves embedded in larger institutional and social relationships (Monge &

Poole, 2008; Takahashi & Smutny, 2001).

An ecological perspective to the study of nonprofits is appealing because it allows

scholars the opportunity to examine how nonprofits unique organizational concerns and

environments affect their behaviors. Indeed, rather than being based on strong market

competition, nonprofit success may very often depend heavily on the political and institutional

environments in which nonprofits conduct their activities, as nonprofits tend rely more heavily

on non-tangible resources such as legitimation by constituencies (Galaskiewicz & Bielefeld,

1998; Galaskiewicz, Bielefeld, & Dowell, 2006). Comparing nonprofits to for-profit

organizations, Galaskiewicz and Bielefeld (1998) argued that while resource mobilization or

acquisition is a key factor in explaining nonprofit collaborations, the effects of that factor are heavily mediated or tempered by the needs to be legitimate and to control costs.

An organizational ecology perspective may be useful for this investigation because it emphasizes the importance of initial or founding conditions in shaping the evolution and sustainability of organizational forms. Indeed, several studies adopting ecological approaches to organizing have emphasized the impact that environmental conditions at the time of founding may exert upon the survival of organizations (Hannan, 1998; Henderson, 1999; Mitchell, 1994; Ranger-Moore, 1997; Romanelli, 1989). Additionally, other studies (Cooper, Gimeno-Gascon, & Woo, 1994; Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1990; Kimberly, 1979), grounded in the same approaches have focused on the impact that those strategic choices at the time of founding may have upon the performance of organization. For instance, Kimberly (1979) found that environmental conditions, the founder's personality, and the initial strategic choices exert an enduring effect on the behavior and performance of organizations.

However, most studies that use ecological approaches to examine the impact of founding conditions on the processes and outcomes of organizational forms focus on the formation or founding conditions of firms and their impact on the performance and survival of firms (Geroski, Mata, & Portugal, 2010). In other words, the impact of founding conditions on processes and outcomes of nonprofit collaborations has not been examined. As such, there is an opportunity and a need to extend organizational ecology or evolutionary arguments about the impact of initial or founding conditions on process and outcomes to collaborative partnerships among nonprofits.

**Impetus for Nonprofit Collaborative Partnerships**

On the question of why nonprofit collaborative partnerships form, the literature provides many answers. Indeed, from the review above, there exist several approaches in the

interorganizational literature that provide various explanations or reasons as to why nonprofits form interorganizational collaborative relationships. However, although the various answers to the 'why question' of nonprofit collaborative partnerships are very important and even satisfactory, they are also limited and frustrating in the sense that they provide very little in the way of an answer to the question of whether the 'why' matters. Does the 'why' of nonprofit collaborations matter in terms of their processes and their outcomes? To put it in another way, is there a relationship between impetus for nonprofit collaborative partnerships and the processes and outcomes of those interorganizational partnerships?

Each of the approaches to nonprofit collaboration discussed so far suggests varying degrees of agency in nonprofit collaborative venture formation. Some, like economic theories emphasize the agency of nonprofits in determining whether to collaborate, and others like institutional theory emphasize the structural constraints that lead nonprofits to collaborate. However, very few studies have examined the role of nonprofit agency in determining whether to collaborate and the impact of such agency on the processes and outcomes of the nonprofit collaborative venture. This study will fill that gap by investigating the relationship between impetus for nonprofit partnerships, collaborative processes, and collaborative effectiveness.

**The Role of the Convener in the Collaboration Process**

Most of the approaches reviewed so far do not explicitly address the role of the convener or catalyst (Wood & Gray, 1991) in the formation of collaborative relationships among nonprofits. According to Wood and Gray (1991), a general theory of collaboration must be able to account for the role of the convener and other founding conditions in shaping the process and outcomes of collaborations. Additionally, Cooper and Shumate's (2012) examination of

nonprofit collaboration in Zambia suggests that the convener can play an important role in shaping the structure of nonprofit coalitions or partnerships.

Table 3

*Dominant Modes and Central Attributes of Conveners for Various Types of Interventions and Influence*

| Type of intervention | Type of influence by conveners | |
|---|---|---|
| | Formal | Informal |
| Requested by stakeholders: convener is responsive | Legitimation: convener is perceived as fair | Facilitation: convener is trusted |
| Initiated by convener: convener is proactive | Mandate: convener is powerful | Persuasion: convener is credible |

Adapted from Wood & Gray (1991, p. 152)

Table 3 above presents the dominant modes and central attributes of conveners for various types of interventions and influence (Wood & Gray, 1991). Convening has its origins in social ecology theory (Trist 1983). Successful convening entails the ability to recognize who has a stake in an issue and the possession of sufficient influence to attract or persuade stakeholders to join a collaborative alliance.

In three of the four cases in table 3, the convener works with the stakeholders or the nonprofits to establish or facilitate the establishment of a partnership between them, and the nonprofits have a relatively high degree of freedom and agency in selecting their partners. In the last case, where the nonprofit or stakeholder collaboration is initiated by a powerful convener through mandate, the nonprofits have very little, if at all, power or flexibility in selecting their partners. According to Wood and Gray (1991), those four different types of convening, and thus the impetus for collaboration, can have different impacts on the processes and outcomes of

nonprofit collaboration. Unfortunately, however, there is very little evidence from the current nonprofit collaboration literature of what impact impetus for collaboration has on processes and outcomes of nonprofit collaborative partnerships. In this study, I intend to fill that gap in the literature by examining how impetus for human services nonprofit partnerships—i.e., whether they are formed voluntarily or through mandates by powerful conveners—is connected to their collaborative processes and effectiveness.

## Partner Selection

After an organization has made the decision to engage in a collaborative relationship, assuming that it is not coerced, its selection of an appropriate partner is the next critical decision (Stephens, Fulk, & Monge, 2009). This process is especially critical in cases where the collaborative relationship was not mandated or forced by an outside party. The decision making process associated with selecting a collaborative partner can be challenging and complex, especially in uncertain and dynamic environments (Bierly & Gallagher, 2007). Indeed, interorganizational partnerships are inherently risky endeavors. Partner selection, which refers to the process of searching, evaluating and eventually selecting a collaborative partner, is generally regarded as an important control choice in managing collaborative relationships (Ireland et al., 2002). Ireland and colleagues (2002), among others, suggest that the proper functioning and success of a collaborative relationship are both heavily dependent on selecting the right or appropriate partner.

While the literature on partner selection is rich in factors explaining why and how organizations select partners, that literature has mostly focused on the investigation of strategic alliances and partnerships among firms or business organizations. As such, the phenomenon of partner selection among nonprofits has rarely been investigated. Nevertheless, there is some

nonprofit research that has suggested a number of factors that may be important in partner selection among nonprofits.

**Prior Experience**

Prior experience with an organization can be an important factor in selecting that organization as a partner in subsequent collaborations. This is especially the case when the prior experience was assessed or rated positively by the parties involved in the collaboration. Previous research on nonprofits alliance partner choice (Shumate et al., 2005) suggests that a prehistory of partnerships or prior experience can play an important role in predicting future partnerships among nonprofits. In their examination of HIV/AIDS nonprofits alliances from archival sources, Shumate and colleagues found that international nonprofits that had formed alliances with each other in the recent past were more likely to continue those alliances in the future than change to new alliances. In explaining their findings, Shumate and colleagues provided a variety of explanations ranging from structural inertia to search costs.

**Institutional Pressures**

Institutional pressures can also play an important role in the process of partner selection among nonprofits (Holland, 2007; Shumate et al., 2005; Stephens et al., 2009). Shumate and colleagues found that nonprofits with common funders or IGO relations were more likely to develop collaborative partnerships. Additionally, Stephens and colleagues argue that in the nonprofit sector, funding agencies can be "cupids," as was the case with The California Endowment, which required three non-profit organizations to form an alliance if they wanted to get funding to pursue policy changes in the area of children's health coverage (Stephens et al., 2009, p. 504).

**Homophily**

Lincoln and McBride (1985) found some support for the role of homophily as an important factor in partner selection among nonprofits. Homophily, or the "selection of others who are similar" (Monge & Contractor, 2003, p. 223), suggests that contact between similar entities occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar entities (McPherson et al., 2001; Kossinets & Watts, 2009). Specifically, Lincoln and McBride (1985) found that despite the attempt of interorganizational theorists to downplay the importance of ideologies and values in the formation of collaborative relationships, they do indeed play a critical role especially among nonprofits. Indeed, their research shows that collaborative relations were significantly more frequent between human service organizations with similar ideologies and client racial makeup.

Although organizations vary in the extent to which they are similar to one another based on a variety of criteria including founding date, status, size, goals, structure, relationships, activities, location, and management styles, organization scholars have rarely investigated how multiple sources of homophily simultaneously influence interorganizational collaboration networks among nonprofits or whether certain sources tend to weigh more heavily than others in the partner selection process. For instance, Shumate and colleagues (2005) found no support for homophily based on organizational type in explaining alliance partner choice among HIV/AIDS INGOs. Their results showed that similarity of organizational type was not a significant predictor of alliances among INGOs across any of the time periods they studied.

**Complementarity**

Complementarity is another factor of partner selection. Complementarity occurs when one organization has unique resources (skills, capabilities, assets, expertise, or money) that another organization needs or could benefit from (and vice versa). Such exchange relationships

are well documented in interorganizational relations literature (Thomson & Perry, 2006; van de Ven, Emmett, & Koenig, 1975) and supported by resource dependence theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

Studies that have investigated the impact of partner complementarity (e.g., fit between partners) on partner selection and attractiveness have generally focused on firms. These studies have found that partner complementarity is a critical factor in partner selection and attractiveness assessment because it affects the extent to which the abilities, image orientations, and activities of organizations can be integrated successfully (Hitt et al., 2004; Luo, 2002; Shah & Swaminathan, 2008). In other words, when organizations have complementary resources, image orientations, activities, and skills, coordination between them is facilitated (Harrison et al., 2001; Larsson & Finkelstein, 1999; Shah & Swaminathan, 2008).

**Summary on Partner Selection**

From the partner selection literature reviewed above, one can observe that partner selection has rarely been investigated in the context of nonprofit organizations. There are very few articles that have examined the topic empirically. In other words, although the literature on partner selection is rich in theories about how organizations select partners, most of that literature is grounded in studies of inter-firm alliances. Additionally, most partner selection research has not examined the impact of partner selection on the processes and outcomes of nonprofit alliances. The paucity of studies examining the impact of partner selection on processes and outcomes of interorganizational collaboration is rather puzzling, considering the myriad of practitioner's texts (e.g., Austin, 2000; Linden, 2002) that emphasize the importance of selecting the 'right' partners.

**Processes of Interorganizational Collaboration among Nonprofits**

Although there are several definitions of collaboration across various disciplines (Lewis 2006), most view it as a process that involves several dimensions or microprocesses to achieve joint goals or outcomes (Gray & Wood, 1991; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Keyton & Stallworth, 2003; Milward & Provan, 2006; Perry & Thomson, 2004; Stohl & Walker, 2002; Thomson & Perry, 2006; Wood & Gray, 1991). Indeed, the achievement of joint goals or outcomes implies synergistic processes more so than stepwise movement from one phase to another (Brinkerhoff, 2002; Huxham & Vangen 2005). For instance, in their review of several cases studies of interorganizational collaboration over many years, Huxham and Vangen (2005) describe various fundamental characteristics of collaborative situations, each of which implies a messy, intense, contradictory, and dynamic process that is defined by multiple viewpoints actions, and unintended consequences or outcomes.

In the antecedent-process-outcome model of interorganizational collaboration presented in Chapter 1 (Figure 1), Thomson and Perry (2006), after reviewing various models of collaborations, summarize the process or the "doing" of collaboration as consisting of five dimensions: governance, administration, organizational autonomy, mutuality, and norms of trust and reciprocity. These dimensions, though distinct variables, are interdependent in the sense that "movement from one dimension to another does not necessarily occur sequentially" (p. 23).

**Governance**

Governance is a structural dimension of collaboration which institutionalizes the process of making joint decisions about the rules that will govern partners' behavior and relationships and the structures for reaching agreement on collaborative activities and outcomes through shared power arrangements (Thomson & Perry, 2006). Governance encompasses both

negotiation and commitment processes (Ring & van de Ven, 1994). The literature on

interorganizational collaboration describes governance variously as participative decision

making (McCaffrey, Faerman, & Hart, 1995; Wood & Gray, 1991), problem solving (Hellriegel,

Slocum, & Woodman 1986), and shared power arrangements (Crosby & Bryson, 2005).

Thus, governance occurs as nonprofits come together to form collaborative partnerships,

and they make decisions or choices that govern a variety of collective action problems implicit in

joint decision making and joint value creation. Such collective action problems include for

instance how to jointly develop sets of working rules to determine decision making procedures,

appropriateness of or constraints on actions, information exchange, and costs and benefits

distribution (Ostrom, 1990). As a process, then, governance in nonprofit collaboration is

dynamic and jointness or togetherness can be achieved in a myriad of ways (Bardach, 1998;

Thomson & Perry, 2006). Although disagreements, contests, and conflicts among nonprofits still

occur, they occur within a larger framework of agreement or consensus on the appropriateness of

collectively determined rules that ensure a collaborative environment.

**Administration**

Nonprofit collaborations are strategic by nature. In other words, nonprofits collaborate

because they want to achieve specific goals or outcomes. To achieve the goals that led the

nonprofits to form a collaborative partnership, some kind of administrative structure must exist

that moves from governance to action (Thomson & Perry, 2006). Administration, much like

governance, is also a structural dimension of interorganizational collaboration. However, unlike

governance which involves making choices or joint decisions about rules to govern the

collaborative effort, administration involves getting things done through an effective operating

system that supports clarity of roles and responsibilities, clarity of goals, and effective

communication channels (Thomson & Perry, 2006). The key administrative functions identified in the classical management literature— functions such as planning, organizing, coordination, staffing, clarity of roles and responsibilities, and monitoring or control mechanisms —are also stressed in the interorganizational collaboration research (Bardach, 1998; Mattessich & Monsey, 1992; Ring & van de Ven, 1994), but they take on different meaning in the context of the more symmetrical and horizontal (at least in theory) relationships found in collaborative partnerships (Perry & Thomson, 2004; Thomson & Perry, 2006).

**Organizational Autonomy**

One of the most important administrative dilemmas for leaders and managers of nonprofit collaborations is the management of the inherent tension between organizational partners' interests—achieving individual organizational missions and maintaining an identity that is distinct from the collaborative—and collaboration's interests—achieving collaboration goals and maintaining accountability to collaborative partners and their stakeholders (Bardach, 1998; Tschirhart, Christensen, & Perry, 2005; Wood & Gray, 1991). Indeed, nonprofits in collaborative partnerships share a dual identity; they maintain their own distinct organizational identities and organizational authority separate from (though simultaneously with) the collaboration identity (Thomson & Perry, 2006). Huxham (1996) refers to that tension as the organizational autonomy –accountability dilemma and argues that because "collaboration is voluntary, partners generally need to justify their involvement in it in terms of its contribution to their own aims" (p. 15) or refrain from forming a collaborative partnership altogether.

The organizational autonomy dimension of the collaboration process, thus, refers to the process of managing or reconciling the tension between organizations' (individual) and collaboration's (collective) interests. The management of that tension and, thus, the importance

of conflict management in nonprofit collaboration is a recurring theme in much of the case research on collaboration (Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Logsdon, 1991; Paquin & Howard-Grenville, 2013; Provan & Lemaire, 2012; Saz-Carranza & Ospina, 2011; Selsky, 1991; Thomson & Perry, 2006; Tschirhart et al., 2005; Wood & Gray, 1991). Indeed, tensions and conflicts in collaborative partnerships can sometimes be so overwhelming as to destroy these partnerships, or at least, undermine the achievement of their purpose. In fact, that reality has often led some collaboration scholars (e.g., Huxham & Vangen, 2005) to be skeptical about recommending that nonprofits collaborate unless absolutely necessary. In their own words, "In the fifteen years that we have been researching collaboration we have seen no evidence to shift our 'don't do it unless you have to' —or unless the stakes are really worth pursuing —position" (Huxham & Vangen, 2005, p. 42). I believe that the previous quote and the centrality of tension, conflict, and conflict management in interorganizational collaboration simply reinforces the need to empirically investigate how antecedents of collaboration affect conflict management and how conflict management affects collaborative experiences and effectiveness.

**Mutuality**

The mutuality dimension of the collaboration process refers to the process of forging mutually beneficial relationships among the organizations involved in the partnership. In other words, it consists in working through difference to arrive at relationships that satisfy each organization's interest(s). Mutuality is rooted in interdependence. Indeed, nonprofits that form collaborative partnerships must experience mutually beneficial interdependencies based either on different but complementary interests (Powell, 1990) or on shared interests, which are usually based on homogeneity, convergence, or an appreciation and passion for problems or issues that go beyond an individual nonprofit's mission (e.g., humanitarian crisis, natural catastrophes and

disasters, wars) (Thomson & Perry, 2006). Mutuality, therefore, provides a basis for forging common views out of differences or disagreements (Gray & Wood, 1991; Wood & Gray, 1991). The more agreement or consensus nonprofit partners can forge out of differences based on each other's needs and interests, the greater the likelihood they will be able to collaborate smoothly and effectively.

**Norms of Trust and Reciprocity**

The last collaboration process dimension that Thomson and Perry (2006) provide is the trust and reciprocity dimension. They refer to that dimension as the process of building social capital norms. Reciprocity and trust are key concepts in the interorganizational literature (Bierly & Gallagher, 2007). Reciprocity in interorganizational collaboration refers to the willingness by organizations to interact collaboratively only if their partners show the same willingness. In other words, reciprocity is based on a perceived degree of obligation or commitment, such that organizations are willing to bear initial costs of collaborative initiatives because they expect that their partners will 'return the favor' by equalizing the distribution of costs and benefits over time out of a sense of duty (Ring & van de Ven, 1994).

Closely related to reciprocity, interorganizational trust refers to the belief that each partner in a collaborative endeavor (1) will make "good-faith efforts to behave in accordance with any commitments both explicit and implicit," (2) will "be honest in whatever negotiations preceded such commitments," and (3) will "not take excessive advantage of another even when the opportunity is available" (Cummings & Bromiley, 1996, p. 303). In other words, interorganizational trust refers to the mutual confidence that no partner in an interorganizational collaborative endeavor will exploit another's vulnerabilities or weaknesses, because

opportunistic behavior would violate principles, norms, values, and standards of behavior that have been internalized by all parties involved (Bierly & Gallagher, 2007).

According to Ganesan (1994), *trust* consists of two dimensions: benevolence and competence. *Benevolence-based trust* has to do with the motives and intentions of the alliance partners. It exists to the extent that partners in a collaborative endeavor will behave and act in a way that shows their reliance on their partner's goodwill and avoidance of opportunistic behavior (Ganesan, 1994). *Competence-based trust*, on the other hand, exists to the extent that partners in a collaborative endeavor consistently exhibit characteristics such as credibility and expertise (Ganesan, 1994). As such, competence-based trust reflects the degree to which partners respect and are willing to rely on each other's expertise, capabilities, and judgments.

Trust is a central component of interorganizational collaboration because it reduces complexity, opportunism or free riding, and transaction costs more quickly than other organizing mechanisms (Bierly & Gallagher, 2007; Chiles & McMackin, 1996; Ostrom, 1998; Smith, 1995). Given the importance of trust in interorganizational collaboration, there need to be investigations on how it is affected by antecedents to collaboration, and how it affects other collaborative processes, as well as the effectiveness of nonprofit collaborative partnerships.

**Summary on Processes**

All the dimensions of the collaboration process reviewed thus far underscore one way or approach to the examination of processes of collaboration. One thing that is clear from the review of the nonprofit literature about these processes is that, as important as these processes are to the 'doing' of interorganizational collaboration, very few studies have examined the connections between them and antecedents and outcomes of collaboration among nonprofits. The paucity of such studies represent an important gap in the nonprofit literature, especially given

that nonprofit collaborative partnerships are formed in a multitude of ways, and have to engage in those processes to achieve various outcomes. Thus, while it makes intuitive sense to assume that the way nonprofits form relationships may have an impact on the development of those relationships, such a connection has not been investigated in the literature on nonprofit collaboration. Examining the empirical connection between formation conditions and collaborative processes could yield valuable insights for both scholars and practitioners about how nonprofits could improve their collaborative partnerships and avoid unnecessary failures.

Another noteworthy gap, or perhaps anomaly, from much of the collaboration literature, especially outside of communication research, is the absence of communication as a distinct or important dimension of the collaboration process. Communication, however, underlie all the collaboration process dimensions discussed thus far. In fact, various definitions of collaboration (e.g., Lawrence et al., 2002) do emphasize the centrality of communication in the collaboration process. The main reason why interorganizational communication is rarely studied as the focus or as a central dimension in collaboration research is that in most empirical studies of interorganizational relationships in general, researchers have typically considered communication as a facet of a broader construct or dimension, such as supply management (e.g., Chen et al., 2004), marketing (e.g., Schultz & Evans, 2002), governance (e.g., Provan & Kenis, 2008), and mutuality (e.g., Thomson & Perry, 2006), or they have examined the extent to which the use of select communication (marketing, and public relations) strategies by firms enhances operational performance (e.g., Prahinksi & Benton, 2004). What has not been systematically investigated is the extent to which interorganizational communication within nonprofit partnerships mediates the connections between key antecedents and outcomes of these nonprofit

partnerships. Such an investigation is needed in order to advance theory building and empirical testing in nonprofit collaboration research.

## Outcomes of Interorganizational Collaboration among Nonprofits

The last area of the antecedent-process-outcome framework of collaboration presented in Figure 1 above (Chapter 1) is the outcomes of interorganizational collaboration. Scholars and practitioners of nonprofit management and collaboration have long shared an interest in understanding the various outcomes of the increasingly studied but little understood process called interorganizational collaboration. The examination of the various outcomes of interorganizational collaboration is often complicated by the fact that there is often very little empirical evidence to support the association between interorganizational collaboration and specific outcomes (Longoria, 2005). Indeed, as part of the push to encourage more interorganizational collaboration, especially in the human services field, interorganizational collaboration has been linked to a variety of positive outcomes. As such, the literature on the outcomes of nonprofit collaborations is rich in terms of lists of outcomes that these partnerships generate.

In the sections below, I review these various outcomes and I categorize them into three broad groups: organizational outcomes, domain level outcomes, and community level outcomes. After that review, I then examine collaborative effectiveness as an important outcome variable for nonprofits participating in interorganizational collaborative endeavors. Collaborative effectiveness is an important outcome to examine because most of the other outcomes discussed in the literature on collaborative outcomes depend, at least in part, on the effectiveness of collaboration for their existence or occurrence.

**Organizational Outcomes**

Organizational outcomes refer to the outcomes or benefits that the individual

organizations participating in a collaborative endeavor or partnership gain from it. Although the

literature on outcomes of interorganizational collaboration among NGOs at the organizational

level is varied, Hardy, Phillips, and Lawrence (2003) differentiate three broad types of effects or

outcomes, which they refer to as the strategic, knowledge creation, and political effects of

collaboration.

**Strategic outcomes**. According to Hardy and colleagues (2003), one important outcome

of interorganizational collaboration lies in its potential to build organizational capacities through

the transfer or pooling of resources. Such a view is consistent with the strategy literature, where

many authors view interorganizational collaboration primarily as a means to acquire resources

through the direct transfer of assets, the sharing of information, intellectual property, material

and human resources, and the transfer of organizational knowledge (Dyer & Singh, 1998; Hamel,

Doz, & Prahalad, 1989).

Strategic outcomes refer to the way in which interorganizational collaborative

arrangements help organizations to improve their strategic performance by making them more

competitive or helping them achieve better positioning in their fields (Galaskiewicz & Zaheer,

1999; Hardy et al., 2003). These strategic outcomes are achieved as a result of a variety of

activities enabled through collaboration, including the sharing of knowledge, information, and

other resources, the development of technological knowhow, the development of a greater

understanding of new and existing fields, and the acquisition of scarce assets (Hardy et al.,

2003). Thus, according to the strategic view of interorganizational collaboration, collaboration is

about working with other organizations to leverage existing resources of all kinds and its

ultimate outcomes are primarily about the pooling and transfer of various resources and the creation of value. Value is created through synergy as the partners work together to achieve mutually beneficial gains that neither could have achieved individually (Teece, 1992).

Scholars who have examined interorganizational collaboration among NGOs (e.g., Gray, 1989; Huxham, 1996; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Saz-Carranza & Ospina, 2011) have argued that one of its main strategic outcomes is that it helps build NGOs' capacities to address social problems more effectively (Hardy et al., 2003). According to these scholars, it is the pooling of resources and knowledge that leads to the solution of otherwise intractable problems or challenges (Trist, 1983). Thus, a strategic view of interorganizational collaboration suggests that nonprofits collaborate with other nonprofits to gain access to information, knowledge and other resources that produce new or improved capabilities that allow them to do things they could not do alone. Indeed, While NGOs do not face market pressures, they still compete for clients, funding, and various forms of legitimacy, and the acquisition of distinctive resources still has a 'competitive' advantage (Hardy et al., 2003, p. 325).

**Knowledge creation outcomes.** While the strategic view of interorganizational collaboration emphasizes the  role of collaboration as a catalyst or a vehicle for the transfer of existing knowledge from one organization to another, Hardy and colleagues (2003) argue that it can also lead to the creation of "*new* knowledge that neither of the collaborators previously possessed" (p. 325). In other words, knowledge creation outcomes of interorganizational collaboration refer to new knowledge that "grows out of the sort of ongoing social interaction that occurs in ongoing collaborations" (Hardy et al., 2003, p. 326).

The ability of collaborative networks to bring together a diverse cross section of interests with competing perspectives on problems and goals for the purpose of producing integrative,

broadly agreed decisions appears to be conducive to innovation and knowledge creation

outcomes (Paruchuri, 2010; Phelps, 2010; Phelps, Heidl, & Wadhwa, 2012; Rogers & Weber,

2010; Schilling & Phelps, 2007). The new knowledge or innovation includes the development of

new technologies, which are "defined very broadly to include hardware, software, processes, and

organizational [or institutional] change" (Klein, Klinger, & Seely, 2003, p. v), or best

management practices (Lubell & Fulton, 2008). For instance, Rogers and Weber (2010), in their

examination of interorganizational collaboration in the environmental policy arena, found several

instances of significant "soft" technology development that involves new conservation easement

templates, hiring practices and employee protocols, and strategic decision approaches.

In summary, the knowledge creation literature sees collaboration as somewhat different

from the strategic literature. Collaboration, from a knowledge creation standpoint, is not a means

of compensating for the lack of internal skills, nor is it a series of discrete transactions; rather it

is a source of ongoing, synergistic collaboration or cooperation leading to the creation of new

knowledge and innovations (Hardy et al., 2003).

**Political outcomes.** Interorganizational collaboration, especially among nonprofits, can

also have political effects or outcomes. Indeed, work that adopts a political perspective on

interorganizational collaboration (e.g., Gray, 1989; 2000; Hardy & Phillips, 1998) has pointed

out that one of the outcomes of interorganizational collaboration among NGOs can be the

acquisition of power and influence (Hardy et al., 2003). This is particularly the case when

organizations in a collaborative arrangement have different values, beliefs, goals, and objectives

(Waddock, 1989) and when the distribution of power between them is unequal (Gray & Hay,

1986). In other words, in such circumstances, interorganizational collaboration may be a means

to protect specific organizational interests. For instance, more powerful organizations may force

collaboration on weaker organizations to control them; or they may collaborate with other powerful organizations to prevent opponents or competitors from reconstituting the domain or field in which they operate (Hardy et al., 2003; see also Hall & Spencer-Hall, 1982; Hasenfeld & Chesler, 1989; Rose & Black, 1985). Thus, what a political perspective on interorganizational collaboration essentially suggests is that collaborative endeavors may represent moves by organizations to disadvantage their opponents, to protect their privileged positions, and to acquire power (Gricar & Brown, 1981; Hardy & Phillips, 1998; Hardy et al., 2003).

According to Gray (1989), there are various types of power that nonprofits can acquire or exercise through collaborative endeavors with other nonprofits. These include: (1) agenda setting power for the domain; (2) the power to organize forums for discussion about the domain or field (or the power of convening); (3) the power to strategize about what domain level actions to take; (4) the power to mobilize in order to gain voice; (5) the power to control processes within the domain; and (6) the power to authorize actions by some on behalf of all other stakeholders (Gray, 1989; Gray, 2000). All these different types of power or some combination of them could give a nonprofit a privileged position within a domain. Therefore, nonprofits may often engage in interorganizational collaboration with other nonprofits to acquire these types of power, and to increase their centrality and the degree of their influence over other organizations (Gray, 2000; Hardy et al. 2003).

**Outcomes at the Domain Level**

At the domain or field level, two types of outcomes are particularly noteworthy. These are social capital and institutional outcomes. These outcomes refer to the way in which interorganizational collaboration can transform an entire network of organizations operating in a given domain or field.

**Social capital as an outcome.** According to Brown and Ashman (1995), interorganizational collaboration can lead to the development of social capital within an interorganizational domain. Social capital generally refers to the mobilization of actual or potential resources through interorganizational relationships (Gray, 2000; Schneider, 2009). As such, it inheres in the structure of relations among organizations (Coleman, 1990). Evidence that organizations in a collaborative network or domain have created social capital through collaboration can be seen in the emergence of trust and norms of reciprocity among them (Coleman, 1990; Gray, 2000; Putnam, 1993).

Lewicki and Bunker (1995) have identified three general types of trust that can emerge from collaborative interactions among organizations. These include: (1) calculus-based trust which derives from consistency of behavior that leads to expectations that other organizations in the collaborative endeavor will behave predictably; (2) knowledge-based trust in which there is a willingness to rely on partners because of direct knowledge about their behavior; and (3) identification-based trust in which organizations in a collaborative endeavor develop a bond with each other based on mutual appreciation of each other's needs (Gray, 2000, p. 248). Norms of reciprocity constitute another ingredient of social capital. According to Gray (2000), the development of shared norms suggests that "in a rudimentary way, a unique culture is evolving within the domain such that the stakeholders agree upon appropriate behaviors to take with respect to each other and/or the problem or task of mutual interest" (p. 250).

**Institutional outcomes.** Interorganizational collaboration among nonprofits can also have institutional effects. Indeed, while nonprofits often engage in collaborative endeavors as a way to develop new solutions to complex problems, these solutions are sometimes adopted far beyond the boundaries of the collaborative process (Lawrence, Phillips, & Hardy, 1999) and can

therefore become institutionalized in a wider field (Powell, Koput, & Smith-Doerr, 1996). As such, although interorganizational collaborative arrangements may contribute to the stability of institutional fields by reproducing existing conditions in that field (e.g., Warren, Rose, & Bergunder, 1974), they also have the potential to transform institutional fields (Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2000) by acting as an important source of institutional change or innovation.

Drawing on institutional theory (e.g., Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Powell et al., 1996) and work on organizational structuration (e.g., Barley, 1986; Pentland, 1992), Lawrence, Hardy, and Phillips (2002), in their investigation of the emergence of proto-institutions, suggest that interorganizational collaboration among nonprofits can play a role in the production of new institutions by facilitating their creation and making them available interorganizationally. According to Jepperson (1991) institutions are "those social patterns that, when chronically reproduced, owe their survival to relatively self-activating social processes" (p. 145). More specifically, Lawrence and colleagues (2002) define institutions as "relatively widely diffused practices, technologies, or rules that have become entrenched in the sense that it is costly to choose other practices, technologies, or rules" (p. 282). In other words, technologies, practices, and rules can be more or less institutionalized, depending on the strength of the self-activating mechanisms that hold them in place and the extent of their diffusion in an institutional field (Lawrence et al., 2002).

In their study of collaboration in commercial whale watching Lawrence, Phillips, and Hardy (1999) conceptualize the outcomes of collaboration, whether in the collaboration or at the field level, in terms of two primary categories: practices and rules. By practices, they mean not simply what people do but the "patterns of action that become legitimated and institutionalized

within some context" (Lawrence et al., 1999, p. 495). For instance, they found that the issue of not knowing where the whales are located was associated with significantly different practices in the different collaborations that arose around it.

The second type of collaborative outcome is the production of a rule. Whereas practices involve action, rules express "normalized understandings of legitimate behavior and, thus, exist strictly as concepts" (Lawrence et al., 1999, p. 496). According to Meyer and Rowan (1977), rules are "classifications built into society as reciprocated typifications or interpretations" (p. 341). Such rules may be simply taken for granted or they may be supported by public opinion or the force of law (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 341). Consequently, regardless of whether they are written down or exist only in oral communication, rules remain in the expressive sphere (Lawrence et al., 1999). Lawrence and colleagues (1999) conceptualize rules as a broad category that comprises a range of discursive concepts, including constitutions, codes, charters, formal legislation, and guidelines, as well as informal norms and standards.

**Outcomes at the Community Level**

According to Gray (2000), an important method in assessing the outcomes of interorganizational collaboration is to adopt a pragmatic or problem-centered focus. Given that many interorganizational collaborative arrangements among nonprofits are formed to address specific problems and challenges (e.g., creation of new jobs, reduced illiteracy, limited spread of disease, early child care, reduction in teenage pregnancies, etc.), it is important to examine how effective they are at achieving those goals.

Provan and Milward's (1995) study of four mental health networks was a first attempt to directly study effectiveness of collaborative networks in terms of outcomes for the community and the clients. In that study, Provan and Milward (1995) collected data on the quality of life,

psychiatric status of mental health patients, and satisfaction from the perspectives of patients, their families, and case workers. They found that structural characteristics of these interorganizational collaborative endeavors were related to the effectiveness of the health system's efforts. In her study of collaboration among social service agencies, Selsky (1991) examined the collective capacity of these organizations to reduce environmental turbulence. Potapchuck and Polk (1994) provided case study evidence of community improvements in many American cities where collaboration among grassroots and citizens organizations were taking place.

Using data from a comparative case study of 20 human services organizations that provide early care and education services in New York State and the Commonwealth of Virginia (the Investigating Partnerships in Early Childhood Education Study), Selden, Sowa, and Sandfort (2006) examined the impact of nonprofit collaboration in early child care and education on management and program outcomes. Their study found that interorganizational collaborations have a demonstrable impact on management processes and outcomes, improving the working experience of teachers and frontline workers in these organizations, as shown by their increased satisfaction with benefits and career opportunities. In addition, they found that collaborations had a significant impact on programs operated by the collaborating organizations, with an increased array of services offered to families and improved quality of classroom facilities. Finally, in addition to its impact on management and program processes, Selden and colleagues (2006) found that interorganizational collaboration had a direct impact on the experiences of clients. Parents whose children were served through these collaborations believed they had a positive impact on school readiness, controlling for other factors that might influence school readiness.

The impact of interorganizational collaboration has also been examined in the health field. Gulzar and Henry (2005) investigated the impact of interorganizational collaboration between nonprofits providing health services in Pakistan. The results of their study suggest that interorganizational collaboration among health care nonprofits in Pakistan was positively associated with women's access to health care.

**When the Outcome is 'Failure'**

Although the review of findings from the literature on outcomes of interorganizational collaboration among nonprofits undertaken so far may suggest that these collaborative arrangements generally lead to positive and desirable outcomes, that is not necessarily the case. In fact, there are several cases where interorganizational collaboration among nonprofits was ineffective, failed, or yielded negative or undesirable outcomes (Longoria, 2005). For instance, several recent studies and reviews have raised questions and doubts about the effectiveness of interorganizational collaboration among nonprofits (Glisson & Hemmelgarn, 1998; Morrison, 1996; O'Looney, 1997; Provan & Milward, 2001; Reilly, 2001; Reitan, 1998; Schorr, 1998). Indeed, interorganizational collaborative networks can fail to achieve meaningful objectives (Provan et al., 2007). For instance, Human and Provan (2000) found that the sustainability of collaborative networks was largely dependent on both external and internal legitimacy and support in the early stages of evolution. They concluded that "networks that are formally constructed and do not emerge out of previous relationships are more likely to fail" (Provan et al., 2007, p. 505).

In addition to the possibility of failure, several authors have noted that interorganizational collaboration can be a risky endeavor. Indeed, the findings of case studies reported by Reilly (2001) indicate that "despite many of the purported benefits, inter-organizational collaboration

remains an uncertain process" (2001, p. 74). Moreover, Schorr's (1998) investigation of collaboration among of human service organizations across the U.S. provided no evidence to support the contention that positive outcomes for human service recipients emerge from interorganizational collaboration. Furthermore, Glisson and Hemmelgarn (1998) reported a quasi-experimental longitudinal study that showed that interorganizational collaboration among 32 children's service organizations resulted in a negative impact on the quality of child and family services and had no effect on key service outcomes.

Finally, reviews of interorganizational collaborative endeavors among nonprofits undertaken in Europe that focus on achieving specific outcomes for service recipients have been inconclusive (Gardner, 2003; Thompson, 2003). Indeed, Gardner writes "while the vision and rationale for joint work between specialist groups are powerful, there is yet insufficient evidence to argue that greater collaboration between services will necessarily produce better outcomes for all children and families" (p. 156). In sum, there is accumulating evidence to question whether interorganizational collaboration generally translates into positive or desirable outcomes for those individuals and groups that receive services from organizations that engage in collaborative arrangements.

The fact that nonprofit collaborations can fail, be ineffective, or yield negative outcomes is an important reason for investigating the connections between antecedents, processes, and outcomes. Indeed, as Gray and Wood (1991) argue, the understanding of nonprofit collaboration as a process that yields particular outcomes requires the examination of the connections between the three 'dots' of interorganizational collaboration—antecedents, processes, and outcomes. Following Gray and Wood's (1991) argument and mindful of the various knowledge gaps in the nonprofit literature identified through this literature review, this study examines the connections

among two sets of antecedents (impetus to nonprofit collaboration and partner selection factors),

three collaborative processes (trust, communication, and conflict management), and one

important outcome (collaborative effectiveness). In the following chapter, I develop the research

questions and the hypotheses of this investigation.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The review of the literature in the last chapter has shed light on a number of important gaps and opportunities in the current nonprofit collaboration literature. Most notably, the current literature on nonprofit collaboration is characterized by a dearth of studies investigating the connections between antecedents, processes, and outcomes of collaboration. Thus, despite the fact that nonprofit partnerships are formed in various strategic ways—sometimes voluntarily, other times through mandates—to engage in collaborative processes to achieve various goals or outcomes, the connection among these three 'dots' of collaboration has not been empirically investigated.

This study intends to fill that gap in the nonprofit collaboration literature by examining the connections among antecedents, processes, and outcomes of collaboration among human services nonprofits. Specifically, the study examines three sets of relationships: (1) how impetus for collaboration and partner selection factors are related to interorganizational trust, interorganizational communication, and interorganizational conflict management, (2) how impetus to collaboration and partner selection factors are related to collaborative effectiveness, (3) how interorganizational trust, interorganizational communication, and interorganizational conflict management are related to each other, to quality of collaboration, and to collaborative effectiveness.

The goal of this chapter is to develop the research questions and hypotheses of this study. First, I develop the research questions about the relationships between impetus for collaboration, collaborative processes—trust, communication, and conflict management—and collaborative effectiveness. Second, I develop the hypotheses about the connections between partner selection factors, collaborative processes, and collaborative effectiveness. Third, I develop the hypotheses

about the connections among the three collaborative processes, quality of collaboration, and collaborative effectiveness.

## Impetus for Collaboration and Collaborative Processes

According to Wood and Gray (1991), a general theory of collaboration must be able to account for the role of the convener and other founding conditions in shaping the process and outcomes of collaborations. Accounting for the role of the convener is important because it directly addresses the degree of agency that organizations have in forming collaborative relations. In the nonprofit sector, organizations generally form collaborative relationships in two main ways. First, nonprofits can voluntarily initiate collaborative ties with other nonprofits. In this case, the organizations enjoy a high degree of freedom and agency and have control over how they want to shape the process.

Second, nonprofits may form collaborative partnerships with other nonprofits to meet necessary legal or regulatory requirements or to conform to the desires of a powerful convener (Guo & Acar, 2005; Stephens et al., 2009; Wood & Gray, 1991). In other words, mandates from higher authorities (e.g., government agencies, corporations, donors, legislation, or professional regulatory bodies) can often provide the impetus for collaborative relationships that otherwise might not have occurred voluntarily (Oliver, 1990; Provan, 1984; Snavely & Tracy, 2000). However, the current nonprofit literature is not clear on how much mandates or 'arranged marriages' account for nonprofit collaborative partnerships. Indeed, there is currently no evidence in the nonprofit literature of the approximate proportion or percentage of nonprofit collaborative pairings that are mandated or arranged by powerful conveners.

Given the varying degrees of organizational agency associated with both impetuses for forming collaborative relations, an important question is: do they matter? In other words, are

there differences between mandated and voluntary partnerships in terms of their collaborative processes and collaborative effectiveness?

**Impetus for Collaboration and Trust**

Among the most common, and possibly also one of the most critical factors in the success of an interorganizational relation is trust. Many of the challenges, difficulties, barriers, or obstacles to successful collaboration outlined in the nonprofit literature are related to issues of lack of trust. Several studies have identified trust between partners as a key factor that may help minimize uncertainties and reduce the threat of opportunism in strategic alliances (Das & Teng, 1998; Gulati, 1995; Gulati & Garguilo, 1998; Koza & Lewin, 1998; Smith & Barclay, 1997; Wuyts & Geyskens, 2005). According to Shah and Swaminathan (2008), trust is especially important when tangible measures of outcomes are absent.

One of the factors that can affect trust in a nonprofit collaborative relationship is the impetus of formation of that relationship (Wood & Gray, 1991). In other word, the ability of nonprofits in a collaborative relationship to trust each other may very well depend on whether the organizations voluntarily initiated the relationship or were mandated to work together by a powerful convener. When nonprofit organizations voluntarily choose to work with each other, I would expect there to be some initial degree of trust as they are selecting each other after evaluations of various options and information. On the other hand, when organizations are mandated to work with each other, trust issues could be likely to arise as the parties do not have a choice in selecting their partners.

However, the relationship between impetus to collaboration formation and trust may not necessarily be that straightforward. Indeed, even when organizations voluntarily select partners, they may do so for reasons such as resource complementarity, which do not necessarily entail

initial trust. After all, a human service nonprofit may feel compelled to work with a partner it does not know or trust if that partner has access to certain resources or assets that the nonprofit need.

The situation may also be equally complex in the case of mandated nonprofit partnerships. Indeed, nonprofits that are mandated to work together do not necessarily have to dislike or distrust each other. In fact, they may know or trust each other based on prior experience. Alternatively, a third party might be mandating that nonprofits work together precisely because they are similar in some important respects (Atouba & Shumate, 2010). In that case, such similarity or similarities might be sufficient to breed trust among the organizations. Thus, the first research question of this study deals with the relationship between impetus for collaboration and interorganizational trust.

**RQ1**: Does the level of trust differ in mandated and voluntary nonprofit partnerships?

**Impetus for Collaboration and Communication**

That communication is the essence of organizational life has been well documented by communication scholars and practitioners (e.g., Fulk & Boyd, 1991; McPhee & Zaug, 2000; Reinsch, 2001; Yates & Orlikowski, 1992). Communication quality is a key aspect of information transmission and exchange (Jablin, Putnam, Roberts, & Porter, 1987), and thus plays an important role in sustaining interorganizational collaboration (Mohr & Spekman, 1994). Communication quality includes such aspects as the timeliness, credibility, adequacy, and accuracy of information exchanged among parties in the collaborative endeavor (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Mohr & Spekman, 1994). In essence, high quality communication is necessary for the effectiveness of collaborative partnerships and the achievement of their goals.

Very much like trust, communication quality among nonprofits in a collaborative relationship can potentially be affected by the way the relationship was formed. Indeed, the quality of communication among parties in a collaborative endeavor is in part dependent on the commitment or simply the willingness of those parties to work together (Seppanen, Blomqvist, Sundqvist, 2007). Given that the willingness of parties to work together is likely to be high when they voluntarily initiate the collaborative relationship, as opposed to when it is mandated, I would expect communication among nonprofits in a mandated or encouraged collaboration to be of lower quality than communication among nonprofits in a non-mandated collaboration.

Alternatively however, nonprofits in mandated collaborations may have already had a good communicative relationship or they may be motivated to engage in high quality communication to please their sponsors or funders and boost their reputations. Organizations in such collaborations may have more to lose. Indeed, failure in a mandated collaboration does not just affect the parties in the relationship; it also affects their relationships with the funders or the sponsors. Thus, the second research question of this study deals with the relationship between impetus for collaboration and the quality of interorganizational communication in nonprofit partnerships.

**RQ2**: Does the communication quality differ in mandated and voluntary nonprofit partnerships?

**Impetus for Collaboration and Conflict Management**

Conflict often exists in interorganizational collaborations due to the inherent interdependencies, tensions, and interactions among the parties involved (DiStefano, 1984; Mohr & Spekman, 1994; Perry & Thomson, 2004; Thomson & Perry, 2006). Given that during the course of a collaborative partnership parties are not likely to always see eye to eye or there may be tensions between one nonprofit's interest and those of the partnerships, conflict management

is an important part of the collaboration process as it can be either productive or destructive (Borys & Jemison, 1989; Mohr & Spekman, 1994; Tsasis, 2009). Important sources of interorganizational conflict include value differences, divergent goals or visions, and personality clashes (Tsasis, 2009). These sources of conflict can influence the working relationships of the organizations involved in collaboration and, depending on the manner in which conflict is resolved, can have implications for partnership success (DiStefano, 1984; Mohr & Spekman, 1994; Tsasis, 2009).

Impetus for collaboration can potentially affect conflict management among parties involved in interorganizational collaboration. Indeed, conflict management is in part dependent on the willingness and the commitment of the parties in conflict to deal with the conflict in a productive manner and save the collaborative relationship. As previously mentioned, such willingness and commitment to the collaborative relationship can be affected by the degree of agency that the organizations have in forming the collaborative relationship. For instance, organizations that are required to collaborate may not necessarily be committed enough to the partnership to use productive conflict management techniques or handle conflict well. On the other hand, organizations in mandated partnerships may have an important incentive (pressure from the funder or convener) to handle conflict well.

**RQ3**: Do mandated and voluntary nonprofit partnerships manage conflict differently?

### Impetus for Collaboration and Collaborative Effectiveness

The manner in which a collaborative relationship is formed or convened can affect the effectiveness of that relationship (Gray & Wood, 1991; Wood & Gray, 1991). Indeed, if the partners in a collaborative endeavor start the relationship 'on the wrong foot' or they are dissatisfied, uncommitted, or unwilling to work together, the relationship may be doomed from

the start (Linden, 2002). In order for a collaboration to be effective, partners have to be willing to work together. Organizations that are mandated to work together may not necessarily have the willingness to do so. As such, mandated collaborations may be more likely to fail or be ineffective than voluntary ones.

However, an alternate way of understanding the relationship between impetus for collaboration and collaborative effectiveness is that partners in a mandated collaboration may be more likely to be committed because they want to please their sponsors or funders. Indeed, failure to commit to a mandated collaboration may cause permanent or irreparable damage to the relations between a funder and an organizational partner.

**RQ4**: Does the collaborative effectiveness of mandated and voluntary nonprofit partnerships differ?

In general, a major difficulty in generating hypotheses about the relationship between impetus for collaboration and any other collaboration variables is that there is very little work to guide the generation of such hypotheses. Additionally, there is no evidence of the proportion of nonprofit partnerships that are accounted for by mandates. As such, this investigation is unique in tackling those questions.

## Partner Selection, Collaborative Processes, and Collaborative Effectiveness

When an organization is not mandated to work with another organization, it has the option of selecting its own partners. As previously mentioned, partner selection refers to the process of searching, evaluating, and eventually selecting a partner for collaboration (Ireland, Hitt, & Vaidyanath, 2002). It is widely viewed as an important control mechanism in managing collaborative relationships (Ireland et al., 2002). In other words, the success of a collaborative relationship is heavily dependent on selecting the right or appropriate partner.

Although much of the literature on partner selection has focused on alliances among business organizations and firms, that literature does suggest a number of important factors that could be applicable to partner selection among nonprofits. Prior research suggests that key factors that could affect trust, communication, conflict management and successful partnerships among nonprofits include prior experience, social networks, reputation, need for resources, and homophily (cultural and organizational similarity) (Bierly & Gallagher, 2007).

**The Role of Prior Experience**

Prior experience or history can play an important role in shaping the process and effectiveness of a collaborative relationship. Indeed, the extent to which an organization trusts its partners is not only based on the partners' characteristics but also on the trusting organization's experience (Bierly & Gallagher, 2007). Organizations, much like individuals, are affected by their past experiences when making decisions about partnerships (Shumate et al., 2005). An organization's propensity to trust is dependent, in part, on the outcomes of its prior partnerships (Bierly & Gallagher, 2007). For instance, an organization that was taken advantage of or was the victim of opportunistic behavior on the part of previous partners will tend to be less trusting of a future partner.

In general, a prehistory of antagonism or bad interorganizational experiences can be an important challenge to the smooth functioning and the effectiveness of nonprofits collaborative endeavors (Andranovich, 1995; Ansell & Gash, 2008; Gray, 1989; Margerum, 2001). This is especially the case when, due to a history of rancor and mistrust, a social psychology of antagonism has been institutionalized in a given field or among a group of organizations. A prehistory of negative experiences is likely to express itself in low levels of trust, which in turn usually produce low levels of identification and commitment, suspicion, insecurity, manipulative

behavior, and dishonest communications (Ansell & Gash, 2008). In other words, a prehistory of

negative experiences is likely to create a vicious circle of suspicion, distrust, stereotyping, and

continuous opposition, competition, or adversarial confrontation. While such historical

antagonism is by no means insurmountable, it is nonetheless important to consider when making

sense of why some organizations are reluctant to work with others.

On the other hand, a prehistory of positive experiences can positively increase an

organization's propensity to trust. Indeed, an organization that has had a good collaborative

experience with a partner in the past is more likely to select that partner in the future (Gulati,

1995; Gulati & Sytch, 2008; Shumate et al., 2005). As such, I would expect that a nonprofit that

selects a partner based on prior experience is more likely to also trust that partner.

**H1a**: There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on prior history with

partner and trust.

Prior experience can also affect interorganizational communication among two

nonprofits. Indeed, prior experience constitutes a direct way for an organization to learn about a

partner (Gulati & Sytch, 2008). Through prior experiences, organizations accumulate knowledge

about their past partners' behaviors, preferences, styles, cognitive frameworks, and other

important organizational attributes and characteristics (Gulati & Sytch, 2008). Such knowledge

is valuable for future interactions or collaborations with that partner as it can be used to make

communication with that partner more effective (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

**H1b**: There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on prior history and

interorganizational communication quality.

The same reasoning that applied to the relationship between partner selection based on

prior experience and communication also applies to the relationship between partner selection

based on prior experience and conflict management. The knowledge acquired or accumulated through prior experiences with a partner is valuable because it can be used to effectively handle future conflicts with that partner. Indeed, prior experiences with a partner create a sense of familiarity with that partner (Gulati & Sytch, 2008) that can be successfully leveraged in future conflict management situations.

**H1c**: There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on prior experience and interorganizational conflict management effectiveness.

Partner selection based on prior experience can also have a positive relationship with collaborative effectiveness. Indeed, as was the case in the relationship between prior experience and conflict management, the knowledge accumulated through prior experiences (Gulati, 1995; Gulati & Sytch, 2008) with a partner is useful and valuable in future partnerships. As such, if an organization had a successful collaborative experience with a partner in the past, it likely to have a successful collaborative experience with that partner in the future because it would have acquired knowledge of how to make things work effectively with that partner. To put it in another way, an effective interorganizational partnership between two human services nonprofits in the past is likely to lead to an effective interorganizational partnership between the same two nonprofits in the future because both partners already have a formula for success that they can use in their future experiences (Gulati & Sytch, 2008).

**H1d**: There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on prior experience and interorganizational collaborative effectiveness.

**The Role of Social Networks**

Social networks of individuals in two organizations are an important factor that could affect the processes and effectiveness of a collaborative relationship between those two

organizations. These social networks provide information about potential organizational partners that enable a thorough evaluation of complementarity, compatibility, strategic, and personality fit and such through evaluation of collaborative potential decreases uncertainty in their future behavior (Bierly & Gallagher, 2007). These social networks can facilitate the communication process, provide social norms and standards to guide behavior, and provide opportunities for the institutionalization of commonly accepted practices and other relevant commonalities (Bierly & Gallagher, 2007). Social networks, therefore, enable trust by allowing opportunism and uncertainty to be minimized because the consequences of such behavior could also affect numerous other relationships (Gulati, 1995). Additionally, these networks or personal relationships among the individuals in the organizations are likely to lead to better handling of conflict because of the familiarity between the members of both organizations. Finally, the thorough evaluations of fit that these social networks enable as well as the flow of information that circulate through them are likely to make the partnership effective or successful. As such, it is reasonable to expect that social network based partner selection will be positively associated with trust, communication, conflict management, and collaborative effectiveness.

**H2a**: There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on social networks and trust.

**H2b**: There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on social networks and communication quality.

**H2c**: There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on social networks and conflict management effectiveness.

**H2d**: There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on social networks and collaborative effectiveness.

**The Role of Reputation**

      Reputation represents another important factor that could affect the process and

effectiveness of a collaborative relationship among nonprofits. An organization's reputation is "a

socially constructed concept and is the outcome of the process of legitimization" (Bierly &

Gallagher, 2007, p. 141). Organizations develop a general reputation based on their past actions

and strategies that demonstrate their capabilities, integrity, and conformity to institutionalized

norms, standards, and practices.  In general, an organization's reputation influences the extent to

which it is trusted by other organizations in two ways. First, a strong reputation and high

legitimacy will increase the visibility of an organization which in turn will increase its trust

capital because other organizations will know more about it and there will be less uncertainty

(Bierly & Gallagher, 2007). Second, the more positive the reputation, the more likely it is to

increase trust because of the 'likeability' of the organization (Bierly & Gallagher, 2007). For

instance, if an organization has a reputation as being a good partner, its representatives will be

trusted more than the representatives of organizations that have a reputation for being bad

partners. As such, it is reasonable to expect partner selection based on reputation to be positively

associated with trust, communication, conflict management, and effectiveness. Essentially, the

reputation of a focal organization affects the behavior of other organizations towards that focal

organization (Bierly & Gallagher, 2007). Thus, if an organization has a great reputation, its

partners are likely to not only commit to the partnership, but also 'be on their best behavior'.

Indeed, the positive reputation of an organization signifies that that organization does a lot of

things well, and it is highly regarded or rated by its peers in the interorganizational domain.

Thus, in the event of collaborative failure with such an organization, the blame is most likely to

be put on the partner. Collaborating with such a partner, therefore, is likely to encourage or

motivate an organization to do things well or the 'right way' thereby resulting in positive and effective collaborative partnerships.

**H3a**: There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on reputation and trust.

**H3b**: There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on reputation and communication quality.

**H3c**: There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on reputation and conflict management effectiveness.

**H3d**: There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on reputation and collaborative effectiveness.

**The Role of Resource Complementarity**

Resource complementarity is also an important factor of partner selection among organizations. Indeed, when a potential organizational partner has access to resources, assets or capabilities that a focal organization needs, the focal organization may have to work with that potential partner to gain access to those resources. Resource complementarity is especially important as a partner selection factor when the resources sought are rare or unique. Although such situations are fairly rare in the human services nonprofit field, they nevertheless exist (Thomson & Perry, 2006).

According to Graddy and Chen (2006), there are two broad categories of benefits that organizations seek from collaborative partners: resources and legitimacy. According to the resource-based and organizational learning perspectives on interorganizational relationships, resources of particular interest could include financial capital, technical capabilities, managerial capabilities, and other intangible assets, such as organizational legitimacy.

Resource complementarity is based on the logic of need or dependency (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). In other words, an organization that selects a partner based on resource complementarity may or may not trust it. The two concepts—trust and resource complementarity—appear to be unrelated. However, partner selection based on resource complementarity may be related to communication quality, conflict management effectiveness, and collaborative effectiveness because of the logic of need or dependency that underlies it. Indeed, depending on how desperate an organization is to gain access to a desired resource or asset, it may have to commit to work hard, engage in high quality communication, and handle conflict well to make the partnership effective long enough to gain access to the desired resources or assets.

**H4a**: There is a relationship between partner selection based on resource complementarity and trust.

**H4b**: There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on resource complementarity and communication quality.

**H4c**: There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on resource complementarity and conflict management effectiveness.

**H4d**: There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on resource complementarity and collaborative effectiveness.

**The Role of Homophily**

Homophily refers to the tendency of a focal organization to select as partners other organizations with which it shares similar characteristics or attributes (Atouba & Shumate, 2010; Monge & Contractor, 2003). According to Bierly and Gallagher (2007), cultural and organizational similarities are important factors of partner selection that could affect the

processes and effectiveness of an interorganizational collaborative relationship. This is so because organizations tend to have more trust and confidence in other organizations if they feel comfortable and are not threatened by the way these other organizations operate (Atouba & Shumate, 2010; Bierly & Gallagher, 2007). Tacit understanding is facilitated by having similar values and visions. As such partner selection based on organizational similarities is likely to result in collaborative partnerships characterized by high trust, high quality interorganizational communication, and positive conflict management. Indeed, the existence of key organizational similarities—such similar visions and values—between partners in a collaborative endeavor facilitates the process of working together and that facilitation is likely to result in highly effective collaborative partnerships.

**H5a**: There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on homophily and trust.

**H5b**: There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on homophily and communication quality.

**H5c**: There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on homophily and conflict management effectiveness.

**H5d**: There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on homophily and collaborative effectiveness.

## Trust, Communication and Conflict Management

So far, I have proposed hypotheses linking or connecting antecedents to interorganizational collaboration (partner selection factors) to the three processes that are the focus of this investigation—trust, communication, and conflict management—and to collaborative effectiveness which is the outcome of interest in this study. Now, I am going to examine the relationships among the three process variables.

**Trust and Communication**

The relationship between trust and communication in interorganizational relationships

has received a lot of attention in various literatures (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001; Panteli &

Sockalingam, 2005). Trust has been found to have a positive effect on openness in

communication (Smith & Barclay, 1997), information sharing (Dirks, 1999; Panteli &

Sockalingam, 2005), accuracy of information (Mellinger, 1959), and knowledge exchange

(Davenport & Prusak, 1998).

According to Panteli and Sockalingam (2005), there is a positive relationship between

trust and communication, and high levels of trust are key to effective communication. Trust

positively affects communication by improving the quality of dialogue and discussions, which in

turn facilitates the sharing of ideas, knowledge, and information, and the development of

committed relationships (Dirks, 1999; Panteli & Sockalingam, 2005). Therefore, I expect trust to

be positively related to communication quality in interorganizational partnerships among human

services nonprofits.

**H6:** There is a positive relationship between trust and communication quality.

**Trust and Conflict Management**

The relationship between trust and conflict management has also received some attention

from the organizational literature (Dirks, 1999; Panteli & Sockalingam, 2005; Zaheer, McEvily,

& Perrone, 1998). In general, there is consensus around the finding that trust positively affects

conflict management. In general, interorganizational relationships that are imbued with trust

(both interpersonal and interorganizational) are characterized by the internal harmonization of

conflict and an array of norms and social processes that work to preserve the relationship and

facilitate conflict management (Zaheer et al., 1998). Indeed, organizations in collaborative

partnerships that are characterized by a high level of interorganizational trust are more likely to give each other the benefit of the doubt and greater leeway in mutual dealings (Panteli & Sockalingam, 2005). Such leeway generally tends to reduce the scope, intensity, and frequency of dysfunctional conflict (Zaheer et al., 1998).

**H7:** There is a positive relationship between trust and conflict management effectiveness.

## Communication and Conflict Management

According to Putnam and Poole (1987), communication plays an important role in conflict management. In their examination of bargaining, a strategy often used to manage or settle interorganizational conflicts, they differentiate distributive bargaining (low quality) from integrative bargaining (high quality) on the basis of communication among other characteristics. Distributive bargaining is characterized by low quality communication which involves withheld information, dishonesty, deception, and lacks credibility. Integrative bargaining on the other hand is characterized by open, honest, and accurate disclosure of information (Putnam, 1995). In sum, low quality communication is associated with low quality conflict management and high quality communication is associated with high quality conflict management.

**H8:** There is a positive relationship between communication quality and conflict management effectiveness.

## Collaborative Processes and Collaborative Outcomes

The last part of the investigation of the antecedent-processes-outcomes link is the examination of the links between the various collaborative processes and the collaborative outcomes. The primary outcome of interest in this investigation is collaborative effectiveness, as it is the most consequential to organizational goal achievement. Collaborative effectiveness essentially measures whether the partnership was productive and achieved its goals. The second

outcome variable examined in this study is collaboration quality, which essentially refers to the quality of the collaborative experience or the satisfaction with the 'doing' of collaboration.

**Trust and Collaborative Outcomes**

The relationship between trust and partnership performance has received a lot of attention in the business literature (Gambetta, 1988; Krishnan, Martin, & Noorderhaven, 2006; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; McEvily, Zaheer, & Perrone, 2003; Zaheer et al., 1998). Most of the findings from that literature indicate that trust is positively related to alliance success (e.g., Dyer & Chu, 2003; Mohr & Spekman, 1994; Zaheer et al., 1998). Essentially, trust contributes to partnership success by (1) bringing about good faith in the intent, fairness, and reliability of partner behavior (Zaheer et al., 1998), (2) allowing for positive or constructive interpretation of partner motives (Uzzi, 1997), (3) reducing the potential for destructive conflict (Zaheer et al., 1998), and (4) encouraging high quality communication between partners (Sako, 1991).

I believe that trust could have similar effects in human services nonprofit partnerships. Not only could trust facilitate high quality communication and conflict management nonprofit partners, it could also increase their commitment, investment, and even identification of their members with the partnership goals. As such, trust can positively enhance both the satisfaction with the collaborative experience and the collaborative effectiveness of the partnership.

**H9a:** There is a positive relationship between trust and quality of collaborative experience.

**H9b:** There is a positive relationship between trust and collaborative effectiveness.

**Communication and Collaborative Outcomes**

Interorganizational communication plays an important role in the success or effectiveness of interorganizational collaborative partnerships. Indeed, high quality communication between partners can reduce ambiguities, misunderstandings, and information asymmetry, thereby

enhancing information sharing, knowledge exchange, and stakeholder responsiveness (Chen &
Paulraj, 2004; Chen, Paulraj, Lado, 2004; Dyer, 1996; Paulraj, Lado, & Chen, 2008). When
organizational partners adequately communicate to share important ideas, information, strategies,
and knowledge relating to common problems or issues, they are more likely to (1) improve the
quality of their solutions, (2) develop innovative ways of thinking about issues, (3) improve the
quality of their services, (4) achieve their organizational goals and (5) achieve the partnerships
goals (Carr & Pearson, 1999, Paulraj et al., 2008). However, when organizational partners
engage in low quality communication, they are more likely to (1) increase the likelihood of
destructive and dysfunctional conflicts, (2) develop mistrust and rancor towards each other, and
(3) fail to achieve organizational and partnership goals.

In essence, communication is the 'glue' or the blood that allows the synergistic
combination of resources, capabilities, and processes that contribute to the achievement of
efficient and effective collaborative partnerships. Empirical research on firms has shown that
business alliances in which partners exchange timely, accurate, complete and credible
information, and share critical and 'sensitive' information are more successful than business
alliances that do not exhibit those communication behaviors (Carter & Miller, 1989; Chen &
Paulraj, 2004; Mohr & Spekman, 1994; Paulraj et al., 2008). Thus, high quality communication
should contribute to the satisfactory functioning and the effectiveness of human services
nonprofit collaborative partnerships.

**H10a:** There is a positive relationship between communication quality and quality of
collaborative experience.

**H10b:** There is a positive relationship between communication quality and collaborative
effectiveness.

**Conflict Management and Collaborative Outcomes**

Conflict management can have an important impact on the success or effectiveness of an interorganizational alliance or partnership (Mohr & Spekman, 1994; Putnam, 1995; Putnam & Poole, 1987). For instance, Mohr and Spekman (1994) found that more successful interorganizational alliances exhibited a higher use of constructive resolution techniques such as joint problem solving and persuading while disdaining other, more destructive techniques. These less effective techniques included coercing or dominating one's partner (attempting to force your alliance partner to agree to your firm's desires), smoothing over or ignoring alliance problems, and/or using third party arbitration to solve conflicts as opposed to "internal resolution" between alliance partners.

Putnam and Poole (1987), in their comparison of distributive and integrative bargaining, suggested that integrative bargaining was a better conflict management technique than distributive bargaining because it was more likely to yield creative solutions that benefited the parties in conflict. Additionally, by maximizing joint gains, integrative bargaining is more suitable to the survival and effectiveness of a collaborative partnership than distributive bargaining which can lead to rancor and mistrust among the partners, thereby 'killing' or damaging the partnership. Thus, not only can positive and effective conflict handling enhance the collaborative experience of the partners, but it can also improve the likelihood of partnership collaborative effectiveness.

**H11a:** There is a positive relationship between conflict management effectiveness and quality of collaborative experience.

**H11b:** There is a positive relationship between conflict management effectiveness and collaborative effectiveness.

**Collaboration Quality and Collaborative Effectiveness**

As previously mentioned, collaboration quality refers to the quality of the collaborative experience or the satisfaction with the 'doing' of collaboration. It entails a general satisfaction with the collaborative processes and the collaborative activities (e.g., meetings, interactions, and work sessions). I expect collaboration quality to be positively related to collaborative effectiveness because satisfaction with the collaborative experience means that something in the partnership is going well, and, as a result of that, the collaborative partnership is more likely to be effective.

**H12:** There is a positive relationship between quality of collaborative experience and collaborative effectiveness.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

The goal of this chapter was to develop the research questions and the hypotheses for this study. Figure 3 below presents a summary model for the hypotheses of the study. In total, this study has 30 hypotheses. Table 4 below presents a summary of both the research question and the hypotheses of the study. Essentially, this study has four research questions all dealing with the impact of impetus for collaboration on collaborative processes and collaborative effectiveness.

In sum, in this research, I am examining the connections among antecedents, processes, and outcomes of collaboration among human services nonprofits by investigating three sets of relationships: (1) how impetus for collaboration and partner selection factors are related to interorganizational trust, interorganizational communication, and interorganizational conflict management, (2) how impetus to collaboration and partner selection factors are related to collaborative effectiveness, (3) how interorganizational trust, interorganizational communication,

and interorganizational conflict management are related to each other, to quality of collaboration,
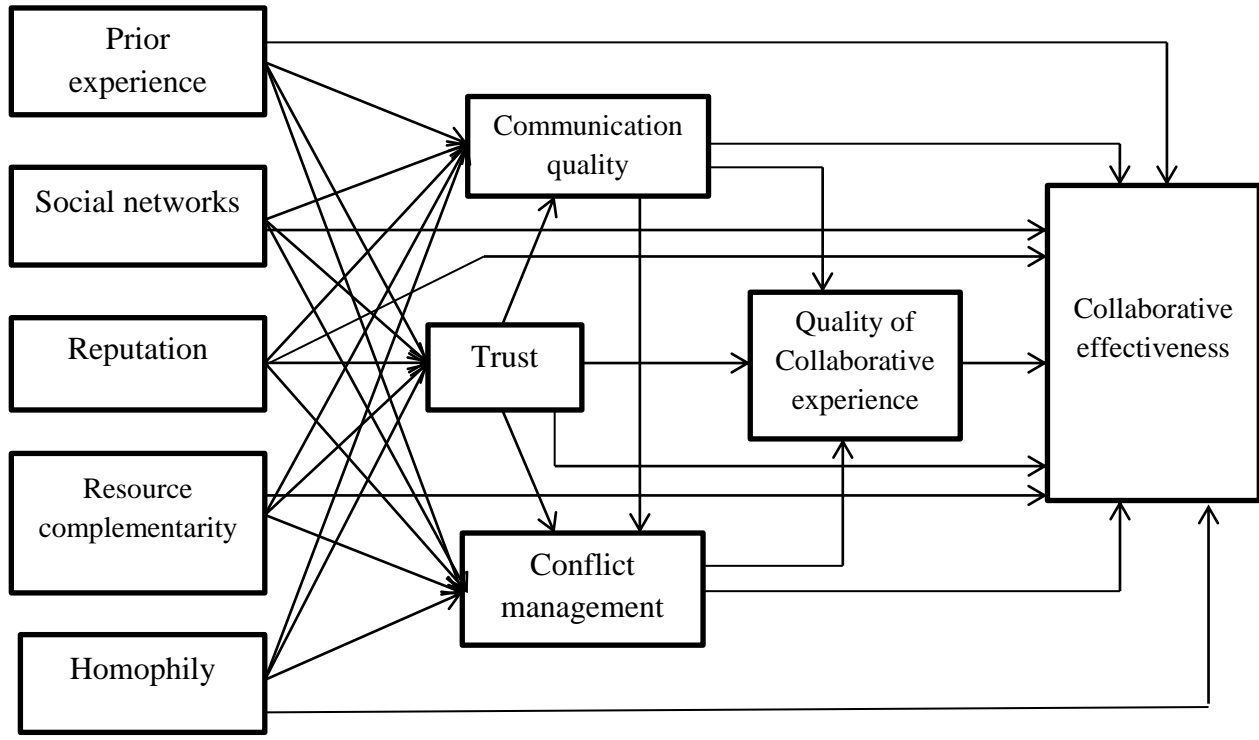
and to collaborative effectiveness.



*Figure 3*. Model with all the hypothesized paths.

Table 4

*Summary of Research Questions and Hypotheses*

| Research questions and hypotheses | Statement of research question or hypothesis |
| --- | --- |
| RQ1 | Does the level of trust differ in mandated and voluntary nonprofit partnerships? |
| RQ2 | Does the communication quality differ in mandated and voluntary nonprofit partnerships? |
| RQ3 | Do mandated and voluntary nonprofit partnerships manage conflict differently? |
| RQ4 | Does the collaborative effectiveness of mandated and voluntary nonprofit partnerships differ? |
| H1a | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on prior history with partner and trust |
| H1b | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on prior history and interorganizational communication quality |
| H1c | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on prior experience and interorganizational conflict management effectiveness |
| H1d | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on prior experience and interorganizational collaborative effectiveness |
| H2a | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on social networks and trust |

Table 4 (cont.)

| Research questions and hypotheses | Statement of research question or hypothesis |
|---|---|
| H2b | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on social networks and communication quality |
| H2c | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on social networks and conflict management effectiveness |
| H2d | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on social networks and collaborative effectiveness |
| H3a | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on reputation and trust |
| H3b | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on reputation and communication quality |
| H3c | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on reputation and conflict management effectiveness |
| H3d | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on reputation and collaborative effectiveness |
| H4a | There is a relationship between partner selection based on resource complementarity and trust |
| H4b | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on resource complementarity and communication quality |
| H4c | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on resource complementarity and conflict management effectiveness |

Table 4 (cont.)

| Research questions and hypotheses | Statement of research question or hypothesis |
|---|---|
| H4d | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on resource complementarity and collaborative effectiveness |
| H5a | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on homophily and trust |
| H5b | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on homophily and communication quality |
| H5c | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on homophily and conflict management effectiveness |
| H5d | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on homophily and collaborative effectiveness |
| H6 | There is a positive relationship between trust and communication quality |
| H7 | There is a positive relationship between trust and conflict management effectiveness |
| H8 | There is a positive relationship between communication quality and conflict management effectiveness |
| H9a | There is a positive relationship between trust and quality of collaborative experience |
| H9b | There is a positive relationship between trust and collaborative effectiveness |

Table 4 (cont.)

| Research questions and hypotheses | Statement of research question or hypothesis |
|---|---|
| H10a | There is a positive relationship between communication quality and quality of collaborative experience |
| H10b | There is a positive relationship between communication quality and collaborative effectiveness |
| H11a | There is a positive relationship between conflict management effectiveness and quality of collaborative experience |
| H11b | There is a positive relationship between conflict management effectiveness and collaborative effectiveness |
| H12 | There is a positive relationship between quality of collaborative experience and collaborative effectiveness |

**CHAPTER 4: METHOD**

The goal of this chapter is to outline and explain the data collection and analysis methods that I used to collect and analyze the data for this investigation. As such, I discuss the sampling strategy, the procedures for data collection, the measures used in the survey and their psychometric properties, and the analytical techniques used to test the hypotheses of the study and provide answers to its research questions.

**Target Population**

The target population for this investigation consists of human services nonprofits—more specifically the collaborative partnerships among them—in the state of Illinois. These are nonprofits that are involved in the provision or administration of human services in the state of Illinois. Human service organizations comprise one of the major categories of nonprofit organizations under the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities. The National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) is the classification system for nonprofit organizations developed by the National Center for Charitable Statistics at the Urban Institute and used by the Internal Revenue Service. The list of human services nonprofits in the state of Illinois for the fiscal year 2010-2011 was bought from the urban institute. That list is compiled based on the yearly tax filings of nonprofits. The list comprised 1787 human services nonprofits. All the human services nonprofit from the target population for this investigation are categorized as P under the NTEE classification system.

**Target Participants**

In order to get data about the human services nonprofits in the state and their collaborative partnerships, I targeted key informants from those organizations. As such, the target participants or respondents in this study were key organizational representatives from

human services nonprofits in the state of Illinois. Because this study relies on self-reported responses about organizations and interorganizational partnerships and most respondents depend on memory, there is a risk of inaccuracy. In order to reduce this inaccuracy, this study defines the time period of collaborations as 'in the past year.'

In addition, in order to reduce another possible inaccuracy from differences between unit of analysis (human services nonprofits' collaborations) and unit of observation (individuals), I demanded that the surveys be completed by individuals who were leaders (CEO, director, executive board member) or senior personnel members of their nonprofits and could therefore meaningfully act as representatives of the organizations involved in the collaborations. Thus, this study, in consistency with previous research on interorganizational relationships (Galaskiewicz, 1985; Provan, Fish, & Sydow, 2007), assumes that the organizational leader or CEO equivalent who acts as key informant and completes the survey "in fact has knowledge of the information being sought" (Wasserman & Faust, 1994, p.57).

## Procedures

### Survey Instrument

This study used an online survey through Qualtrics (an online data collection and analysis software) as the data collection tool to gather data about the organizations in the target population and their collaborative partnerships. In the absence of appropriate or relevant archival records, surveys are often the most practical alternative. Surveys are beneficial because of their ability to target large populations more cost effectively than a field study and they are also adaptable to various types of research needs. Additionally, they make much more modest demands on participants and investigators than do field research methods (e.g., observations, ethnographies). However, surveys do introduce some degree of artificiality and findings rest

heavily on the reliability of the measurement instruments and the presumed validity of self-reports (Marsden, 2005).

**Survey Content and Organization**

The survey asked the respondent to answer a variety of questions about themselves, their organizations, and some of their organizations' collaborative partnerships with other nonprofits in the state. However, before gaining access to the survey, the participants were required to read the informed consent notice and to consent to the study. Participants who did not consent to the study were automatically taken to the survey exit page. A copy of the survey sections and questions is provided in **Appendix A** below. As this investigation is primarily about examining human services nonprofit partnerships, most of the surveys' sections, questions, and items were about the collaborative partnerships the respondents' organizations were involved in in the past year. Additionally, given the semi-comparative nature of this investigation, respondents whose organizations did not collaborate with at least two organizations were also taken to the exit section of the survey.

Regarding collaborative partnerships, the survey asked respondents to list up to 10 nonprofits with which they collaborated in the previous year. Then the survey asked the respondents whether or not some of their organizations' partnerships (the ones they listed) were mandated. There were three possible answers to that key question: (1) all the organizations' partnerships are mandated, (2) some of the organizations' partnerships are mandated and some are not, and (3) none of the organizations' partnerships are mandated. Depending on the respondents' answers to that question, they were exposed to different sets of questions moving forward. This was done using the skip logic routines in Qualtrics.

If the respondents chose option 2 (some of their organizations' partnerships are mandated and some are not), they were then asked to select and focus on the mandated partner they interacted with the most and the voluntary partner they interacted with the most within the past year in answering subsequent survey questions. The emphasis on high levels of interaction with the selected partners is significantly helpful in reducing recall errors and forgetfulness (Marsden, 2005). Indeed, people tend to learn more about the partners they interact with the most.

If, however, the respondents chose option 1 (all their organizations' partnerships are mandated) or option 3 (none of the organizations' partnerships are mandated), they were then asked to select and focus on the partner that their organizations had liked working with the least, and the partner that their organization had liked working with the most in answering subsequent survey questions about partnerships. This dichotomy about the quality of the collaborative experience was introduced in options 1 and 3 in part to ensure adequate variability in the dependent variables, given that in their recall and selection, respondents may have a natural bias toward selecting only positive or negative experiences (Brewer & Webster, 2000; Zwijze-Koning & De Jong, 2005). However, the dichotomy was also introduced to measure the quality of collaborative interactions or experiences in investigating the relationships between antecedents (partner selection), processes (trust, communication, and conflict management), and outcomes (collaborative effectiveness) of nonprofit collaborations. For each of the two partnerships selected in each option, the respondents were asked questions pertaining to the impetus for collaboration, factors of partner selection (when the relationship is not mandated), collaborative processes (trust, communication quality, and conflict management), and the collaborative effectiveness of the partnerships.

Thus, in essence, each of the three response options regarding the question about the types of collaborative partnerships each human service nonprofit is engaged in were supposed to generate three different samples for the data analysis. The first sample (sample 1) would allow analyses and comparisons of good and bad mandated partnerships, the second sample (sample 2) would allow analyses and comparisons of mandated and non-mandated (voluntary) partnerships, and the third sample (sample 3) would allow analyses and comparisons of good and bad voluntary partnerships. Cumulatively, the three samples could be merged into a bigger sample to examine collaborative partnerships under different conditions.

**Survey Distribution**

After obtaining the institutional review board's (IRB) approval from both the University of Illinois and Northwestern University for the investigation, I contacted all the 1787 organizations in the target population and asked that executive directors, chief executive officers (CEOs), or other organizational representative knowledgeable about the organization's activities and operations participate in the survey on behalf of their organizations. Of the 1787 organizations in the target population, 656 were contacted via emails, 4 organizations were removed because they were duplicates, and the remaining organizations (1127) were contacted via postal mail. The organizations that were contacted via emails are organizations whose leaders' email addresses a team of research assistants from Northwestern and I were able to find through online public searches of organizations' websites and Facebook profiles. The survey opened on June 5, 2013 and closed on July 5, 2013.

<div align="center">

**Survey Response: Study Participants**

</div>

236 respondents attempted the online survey in Qualtrics. 107 of those respondents had received the survey via email and the remaining respondents (129) received the survey via postal

mail. Of the 236 survey respondents, 144 fully completed the survey while 92 respondents only

partially completed the survey. Of the 1127 organizations that were contacted via postal mail, 94

could not be found based on their postal addresses from the NTEE database. Thus, the effective

human services nonprofit population target consisted of 1693 organizations. That means that the

survey response rate (236 out 1693 possible) was approximately 13.94%.

Table 5

*Descriptive Statistics about the Survey Respondents*

| Variables | *n* | Minimum | Maximum | *M* | Median | Mode | *SD* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Educational level[a] | 208 | 2 | 11 | 8.15 | 9 | 9 | 1.59 |
| Organizational tenure (years) | 205 | 0 | 38 | 12.05 | 9 | 3 | 9.91 |
| Organizational tenure (categories)[b] | 205 | 1 | 3 | 2.17 | 2 | 3 | .82 |

*Note.* [a] 1= No schooling completed; 2= Nursery school to 8th grade; 3= Some high school, no
diploma; 4= High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent; 5= Some college credit, no degree;
6= Trade/technical/vocational training; 7= Associate degree; 8= Bachelor's degree; 9= Master's
degree; 10= Professional degree; 11= Doctorate degree.
[b] 1= Less than 5 years; 2= 5 to 10 years; 3= more than 10 years.

**Characteristics of Respondents**

The overwhelming majority of respondents (organizational representatives) who

completed the survey were executive directors, CEOs, or CEO equivalents (director, president,

chairperson), or direct assistants to them (see **Appendix B** for the list of organizations that were

represented). Table 5 above presents some descriptive statistics about the survey respondents.

Essentially most of the respondents had at least a high school diploma and, perhaps surprisingly, an overwhelming proportion of them had graduate degrees (see Figure 4 below).



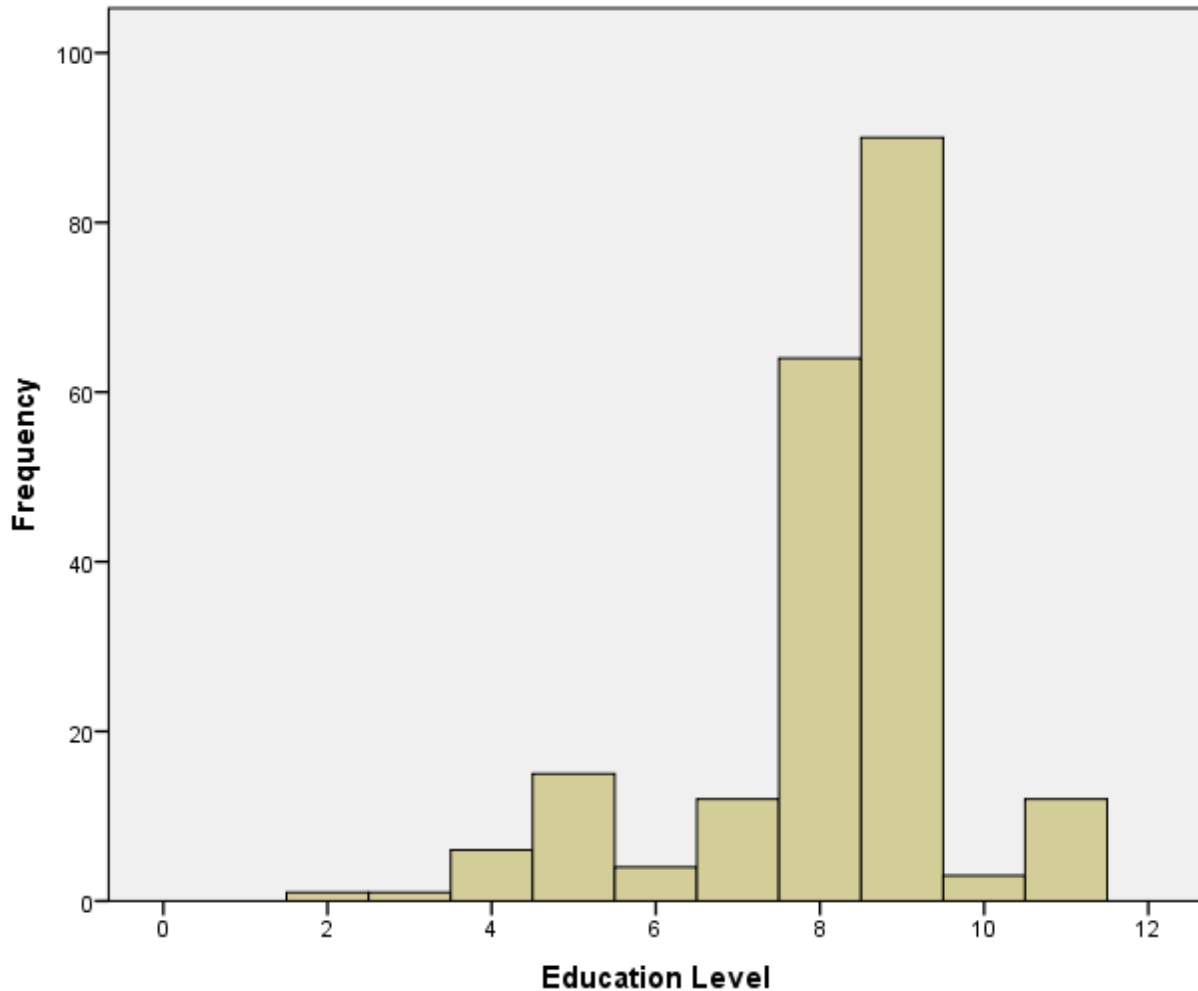*Figure 4*. Frequency distribution of respondents' educational level.

Additionally, most of the survey respondents had been with their organizations for at least five years (see Figure 5 below). A long tenure for an organizational representative or key informant in an organization is desirable because it is generally associated with more knowledge about the organization and its activities (Galaskiewicz, 1985).
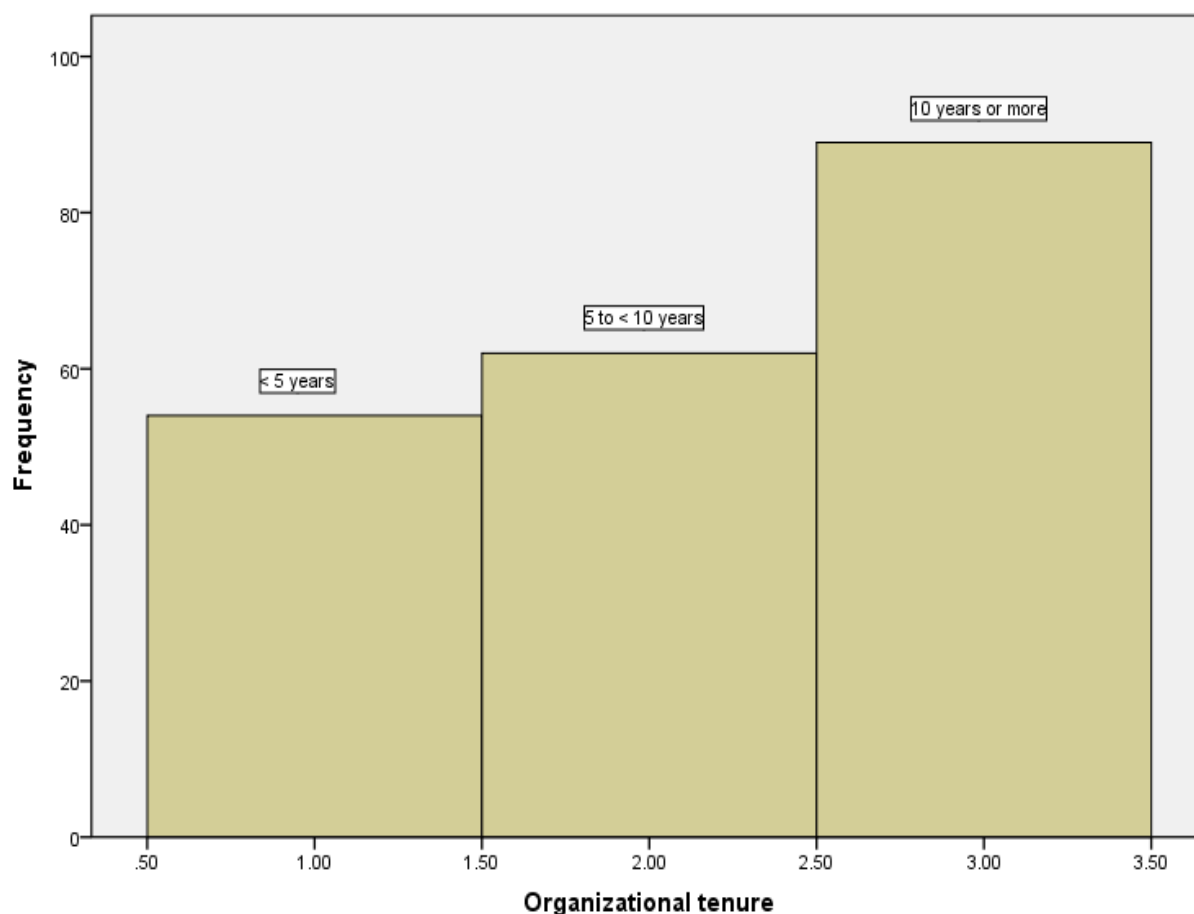
*Figure 5*. Frequency distribution of respondents' organizational tenure.

**Characteristics of the Organizations in the Sample**

Table 6 below presents some general descriptive statistics about the organizations that the survey respondents represented. In general, the human services nonprofits represented were from a variety of categories. Most of the organizations represented in the sample were fairly old (born before 2000) (see also **Appendix B**). The majority of them had revenues and yearly budgets of at least $500,000 (see Figure 6 below) and most of them received some percentage of their funding from the government (see Figure 7 below).

Table 6

*Some Descriptive Statistics about the Organizations in the Sample*

| Variables | *n* | Minimum | Maximum | *M* | Median | Mode | *SD* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Organizational age | 195 | 0 | 154 | 41.57 | 34 | 40 | 32.48 |
| Last year[a] revenue | 193 | 1 | 4 | 1.91 | 2 | 1 | 1.00 |
| Yearly budget[a] | 197 | 1 | 4 | 1.95 | 2 | 1 | 1.01 |
| Percentage of government funding | 171 | 0 | 100 | 46.12 | 50 | 0 | 36.53 |

*Note.* [a] 1= Less than 500000; 2= 500000 to < 1 million; 3= 1 million to < 10 million; 4= 10 million or more.
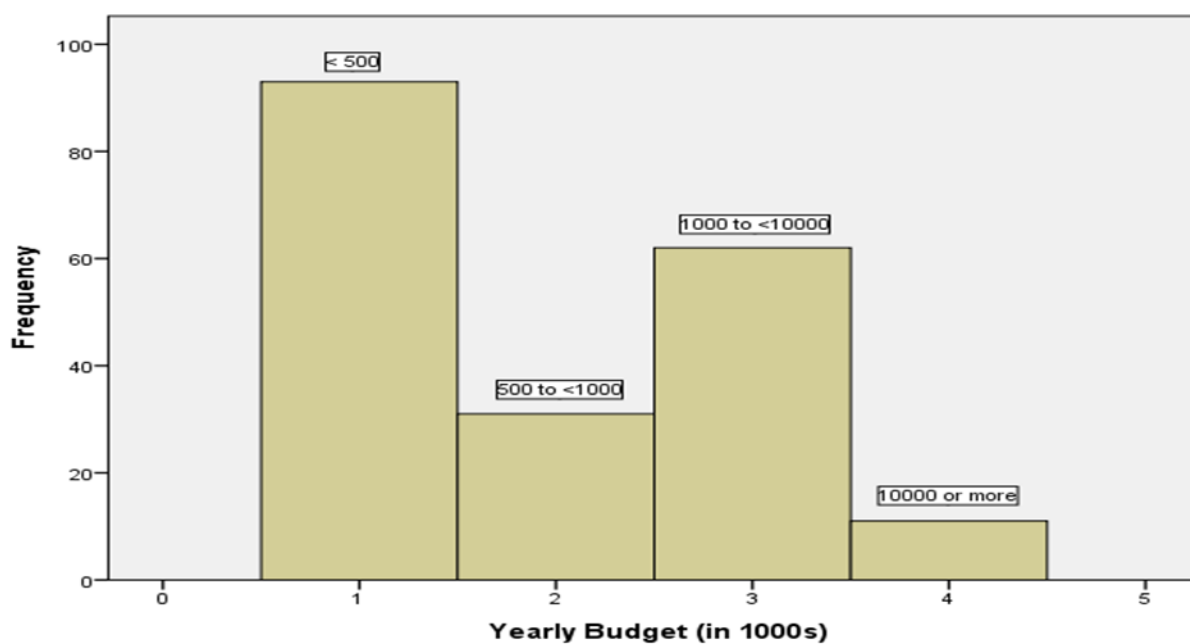


*Figure 6.* Frequency distribution of yearly budget for organizations in the entire sample.
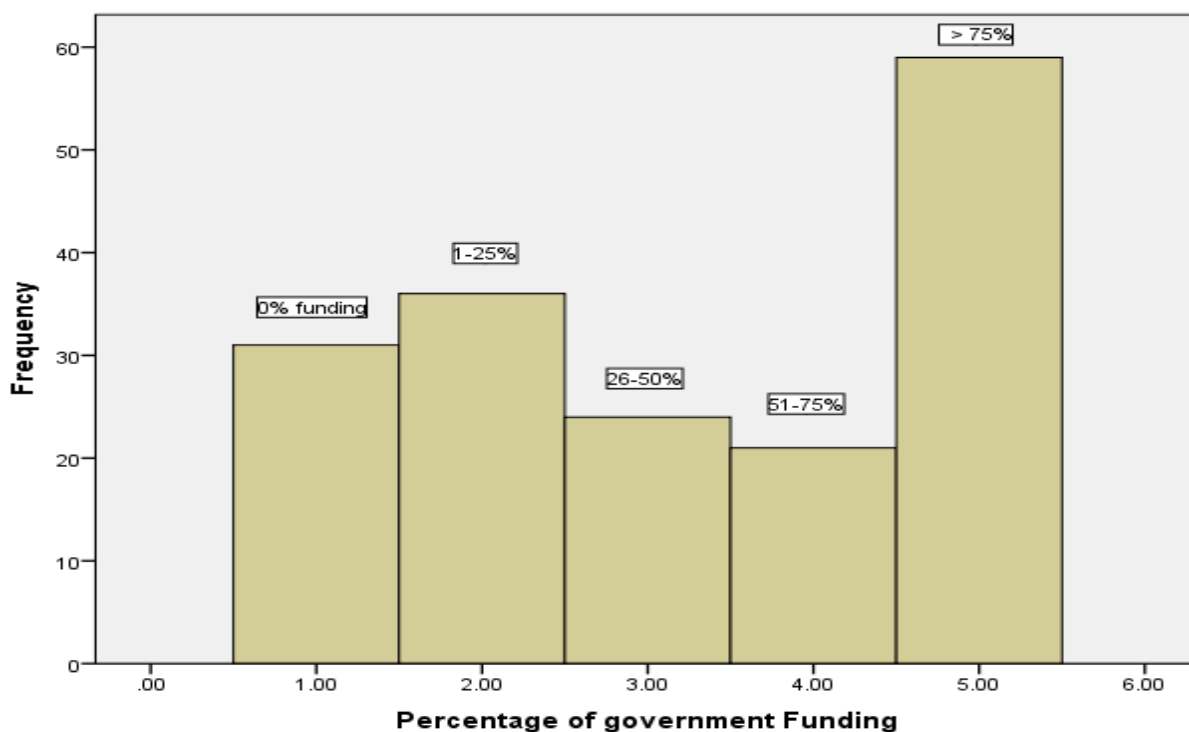
*Figure 7*. Frequency distribution of percentage of government funding for organizations in the entire sample.

**Characteristics of the Research Samples**

Sample 1 consisted of only one respondent. In other words, of the 236 respondents that attempted the survey, there was only one respondent who reported that all of his/her organization's collaborations were mandated. That respondent, however, only partially completed the survey and did not provide enough data to even allow an ad-hoc comparison of his/her organization's experience in the 'good' and the 'bad' mandated partnerships.

Sample 2 consisted of 26 respondents. That means that 26 respondents reported that some of their organizations' partnerships were mandated and some were not. Thus, this is the sample that was used to compare mandated partnerships and voluntary partnerships.

Sample 3 consisted of 125 respondents. That means that 125 respondents reported that none of their organizations' partnerships were mandated (all were voluntarily established).

Sample 3 is the sample that was used to analyze the relationships between partner selection, collaboration processes (Trust, communication, and conflict management), and collaborative effectiveness.

Out of the 84 remaining respondents, 19 respondents refused to consent to the study. 41 respondents reported that their organizations had less than two collaborative partnerships in the previous year; as such, they did not have to provide any data on collaborative partnerships. Finally, 24 respondents began the survey, but they did not provide much—if any—data about their organizations' collaborative partnerships.

## Measures

The measurement items in the survey have been designed after a careful examination of the information gathered during the background research and a thorough review of the network, collaboration, and alliance literature. All the measures used in this study, when appropriate, were examined for their unidimensionality through principal component analysis (PCA) and their reliability or internal consistency.

### Impetus for Collaboration

Impetus for collaboration was measured as a dichotomous variable specifying whether the collaborative relationship with a given organizational partner was initiated voluntarily or mandated/required by another organization. When the relationship was mandated, the respondent did not have to fill a partner selection questionnaire.

### Partner Selection

In order to examine factors of partner selection, respondents were asked to rate how important various factors were in influencing the formation of collaborative relationships by the organizations they represent. More precisely, a 7-point Likert scale (with 1 representing "not at

all" and 7 representing "very important") was used to ask the representative of each organization in the sample to select the number that best indicate how important each reason or criterion was in its choice of specific organizations as a partners.

Partner selection reasons or motivations in this investigation include (1) social and communication networks, (2) reputation, (3) need for resources or resource complementarity, (4) cultural and organizational similarity, and (5) successful prior experience. Each of those partner selection factors is measured by three items. As such, the partner selection measure has a total of 15 items. All of those items were generated based on a review of the literature and on interviews with practitioners and are later analyzed through factor analysis.

**Length of Collaboration**

The length of collaboration represents the number months that the collaboration has lasted. That number can vary between 0 (for less than a month) to 120 months (10 years). This variable was primarily used as a control variable.

**Quality of Collaboration**

As its name indicates, the quality of collaboration represents the quality of or satisfaction with the collaborative experience in a partnership. That experience could be good, memorable, enjoyable, and fun for all the participants involved or it could be miserable, hard, and bad for them. Thus, this dichotomous variable measures whether or not the respondents' organizations liked a particular partnership or liked collaborating with a particular organization. Essentially, for samples 1 and 3, a partnership was assigned to the group of 'good' collaborations if a respondent selected it as the partnership that the respondent's organization liked the most. Conversely, a partnership was assigned to the group of 'bad' collaborations if a respondent selected it as the partnership that the respondent's organization liked the least.

**Collaborative Processes**

There are three key process variables of interest in this investigation. These include: trust/lack of trust, quality of communication, and conflict occurrence and management. For those three variables, the respondent was asked to assess or rate the degree to which the collaborations experience those processes.

**Trust.** Trust here represents the belief that an organization's word, action, and behavior are reliable and that the organization will fulfill its obligation in the collaborative partnership. Trust was measured using a four item measure from Norman (2002) (see also Ganesan, 1994; Mohr & Spekman, 1994). The four item scale has exhibited acceptable reliability (.75) in previous studies (Mohr & Spekman, 1994).

**Communication quality**. As its name indicates, communication quality simply measures the quality of communication among the partners involved in the collaboration. Quality of communication was measured using Mohr and Spekman's (1994) communication quality 5 items inventory. The five item inventory measures the timeliness, the accuracy, the adequacy, the completeness, and the credibility of communication among the partners. The communication quality scale also exhibited good reliability (.91) in previous studies (Mohr & Spekman, 1994).

**Conflict occurrence and management**. Conflict occurrence refers to the amount of conflict between the nonprofit partners. It was measured using one item from Lewis (2006) interorganizational collaboration scale asking respondents to rate whether there was too much conflict in their partnerships. Conflict management effectiveness refers to the ability of the nonprofit partners to deal with conflicts in an effective or satisfactory manner. It was measured using one item from Lewis (2006) interorganizational collaboration scale asking the respondents to rate how well conflict was handled in the collaboration.

**Collaborative Effectiveness**

One of the problems in interpreting the high failure rates that are often reported for interorganizational collaboration is how best to measure interorganizational collaborative effectiveness (Donaldson & O' Toole, 2002; Gulati, 1998). Effectiveness is the prime dependent variable in many organizational contexts and its multidimensionality is the cause of conceptual ambiguities and measurement difficulties (Shilbury & Moore, 2006). There appears to be no universal agreement on precisely what effectiveness means, as it means different things to different people. Although there is no definitive meaning of interorganizational collaborative effectiveness , the majority of authors agree that it requires measuring multiple criteria and the evaluation of different organizational functions using different characteristics, and it should also consider both means (processes) and ends (outcomes) (Shilbury & Moore, 2006).

Several previous studies using a system resource approach (Yuchtman & Seashore, 1967) have equated effectiveness with longevity or survival (Shilbury & Moore, 2006). The assumption made by those studies is that an effective collaboration would not be terminated by the organizations involved. As such attracting necessary resources and maintaining a harmonious relationship with the environment is central to the application of the systems resource model (Shilbury & Moore, 2006). One problem with this view is that it fails to account for the fact that some collaborative arrangements are intended to be only temporary, while others may continue to exist for a variety of reasons, even though they are no longer effective (Fyall & Garrod, 2005; Longoria, 2005). Indeed, organizations may engage in interorganizational collaboration for purely symbolic reasons (Longoria, 2005). Moreover, the survival approach to interorganizational collaborative effectiveness (ICE) does not really make any allowance for the possibility of partial success and partial failure; the collaboration is either effective if it survives

or ineffective if it is terminated. ICE is much more variable than that. Indeed, it is quite possible that a collaborative arrangement may be successful in certain respects and not in others; or that it is considered effective by some of its members and not by others. These issues have to be taken into account when determining how effective a collaborative arrangement is.

A second approach that can be used to measure ICE is the internal process approach (Steers, 1977). This approach suggests that the dynamic between organizations in a network is an important criterion for ICE. According to this approach factors such as trust, integrated systems, and smooth functioning are viewed as more accurate indicators of ICE compared to, for example, the resource/survival approach.

Another approach to ICE, the goal attainment approach, has equated it to the achievement of the goal(s) for which the collaborative arrangement was established (Fyall & Garrod, 2005; Longoria, 2005). The assumption here is that if a collaborative arrangement is effective, it will necessarily lead to the achievement of the goals for which it was established. While such a way of determining the effectiveness of a collaborative arrangement may intuitively make sense, it is not without problems. Indeed, an outcome-based measure does not really measure the quality of the process of collaborating. Indeed, collaboration as defined in this study is not inherently related to a specific outcome. The achievement of several outcomes is in part dependent on a multitude of factors (resources, capacities, environment, etc.) that are not necessarily related to how effective the collaboration is (Keyton et al., 2008).

Collaborative effectiveness here refers to the effectiveness of a partnership in achieving its goals and generating rewards for the organizations involved in the partnership. In other words, it is a perceived effectiveness measure of how effective the organizations involved in collaborative endeavors perceive them to be. An important advantage of such a measure of

effectiveness is that organizations are the actors making the decision to enter or commit to a collaborative endeavor or to exit from it and such decisions are very often based on whether the organization believes the collaborative partnership to be effective in achieving its goals.

Collaborative effectiveness was measured using Bucklin and Sengupta's (1993) five item measure of partnership effectiveness, which was developed based on organization theory (Van De Ven & Ferry, 1980) and interorganizational dyadic relationship research (Ruekert & Walker 1987; Van De Ven & Ferry, 1980). The items measure the nonprofits' perception of their own and their partner's ability to carry out responsibilities, as well as their perception of whether the relationship has been productive, worthwhile, and satisfactory. Some previous studies have used this measure as a qualitative measure of the success of a partnership (Bucklin & Sengupta 1993; Ruekert & Walker 1987), and Milne, Iyer, and Gooding-Williams' (1996) have used it as a descriptor of alliance effectiveness. The five items relationship effectiveness scale exhibited good reliability ($\alpha$ =.88) in Milner et al. (1996) study.

### Psychometric Examination of the Study Variables

An important assumption of many of the tests used in this analysis is that the variables used are appropriate, psychometrically sound, and reliably measured. In simple correlation and linear regression, unreliable measurement can cause relationships to be under-estimated increasing the risk of Type II errors (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).  In the case of multiple regression analysis, effect sizes of other variables can be over-estimated if the covariate is not reliably measured. Thus, before using the study variables to analyze the hypothesized relationships, I examined their dimensionality and reliability when appropriate and I analyzed their psychometric properties (mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis) and their distributions. I examined measures' dimensionality through principal component analysis and

assessed their reliability by calculating their internal consistency reliability estimates (Cronbach alphas) and comparing it to commonly accepted cutoffs.

**Partner Selection Factors**

Fifteen 7-point Likert scale (with 1 representing "not at all" and 7 representing "very important") items were initially generated from previous partner selection literature and background interviews with practitioners in the nonprofit field here in Champaign to measure the five partner selection factors (3 items per factor) used in this study. These 15 items were then examined through principal components analysis. Principal components analysis (PCA) was used because the primary purpose was to identify and compute composite partner selection factors scores for the factors underlying the 15 item partner selection instrument.

The minimum amount of data for factor analysis was satisfied, with a final sample size of 193 (using listwise deletion), with over 12 cases per variable. Initially, the factorability of the 15 items was examined. Several well-recognized criteria for the factorability of items were used. Firstly, all 15 items correlated at least .3 with at least one other item, suggesting reasonable factorability.

Secondly, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .87, above the recommended value of .6, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2$ (105) = 2344.96, $p$ < .001). The diagonals of the anti-image correlation matrix were all over .6, supporting the inclusion of each item in the factor analysis. Finally, the communalities were all above .6, further confirming that each item shared some common variance with other items. Given these overall indicators, PCA with varimax rotation was conducted with all 15 items to examine a 5 factors solution.

Table 7

*Factor Loadings for Principal Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation of Partner Selection Items*

| | Prior experience | Social networks | Reputation | Resource complementarity | Homophily |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Our organization has worked well with that organization in the past | **.87** | .07 | .23 | .20 | .25 |
| Our organization has had a successful collaboration with that organization in the past | **.87** | .07 | .28 | .15 | .13 |
| Our organization has had a good relationship with that organization | **.75** | .07 | .29 | .36 | .22 |
| Members of our organization are very familiar with members of that organization | .34 | .10 | .18 | **.74** | .17 |
| Members of our organization have friends/acquaintances in that organization | .08 | .12 | .10 | **.88** | .14 |

Table 7 (cont.)

|  | Prior experience | Social networks | Reputation | Resource complementarity | Homophily |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Members of our organization frequently interact with members of that organization | .26 | .26 | .25 | **.78** | .08 |
| That organization does good work | .32 | .18 | **.84** | .16 | .23 |
| That organization has a good reputation | .26 | .17 | **.86** | .20 | .23 |
| That organization works well with other organizations | .37 | .28 | **.66** | .29 | .23 |
| That organization has resources that our organization need | .06 | **.84** | .27 | .25 | .06 |
| That organization has assets that our organization needs | .07 | **.88** | .05 | .07 | .01 |
| That organization has capabilities that our organization needs | .06 | **.90** | .14 | .11 | .15 |

Table 7 (cont.)

| | Prior experience | Social networks | Reputation | Resource complementarity | Homophily |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Our organizations both have similar visions | .26 | .10 | .17 | .25 | **.88** |
| Our organizations both share the same values | .25 | .10 | .43 | .11 | **.80** |

*Note*. Factor loadings > .6 are in boldface. ($N = 193$).

The eigenvalues from the initial PCA results showed that the first factor explained 49%
of the variance, the second factor 13.47% of the variance, the third factor 8.87% of the variance,
the fourth factor 6.43% of the variance, and the fifth factor 5.52% of the variance for a total of
83.29 % variance explained. However, after further examination of the initial PCA results, one
item measuring homophily was eliminated because it led to cross loadings of the homophily
factor and it contributed to less total variance explained.

A PCA of the remaining 14 items, using varimax rotation and a five factor solution was
conducted.  Table 7 above shows the results of PCA on the remaining 14 items.  The results of
the PCA analysis adequately supported a five factor solution. The eigenvalues from these results
showed that the first factor explained 50.36% of the variance, the second factor 14.40% of the
variance, the third factor 9.08% of the variance, the fourth factor 6.47% of the variance, and the
fifth factor 5.25% of the variance for a better total of 85.56 % variance explained.

Out of the set of 14 remaining items, 3 items measured importance of social and
communication networks, 3 items measured importance of reputation, 3 items measured
importance of resource complementarity, 2 items measured importance of cultural and

organizational similarity (homophily), and 3 items measured importance of successful prior experience in partner selection. All items had primary loadings over .6 and only one item had a cross-loading slightly above .4, but that item had a strong primary loading of .80.

**Principal Component Analysis of Other Study Variables**

All the other multi-item composite measures used in the study were examined through PCA. As such, trust (4 items), communication quality (5 items), and collaborative effectiveness (5 items) were all examined through PCA with varimax rotation. All three measures proved unidimensional. The only factor in trust accounted for 88.05% in total variance explained. The only factor in communication quality accounted for 88.91% in total variance explained. Finally, the only factor in collaborative effectiveness accounted for 77.29% in total variance explained. All those percentages are adequate percentages of variance explained as they are all above 60%.

**Reliability Analysis**

In order to assess the reliability of the study's composite measures, I calculated internal consistency reliability estimates (Cronbach's α) for them. These are reported in Table 8 below. Cronbach's alpha will typically increase as the intercorrelations among a set of measurement items increase, and it is therefore known as an internal consistency estimate of reliability of measurement items. Because intercorrelations among measurement items are maximized when all items measure the same construct, Cronbach's alpha is widely used as an indicator of the degree to which a set of items measures a single unidimensional latent construct. George and Mallery (2003) provided the following rules of thumb for alpha values: .90 to 1.0 are excellent, .80 to.89 are good, .70 to.79 are acceptable, .60 to .69 are questionable, .50 to .59 are poor, and below .50 are unacceptable (p. 231). Judging from column 4 of Table 8 below, all the internal consistency reliability estimates of the measures in the study are good and most are excellent.

Table 8

*Psychometric Properties of the Major Study Variables*

| Variable | *n* | *M* | *SD* | α | Minimum | Maximum | Skew | Kurtosis |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Length of collaboration (1) | 202 | 52.20 | 43.93 | - | 1 | 120 | .55 | -1.28 |
| Conflict occurrence (1) | 188 | 2.20 | 1.6 | - | 1 | 7 | 1.02 | -.30 |
| Conflict management (1) | 188 | 5.08 | 1.46 | - | 1 | 7 | -.51 | -.17 |
| Prior experience (3) | 193 | 5.58 | 1.32 | .92 | 1 | 7 | -1.18 | 1.55 |
| Social network (3) | 193 | 4.80 | 1.53 | .85 | 1 | 7 | -.47 | -.24 |
| Reputation (3) | 193 | 5.80 | 1.31 | .92 | 1 | 7 | -1.42 | 1.97 |
| Resource complementarity (3) | 193 | 5.29 | 1.67 | .88 | 1 | 7 | -1.10 | .50 |
| Homophily (2) | 193 | 5.54 | 1.44 | .89 | 1 | 7 | -1.18 | .96 |
| Trust (4) | 191 | 5.46 | 1.47 | .95 | 1 | 7 | -.86 | -.12 |
| Communication quality (5) | 188 | 5.61 | 1.38 | .97 | 1 | 7 | -1.11 | .57 |
| Collaborative effectiveness (5) | 185 | 5.94 | 1.10 | .92 | 1.80 | 7 | -1.27 | 1.36 |

*Note*. The variation in sample size is due to missing data. The number of items used to compute each measure is in parentheses.

## Psychometric Properties of Study Variables

Table 8 above also presents the psychometric properties of the study variables. The mean represents the average value of the distribution. The standard deviation, the minimum, and the maximum are all measures of the variability in the distribution. Judging from the mean and standard distribution, many of the variables seem quite skewed. Skewness and kurtosis measure the shape of the distributions and deviations from normality.

Skewness represents the degree to which a distribution of values or scores departs from symmetry around the mean. A value of zero means the distribution is symmetric, while a positive skewness indicates a greater number of smaller values as in the case of conflict occurrence, and a negative value indicates a greater number of larger values as in many variables in the table. A skewness value between +/-1 is considered very good, and a value between +/-2 is considered acceptable for most psychometric uses (Cameron, 2004; Newton & Rudestam, 1999). Kurtosis measures of the 'peakedness' or 'flatness' of a distribution. A kurtosis value near zero indicates a shape close to normal. A negative value indicates more peakedness than normal, and a positive kurtosis indicates more flatness than normal. By statistical convention, a kurtosis value falling in the range from +2 to −2 is considered acceptable for most psychometric uses (Cameron, 2004).

## Statistical Methods and Analysis

The statistical methods of analysis varied depending on the research questions, the hypotheses being tested, the size of the relevant sample, and the nature of the relevant data in each sample. For each of the statistical techniques used, their assumptions were thoroughly checked and whenever there was uncertainty about the violations of certain assumptions,

multiple tests (both parametric and nonparametric) with different assumptions were used to test the same hypotheses to compare the results.

**Unit of Analysis**

The main unit of analysis in this study is the dyadic relationship between each organization and each of its partners. Given that each respondent had to provide data about two of their organizations' partnerships, each of the samples (without accounting for missing values) has the double of its size when considering collaborative partnerships as the unit of analysis. As such, without accounting for missing data in each sample, sample 2 contains 52 units and sample 3 contains 250 units. Given that its sole respondent did not provide much data about his/her organization's partnerships, sample 1 really has no units, and, as such, was not used in any of the statistical analyses.

The main independent or explanatory variables in this investigation are impetus for collaboration and motivations for partner selection. The dependent variables are the three process variables, trust, communication quality, and conflict management, and the outcome variable collaborative effectiveness.

**Impetus for Collaboration, Collaborative Processes, and Collaborative Effectiveness**

The research questions for this investigation focused on the relationships between impetus for collaboration and collaborative processes—trust, communication, and conflict management—and between impetus for collaboration and collaborative effectiveness. Essentially, the research questions are comparative in the sense that they deal with the differences between mandated and voluntary partnerships in terms of their collaborative processes and their collaborative effectiveness.

To examine the differences between mandated and voluntary partnerships, both paired t tests and Wilcoxon signed ranks tests were used. Both of these tests are used because of the small size of the sample 2. The use of multiple tests under such conditions is beneficial because it allows the investigator the opportunity to compare the results of the tests and, if different, explore whether some violated assumptions or sensitivity to sample size led to the differences in results.

The dependent t-test or Paired-Samples t-test is a parametric statistical test that compares the means between two related or dependent groups on the same continuous dependent variable(s). Although the t-test is quite 'robust' to violations of normality, meaning that the assumption can be a little violated and still provide valid results (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013), it is not always clear how much of a violation would lead to invalid results. As such, I also used Wilcoxon signed ranks tests which do not assume normality. Indeed, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test is the nonparametric test equivalent to the paired t-test. As the Wilcoxon signed-ranks test does not assume normality in the dependent variable(s), it can be used when this assumption has been violated and the use of the paired t-test is inappropriate (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

**Regression Analysis of Partner Selection and Collaborative Processes**

In order to examine the relationships between the five partner selection factors, trust, communication, and conflict management, multiple regression analysis was used. Multiple linear regression is an extension of simple linear regression and it is often used when researchers want to examine the relationships among variables or predict the value of a variable based on the value of two or more other variables (Osborne & Waters, 2002). As such, it is suitable for examining the relationships between partner selection factors and trust, partner selection factors and communication quality, and partner selection factors and conflict management. However, like

most statistical tests, multiple regression relies upon certain key assumptions about the variables used in the analysis. When these assumptions are violated, the results or findings may not be trustworthy, resulting in poor estimation of significance, effect size(s), type I, or type II errors (Osborne & Waters, 2002).

**Linearity**. The first of these key assumptions is that there needs to be a linear relationship between (a) the dependent variable and each of the independent variables, and (b) the dependent variable and the independent variables collectively (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Indeed, multiple regression analysis can only accurately and effectively estimate the relationship between independent and dependent variables if those relationships are linear in nature (Osborne & Waters, 2002; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Although there are several ways of checking the linearity assumption, I used scatterplots and partial regression plots in SPSS, and then I visually inspected these scatterplots and partial regression plots to check for linearity.

**Homoscedasticity**. The second key assumption in multiple regression analysis is that the data needs to show homoscedasticity, which means that the variance of errors is the same across all levels of the independent variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). When the variance of errors differs at different values of the independent variables, heteroscedasticity is indicated. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) slight or moderate heteroscedasticity has little impact on significance tests; however, severe heteroscedasticity can lead to increases in the probability of a Type I error, thereby distorting the results and weakening the analysis (Osborne & Waters, 2002; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). To check for heteroscedasticity in the data for all my regression analyses, I used the plots of the studentized residuals against the unstandardized predicted values.

**Normality of residuals**. The third key assumption in multiple regression analysis is that the residuals (errors) are approximately normally distributed (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). It is important to meet this assumption for the p-values for the t-tests to be valid. Although there are several ways of checking this assumption in SPSS, I used histograms (with superimposed normal curves) and Normal P-P Plots to visually inspect the data in all my regression analyses. The normal probability plot is a graphical method for testing normality; it assesses whether or not a variable or a set of variables are approximately normally distributed (Chambers, Cleveland, Kleiner, & Tukey, 1983). The data for the variable(s) are plotted against a theoretical normal distribution in such a way that the points should form an approximate straight line. Deviations from that straight line indicate deviations from the normal distribution (Chambers et al., 1983).

**Multicollinearity**. The fourth key assumption in multiple regression analysis is that the data must not show multicollinearity, which occurs when two or more independent variables or predictors are highly correlated with each other (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Multicollinearity leads to problems with interpretation or understanding which independent variable(s) contribute(s) to the variance explained in the dependent variable. Indeed, as the degree of multicollinearity increases, the multiple regression analysis estimates of the coefficients become less stable and, as a result, the coefficients' standard errors are often wildly inflated (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). To check for multicollinearity in my multiple regression analyses, I used two collinearity diagnostics from SPSS: Tolerance and variance inflated factor (VIF). The tolerance is a diagnostic value that indicates of the proportion or percentage of variance in an independent variable that cannot be accounted for by the other independent variables in a multiple regression analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Therefore, very small values indicate that an independent variable is redundant, and values that are less than .10 are often problematic. The VIF is the

inverse of the tolerance (1 / tolerance) and in general, a variable whose VIF value is greater or equal to 10 should be considered for exclusion, or at the very least seen as problematic, as it would indicate redundancy (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

      **Independence of observations**. The last of these key assumptions is that observations should be independent (i.e., independence of residuals). Such independence of residuals can be easily examined or checked using the Durbin-Watson statistic (Durbin & Watson, 1950; 1951; 1971). This test statistic is very important in this investigation because each respondent provided data on two partnerships. In other words, pairs of partnerships from the same respondent are presumably more similar than other partnerships. As such, for every regression analysis that I did, I tested for the independence of residuals and reported the Durbin-Watson statistic.

      The Durbin–Watson statistic is a test statistic used to detect the presence of first order autocorrelation in the residuals from a regression analysis (Durbin & Watson, 1971; Savin & White, 1977; Wooldridge, 2009). The Durbin-Watson statistic ranges in value from 0 to 4. A value toward 0 indicates positive autocorrelation, a value near 2 indicates non-autocorrelation, and a value toward 4 indicates negative autocorrelation (Savin & White, 1977; Wooldridge, 2009). Durbin and Watson (1971) established lower and upper bounds for the test critical values. Generally, tabulated bounds are used to test the null hypothesis of zero autocorrelation against the alternative hypothesis that the residuals are positively autocorrelated, since positive autocorrelation is observed much more frequently in social phenomena than negative autocorrelation (Savin & White, 1977). To use the Durbin-Watson tables, the researcher must cross-reference the sample size against the number of predictors (regressors), excluding the constant from the count of the number of regressors (Savin & White, 1977). If the observed value of the test statistic is less than the tabulated lower bound, then the researcher should reject

the null hypothesis of non-autocorrelated errors in favor of the hypothesis of positive first-order autocorrelation. If the test statistic value is greater than the tabulated upper bound, then the researcher should not reject the null hypothesis. Finally, if the test statistic value lies between tabulated lower and upper bounds, the test is inconclusive (Savin & White, 1977).

For regression models with an intercept, such as the ones used in this research, if the observed test statistic value is greater than 2, then I tested the null hypothesis against the alternative hypothesis of negative first-order autocorrelation (Savin & White, 1977). To do this, I computed the quantity 4-d (d = Durbin-Watson statistic) and compared it to the tabulated lower and upper bounds for the test following the procedure.

For the sake of parsimony, I do not include all the plots that I used to test the various assumptions of multiple regression in the results. I also do not include the collinearity diagnotics (tolerance and VIF) for every variable in every regression. I only mention these plots and the collinearity diagnostics when they indicate severe violations of the assumptions of regression analysis. I do however report the Durbin-Watson statistic for every regression analysis.

**Partner Selection, Collaborative Processes, and Collaborative Effectiveness**

In order to examine the relationships between partner selection factors and collaborative effectiveness, I used both hierarchical regression analysis and path analysis. I used hierarchical regression analysis because I initially wanted to simply examine whether there is a relationship between partner selection factors and collaborative effectiveness, while also accounting for collaborative processes. I also used regression analysis in SPSS to get the Durbin-Watson statistic that AMOS does not provide, to examine independence of observations.

In addition to using regression analysis to examine the relationships between partner selection factors and collaborative effectiveness, I used path analysis to comprehensively

examine how interorganizational collaboration work; that is, how antecedents to collaboration (partner selection factors), collaborative processes (trust, communication, conflict management), and collaborative effectiveness are all connected and the paths (direct or indirect) that connect them. Path analysis is a statistical technique used primarily to examine the comparative strength of direct and indirect relationships among measured variables. Path analysis allows the simultaneous modeling of several related regression relationships. In path analysis, a variable can be a dependent variable in one relationship and an independent variable in another; these variables are referred to as mediating variables.

Because path analysis is an extension of multiple linear regression, many of the same assumptions hold for the two techniques and they generally produce similar results. Despite their similarities however, path analysis and regression do differ in several areas. Indeed, unlike regression for instance, path analysis does not assume that measurement occurs without errors; as such, it allows researchers to recognize the imperfect nature of their measures. Such an assumption of error in measurement in path analysis is important because it occasionally contributes to differences in significance testing results from regression analysis. In case such differences occur in this study, I will use the path analysis results rather than the regression results to make sense of connections among variables.

Another noteworthy area of difference between the two technique is that whereas standard multiple regression analysis provides straightforward significance tests to determine group differences, relationships between variables, or the amount of variance explained, path analysis provides no straightforward tests to determine model fit. Instead, the best strategy for evaluating model fit is to examine multiple tests. Commonly examined and reported tests include

the chi square, the normed fit index (NFI), the comparative fit index (CFI), and the Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA).

The chi square tests the null hypothesis that the hypothesized (reduced) model fits the data as well as does a saturated (full) model (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). In a saturated model there is a direct path from each variable to each other variable. A non-significant chi square, which is the desired result, indicates that the fit between the hypothesized model and the data is not significantly worse than the fit between the saturated model and the data.

Unlike the chi square test, the NFI and the CFI goodness of fit indices compare the hypothesized model to the independence model rather than to the saturated model. The NFI is simply the difference between the two models' chi squares divided by the chi square for the independence model. Values of .9 or higher (some say .95 or higher) indicate good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The CFI uses a similar approach (with a noncentral chi-square) and is often lauded as a good index for use even with small samples. It ranges from 0 to 1, like the NFI, and values of .95 (or .9 or higher) indicates good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

The RMSEA is related to residual in the model. It estimates lack of fit compared to the saturated model. The RMSEA values range from 0 to 1 with a smaller RMSEA value indicating better model fit. Good model fit is indicated by an RMSEA value of 0.05 or less (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Table 9 below provides a general summary of the research questions and hypotheses of this investigation as well as the various statistical techniques that I use to test them. The table also specifies which sample was used for each analysis. Essentially, the research questions were examined using both paired t tests and Wilcoxon signed ranks tests and the hypotheses were tested using regression and path analyses.

Table 9

*Summary of Hypotheses/Research Questions and Statistical Tests*

| Research question & hypotheses | Statement of research question or hypothesis | Sample (2 or 3) | Statistical tests or technique |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| RQ1 | Do mandated and voluntary nonprofit partnerships differ based on trust? | 2 | Paired t tests and Wilcoxon signed ranks tests |
| RQ2 | Do mandated and voluntary nonprofit partnerships differ based on communication? | 2 | Paired t tests and Wilcoxon signed ranks tests |
| RQ3 | Do mandated and voluntary nonprofit partnerships differ based on conflict management? | 2 | Paired t tests and Wilcoxon signed ranks tests |
| RQ4 | Do mandated and voluntary nonprofit partnerships differ based on collaborative effectiveness? | 2 | Paired t tests and Wilcoxon signed ranks tests |
| H1a | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on prior history with partner and trust | 3 | Regression and path analysis |

Table 9 (cont.)

| Research question & hypotheses | Statement of research question or hypothesis | Sample (2 or 3) | Statistical tests or technique |
|---|---|---|---|
| H1b | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on prior history and interorganizational communication quality | 3 | Regression and path analysis |
| H1c | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on prior experience and interorganizational conflict management effectiveness | 3 | Regression and path analysis |
| H1d | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on prior experience and interorganizational collaborative effectiveness | 3 | Regression and path analysis |
| H2a | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on social networks and trust | 3 | Regression and path analysis |
| H2b | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on social networks and communication quality | 3 | Regression and path analysis |
| H2c | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on social networks and conflict management effectiveness | 3 | Regression and path analysis |
| H2d | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on social networks and collaborative effectiveness | 3 | Regression and path analysis |

Table 9 (cont.)

| Research question & hypotheses | Statement of research question or hypothesis | Sample (2 or 3) | Statistical tests or technique |
|---|---|---|---|
| H3a | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on reputation and trust | 3 | Regression and path analysis |
| H3b | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on reputation and communication quality | 3 | Regression and path analysis |
| H3c | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on reputation and conflict management effectiveness | 3 | Regression and path analysis |
| H3d | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on reputation and collaborative effectiveness | 3 | Regression and path analysis |
| H4a | There is a relationship between partner selection based on resource complementarity and trust | 3 | Regression and path analysis |
| H4b | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on resource complementarity and communication quality | 3 | Regression and path analysis |
| H4c | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on resource complementarity and conflict management effectiveness | 3 | Regression and path analysis |

Table 9 (cont.)

| Research question & hypotheses | Statement of research question or hypothesis | Sample (2 or 3) | Statistical tests or technique |
|---|---|---|---|
| H4d | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on resource complementarity and collaborative effectiveness | 3 | Regression and path analysis |
| H5a | There is a relationship between partner selection based on homophily and trust | 3 | Regression and path analysis |
| H5b | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on homophily and communication quality | 3 | Regression and path analysis |
| H5c | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on homophily and conflict management effectiveness | 3 | Regression and path analysis |
| H5d | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on homophily and collaborative effectiveness | 3 | Regression and path analysis |
| H6 | There is a positive relationship between trust and communication quality | 3 | Regression and path analysis |
| H7 | There is a positive relationship between trust and conflict management effectiveness | 3 | Regression and path analysis |
| H8 | There is a positive relationship between communication quality and conflict management effectiveness | 3 | Regression and path analysis |

Table 9 (cont.)

| Research question & hypotheses | Statement of research question or hypothesis | Sample (2 or 3) | Statistical tests or technique |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| H9a | There is a positive relationship between trust and quality of collaborative experience | 3 | Regression and path analysis |
| H9b | There is a positive relationship between trust and collaborative effectiveness | 3 | Regression and path analysis |
| H10a | There is a positive relationship between communication quality and quality of collaborative experience | 3 | Regression and path analysis |
| H10b | There is a positive relationship between communication quality and collaborative effectiveness | 3 | Regression and path analysis |
| H11a | There is a positive relationship between conflict management effectiveness and quality of collaborative experience | 3 | Regression and path analysis |
| H11b | There is a positive relationship between conflict management effectiveness and collaborative effectiveness | 3 | Regression and path analysis |
| H12 | There is a positive relationship between quality of collaborative experience and collaborative effectiveness | 3 | Regression and path analysis |

## CHAPTER 5: RESULTS & FINDINGS

## Introduction

This chapter presents the results and the findings of the investigation. In the first part of the chapter, I present some descriptive results from sample 2, which is the sample used to compare mandated and voluntary partnerships. Then I present the results of the Wilcoxon signed rank tests and the paired t tests comparing mandated and voluntary partnerships across process variables and collaborative effectiveness to answer the research question about the relationships between impetus for collaboration, processes of collaboration—trust, communication quality, and conflict management—and collaborative effectiveness.

In the second part of the chapter, I present some descriptive results from sample 3, which is the sample that was used to test the hypotheses about the relationships between partner selection factors, collaborative processes, and collaborative effectiveness. Then I present the results of the various statistical tests that were used to test the hypotheses of the study. The various results sections are arranged or organized according to the order in which the hypotheses appear in Chapter 2 and based on their topic. I conclude the chapter with a summary table of the results.

## The Role of Impetus for Collaboration

The four research questions guiding this investigation focused on the role of impetus for collaboration in shaping collaborative processes and collaborative effectiveness. In other words, does the manner in which partnerships are formed—either voluntarily or mandated by a third party—influences collaborative processes within those partnerships and their collaborative effectiveness? Sample 2 which consists of paired data about mandated and voluntary collaborative partnerships was suitable for comparing both types of partnerships.

**Descriptive Results from Sample 2**

Table 10 below presents descriptive statistics for the major study variables for both mandated and voluntary partnerships from sample 2. The first thing we learn from that table is that the sample for comparison of both types of partnerships is very small. Indeed, the valid sample size for comparison across most variables in the table (except collaborative effectiveness) is 17. In general, the results from that table suggest that mandated partnerships were longer on average than voluntary ones, had more conflicts, were less likely to properly handle conflict, were characterized by less trust, had better communication, and were deemed less effective on average by the respondents.

**Impetus for Collaboration and Processes of Collaboration**

Given the small size of sample 2 and the uncertainty regarding the normality of its data, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test and its parametric equivalent, the paired t-test, were used to compare mandated and voluntary partnerships across several variables of interest. The last two columns of Table 10 provide the results of the comparison of both types of partnerships in terms of their collaborative processes. The results from that comparative table show that there are statistically significant differences between mandated and voluntary partnerships in terms of conflict occurrence and conflict management. Essentially, mandated partnerships have significantly more conflicts and handle conflict significantly less well than voluntary partnerships.

The results from Table 10 suggest that there is not enough evidence to conclude that mandated partnerships and voluntary ones are significantly different in terms of their collaborative processes, except in terms of conflict management processes. However, the small

size of the sample precludes any generalizability of the results. Thus, those results should be interpreted with caution as it is hard to make any meaningful inferences from a sample of 17.

Table 10

*Descriptive Statistics, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Tests, and Paired t Tests Comparing Mandated and Non-Mandated Partnerships*

| Variable | Mandated partnerships | | | Non-mandated partnerships | | | Z | t(16) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | n | M | SD | n | M | SD | | |
| Length of collaboration | 24 | 96.91 | 40.36 | 18 | 77.72 | 42.42 | - | - |
| Conflict occurrence | 20 | 2.35 | 1.6 | 17 | 1.53 | 1.00 | -1.98[a]* | 2.19* |
| Conflict management | 20 | 5.00 | 1.75 | 17 | 5.94 | .97 | -1.97[b]* | -2.14* |
| Trust | 20 | 6.10 | .92 | 17 | 6.19 | 1.04 | -.35[b] | -.53 |
| Communication quality | 20 | 6.15 | .84 | 17 | 5.98 | 1.32 | -.51[b] | .19 |
| Collaborative effectiveness | 20 | 5.99 | 1.15 | 16 | 6.39 | .62 | -1.53[b] | -1.57[c] |

*Note.* [a] based on positive ranks; [b] based on negative ranks; [c] degree of freedom =15 instead of 16 like all the others. * indicates significance (two tailed) correlation at p <.05.

**Impetus for Collaboration and Collaborative Effectiveness**

The fourth research question of this study focused on the connection or the relationship between impetus for collaboration and collaborative effectiveness. The results from the Wilcoxon signed-rank test and the paired t test comparing mandated and voluntary partnerships

in terms of their collaborative effectiveness in Table 10 above are not statistically significant. In other words, the data do not provide evidence of a statistically significant difference between mandated and voluntary partnerships in terms of their collaborative effectiveness. However, these results, much as was the case with the differences between mandated and voluntary partnerships in terms of their collaborative processes, need to be interpreted with caution given the very small size of the sample (N = 16).

## Partner Selection and Collaborative Processes

Hypotheses 1 through 5 of this investigation focused on the relationships between partner selection factors and collaborative processes. These hypotheses are all related to a fundamental guiding question of this research which focuses on whether the manner in which human services nonprofits select partners affect trust, communication, and conflict management within their partnerships. In other words, do interorganizational trust, communication, and conflict management within human services nonprofits partnerships vary according to the importance that these organizations place on certain factors or criteria in selecting partners?

Sample 3, which consists of collaborative partnerships that were not mandated, was used to test the various hypotheses about the connections between partner selection factors, trust, communication, and conflict management. The results of the hypotheses tests are organized according to the connections between partner selection and each of the three process dependent variables.

### Descriptive Statistics from Sample 3

Table 11 below presents a correlation matrix of the study variables. Notably, all the partner selection factors are significantly correlated with each other, with the process variables, and with collaborative effectiveness. Essentially, all the correlations in the table are significant.

Table 11

*Correlation Matrix of Study Variables*

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.Prior experience | - | .55**<br>(193) | .68**<br>(193) | .24**<br>(193) | .57**<br>(193) | -.37**<br>(188) | .40**<br>(188) | .54**<br>(191) | .56**<br>(188) | .47**<br>(185) |
| 2.Social networks | | - | .54**<br>(193) | .39**<br>(193) | .45**<br>(193) | -.19*<br>(188) | .38**<br>(188) | .41**<br>(191) | .40**<br>(188) | .30**<br>(185) |
| 3.Reputation | | | - | .44**<br>(193) | .64**<br>(193) | -.41**<br>(188) | .49**<br>(188) | .62**<br>(191) | .56**<br>(188) | .52**<br>(185) |
| 4.Resource complementarity | | | | - | .28**<br>(193) | -.16*<br>(188) | .29**<br>(188) | .34**<br>(191) | .20**<br>(188) | .21**<br>(185) |
| 5.Homophily | | | | | - | -.33**<br>(188) | .45**<br>(188) | .53**<br>(191) | .46**<br>(188) | .40**<br>(185) |
| 6.Conflict occurrence | | | | | | - | -.47**<br>(188) | -.69**<br>(188) | -.57**<br>(188) | -.69**<br>(185) |
| 7.Conflict management | | | | | | | - | .55**<br>(188) | .49**<br>(188) | .55**<br>(185) |
| 8.Trust | | | | | | | | - | .72**<br>(188) | .77**<br>(185) |
| 9.Communication quality | | | | | | | | | - | .70**<br>(185) |
| 10.Collaborative effectiveness | | | | | | | | | | - |

*Note. N* of respondents is in parentheses; * indicates significance (two tailed) correlation at p <.05 and ** at p <.01.

Table 12

*Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Trust from Partner Selection*

| Variables | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *B* | *SE B* | *β* | *B* | *SE B* | *β* |
| Quality of collaboration | -1.64 | .18 | -.56** | -1.05 | .16 | -.36*** |
| Length of collaboration | -.01 | .01 | -.03 | -.01 | .01 | -.04 |
| Prior experience | | | | .15 | .08 | .13 |
| Social network | | | | .01 | .06 | .01 |
| Reputation | | | | .32 | .09 | .28** |
| Resource complementarity | | | | .06 | .05 | .07 |
| Homophily | | | | .15 | .07 | .15* |
| $R^2$ | | .31 | | | .54 | |
| *F* | | 41.42*** | | | 31.01*** | |
| $\Delta R^2$ | | | | | .24 | |
| $\Delta F$ | | | | | 18.91 | |
| Durbin-Watson d | | | | | 2.16 | |

*Note*. $N = 190$; * indicates significance at $p < .05$, ** at $p < .01$ and *** at $p < .001$.

**Partner Selection and Trust**

Table 12 above presents the results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis testing the relationships between partner selection factors and trust. From the table, the Durbin-Watson test statistic value is 2.16, and 4-d is 1.84, which is greater or equal to the tabulated upper bound (1.72) from Savin and White's (1977) Durbin-Watson 1% significance tables. Thus I cannot reject the null hypothesis of non-autocorrelated errors in favor of the hypothesis of negative first-order autocorrelation. In other words, my observations were sufficiently independent to allow me to run the regression.

The results from Table 12 above reveal that adding the partner selection factors in the second step of the hierarchical regression—after controlling for quality and length of collaboration—resulted in significant improvements in variance explained in the dependent variable, trust ($\Delta F = 18.91$, $df = 182$, $p < .00$).  In other words, the manner in which human services nonprofits select their partners influences the degree of trust they have in those partnerships. However, not all partner selection factors have a relationship with trust. Even though Table 11 above showed that all partner selection factors are correlated with trust, after accounting for the quality of collaboration and other partner selection factors, only reputation ($\beta = .28$, $p < .01$) and homophily ($\beta = .15$, $p < .05$) are still significantly positively related to trust. Those results signify that human services nonprofits that select their partners based on reputation and/or similarities in vision or values are also more likely to trust them than those that do not.

**Partner Selection and Communication Quality**

Table 13 below presents the results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis testing the relationships between partner selection factors and communication quality. From the table, the Durbin-Watson test statistic value is 2.28, and 4-d is 1.72, which is greater or equal to the

Table 13

*Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Communication Quality from Partner Selection*

| Variables | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *B* | *SE B* | *β* | *B* | *SE B* | *β* |
| Quality of collaboration | -1.26 | .18 | -.46** | -.74 | .17 | -.27*** |
| Length of collaboration | -.01 | .01 | -.08 | -.01 | .01 | -.10 |
| Prior experience | | | | .27 | .09 | .26** |
| Social network | | | | .05 | .06 | .06 |
| Reputation | | | | .26 | .09 | .25** |
| Resource complementarity | | | | -.05 | .05 | .06 |
| Homophily | | | | .06 | .07 | .06 |
| $R^2$ | | .21 | | | .45 | |
| *F* | | 24.56*** | | | 21.04*** | |
| *ΔR²* | | | | | .24 | |
| *ΔF* | | | | | 15.70 | |
| Durbin-Watson d | | | | | 2.28 | |

*Note*. *N* = 188; * indicates significance at p <.05, ** at p <.01 and *** at p < .001.

tabulated upper bound (1.72) from Savin and White's (1977) Durbin-Watson 1% significance tables. Therefore, I fail to reject the null hypothesis of non-autocorrelation of residuals. In other words, the regression assumption of independence of observation is not violated.

The results from Table 13 reveal that adding the partner selection factors in the second step of the hierarchical regression—after controlling for quality and length of collaboration—resulted in significant improvements in variance explained in the dependent variable, communication quality ($\Delta F = 15.70$, $df = 179$, $p < .00$). Thus, the partner selection factors that human services nonprofits emphasize when selecting their partners influence the quality of communication within those partnerships. However, not all partner selection factors have a relationship with communication quality. Among all the partner selection factors, only prior experience ($\beta = .26$, $p < .01$) and reputation ($\beta = .25$, $p < .01$) are significantly positively related to communication quality. Those results signify that human services nonprofits that select their partners based on reputation and/or prior experience are also more likely to have better communication with them than those that do not.

**Partner Selection and Conflict Management Effectiveness**

Table 14 below presents the results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis testing the relationships between partner selection factors and conflict management effectiveness. From the table, the Durbin-Watson test statistic value is 1.78, and 4-d is 1.72, which is greater or equal to the tabulated upper bound (1.72) from Savin and White's (1977) Durbin-Watson 1% significance tables. Therefore, the regression assumption of independence of observation is not violated.

The results from Table 14 below reveal that, controlling for quality and length of collaboration, partner selection factors have a significant influence on conflict management in

voluntary nonprofit partnerships ($\Delta F = 10.26$, $df = 179$, $p < .00$).  In other words, the manner in

which human services nonprofits select their partners influences how well the handle conflicts

within their collaborative partnerships. More specifically, among all the partner selection factors,

Table 14

*Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Conflict Management Effectiveness from Partner Selection*

| Variables | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *B* | *SE B* | *β* | *B* | *SE B* | *β* |
| Quality of collaboration | -.96 | .20 | -.33** | -.44 | .20 | -.15*** |
| Length of collaboration | -.00 | .01 | -.01 | .00 | .01 | -.01 |
| Prior experience | | | | .05 | .10 | .04 |
| Social network | | | | .09 | .08 | .09 |
| Reputation | | | | .24 | .11 | .21* |
| Resource complementarity | | | | .06 | .06 | .07 |
| Homophily | | | | .18 | .08 | .18* |
| *R²* | .11 | | | .31 | | |
| *F* | 11.09*** | | | 11.30*** | | |
| *ΔR²* | | | | .20 | | |
| *ΔF* | | | | 10.26 | | |
| Durbin-Watson d | | | | 1.78 | | |

*Note*. $N = 188$; * indicates significance at p <.05, ** at p <.01 and *** at p < .001.

only reputation ($\beta = .21$, $p < .05$) and homophily ($\beta = .18$, $p < .05$) have a significant positive relationship to conflict management. Those results signify that human services nonprofits that select their partners based on reputation and/or similarities in vision or values are also more likely to better handle conflict with them than those that do not.

### Partner Selection, Collaborative Processes, and Collaborative Effectiveness

The last set of hypotheses in this investigation concerned the relationships between partner selection factors, collaborative processes, and collaborative effectiveness. Examining the interconnections or the relationships among these three sets of variables is at the heart of the core question that guided this investigation. Indeed, the fundamental question posed in the title of this dissertation, 'how does interorganizational collaboration work?', is really about understanding the connections between antecedents of collaboration (partner selection factors), collaborative processes (trust, communication quality, and conflict management effectiveness), and collaborative outcomes (collaborative effectiveness).

Table 15 below presents the results of the hierarchical regression analysis of antecedent, process, and outcome variables. The goal of running the regression analysis was to examine the relationships among these variables and verify that the data did not violate the assumption of the independence of residuals. The Durbin-Watson test statistic value from Table 15 below is 2.12, and 4-d is 1.88, which is greater or equal to the tabulated upper bound (1.77) from Savin and White's (1977) Durbin-Watson 1% significance tables. Therefore, the regression assumption of independence of observation is not violated.

The regression results from Table 15 reveal that, controlling for quality and length of collaboration, partner selection factors have a significant influence on collaborative effectiveness nonprofit partnerships ($\Delta F = 8.31$, $df = 176$, $p < .00$). Specifically, among all the partner

Table 15

*Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Collaborative Effectiveness from Partner Selection*

| Variables | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | β | B | β | B | β |
| Quality of collaboration | -1.21 | -.55*** | -.92 | -.42*** | -.36 | -.17** |
| Length of collaboration | .01 | .04 | .01 | .03 | .01 | .08 |
| Prior experience | | | .11 | .14 | .00 | .00 |
| Social network | | | -.02 | -.03 | -.04 | -.06 |
| Reputation | | | .26 | .31** | .07 | .08 |
| Resource complementarity | | | -.04 | -.06 | -.05 | -.08 |
| Homophily | | | .01 | .01 | -.08 | -.10 |
| Trust | | | | | .34 | .46*** |
| Communication quality | | | | | .20 | .26*** |
| Conflict management | | | | | .11 | .15** |
| $R^2$ | .31 | | .44 | | .68 | |
| F | 41.32*** | | 20.13*** | | 37.12*** | |

Table 15 (cont.)

| Variables | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| $\Delta R^2$ | | .13 | .24 |
| $\Delta F$ | | 8.31*** | 43.09*** |
| Durbin-Watson d | | | 2.12 |

*Note.* $N = 185$; * indicates significance at p <.05, ** at p <.01 and *** at p < .001.

selection factors, reputation-based partner selection is significantly related to collaborative effectiveness ($\beta = .31$, $p < .01$). However, when the process variables are included in the model, the significant effect for reputation disappears ($\beta = .08$, $p = .26$). On the other hand, the inclusion of the process variables significantly improve the model ($\Delta F = 43.09$, $df = 173$, $p < .00$). Indeed, trust ($\beta = .46$, $p < .00$), communication quality ($\beta = .26$, $p < .00$), and conflict management ($\beta = .15$, $p < .01$) are all significantly positively related to collaborative effectiveness. These results signify that human services nonprofit partnerships that are characterized by a high degree of interorganizational trust, high quality interorganizational communication, and good conflict management methods are more likely to be effective than those that do not.

However, the results from the regression do not provide a comprehensive picture of the connections among antecedents, processes, and outcomes, and the nature of these connections. What is learned from the regression results from Table 15 and Tables 12, 13, and 14 is that the connection between partner selection factors and collaborative effectiveness is probably mediated through the collaborative processes. To examine the nature of the connections among antecedents, processes, and outcomes of collaboration, I conducted a path analysis of all the relevant study variables with the hypothesized links among them.
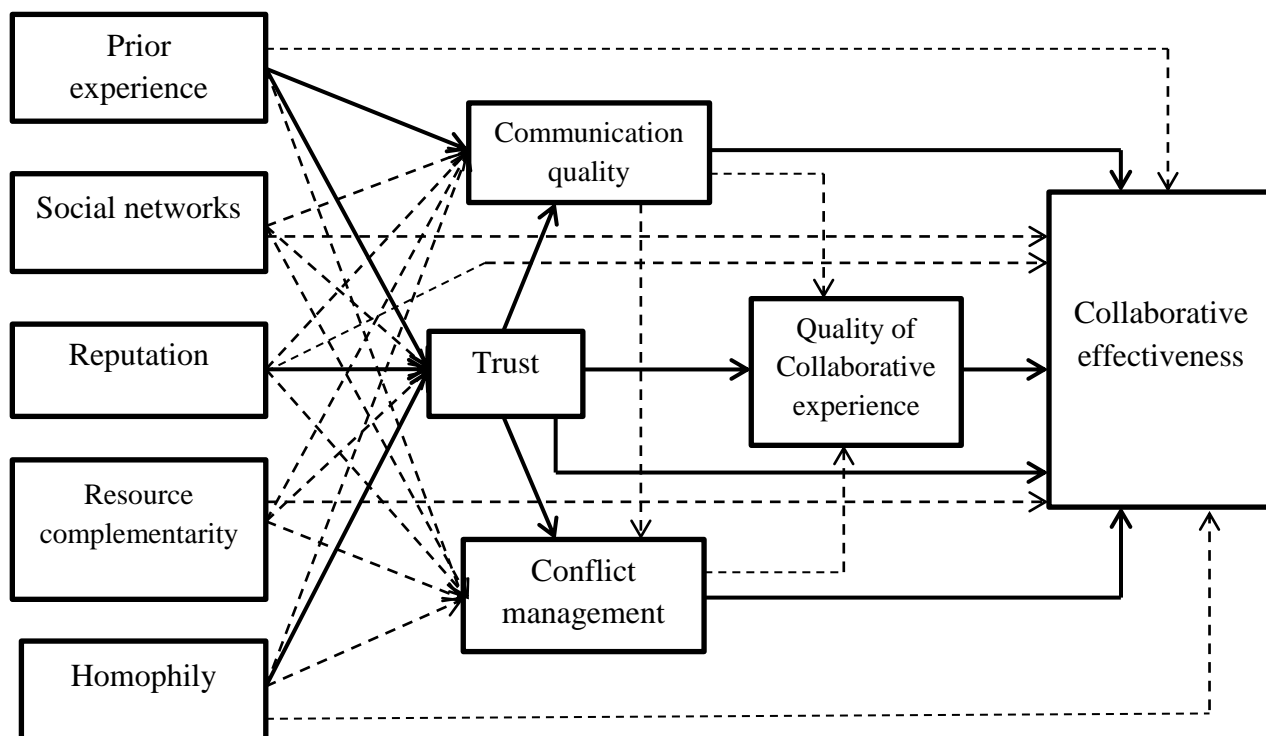
*Figure 8*. Path model predicting collaborative effectiveness. Solid lines represent significant paths. Dashed lines represent non-significant paths.

Figure 8 above and Table 16 below both present the results of the path analysis. Essentially, Figure 8 graphically summarizes the results of the significance tests by indicating which paths are significant and which are not. Table 16 adds to Figure 8 by providing the unstandardized and standardized coefficients for each path.

These results confirm the indirect nature of the relationships between partner selection factors and collaborative effectiveness. The model fit the data very well ($\chi^2$ (10) = 8.95, $p$ = .54; NFI = .99; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = .00), thereby supporting most the theoretical story generated by the hypotheses. Essentially, antecedents (prior experience, reputation, and homophily) are significantly and directly connected to processes (trust and communication), which are themselves directly connected to collaborative effectiveness. Table 17 summarizes the results of the hypotheses tests for direct connections between the study variables.

Table 16

*Path Analysis Results Predicting Collaborative Effectiveness*

| Paths | B | SE | β |
|---|---|---|---|
| Prior experience  →  trust | .22 | .09 | .19* |
| Social networks  →  trust | .01 | .07 | .01 |
| Reputation  →  trust | .36 | .10 | .32*** |
| Resource complementarity  →  trust | .09 | .06 | .10 |
| Homophily  →  trust | .20 | .08 | .19* |
| Prior experience  →  communication | .19 | .07 | .18* |
| Social networks  →  communication | .06 | .06 | .06 |
| Reputation  →  communication | .13 | .08 | .12 |
| Resource complementarity  →  communication | -.09 | .05 | -.11 |
| Homophily  →  communication | -.03 | .07 | -.03 |
| Trust  →  communication | .53 | .06 | .58*** |
| Prior experience  →  conflict management | -.01 | .10 | -.01 |
| Social networks  →  conflict management | .08 | .07 | .09 |
| Reputation  →  conflict management | .13 | .11 | .12 |
| Resource complementarity  →  conflict management | .05 | .06 | .05 |
| Homophily  →  conflict management | .12 | .08 | .12 |
| Communication  →  conflict management | .15 | .09 | .14 |
| Trust  →  conflict management | .26 | .09 | .27** |
| Conflict management  →  collaboration quality | -.01 | .03 | -.03 |

Table 16 (cont.)

| Paths | B | SE | β |
|---|---|---|---|
| Communication → collaboration quality | -.04 | .03 | -.10 |
| Trust → collaboration quality | -.16 | .03 | -.47*** |
| Prior experience → collaborative effectiveness | .02 | .05 | .02 |
| Social networks → collaborative effectiveness | -.05 | .04 | -.06 |
| Reputation → collaborative effectiveness | .07 | .06 | .08 |
| Resource complementarity → collaborative effectiveness | -.05 | .03 | -.07 |
| Homophily → collaborative effectiveness | -.08 | .05 | -.10 |
| Collaboration quality → collaborative effectiveness | -.37 | .11 | -.18*** |
| Conflict management → collaborative effectiveness | .10 | .04 | .15** |
| Trust → collaborative effectiveness | .31 | .05 | .45*** |
| Communication → collaborative effectiveness | .20 | .05 | .24*** |

*Note*. $N = 185$; * indicates significance at p <.05, ** at p <.01 and *** at p < .001. $\chi^2 (5) = 1.49$, $p = .91$; GFI = 1.00; NFI = 1.00; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = .00.

## Summary

Overall, the results from this chapter show that the antecedents of collaboration impact

the processes or the 'doing' of collaboration, and the processes of collaboration impact the

outcomes of collaboration. However, there was no direct connection between antecedents of

collaboration and outcomes of collaboration; the path analysis results show that the connections

between partner selection factors and collaborative effectiveness are totally indirect or fully

mediated through collaborative processes. Additionally, the results from both the path analysis

and the regression revealed that communication quality and trust have the biggest effects on

collaborative effectiveness and thus play an important role in the success of interorganizational

collaborative partnerships among human services nonprofits.

Table 17

*Summary of Hypotheses and Results*

| Research questions and hypotheses | Statement of research question or hypothesis (direct connections only) | Results |
|---|---|---|
| RQ1 | Does the level of trust differ in mandated and voluntary nonprofit partnerships? | No support |
| RQ2 | Does the communication quality differ in mandated and voluntary nonprofit partnerships? | No support |
| RQ3 | Do mandated and voluntary nonprofit partnerships manage conflict differently? | Support (cautious) |
| RQ4 | Does the collaborative effectiveness of mandated and voluntary nonprofit partnerships differ? | No support |
| H1a | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on prior history with partner and trust | Support |
| H1b | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on prior history and interorganizational communication quality | Support |
| H1c | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on prior experience and interorganizational conflict management effectiveness | No support |
| H1d | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on prior experience and interorganizational collaborative effectiveness | No support |

Table 17 (cont.)

| Research questions and hypotheses | Statement of research question or hypothesis (direct connections only) | Results |
| --- | --- | --- |
| H2a | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on social networks and trust | No support |
| H2b | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on social networks and communication quality | No support |
| H2c | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on social networks and conflict management effectiveness | No support |
| H2d | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on social networks and collaborative effectiveness | No support |
| H3a | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on reputation and trust | Support |
| H3b | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on reputation and communication quality | No support |
| H3c | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on reputation and conflict management effectiveness | No support |
| H3d | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on reputation and collaborative effectiveness | No support |
| H4a | There is a relationship between partner selection based on resource complementarity and trust | No support |
| H4b | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on resource complementarity and communication quality | No support |

Table 17 (cont.)

| Research questions and hypotheses | Statement of research question or hypothesis (direct connections only) | Results |
|---|---|---|
| H4c | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on resource complementarity and conflict management effectiveness | No support |
| H4d | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on resource complementarity and collaborative effectiveness | No support |
| H5a | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on homophily and trust | Support |
| H5b | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on homophily and communication quality | No support |
| H5c | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on homophily and conflict management effectiveness | No support |
| H5d | There is a positive relationship between partner selection based on homophily and collaborative effectiveness | No support |
| H6 | There is a positive relationship between trust and communication quality | Support |
| H7 | There is a positive relationship between trust and conflict management effectiveness | Support |
| H8 | There is a positive relationship between communication quality and conflict management effectiveness | No support |

Table 17 (cont.)

| Research questions and hypotheses | Statement of research question or hypothesis (direct connections only) | Results |
|---|---|---|
| H9a | There is a positive relationship between trust and quality of collaborative experience | Support |
| H9b | There is a positive relationship between trust and collaborative effectiveness | Support |
| H10a | There is a positive relationship between communication quality and quality of collaborative experience | No support |
| H10b | There is a positive relationship between communication quality and collaborative effectiveness | Support |
| H11a | There is a positive relationship between conflict management effectiveness and quality of collaborative experience | No support |
| H11b | There is a positive relationship between conflict management effectiveness and collaborative effectiveness | Support |
| H12 | There is a positive relationship between quality of collaborative experience and collaborative effectiveness | Support |

**CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION**

The general purpose of this study was to examine the connections among antecedents to collaboration, collaborative processes, and collaborative effectiveness. Specifically, I examined the connections among impetus to collaboration and partner selection, interorganizational trust, interorganizational communication quality, interorganizational conflict management effectiveness, and interorganizational collaborative effectiveness. In connecting the 'dots' among those three parts of human services nonprofit partnerships, the goal was to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of how interorganizational collaboration among human services nonprofits work and to provide some explanations regarding why nonprofits work and communicate better with some nonprofits and not others and why some nonprofit partnerships are more effective than others.

Overall, I believe this study provides significant insights about how interorganizational collaboration among human services nonprofits works, and why certain nonprofit partnerships operate differently and are more effective than others. In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss the key findings and contributions of this research, implications for practice and theory development, limitations of the study, and directions for future research.

**Impetus for Collaboration, Collaborative Processes, and Collaborative Effectiveness**

Two decades ago, Wood and Gray (1991) argued for the investigation of the role of the convener and other founding conditions in shaping the processes and outcomes of interorganizational collaborations. The first three research questions of this study focused on the role of impetus to collaboration in shaping collaborative processes. In other words, these questions were concerned with whether mandated human services nonprofit partnerships were significantly different from voluntary ones in terms of interorganizational trust,

interorganizational communication quality, and interorganizational conflict management effectiveness. These questions were motivated by the vast amount of nonprofit literature (e.g., Graddy & Chen, 2006; Gray & Wood, 1991; Guo & Acar, 2005; Longoria, 2005; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Snavely & Tracy, 2000; Stephens et al., 2009; Wood & Gray, 1991) that has frequently reported or argued that mandates from powerful conveners (e.g., government, corporations, foundations) play an important role in the formation of nonprofit partnerships. Building from that knowledge, I became intrigued with whether such mandated partnerships are a "good thing" for the nonprofit field and the communities that they serve and whether these mandated partnerships operated differently and fared better or worse that their voluntary counterparts.

The results from this study revealed that there were some differences between mandated and voluntary human services nonprofit partnerships in terms of conflict occurrence and conflict management effectiveness. Specifically, mandated partnerships on average had significantly more conflicts and handled conflicts significantly less well than voluntary partnerships. These results perhaps suggest that the idea of 'arranged marriages' between nonprofits is not necessarily a good thing for the provision and administration of human services in communities, especially when the powerful conveners (Wood & Gray, 1991), cupids (Stephens et al., 2009) or 'matchmakers' that put them together do not offer or provide technical assistance to them for managing collaborative work.

One of the reasons why mandated nonprofit partnerships could have significantly more conflicts and handle conflicts significantly less well than voluntary nonprofit partnerships is that when parties have control over who their partners are, and it is their choice to work with them, they are more likely to commit and invest in the success of the partnership (their choice)

(Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Saz-Carranza & Ospina, 2011). More commitment and investment in the partnership signifies that a nonprofit is willing to work hard on managing or reconciling the tensions between its interests, its partners' interests, and the partnership's interests. The willingness to work together and the commitment to the partnership are likely to result in effective conflict management and less conflict overall. Given the recurrence of conflict and tensions in interorganizational collaboration (Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Logsdon, 1991; Paquin & Howard-Grenville, 2013; Provan & Lemaire, 2012; Saz-Carranza & Ospina, 2011; Selsky, 1991; Thomson & Perry, 2006; Tschirhart et al., 2005; Wood & Gray, 1991), the importance of willingness and commitment to collaborative work cannot be overemphasized.

However, the results from examination of the role of impetus for collaboration in shaping collaborative processes should be interpreted with caution. Indeed, the sample for the comparison of mandated and voluntary nonprofit partnerships was very small. Such a small sample size for mandated partnerships is interesting especially when considering the fact that the current nonprofit literature is not clear on how much mandates or 'arranged marriages' account for nonprofit collaborative partnerships. In fact, given the small number of respondents who reported that their organizations had mandated partnerships, maybe the real story here regarding impetus to collaboration is not so much about its relationships with collaborative processes and effectiveness, but about the possibility that there might not be as many mandated partnerships among nonprofits as scholars (e.g., Guo & Acar, 2005; Longoria, 2005; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Snavely & Tracy, 2000; Stephens et al., 2009; Wood & Gray, 1991) often assume. To put it in another way, the very small number of mandated partnerships as compared to voluntary ones may suggest that mandates do not play as big a role in determining or explaining nonprofit partnerships formation as many nonprofit scholars often assume. Such a suggestion would not

necessarily be contrary to current arguments in the nonprofit collaboration literature about the institutionalization of interorganizational collaboration as the 'way to go' in dealing with the complex social problems of our time (Heath, 2007; Longoria, 2005); it would simply signify that matched pairs are not as prevalent as generally thought.

Alternatively, it is possible that the small number of mandated partnerships in the sample is due to the fact that the respondents did not understand the meaning of the term *mandate* or, more plausibly, they do not consider mandated partnerships as instances of collaboration. Indeed, respondents who do not consider mandated partnerships as collaboration are not likely to report them when asked about their organizations' collaborative partnerships. As such, more research focusing on the nature of mandated partnerships and how they differ from voluntary collaborative partnerships is needed. Such research would be helpful in understanding how partner selection mandates affects nonprofit partnerships.

## Partner Selection and Collaborative Processes

When nonprofits are not mandated to work with specific partners, they still have to decide which partners to select if they decide to collaborate. As such, partner selection is a crucial process in interorganizational organizing. As part of this investigation, I wanted to know if and how the various ways that human services nonprofits select partners affect the degree of trust, the communication quality, and the conflict management effectiveness within their partnerships.

### Partner Selection and Trust

The results from the analysis revealed that partner selection does indeed directly affect the degree of trust in human services nonprofit partnerships. Specifically, nonprofits that emphasized prior experience, reputation and organizational similarities in visions and values in

selecting their partners were more likely to trust those partners. A common thread or link between prior experience, reputation, and similarities in visions and values is that they all constitute important sources or repository for strategic information about an organizational partner's capabilities and behavior. Indeed, through prior experience or past partnerships, a nonprofit gets the opportunity to evaluate what a partner values and how a partner behaves (Bierly & Gallagher, 2007). If the results of that evaluation are negative, it is likely that the nonprofit will avoid that partner in future when it can. However, if the prior experience was positive, it is likely that the nonprofit will seek, select, and trust that partner in future collaborative partnerships.

Reputation represents another important source of strategic information about a potential organizational partner (Bierly & Gallagher, 2007; Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1996; Dollinger, Golden, & Saxton, 1997). Indeed, given that an organization's reputation is generally based on its past actions, behavior, and strategies, it serves to demonstrate the capabilities, integrity, and conformity of that organization to institutionalized norms, standards, and practices. In other words, having a good reputation, especially for working well with others, in a field or domain means that one is a 'proven commodity' or 'safe bet' for collaborative partnership and encourages trust. Having a bad reputation, on the other hand, is likely to reduce opportunities for future collaborative partnerships.

Similarity in organizational vision and values is also an important source of strategic information and trust because it indicates to a potential partner that a focal organization values the same things as the potential partner and operates in a way that is familiar to the potential partner. Such similarity is therefore a good indicator of fit between two organizations and reduces uncertainty or anxiety about collaborative failure. This result is consistent with the

'similarity breeds trust' argument (Gulati, 1995; Gulati & Garguilo, 1999; Gulati & Sytch, 2008; Lubell, 2008).

Contrary to what I expected, social networks among members of human services nonprofits were not a significant driver of trust in human services nonprofit partnerships. This lack of significance may be due to the fact that, when compared to other reasons or factors for selecting partners, social networks just aren't that important. Of the five factors of partner selection examined it this study, social networks were also the lowest rated reason for selecting a partner. The lack of significant importance of organizational members' social networks may be due to the fact that these networks simply do not generate any more valuable information than other sources (prior experience, reputation, organizational similarity). However, these networks may still play an important role as it is through them that information from prior experiences are stored and information about organizational similarities are accessed. In that sense, they constitute the channels through which other sources of valuable information are accessed.

Resource complementarity was also not a significant source of trust within human services nonprofit partnerships. This result is not very surprising because resource endowment does not say anything or provide any valuable information about the behavior or the 'character' of an organization.

**Partner Selection and Communication Quality**

The results revealed that partner selection was also directly linked to communication quality in human services nonprofit partnerships. However, only partner selection that emphasized prior experience was directly related to communication quality. The positive relationship between prior experience and communication quality is understandable because prior experience allows organizational partners the opportunity to know each other directly (Dyer

& Chu, 2000; Gulati & Sytch, 2008; Uzzi & Gillespie, 2002). High interorganizational communication quality between two partners is more likely to occur when the partners have a good understanding of each other's preferences, cultures, histories, and cognitive and interpretive frameworks (Paulraj et al., 2008). As such, high interorganizational communication quality between two organizations is more likely to occur if the two organizations have had a prior experience of working together. Indeed, the knowledge capital that is accumulated through the prior experience makes communication easier and better in the future.

None of the other partner selection factors were directly linked to communication quality. These results may be due to the fact that, unlike prior history or experience, none of the other partner selection factors really allows a direct knowledge of an organization's preferences, cultures, histories, and cognitive and interpretive frameworks (Paulraj et al., 2008). Indeed, the reputation of an organization may signal that that organization does many things well, but it does not socialize a potential organizational partner about that organization's culture, history, communication preferences, or collaborative habits.

The three other partner selection factors, social networks, resource complementarity, and organizational similarity in values and vision also do not allow a potential organizational partner the opportunity to know how to properly communicate when collaborating with an organization. Such knowledge, it seems, is best acquired through direct experience. However, given that reputation and similarity in organizational vision and values have a direct effect on trust, they might indirectly positively influence communication quality between two nonprofits.

**Partner Selection and Conflict Management**

None of the partner selection factors examined in this investigation was directly connected to conflict management effectiveness in human services nonprofit partnerships. These

results are perhaps not that surprising given that interorganizational conflict is much more dependent, than either trust or communication, on situational factors such as the nature and magnitude of the conflict, the stakes involved, the interorganizational context, and the level of expertise or experience of the organizations in conflict management (Miller, 2012; Mohr & Spekman, 1994). However, partner selection factors, more specifically reputation, prior experience, and organizational similarity in values and vision, may indirectly affect conflict management effectiveness through their positive relationship with trust, given that trust is directly positively related to conflict management effectiveness, as described later.

### Partner Selection and Collaborative Effectiveness

None of the partner selection factors were directly related to the effectiveness of collaborative partnership. In other words, partner selection was not directly related to the success of partnerships among human services nonprofits. As such the results from this investigation are not consistent with studies of firms in the organizational ecology and strategy literatures that have emphasized the impact that initial decisions and strategic choices at the time of founding may exert upon the survival and success of organizations (Cooper, Gimeno-Gascon, & Woo, 1994; Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1990; Kimberly, 1979).

The inconsistency with those previous results may be due to the fact that these studies did not thoroughly account for the effect of intermediary or micro-mediation processes in examining the connections between initial decisions and strategic choices at the time of founding and outcomes of organization. Indeed, organizations have to go through various day to day processes (e.g., assimilation, decision-making, change, conflict management, communication, leadership) in order to achieve their goals and examining the connections between initial decisions and strategic choices at the time of founding (antecedents) and success or effectiveness (outcomes)

without accounting for processes may lead one to draw the misleading conclusion that the antecedents are directly responsible for the observed variation in outcomes. This investigation shows that the relationships between antecedents of organizing (nonprofit partnerships in this case) and outcomes are indirect (through processes). In other words, that relationship is fully mediated through organizational processes.

This result is very interesting because there is often a tendency in macro-organizational research to often ignore the important roles that micro or intermediary processes play in shaping connections or outcomes at the macro-level (Geroski et al., 2010). Such an approach, unfortunately, generally carries the risk of missing important parts of the story behind the connections between organizational phenomena. The results here suggest that successful partner selection processes provide interorganizational partnerships with some capital (e.g., trust) that, if put to good use (through collaborative processes), can result in effective or successful partnerships achievement and enhance the satisfaction of participants, thereby predisposing them favorably toward future partnerships with even more 'capital'.

## Trust, Communication, and Conflict Management

Much like traditional organizations, interorganizational collaborative partnerships rely on various processes to sustain themselves and properly function to achieve their goals. Given that these processes are all part of or constitute organizing, I was curious to know how they were interconnected. I was especially interested in the relationship between interorganizational communication, interorganizational conflict management effectiveness, and interorganizational trust, as interorganizational communication has often been neglected, overlooked, or relegated to secondary status in nonprofit collaboration research.

**Trust and Communication**

The results revealed that interorganizational trust has a direct positive relationship with interorganizational communication quality. In other words, human services nonprofits that trusted each other were more likely to communicate more effectively with each other. This result is consistent with previous results from the study of inter-firm alliances where trust has been found to have a positive effect on openness in communication (Smith & Barclay, 1997), information sharing (Dirks, 1999; Panteli & Sockalingam, 2005), accuracy of information (Mellinger, 1959), and knowledge exchange (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). Trust positively affects communication in nonprofit partnerships by improving the quality of conversations, meetings, negotiations, and discussions, which in turn facilitates the sharing of ideas, knowledge, and information, (Dirks, 1999; Panteli & Sockalingam, 2005).

**Trust and Conflict Management**

The relationship between trust and conflict management effectiveness in human services nonprofit partnerships was positive and significant. In other words, human services nonprofits that trusted each other were more likely to handle conflict well. This result is consistent with the general consensus from previous literature that trust positively affects conflict management effectiveness. Indeed, organizations in collaborative partnerships that are characterized by a high level of interorganizational trust are more likely to give each other the benefit of the doubt and greater leeway in mutual dealings (Panteli & Sockalingam, 2005). Such leeway generally tends to reduce the scope, intensity, and frequency of dysfunctional conflict (Zaheer et al., 1998). Additionally, organizations that trust each other are more likely to commit to constructive conflict management strategies to preserve their good relationship (Mohr & Spekman, 1994; Zaheer et al., 1998).

**Communication and Conflict Management**

The results revealed that the direct relationship between communication quality and conflict management effectiveness was positive but not significant. This result may be due to the fact that, although communication quality is important to the conflict management process, it does not constitute a solution or remedy for conflict. Indeed, a direct effect of communication quality on conflict management effectiveness may depend on the suitability or the appropriateness of content of communication to the conflict at hand (Miller, 2012; Putnam, 1995). However, that result does not mean that communication quality is unimportant in conflict management processes; its effect however, appears to be indirect. Indeed, the results do suggest that communication quality is indirectly positively related to conflict management effectiveness through its positive direct relationship to trust. As such, communication quality still plays an important positive role in shaping conflict management effectiveness.

## Collaborative Processes and Collaborative Outcomes

The last part of the puzzle in the investigation of the antecedent-processes-outcomes connection is the examination of the links between the three collaborative processes—trust, communication, and conflict management—and the collaborative outcomes. The primary outcome of interest in this investigation is collaborative effectiveness. The second outcome variable examined in this study was collaboration quality.

**Trust, Collaboration Quality, and Collaborative Effectiveness**

Trust was positively and directly related to both collaboration quality, and collaborative effectiveness. In other words, trust positively influenced both the satisfaction with the collaborative experience, and the success of the partnership. Thus, human services nonprofits

partners that trusted each other were more likely to like or enjoy their collaborative experience, and their partnerships were more likely to be effective or successful.

The positive direct relationship between trust and collaborative effectiveness is consistent with previous studies of the relationship between trust and alliance performance in the business literature (Gambetta, 1988; Krishnan et al., 2006; Mayer et al., 1995; McEvily et al., 2003; Zaheer et al., 1998). Most of the findings from the examination of that relationship indicate that interorganizational trust is positively related to alliance success (e.g., Dyer & Chu, 2003; Mohr & Spekman, 1994; Zaheer et al., 1998). Essentially, interorganizational trust has been posited to contribute to partnership or alliance success by (1) bringing about good faith in the intent, fairness, and reliability of partner behavior (Zaheer et al., 1998), (2) allowing for positive or constructive interpretation of partner motives (Uzzi, 1997), (3) reducing the potential for destructive conflict (Zaheer et al., 1998), and (4) encouraging high quality communication between partners (Sako, 1991).

As far as the positive relationship between trust and collaboration quality is concerned, it makes sense that human services nonprofits that trust each other also enjoy or like working with each other. Indeed, working with a trusted partner reduces anxiety (Zaheer et al., 1998), improves communication (Sako, 1991; Uzzi, 1997), and fosters freedom to innovate or be creative (Dirks, 1999; Panteli & Sockalingam, 2005).

**Communication, Collaboration Quality, and Collaborative Effectiveness**

The direct relationship between communication quality and collaborative effectiveness was positive and significant. In other words, human services nonprofit partnerships that were characterized by high quality interorganizational communication were also likely to be highly effective. This result, which signifies that interorganizational communication plays an important

positive role in the success or effectiveness of human services nonprofit collaborative partnerships, is consistent with the role of interorganizational communication in alliances success. Indeed, empirical investigations on corporations has shown that business alliances in which partners exchange timely, accurate, complete and credible information, and share critical and 'sensitive' information are more successful than business alliances that do not exhibit those communication behaviors (Carter & Miller, 1989; Chen & Paulraj, 2004; Mohr & Spekman, 1994; Paulraj et al., 2008).

High interorganizational communication quality is important to the effectiveness or the success of human services nonprofit partnerships because it reduces ambiguities, misunderstandings, and confusion, thereby enhancing knowledge exchange, coordination information sharing, stakeholder responsiveness, and creativity (Chen & Paulraj, 2004; Dyer, 1996; Paulraj, Lado, & Chen, 2008). Moreover, when organizational partners adequately communicate to share important ideas, information, and strategies relating to the common problems or issues they face, they are more likely to (1) improve the quality of their solutions, (2) develop innovative ways of thinking about issues, (3) improve the quality of their services, (4) achieve their organizational goals, and (5) achieve the partnerships goals (Carr &Pearson, 1999, Paulraj et al., 2008). Thus high interorganizational communication quality enhances synergy in human services nonprofit partnerships.

The results also revealed that the direct relationship between interorganizational communication quality and satisfaction with collaborative experience was not significant. Although this is a puzzling result at first thought, it may simply mean that communication by itself does not make the collaborative experience enjoyable. However, communication quality

does indirectly contribute to the satisfaction with the collaborative experience through its positive relationship with trust.

**Conflict Management, Collaboration Quality, and Collaborative Effectiveness**

The results revealed that conflict management effectiveness was directly and positively related to collaborative effectiveness. That result makes sense because conflicts are an important part of interorganizational partnerships due to the inherent interdependencies, tensions, and interactions among the parties involved (DiStefano, 1984; Miller, 2012; Mohr & Spekman, 1994; Thomson & Perry, 2006). Since partners are not likely to always see eye to eye or there may be tensions between nonprofits' interest and those of the partnerships, conflict management effectiveness is key to the success or effectiveness of the collaborative partnership (Borys & Jemison, 1989; Mohr & Spekman, 1994; Tsasis, 2009).

However, the direct connection between conflict management effectiveness and satisfaction with the collaborative experience was not significant. This result may be due to the fact that no matter how constructive or effective conflict management can be for a partnership, people in general do not like that aspect of collaboration or organizing in general (Mohr & Spekman, 1994). Alternatively, that result may simply signify that it takes much more than effective conflict management to make the collaborative experience enjoyable.

**Collaboration Quality and Collaborative Effectiveness**

The relationship between satisfaction with the collaborative experience and collaborative effectiveness was positive and significant. This result signifies that human services nonprofit partnerships in which the partners were happy with the process of collaborating were generally effective. This result makes sense because the nonprofit partners would not be happy if the process of collaboration was 'going wrong' or not smoothly. This results thus reinforces the

importance of effective collaborative processes in not only the achievement of collaborative goals and objectives, but in enhancing the satisfaction with the collaborative experience.

## Contributions

This dissertation has made several contributions to the current literature on nonprofit collaborations. Indeed, by undertaking the examination of the connections among antecedents, processes, and outcomes of collaboration, it has contributed to the provision of a more comprehensive understanding of how interorganizational collaboration work. In the current literature on nonprofit collaboration, the general practice is to study those three areas separately as if they were not related. The results from this investigation suggest that those three areas of interorganizational collaboration are related, and thus future studies on nonprofit collaboration should be mindful of those relationships or connections. In the paragraphs below, I discuss what I believe are four other more specific contributions of this investigation to current literatures.

First, this investigation has contributed to the nonprofit literature by examining the relationship between the impetus for the formation of collaborative relationships among nonprofits and the processes and effectiveness of those collaborative relationships. Despite calls by Wood and Gray (1991) to do so two decades ago, the literature had remained mostly silent on that topic. Findings from this research suggest that impetus for collaboration formation may have an impact on conflict management processes within collaborative partnerships. Additionally, this study hints at the possibility that mandates may not play as important a role in nonprofit pairings as is often thought in the nonprofit literature.

Second, this dissertation has contributed to the nonprofit literature by examining the connections between partner selection, the processes, and the effectiveness of collaborative relationships among nonprofits. This research suggests that partner selection impacts the

processes and outcomes of human services nonprofit collaborations. However, the connection between partner selection factors and collaborative outcomes was not a direct one; collaborative processes fully mediated the relationship between partner selection and collaborative effectiveness.

Third, this research contributes to the nonprofit literature by empirically investigating the connection between collaborative processes and outcomes in nonprofit collaboration. For a long time the nonprofit literature has relied on small case studies and anecdotal evidence to make the case for the importance of the processes of collaboration in the achievement of collaborative goals or outcomes.

Fourth, this research has contributed to both the nonprofit and communication literatures by examining the role of communication in the antecedent-process-outcome framework of nonprofit collaboration. This research has revealed that partner selection influences communication quality and communication quality directly impact the success or effectiveness of collaborative partnerships.

### Limitations and Future Research

Despite the important findings and contributions of this research, there are also some limitations. First, this study was cross sectional, but it dealt with phenomena (conflict management, trust, communication) that unfold, evolve, or change over time. As such, the study had to reduce processes to variables. Future research would do well to examine interorganizational collaboration from a process perspective to account for the fluctuations or changes in conditions over time.

Second, the sample of organizations that took part in this study was not sufficiently large to allow the use of more sophisticated statistical methods such as structural equation modeling

which would entail combining both a measurement model and a structural/explanatory model. This study, through path analysis, only tested the structural model linking antecedents, processes and outcomes. On a positive note regarding the sample of organizations in this study, when comparing the them to nonprofits that did not take part in the study, based on financial data from the fiscal years 2009-2011, the results of the independent samples t tests for equality of means show that the two groups do not differ significantly in terms of their total revenues ($t = -.94$, df = 1776, $p = .35$), their expenditures ($t = -.94$, df = 1776, $p = .35$), and their net incomes ($t = -.27$, df = 1776, $p = .79$). Moreover, the results of the Levene's tests for equality of variance also show that the two groups are not significantly different in terms of their variance across total revenues ($F = 2.97$; $p = .08$), total expenditures ($F = 2.77$; $p = .10$), and net incomes ($F = 1.95$; $p = .16$). Additionally, after comparing sample averages with population averages through one sample t tests, there was no statistically significant differences between organizations in the population and organizations in the sample in terms of total revenues ($t = -1.36$, df = 198, $p = .18$), total expenditures ($t = -1.31$, df = 198, $p = .19$), and net incomes ($t = -.83$, df = 198, $p = .41$). In sum, although the sample of organizations used in this study appears to be representative of the population of human services nonprofits in the state, having a bigger sample would have been better as it would have enabled a more sophisticated test of the hypothetical model of this study. As such future studies should strive for larger samples of the population of nonprofits in a given region or area, as much as possible.

Third, this research relied on self-reports by key organizational informants. Although that is customary in organizational and interorganizational research, such ways of measuring variables relating to macro level phenomena has often been criticized for the difficulty in determining how accurate they are. The effectiveness measure used in this study, for instance, is

a perceived effectiveness measure, that can be fairly subjective. However, there is also much evidence that organizational effectiveness in the nonprofit sector is socially constructed and that outcome indicators can sometimes be limiting and potentially dangerous (Herman & Renz, 1997; 1999).

Fourth, due to limitations in availability of means, this study was not able to account for certain key variables in collaboration research such as level of coordination, interdependence, commitment, and participation. These variables are often mentioned in the collaborative literature as very important to the success or effectiveness of collaborative partnerships (Mohr & Spekman, 1994; Thomson & Perry, 2006; Thomson et al., 2009). Future research should examine how these key factors affect the processes and outcomes of collaboration.

**Conclusion**

The main purpose of this investigation was to examine the connections among antecedents, processes, and outcomes of collaboration among human services nonprofits. As such, this study had several important goals. First, this study sought to understand how antecedents to collaboration are related to processes of collaboration. Results from the study showed that both impetus for collaboration and partner selection had an impact on collaborative processes.

Second, this study investigated the connection between antecedents to collaboration and the effectiveness of collaboration. The study found that neither impetus for collaboration nor partner selection was directly connected to the effectiveness or success of collaborative partnerships among human services nonprofits. Indeed, their impact on the effectiveness of nonprofit partnership was fully mediated through collaboration processes.

Third, this study investigated the relationship between the processes of collaboration, that is, between trust, communication quality, and conflict management effectiveness. It found that all three process variables were directly or indirectly related to each other.

Finally, this study investigated the connections between the three collaborative processes—trust, communication, and conflict management—and collaborative outcomes. The study found that trust, communication quality, and conflict management were all positively related to collaborative effectiveness. In sum, as originally intended, this study has essentially established that the three areas of collaboration—antecedents, processes, and outcomes—are all connected.

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## APPENDIX A

### Human Services Nonprofit Collaboration Survey

Please complete the following questions regarding yourself, your organization, and its collaborative partnerships with other human services nonprofits in the state of Illinois.

### Part 1 : Background questions

**Section 1: About You**

1. How long have you worked for this organization? *Please indicate the number of years.* _____

2. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? *If currently enrolled, highest degree received.*_____
    1. No schooling completed
    2. Nursery school to 8$^{th}$ grade
    3. Some high school, no diploma
    4. High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
    5. Some college credit, no degree
    6. Trade/technical/vocational training
    7. Associate degree
    8. Bachelor's degree
    9. Master's degree
    10. Professional degree
    11. Doctorate degree

3. What is your position within this organization? _____

**Section 2: About your organization**

1. What is your organization's name? _____

2. What year was your organization founded? _____

3. How many employees does the organization have? _____

4. What was your organization's revenue last year? _____
    1. Less than 500000
    2. 500000 to < 1 million
    3. 1 million to < 10 million
    4. 10 million or more.

5. What is your organization's yearly budget? _____
    1. Less than 500000
    2. 500000 to < 1 million
    3. 1 million to < 10 million
    4. 10 million or more.

6. Approximately what percentage of your organization's funding comes from government sources? _____
    1. 0 to Less than 10%
    2. 10% to < 20%

3. 20% to < 30%
4. 30% to < 40%
5. 40% to < 50%
6. 50% to < 60%
7. 60% to < 70%
8. 70% to < 80%
9. 80% to < 90%
10. 90% or more

## Part 2: About your organization's collaborative partnerships

For the purposes of this survey, two organizations have a collaborative partnership if they conduct joint activities that produce joint outcomes or if they work together to provide a set of services to their mutual clients.

1a. Has your organization collaborated or worked with other nonprofit organizations in the state of Illinois in the past year?
1. Yes
2. No

1b. Has your organization collaborated or worked with MORE THAN ONE nonprofit organizations in the state of Illinois in the past year?
1. Yes
2. No

1c. If yes, please list up to 10 nonprofit organizations your organization has collaborated or worked with the most in the state of Illinois in the past year? (List up to 10 and then proceed to the next section)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

If no, please proceed to the part 5 of the survey

## <u>Section 1: Impetus for Collaboration</u>

We are now going to focus on the nonprofit organizations you listed as collaborative partners of your organization in the previous question (1b) and classify them as mandated partners or non-mandated partners. Thus, we essentially want to know which ones (if any) your organization was mandated or required to collaborate with, and which ones your organization was not.

2a. Of those nonprofit organizations you listed in 1b, was your organization mandated or required to collaborate with any of them?
1. Yes
2. No

2b. If **yes**, please list the nonprofit organizations that your organization was mandated or required to collaborate with? (Please list)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

This survey uses skip logic. This means that depending on how you answered the previous two questions, you will answer different sets of questions. There are three possible options based on your answers to questions **1b, 2a, and 2b**.

**Option 1**
<u>If you answered **Yes** to question 2a and SOME (but not all)</u> of the nonprofit partners you listed in 1b were also listed in 2b, then some of your organization's partnerships were mandated/required and some of them were not. Please answer the following questions

3.1a. Of the nonprofit organizations that your organization was mandated/required to work with, which one did your organization interact with the most? (Org 1) _____

For your organization's partnership with that nonprofit organization, please answer the questions in section 2a, and parts 3, 4, and 5

3.1b. Of the nonprofit organizations that your organization was **NOT** mandated/required to work with, which one did your organization interact with the most? (Org 2) _____

For your organization's partnership with that nonprofit organization, please answer the questions in section 2b, and parts 3, 4, and 5

**Option 2**

If you answered **Yes** to question 2a and ALL of the nonprofit partners you listed in 1b were also listed in 2b, then all of your organization's partnerships were mandated/required. Please answer the following questions.

3.2a. Of those nonprofit organizations you selected, which one did your organization like working with the most? (Org 1) _____

3.2b. Of those nonprofit organizations you selected, which one did your organization like working with the least? (Org 2) _____

For your organization's partnerships with both of those nonprofit organizations, please answer the questions in section 2a, and parts 3, 4, and 5.

**Option 3**

If you answered **No** to question 2a, then NONE of your organization's partnerships were mandated/required. Please answer the following questions.

3.3a. Of those nonprofit organizations you selected, which one did your organization like working with the most? (Org 1) _____

3.3b. Of those nonprofit organizations you selected, which one did your organization like working with the least? (Org 2) _____

For your organization's partnerships with both of those nonprofit organizations, please answer the questions in section 2b, and parts 3, 4, and 5.

**Section 2a: mandated partnerships**

For the nonprofit organization(s) that your organization was mandated/required to collaborate with, please answer the following questions and then proceed to part 3.

1. How long has your organization worked with that organization? Please indicate the number of months. _____

2. What type of organization mandated the partnership? _____
   1. Governmental agency
   2. Corporation/firm
   3. Nonprofit
   4. Other

3. How much flexibility did **your organization** have in selecting a partner? _____
   1. None
   2. A little bit
   3. Quite a bit
   4. A good deal
   5. A great deal

## Section 2b: Criteria for Partner Selection

For the nonprofit organization(s) that your organization was **NOT** mandated/required to work with, please answer the following questions and then proceed to part 3.


**About your relationship with organization 1 (or 2)**

1. How long has your organization worked with that organization? Please indicate the number of months. _____


**Criteria for partner selection**

*On a seven-point scale, please select the number that best indicates how important each reason was in choosing one particular organization as your partner.*

2. Our organization has worked well with that organization in the past
3. Our organization has had a successful collaboration with that organization in the past
4. Our organization has had a good relationship with that organization
5. Members of our organization are very familiar with members of that organization
6. Members of our organization have friends/acquaintances in that organization
7. Members of our organization frequently interact with members of that organization
8. Our organizations both do similar activities
9. That organization does good work
10. That organization has a good reputation
11. That organization works well with other organizations
12. That organization has resources that our organization need
13. That organization has assets that our organization needs
14. That organization has capabilities that our organization needs
15. Our organizations both have similar visions
16. Our organizations both share the same values

**Not At All**                                    **Very Important**
1       2       3       4       5       6       7

**Part 3: Processes of Collaboration with Organization 1 (and 2)**

<u>**Section 1: Trust**</u>
*Please indicate the degree to which you feel each of the following statements accurately characterize your organization's relationship with this partner by selecting the number that relates to your response.*

1. We can rely on our partner to abide by the collaboration agreement
2. There is a high level of trust in the working relationship with our partner
3. We trust that our partner's decision will be beneficial to the collaboration
4. We trust that our partner's decision will be beneficial to our organization

**Not very accurate**                                    **Very accurate**
1        2        3        4        5        6        7

<u>**Section 2: Conflict**</u>

*Please indicate the degree to which you feel each of the following statements accurately characterize your organization's relationship with this partner by selecting the number that relates to your response.*

1. There is too much conflict in this collaboration
2. In this collaboration, we handle conflict well

**Not very accurate**                                    **Very accurate**
1        2        3        4        5        6        7

<u>**Section 3: Communication quality**</u>

*To what extent do you agree that your organization's communication with this Partner is? Please select the number that best characterizes your response.*

1. Untimely/timely          1        2        3        4        5        6        7
2. Inaccurate/accurate      1        2        3        4        5        6        7
3. Inadequate/adequate      1        2        3        4        5        6        7
4. Incomplete/complete      1        2        3        4        5        6        7
5. Not credible/credible    1        2        3        4        5        6        7

**Part 4: Effectiveness of collaborative relationship (1 and 2)**

*Please indicate the degree to which you feel each of the following statements accurately characterize your organization's relationship with this partner by selecting the number that relates to your response.*

1. Our partner has carried out its responsibilities
2. Our organization has carried out its responsibilities
3. The relationship has been productive
4. The relationship has been worthwhile
5. The relationship has been satisfactory

**Not very accurate**                                **Very accurate**
1        2        3        4        5        6        7

**APPENDIX B**

Organizations' names, founding years, and location

| Organization name | Founding year | City |
|---|---|---|
| Access Services of Northern Illinois | 1997 | Loves Park |
| Achs Homemakers Association | 1979 | Centralia |
| ADV & SAS | 1978 | Streator |
| Alton Day Care & Learning Center | 1970 | Alton |
| Ambucs / American Business Club of Springfield | 1942 | Springfield |
| Arden Shore Child and Family Services | 1898 | Vernon Hills |
| Area Agency on Aging of Southwestern Illinois | | Collinsville |
| Asian Youth Services | 1991 | Chicago |
| Association for Individual Development | 1961 | Aurora |
| Austin Childcare Providers' Network | 2000 | Chicago |
| Barbara Olson Center of Hope | 1948 | Rockford |
| Belvidere Family YMCA | 1902 | Belvidere |
| Bernie Mac Foundation | 2007 | Matteson |
| Between Friends | 1986 | Chicago |
| Birthright of McLean County | 1973 | Bloomington |
| Blessing Barn | 2005 | Crystal lake |
| Bloomington Day Care Center, Inc. | 1972 | Bloomington |
| Bond County Senior Citizens Center, Inc | 1976 | Greenville |
| Boone County Council on Aging | 1973 | Belvidere |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Bosnian Herzegovinian American Community Center | 1994 | Chicago |
| Brown Bear Daycare and Learning Center | 1999 | Harvard |
| Care Net Pregnancy Services of Quincy | 1993 | Quincy |
| CareLink Foundation | 2000 | Bolingbrook |
| Caring and Sharing Thrift Shop | | Pinckneyville |
| Caring Connections for Seniors | 2009 | Chicago |
| Carroll County Senior Services Org., Inc. | | MT Carroll |
| Casa de los Angeles | 2000 | Homer Glen |
| CASA of Saline County | 2000 | Harrisburg |
| Cass County Council On Aging | 1974 | Beardstown |
| Centro de Informacion | 1972 | Elgin |
| Champaign Community Advocacy and Mentoring Resources (CCAMR) | 2011 | Urbana |
| Charleston Transitional Facility | 200 | Champaign |
| Chicago chesed fund | 1986 | Lincolnwood |
| Chicago Club of the Deaf | 1942 | Joliet |
| Chicago Persian School | 2007 | Lincolnwood |
| Chicago Wolves/Chicago Wolves Charities | 1994 | Glenview |
| Child Care Association of Illinois | 1964 | Chicago |
| Child Care Center of Evanston | 1944 | Evanston |
| Children's Home Society of America | 2013 | Chicago |
| Children's Learning Center | 1968 | DeKalb |
| ChildServ | 1894 | Chicago |

| Christian HomeCare Services Inc | 1996 | Lebanon |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Christopher House | 1906 | Chicago |
| Common Place | 1967 | Peoria |
| Community Family Center | 2001 | Highland Park |
| Community Service Center of Northern Champaign County | 1971 | Rantoul |
| Community Workshop & Training Center | 1960 | Peoria |
| Comprehensive Youth Services Network of Mercer & Rock Island Counties | 1979 | Rock Island |
| Countryside Association for People With Disabilities | 1953 | Palatine |
| Crisis Food Center, Inc. | 1977 | Alton |
| Crittenton Centers | 1892 | Peoria |
| CrossWord Cafe Chillicothe Youth Center | 2001 | Chillicothe |
| Dixon Family YMCA | 1872 | Dixon |
| DuPage Federation on Human Services Reform | 1995 | Villa Park |
| Ecumenical Adult Care of Naperville | 1983 | Naperville |
| Edwards County Council on Aging | 1973 | Albion |
| Effingham County FISH Human Services | 1970 | Effingham |
| ETS/NW | 2006 | Arlington Heights |
| Evergreen Park Ministry, Inc. | 1988 | Palos Pqrk |
| Faith in Action | 2005 | Normal |
| Family Choices,NFPC | 2003 | Charleston |
| Family Counseling Service of Aurora | 1925 | Aurora |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Family Focus | 1976 | Chicago |
| Family Service Agency of DeKlab County | 1956 | DeKalb |
| Family Service of Winnetka-Northfield | 1893 | Winnetka |
| Family Service Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) | 1972 | Champaign |
| Family YMCA of Fayette County | 1982 | Vandalia |
| Father Michael J. McGivney Center of Hope and Healing | 2009 | Bolingbrook |
| First Step Learning, Inc. | 2005 | Belvidere |
| Fox Valley Older Adult Services | | Sandwich |
| Franciscan Community Based Services | 1999 | Homewood |
| Freedom Ministries of the Quad Cities, INC | 1995 | Moline |
| Friends of Uncle Mike Inc. | | Hazel Crest |
| Friendship House | 1965 | Crystal Lake |
| Fulton-Mason Crisis Service | 1980 | Canton |
| Geneseo Senior Citizens INC | 1983 | Geneseo |
| Geneva Lions Club | 1937 | Geneva |
| GOLDEN CIRCLE SENIOR CITIZENS COUNCIL, INC. | 1974 | ELIZABETHTOWN |
| Greater Joliet Area YMCA | 1928 | joliet |
| Grundy community Volunteer Hospice | 1985 | Morris |
| Halfway House Committee | 1947 | Harvey |
| Hearthstone Communities | 1886 | Woodstock |
| HELP | 1975 | Rushville |
| Help Ministries | 1992 | Danville |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Hephzibah Children's Association | 1897 | Oak Park |
| HIAS Chicago | 1911 | Chicago |
| HIS Service Station | 1988 | Staunton |
| HOPE of East Central Illinois | 1979 | Charleston |
| Hospice of the Rock River Valley | 1982 | Dixon |
| House of the Good Shepherd | 1859 | Chicago |
| Howard Area Community Center | 1968 | Chicago |
| Human Service Center | 1976 | Peoria |
| Human Service Center of Southern Metro-East | 1975 | Red Bud |
| Humanitarian Service Project | 1979 | Carol Stream |
| Hyde Park Neighborhood Club | 1909 | Chicago |
| Ibukun Comprehensive Community Services | 2007 | Chicago |
| Illinois Masonic Charities | | Springfield |
| Illinois Valley Center for Independent Living | 1999 | LaSalle |
| Immigration Project | 1995 | Bloomington |
| IMPACT CIL | 1985 | Alton |
| Indian Muslim Education Foundation of North America (IMEFNA) | 1999 | Downers Grove |
| Institute For Community | 1996 | Homer Glen |
| Instituto del Progreso Latino | 1977 | Chicago |
| IPH | 1954 | Chicago |
| Japanese American Service Committee Housing Corporation dba Heiwa Terrace | | Aurora |

| Kankakee County Training Center for the Disabled | 1966 | Bradley |
|---|---|---|
| KCCDD, Inc. | 1953 | Galesburg |
| Kendall County Community Benefits | ? | Oswego |
| Kuza Project | 2008 | Naperville |
| Lazarus House | 1997 | St Charles |
| LCCIL | 1990 | Mundelein |
| Lee County Council on Aging | 1974 | Dixon |
| Livingston County Commission on Children and Youth | 1985 | Pontiac |
| Livingston Family Care Center | 1993 | Pontiac |
| Loaves & Fishes Community Pantry | 1984 | Naperville |
| Lost Boys Rebuilding Southern Sudan | 2008 | St. Charles |
| LOVE Christian Clearinghouse | 1985 | Clarendon Hills |
| Loving Arms Crisis Pregnancy Center | 1999 | Taylorville |
| Lydia Home Association | 1916 | Chicago |
| Malcolm Eaton Enterprises | 1967 | Freeport |
| Mano a Mano Family Resource Center | 2000 | Round Lake Park |
| Marklund | 1954 | Geneva |
| Mendota Child Development Center | 1992 | Mendota |
| Mercer County Famiy Crisis Center | 1984 | Aledo |
| Mercer County Senior Center | 1973 | Aledo |
| Midwest Youth Services | 1978 | Jacksonville |
| MorningStar Mission | 1909 | Joliet |
| Mothers Trust Foundation | 1998 | Lake Forest, |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Mt. Sterling Community Center YMCA | 2004 | Mt. Sterling |
| New Beginnings Daycare | 1998 | New Athens |
| New Moms Inc. | 1983 | Chicago |
| Nightengales Thrift Shop    supports    Trinity Health Care- which is inside the thrift shop | 2008 | Mendota |
| North Suburban YMCA | 1967 | Northbrook |
| Northeast DuPage Family and Youth Services | 1976 | Addison |
| Northeastern IL Agency on Aging | 1973 | Kankakee |
| Old King's Orchard Community Center | 2001 | Decatur |
| Older Americans of Knox, Inc.  (OAKS) | 1981 | Galesburg |
| ONE HOPE UNITED | 1895 | Lake Villa |
| Options Center for Independent Living | 1989 | Bourbonnais |
| Our Redeemer Day Care | 1987 | Jacksonville |
| PACE, Inc | | Urbana |
| PACT, Inc. | 1981 | Lisle |
| Palatine Opportunity Center | | Palatine |
| Parkview | 1914 | Freeport |
| Pioneer Center for Human Services | 1959 | McHenry |
| Plymouth Place | 1939 | La Grange Park |
| Project Oz | 1973 | Bloomington |
| Project Patient Care | 2009 | Chicago |
| Project VIDA | 1992 | Chicago |
| Rainbow Hospice and Palliative Care | 1981 | MT Prospect |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Reclaim A Youth of Illinois | 1981 | Glenwood |
| Renaissance Social Services | 1993 | Chicago |
| Respond Now | 1969 | Chicago Heights |
| RMH Foundation | 1993 | Olney |
| Rocford Day Nursery | | Rockford |
| Rock Island County Children's Advocacy Center | 1989 | Rock Island |
| Rock River Center | 1975 | Oregon |
| Rockford Area Pregnancy Care Centers | 1983 | Rockford |
| Rockland Family Association | | Libertyville |
| RRAF | 1981 | Lombard |
| Safe Passage, Inc. | 1981 | DeKalb |
| Sankofa cultural arts | 2007 | Chicago |
| Senior Citizens of Christian County | 1978 | Taylorville |
| Senior Services Center of Will County | 1967 | Joliet |
| Senior Services of Southern St. Clair County | 1973 | Marissa |
| Senior Services Plus | 1974 | Alton |
| Serve India Ministries | 2006 | Charleston |
| Shore Community Services, Inc. | 1951 | Skokie |
| Sign Of The Kingdom East | | Lawrenceville |
| Solutions for Care | 1972 | N. Riverside |
| South Suburban Family Shelter | 1980 | Homewood |
| Southern Illinois Coalition for the Homeless | 1989 | Raleigh |
| Southwest Community Services | 1971 | Tinley Park |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| St. Mary's Services | 1886 | Arlington Heights |
| Starfish Learning Center | 1997 | Chicago |
| Sterling-Rock Falls Family YMCA | 1888 | Sterling |
| The Arc of  Winnebago, Boone and Ogle Counties | 1966 | Rockford |
| The ARK | 1971 | Skokie |
| The Avery Coonley School | 1906 | Downers Grove |
| The Center for Prevention of Abuse | 1976 | Peoria |
| THE FIRST STEP DAY CARE / FIRST STEP LEARNING, INC | 1972 | BELVIDERE |
| The Imagine Foundation | 2005 | Jacksonville |
| The Lighthouse Shelter | 2007 | Marion |
| The Thrift Shop, Church Women United of Carbondale, IL | 1967 | Carbondale |
| Tibetan alliance of Chicago | 1993 | Evanston |
| Together We Cope | 1982 | Tinley Park |
| Trans | 1955 | Quincy |
| Tri-State Family Services | 1991 | Carthage |
| Tuesday's Child | 1981 | Chicago |
| Uni-Pres Kindercottage | 1965 | EAST ST LOUIS |
| Vilaseca Josephine Center | 1974 | Joliet |
| Village Treasure House | 1997 | Northbrook |
| Volunteer Hospice of Northwest Illinois | 1983 | Stockton |
| Volunteer Services of Iroquois  County | 1973 | Watseka |
| Wabash Valley Youth in Action, Inc. (formerly Wabash | 1982 | Mt. Carmel |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Valley YMCA, Inc.) | | |
| We Care Pregnancy Clinic | 1992 | DeKalb |
| Webster-Cantrell Hall | 1916 | Decatur |
| West Suburban Special Recreation Association | 1976 | Franklin Park |
| Western Clinton County Senior Services | 2009 | Trenton |
| Western IL Area Agency on Aging | 1972 | Rock Island |
| White Oaks Therapeutic Equestrian Center (WHOA) | 1995 | Morrison |
| Winnebago County CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) | 1987 | Rockford |
| Woodford County Heartline and Heart House | 1982 | EUREKA |
| YMCA of Kewanee | 1888 | Kewanee |
| Young Women's Christian Assocation, Elgin IL | 1902 | Elgin |
| Youth & Family Counseling | 1961 | Libertyville |
| Youth Outreach Services | 1959 | Chicago |
| YWCA Kankakee | 1907 | Kankakee |