

# Alpha Nu Sigma 2019 Honors in Action Project

**1. Provide a brief abstract or summary of your Honors in Action project including the following components: academic research into and analysis of sources related to the Honors Study Topic, action that addresses a need in your community that was discovered through your research and analysis into the Society's current Honors Study Topic, and the impact of your project.**

Alpha Nu Sigma's Honors in Action (HiA) project focused on human trafficking. Academic research revealed 40.3 million people are trafficked globally, generating \$150 billion in illegal profits annually. We discovered human trafficking occurs frequently where we live. Headlines such as "Local Human Trafficking Victim Speaks Out" are commonplace. We found our county ranked third in South Carolina with nine cases last year. Our state ranked 16<sup>th</sup> in the number of hotline calls, with 81 reported in 2018. Our community responded by enacting new legislation and relaunching its human trafficking task force. Because children and teens are the most frequent victims, we initiated an awareness campaign tailored to young adults. We conducted surveys to establish a need, created an informative PowerPoint, and visited several youth groups to share our research findings. We assessed human trafficking, acknowledged the enormity of the problem, and achieved change by conducting five human trafficking awareness presentations to nearly 250 young adults. Local media coverage of our presentations generated requests for us to speak to six additional groups across four counties in 2019.

**2. What theme in the current Honors Program Guide did your chapter focus on?**

Theme 6: Visions of Justice

**3. Summarize your project objectives. In other words, what did your chapter set out to accomplish in terms of its research, collaboration, and action?**

## *Research*

- Learn how to conduct academic research and cite using APA style
- Organize a research team
- Develop a research question
- Identify the eight most relevant sources and construct an annotated bibliography

## *Collaboration*

- Consult a sociology professor for assistance establishing objective survey questions
- Collaborate with the Coastal Region Human Trafficking Task Force

## *Action*

- Create a PowerPoint summarizing research findings and identify groups with whom to share it

**4. Describe your academic research into the Honors Study Topic, your research question(s), your analysis of your research findings, and your research conclusions.**

We were alarmed to read stories about human trafficking locally. Recent headlines included, “Man Arrested on Sex Trafficking Charges in Myrtle Beach” and “FBI: Child Sex Trafficking Operations Conducted in Myrtle Beach.” These led us to develop our research question, “What is the extent of human trafficking globally and locally, and what actions are being taken to combat it domestically and abroad?” We created a six-person research team and met with our research librarian, who conducted an academic research workshop. Utilizing our new research skills, we learned human trafficking falls under the category of “modern slavery.” An estimated 40.3 million people are affected globally. According to the Department of Homeland Security, human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act. Our research team discovered the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has a zero-tolerance policy for human trafficking because it fuels corruption and organized crime. We discovered Horry County ranks third in South Carolina for reported human trafficking cases primarily because it is a coastal tourist destination, attracting more than a million visitors each year. Last year, 81 human trafficking cases were reported in South Carolina, ranking us 16<sup>th</sup> in the number of hotline calls. Locally, House Representative Russell Fry recently introduced a bill enforcing consecutive sentencing for individuals convicted of trafficking minors, which became law. In response to our county’s human trafficking ranking, the Coastal Region Human Trafficking Task Force relaunched in July 2018.

Although none of our research supported human trafficking, such operations financially benefit traffickers and positively impact economies. A paper from the Institute for Women’s Policy Research revealed, “Human trafficking generates large illegal profits which, combined with the perceived low risk of arrest and prosecution for traffickers, help to fuel trafficking. The International Labor Organization estimated sex and labor trafficking globally generates \$150 billion in illegal profits a year. The report also estimated annual profits generated per victim were \$21,800 for sex trafficking and \$4,800 for victims trafficked for construction, manufacturing, mining, and utilities globally.” Undeniably, human trafficking is a highly profitable industry.

**5. List the 8 academic/expert sources that were most enlightening regarding multiple perspectives of the Honors Study Topic you selected. Briefly explain why these were the most important sources and what you learned from each of them as you researched your theme.**

***Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative (CTDC). (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.ctdatacollaborative.org/story/human-trafficking-and-gender-differences-similarities-and-trends>.***

Launched in November 2017, the Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative is the first worldwide data center focused on human trafficking. It publishes compiled information from numerous counter-trafficking organizations. Through this site, we learned 71% of victims are women, 28% are men, and approximately 1% are transgender or nonconforming. We also found a higher proportion of female victims have minimal education compared to males. We included this data in our presentations.

***Hotline Statistics. (2018). Retrieved from <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/states>.***

We learned striking facts about human trafficking in our state. There were 81 human trafficking cases in South Carolina in 2018, giving us the 16<sup>th</sup> highest number of hotline calls in the United States.

***NATO. (2018). NATO Policy on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. Retrieved from [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_50315.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50315.htm).***

This article explained the role of NATO in the fight against global human trafficking. All NATO countries agreed to the United Nations Protocol on Trafficking in Persons and work alongside NATO to tackle trafficking issues. NATO's zero tolerance policy states, "Contributing troops to NATO-led operations are required to ensure that members of their forces—as well as civilian elements—who engage in human trafficking or facilitate it, are liable to appropriate persecution and punishment under their national legislation." This led us to investigate South Carolina human trafficking legislation.

***South Carolina Human Trafficking Task Force 2017 Annual Report (pp. 2-53, Rep.). (2017). Columbia, SC: Office of the Attorney General.***

We learned which South Carolina counties had the most human trafficking cases in 2017, where sex and labor trafficking occurred, and the means of control traffickers used to manipulate victims. We discovered statistics about ages and genders of victims, the relationships victims shared with traffickers, and recruitment methods. This report played a vital role as a source in our PowerPoint presentation.

***The Economic Impacts and Consequences of Sex Trafficking in the United States (pp. 1-9, Rep. No. B369). (2017). Washington DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research.***

This paper revealed sex and labor trafficking generate large illegal profits and highlighted the impact on global economies. This provided a different perspective on human trafficking because it framed the industry as a business instead of focusing on the physical and emotional toll on victims. It also gave us insight into what motivates traffickers to engage in illegal activity. For traffickers, people become commodities which are bought and sold for profit.

***What Is Human Trafficking? (2018, October 17). Retrieved from <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/what-human-trafficking>.***

According to the Department of Homeland Security, human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act. This site explained how traffickers manipulate individuals and turn them into victims. Human trafficking is commonly referred to as a "victimless" or "hidden crime" because victims rarely seek help or file police reports. We shared this information at presentations.

*Williams, B. A. (2018). Efforts to Stop Human Trafficking. Harvard Journal of Law & Public Policy, 41(2), 623-629. doi:10.18411/d-2016-154.*

This article indicated statistically most traffickers are men. However, women have been prosecuted for acting as traffickers and accessories to trafficking. Many traffickers target female drug users because they are typically more submissive and easily controlled. We used this information in our presentations.

*Zimmerman, C., & Kiss, L. (2017). Human Trafficking and Exploitation: A Global Health Concern. PLOS Medicine, 14(11), 1-11. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1002437.*

This scholarly essay provided a global perspective of human trafficking. We learned various forms of abuse, such as lengthy hours, insufficient compensation, confinement, and violence, fuel human trafficking. Sadly, few victims emerge from the industry without crippling physical and mental health problems. Contrary to the focus of the report published by the Institute of Women's Policy Research, this journal article featured a humanized perspective of victims.

**6. Describe the service or “action” components of this Honors is Action project that were inspired by and directly connected to your Honors Study Topic research. (Action can also include promoting awareness and advocacy.) Be sure to include information about the people and/or groups with whom you collaborated, why you chose these collaborators, and the impact they had on the outcomes of the project.**

To determine a need, we created a survey team and consulted a sociology professor to construct objective questions. We surveyed students on all three HGTC campuses when classes began in late August. Initial results indicated students were well informed about human trafficking. From our research, we learned young people aged 13-24 were most commonly targeted as human trafficking victims. The survey team revised our questions to assess how aware Early College High School (ECHS) students were of human trafficking.

Just as our research was leading us to an action component, Hurricane Florence struck in mid-September, and our college was closed for three weeks due to flooding and road closures. When classes resumed on October 1<sup>st</sup>, we contacted the ECHS principal to propose surveying her students. A chapter officer worked with the school's media coordinator to distribute our survey electronically. The survey was finally approved and released to ECHS students in mid-November. Results indicated high school students were uninformed about human trafficking, so we decided our action component would be to offer presentations at ECHS. We created a presentation team and developed a PowerPoint highlighting our research findings. We sent our PowerPoint to the principal for approval and expected her to schedule dates for our presentations.

Several weeks later she sent the following email response:

*“I am just not comfortable with the slides/conversation about the Human trafficking to the underclassman students without having the support of parents. There were several things in the slides that while I feel them to be beneficial, doesn't work with the relationships my staff and I try to establish with our students. We try to protect them and get to know them, and I feel that thrusting this on them would not fall in line with the way we try to approach areas of concern. We do not dig our heads in the sand and ignore controversial areas, but if there is not*

*a known problem, I do not want to open the area up for exploration. I also have been told that I have several students who are here illegally and gained entry because they were in human trafficking. This seems really deep for our high school students.”*

Her response was confusing and frustrating, given that students attending her school were victims. Research showed us children and teens are the most frequent victims. We felt not sharing our research findings would be doing a disservice to this targeted demographic in our community. Additionally, we understood without an action component, our HiA project would be incomplete. Thus, we created a contact team who reached out to over 30 local youth groups via email, phone, and social media to request permission to give our presentation. We also wrote a press release explaining the purpose of our project and sent it to several local media outlets. We were excited when a librarian invited us to give our presentation to her middle school group, which a local news station filmed for their evening broadcast. Overall, the contact team received ten invitations to give presentations.

We collaborated with an HGTC sociology professor and presented to three of her classes of dually-enrolled high school students. A student in one of these classes asked us to speak to his church youth group. The presentation team sent our PowerPoint to the youth minister, who enthusiastically invited us to share our findings. We gave our presentation to 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders at his church.

We visited the Director of Lowcountry Preparatory School, and we will present to all 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders in February. We met with the Deputy Superintendent of Georgetown County School District to show her our presentation and seek approval to share it with their middle and high school students. We are still awaiting approval. In addition, we have upcoming events scheduled with four youth groups, two libraries, and another school across four counties. We contacted the Coastal Region Human Trafficking Task Force, and we will collaborate with them in 2019.

## **7. What are the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of your project? What impact did your project have on the problem addressed and on opportunities for chapter members and others to grow as scholars and leaders?**

We initially surveyed 274 HGTC students on three campuses, asking questions such as, “Have you ever heard of human trafficking?” and “Do you believe human trafficking exists in the Grand Strand area?” Survey respondents overwhelmingly answered yes. Since these results did not indicate a need for advocacy at our college, we changed the focus of our survey. Our research indicated most victims range in age from 13 to 24, so we surveyed ECHS students and 46 responded. Results showed 17.4% of students thought human trafficking was solely sex slavery and 21.7% believed human trafficking victims are younger than twelve.

Our PowerPoint consisted of 26 slides, and presentations were typically 30 to 45 minutes. We defined human trafficking, why it happens, and how people become victims. We shared global statistics and featured a quiz entitled Fact or Fiction: Human Trafficking Debunked. Other topics included where it happens, recruitment methods, South Carolina statistics, and information about how human trafficking is being combatted locally. Afterward, we asked audiences to write down something they learned. Their responses included “most victims know their traffickers prior to being trafficked,” “text messages are commonly used as methods of recruitment,” and “victims vary in age, race, and gender.” Students were shocked to learn how traffickers lure victims through sketchy hiring ads and social networking sites. Another tool to recruit victims is fake

text messages stating someone gave the recipient a compliment. Nearly half of our audiences stated they received similar text messages and were surprised to learn opening them installs a GPS tracker on their phones. Our team shared precautionary measures to avoid becoming victims, such as traveling in a group and telling loved ones where you are going. Additionally, audience members shared their local encounters with human trafficking. One young man described being approached by strangers in Myrtle Beach and invited to a party. They attempted to lure him by claiming a famous rapper would be at the party and encouraged him to bring his friends. We conducted five presentations to almost 250 audience members, the majority of whom were minors. Two local television stations filmed our presentations and broadcast them on the evening news, and we were featured on the front page of a local newspaper.

All chapter members involved in this project improved their research methods, interpersonal communication skills, writing abilities, and public speaking expertise. We learned how to present a serious topic with sensitivity. We exercised professional communication skills when contacting community youth group leaders. Additionally, components of the HiA award writing process, such as creating annotated bibliographies and composing APA citations, enhanced our writing skills.

Ultimately, we realized our inability to share our findings with ECHS was a blessing in disguise. Had presentations at ECHS served as our action component, we would have missed the opportunity to reach larger audiences in our community. We would not have heard from one young lady who shared she was a victim of human trafficking and knew another individual who was still trapped in the industry. Her emotional reaction validated our commitment to educate and create awareness in our communities into 2019. We grew as scholar-servant-leaders when we realized sharing our research could potentially save someone's life. This became our vision of justice.