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**THE NATURE OF NONPROFIT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
AND TRAINING IN MONTANA**

By

Jenni Johanna Pohjoispuro

B. Sc, University of Joensuu, Finland, 2004

M. Sc, University of Joensuu, Finland, 2005

Thesis

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Approved by:

Dr. David A. Strobel, Dean
Graduate School

Ph.D. Kathy Kuipers, Chairperson
Sociology

Ph.D. Lyn McGregor
Sociology

Ed.D. Andrea Vernon
Office for Civic Engagement

The Nature of Nonprofit Professional Development and Training in Montana

Chairperson: Ph.D. Kathy Kuipers

Since sociology of nonprofit professionals and organizations is new and sociologists have not yet been able to theorize or adequately address the strategies and behavior of nonprofit organizations, this study is to give an in-depth view on the nature of nonprofit professional development and training in Montana. The research examines the similarities and differences between rural and urban nonprofit organizations and professionals in the United States depending upon the degree of rural setting, values, attitudes, culture, and challenges.

To address the research topic, institutional theories on organizational behavior are applied to this study. The social capital theory is used to help in understanding the nature of nonprofit organizations, particularly, how shared networks of trust and reciprocity among rural nonprofits provide access to needed information, resources, and support. The literature also describes and explains the characteristics of rural–urban nonprofit organizations and professional work. Lastly, since little empirical research has addressed the specifics of IT adoption, implementation, and use in small (nonprofit) organizations, this study will address these issues by focusing on current IT training offerings and barriers for nonprofits.

Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, based on personal contact with informants and descriptions of their perceptions, are implemented in this study to form a case study of nonprofit professionals in nonprofit organizations.

The results explain barriers Montana nonprofits face in receiving adequate training and professional development, since professionals (especially in small rural communities) are sometimes left without proper training and often feel isolated from resource opportunities they could receive if located in a larger urban area. Attention is also given to the in-person networks and information technology as they can be seen as an alternative for the efficient provision of information and training at low cost in rural areas.

The results conclude with suggestions for the nonprofit professional development and training in regards to coordination and collaboration between the state, the nonprofit sector, and the universities in providing better training opportunities and future development for nonprofit professionals in Montana statewide.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on describing and identifying the existing professional development resources and training needs of nonprofit professionals in Montana. The aim is to explore the links between physical, economic, and socio-cultural resources such as geography, demographics, education, work experience, values, norms, peer networks, collaboration, funding and time constraints that explain the training needs of directors, staff, consultants, funders, and board members of nonprofit organizations¹ and government agency staff (who work closely with nonprofit organizations) statewide in Montana. This study examines the resources, experience, and meanings behind training and career development needs at individual levels. The viewpoints are guided by the research question of this study that is: What is the nature of nonprofit professional development and training in Montana? The following sub-questions help to answer the research question:

- 1) What skills and responsibilities Montana nonprofits professionals have?
- 2) What training opportunities currently exist for nonprofit professionals in Montana?
- 3) What features are unique and common to nonprofit professionals in Montana in comparison to other nonprofits in the United States?
- 4) How do Montana nonprofit professionals utilize information technology?

¹ DiMaggio and Anheir (1990:138) define nonprofit organizations:

For the United States, nonprofit organizations are those falling under section 501 (c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code, which is a category including most nonprofit hospitals, cultural organizations, traditional charities, foundations, schools, daycare centers, and foundations among others.

- 5) How is social capital theory related to collaboration and networking of nonprofit professional development and training in Montana?
- 6) How can institutional theory be applied to the improvement of nonprofit professional development and training?

A study called “*The Training and Professional Development: Needs of Non-Profit Professionals in the State of Montana*” was completed in spring 2004. A group of students² from the Department of Political Science at The University of Montana conducted a quantitative online survey assessing the training needs of nonprofit professionals statewide. The survey research was designed to determine the training and professional development needs of directors and staff at nonprofit agencies in Montana. The aim was to understand what barriers Montana nonprofits face in receiving adequate training and professional development. Also, the survey research was designed to assess what type of training topics and methods nonprofit professionals preferred.

The data was collected through the Flashlight On-line Survey Program. The on-line survey contained 26 questions, which were sent to approximately 350 Montana nonprofit agencies via the Montana Nonprofit Association. The response rate was approximately 36 percent. The results of the survey show that Montana nonprofits thought they needed more nonprofit professional development and training opportunities in various areas such as marketing, public relations, fundraising, strategic planning, board development, and grant-writing. The reasons why nonprofits had difficulties in accessing

² Bennion, Jessi, Almanz Diushembiev, Sharjan Tashtanbekova, and Averiel Wolf (eds). 2005. *The Training and Professional Development: Needs of Non-Profit Professionals in the State of Montana*. Missoula: The University of Montana.

current training was due to geographical travel distances, and lack of time and financing (Bennion, et al. 2005).

However, the survey research only scratched the surface in explaining the training and professional development needs of nonprofit professionals in Montana. The purpose of this study is to give a more in-depth view on the nature of nonprofit professional development and training in Montana by examining the similarities and differences between the rural-urban nonprofit organizations and professionals in the United States. The organization for the thesis will be the following. The literature, Chapter 2, starts by looking at what current sociological research has examined and emphasized about nonprofit organizations and what the research is lacking. Descriptive literatures on rural-urban professionals, nonprofit organizations, and organizations' adaptation to information technology (IT) are presented because they are relevant to the research context. I also discuss three theoretical frameworks, institutional, social capital, and open systems theories, which will guide the analysis. Chapter 3 focuses on Montana nonprofits, their known features, and identifies the research suppositions. In Chapter 4, I present the methods used in the field work and discuss the analysis. Chapter 5 will focus on the interpretation and results of the empirical data. Lastly, in Chapter 6, I will conclude the findings and discuss the results.

In the context of the study, training needs are conceptualized at the individual level. On the one hand, nonprofit professionals and their training needs are embedded in independent organizations and their resources and providers, but on the other hand, training needs are taken as a complex and multidimensional social phenomenon that is connected to history and changes in time and space. If we want to assess and continue

future research and development of the nonprofit sector in the United States, and understand and improve Montana's nonprofit professional development and training, every source of information about the issue is valuable, including this study.

2 LITERATURE

2.1 Problem Setting

Sociological literature on research and theories of nonprofit organizations is only recently developing and expanding. Researchers have been careful about making general theories of nonprofit organizations, because nonprofit organizations tend to have complex and heterogeneous organizational structures (Andrews and Edwards 2004; DiMaggio and Anheier 1990; Rose-Ackerman 1996). Theories that characterize organizations in general, such as institutional and organizational theories indicate that many propositions in organizational theory do not apply equally to profit and nonprofit organizations, and thus, need to be specified with respect to this sector. The traditional model of rational organizational theory is viewed as inadequate in explaining nonprofit organizations, especially because there are significant differences in organizational structure and behavior between government, business, and rural-urban nonprofit organizations (Mirabella and Wish 2000; Preston 1989; Rushing 1974). Thus, sociologists have given attention to nonprofit organizations; not the sector as a whole, but rather to particular components of it such as trust, values, collaboration, economy, and electronic advocacy in nonprofit organizations (Blau and Rabrenovic 1991).

Sociological research on nonprofits has emphasized the institutional pressures that often lead nonprofits to adjust to external rationalities, but more recent empirical research stresses the self-interest and agency of nonprofit organizations claiming that nonprofit organizations not only conform to external rules and regulations, but also are able to manage institutional pressures creating new structural diversity across the field (Barman 2002). In this way, nonprofit organizations become accustomed to their institutional

contexts and actively reshape those contexts (Meyer and Rowan 1977). For instance, studies have recognized proactive abilities of nonprofits to influence their institutional environments and funding by establishing new relationships with other actors, and by shaping formal structures and rationales to their own benefit (Barman 2002).

As mentioned before, sociology of nonprofit organizations is new and sociologists have not yet been able to theorize or adequately address the strategies, behavior, or the very nature of nonprofit organizations (Barman 2002; Easley and O'Hara 1983).

Developing a sociological theory of nonprofits is problematic because of the great diversity within the sector (DiMaggio and Anheier 1990). Problems arise also because sociological research on nonprofits is heavily based on urban nonprofits, even though rural nonprofits significantly differ from their urban counterparts (Mellow 2005). Thus, the sociology of nonprofits needs further research on how nonprofit organizations seek out others for similarity, but also assert their uniqueness and difference in regards to their environment to survive, compete, and obtain resources (Barman 2002).

Taking into consideration what recent sociological research and theories on nonprofit professionals and organizations are lacking, this research will address the nature of nonprofit organizations in regards to rural settings, values, attitudes, problems, culture, and challenges. This study will focus on the uniqueness and commonality of Montana nonprofit organizations by looking at the needs of nonprofit professional development and training, since questions about nonprofit professionalization and continuous learning, which are central to organizational success, have been left out of theories and research.

To address the research topic, institutional theory on organizational behavior is applied to this study. Theories on institutional environments explain where organizational structures come from, how organizations structurally reflect a socially constructed reality, and how organizations adapt to institutional contexts establishing legitimacy, but, at the same time, play active roles in shaping the contexts, organizational language, shared values, attitudes, and organizational culture. Additionally, the literature on social capital is used in this study to help in understanding the nature of nonprofit organizations, particularly, how shared networks of trust and reciprocity among rural nonprofits provide access to needed information, resources, and support. The literature also describes and explains the characteristics of rural and urban nonprofit organizations and professional work. Lastly, since little empirical research has addressed the specifics of IT adoption, implementation and use in small (nonprofit) organizations, it is difficult to know how (nonprofit) professionals perceive available technologies, and what influences their choices about the use of technology (Sambrook 2003; Rousseau 1979). Thus, more research is needed on the factors affecting technological change, such as the organizational environment, and values and beliefs of managers about the availability and suitability of different technologies (Rousseau 1979). This study will address these issues and focus on current IT training offerings and barriers for nonprofits.

2.2 Literature on Nonprofits, Rural Organizations, and Technological Needs

2.2.1 Organizational and Professional Characteristics for Nonprofits

Nonprofit organizations tend to have different features in comparison to business and public organizations. Many nonprofits work in a small organizational environment with a small staff and budget, not the large bureaucratic setting of many public and private organizations. Nonprofits depend upon external funding and have problems with the coordination for services and dealing with complex governmental regulations (Blau and Rabrenovic 1991; Easley and O'Hara 1983). Nonprofits are often based on strong ideological values, because they are responsible for meeting the needs of the community and serving the society at large, and they make decisions using a collaborative rather than a competitive approach (Andrews and Edwards 2004; Mirabella and Wish 2000; Rose-Ackerman 1996).

Although training and development are seen as very important for nonprofit organizations, nonprofit employees perceive that they do not receive enough of it due to the high cost (Saidel and Cour 2003). Small nonprofit organizations rarely have adequate formal learning infrastructure and they rely on multiple means of gaining access to needed information, advice and training (Andrews and Edwards 2004). Thus, small nonprofit organizations prefer more informal forms of learning or learning through work in comparison to large organizations, which have more formal form of learning and off the job financing (Sambrook, 2003). Their missions tend to be narrow as well as their geographical areas of operation, and markets are limited. Because of the tendency for nonprofit organizations to have small staff, nonprofit professionals often have multiple roles and tasks, which increases the need for specific training on various training topics.

Communication tends to be relaxed (which makes interaction easier) and rests on personal contacts both within and outside the organization. Status is less important than using individual skills to get the job done. Moreover, altruism is the core value in many nonprofits. Helping others is often seen as both a basic human motivation and the reason for the organizations' existence. Nonprofit boards and employees often have a strong belief in the inherent value of what their organization does. While this benefits the organization, it can cause nonprofits to ignore questions about efficiency and level of demand for other services, although competitive market exists even among altruistic nonprofits, which actually play an important economic role (Easley and O'Hara 1983; Rose-Ackerman 1996).

Committed to organizational mission involving public benefits, nonprofit employees tend to be highly professionalized with more education than, for instance, their for-profit counterparts. Nonprofit professionals seek more work related challenges, job and task variety, autonomy, and collegiality than for-profit professionals (Saidel and Cour 2003:6). According to Mirabella and Wish (2000:222), "Nonprofit managers must be trained to handle the full range of issues facing managers in other public and private settings, while also serving as dynamic leaders operating within a complex environment characterized by severe resource constraints". Also, Saidel and Cour (2003:6) explain that, "the high degree of professionalization suggests that the values of professionals, including the need for autonomy, participation in shared decision-making, and collegiality among all employees, can be adopted as values for the entire workforce".

2.2.2 Distinction between Rural and Urban Nonprofits

This chapter discusses rural and urban categories and explores rural-urban differences in the work of professionals. The literature argues that rural professionals distinguish themselves from their urban counterparts because of the rural experience in their work. However, rural-urban interaction is widely recognized, and stereotypical perceptions of rural communities as cohesive and self sufficient are criticized. There is no single definition of rural and it is problematic to categorize localities either rural³ or urban⁴, because of the increased access to and interchange with urban areas. The idea of a unique rural culture is problematic, for instance, because IT and mass media is ensuring that urban lifestyles and outlooks reach beyond urban boundaries. Thus, small rural communities and people are diverse and they are gaining characteristics that are suburban⁵ rather than simply rural, and the traditional distinction between rural and urban no longer exists (Castle 1995; Mellow 2005).

Despite the difficulties in defining what is rural, it is possible to compare how rural life and work differs from urban, for instance, by distinguishing demographic, economic and socio-cultural differences by communities and individuals and their social organization (Castle 1995; Mellow 2005). A study on the work of rural professionals shows that professionals in rural areas construct a different way of “doing

³ A rural area consists of territory, population and housing units not classified as urban. “Rural classification cuts across other hierarchies and can be metropolitan or non-metropolitan areas”, (U.S. Census Bureau 2006).

⁴ An urban area consists of a large central place and adjacent densely settled census blocks that together have a total population of at least 2,500 for urban clusters, or at least 50,000 for urbanized areas. “Urban classification cuts across other hierarchies and can be metropolitan or non-metropolitan areas”, (U.S. Census Bureau 2006).

⁵ Suburban areas are areas, where urban sprawl and development occurs, which provide much the same variety of employment and lifestyle opportunities within rural areas as is found in urban areas (Castle 2005:104; Salomon 2003:9).

professionalism” than was thought in their formal training. Professionals in rural areas perceive that they are subject to scrutiny by the community and they have to work hard on building trust. Rural workers are often characterized as caring and engaged citizens, and are more likely than urban ones to emphasize face to face communication. The importance of being trusted, available, committed and sensitive to local norms and social status characterizes rural work as well (Mellow 2005; Salomon 2003). Similarly, in rural areas, professionals tend to pay attention to personal contacts rather than using written communications such as mail or computer technology. Thus, social dynamics of small communities require different work procedures and strategies from rural professionals in comparison to urban professionals. In addition, rural professionals are often challenged to do the same work as their urban peers, but on a smaller scale with fewer resources (Mellow 2005).

When resources are limited, organizations often collaborate, because they cannot provide services or solve problems alone. In rural areas, the fact that there are few organizations, and communities are small in size, makes collaboration and trust building easier to accomplish than in urban areas (Blau and Rarenovic 1991; Snavely and Tracy 2002). Rural communities share a type of solidarity that eases problem solving and conflicting interests (Snavely and Tracy 2002). Thus, rural areas are largely considered as places which are ideal for workers and leaders to get to know each other on a highly personal, but also professional level. Due to the small community size, rural nonprofit professionals run into each other often at meetings, and learn quickly whom to contact in other organizations for information and assistance. Small community size also helps in building trust relationships deemed significant for working cooperatively with other

nonprofit organizations and government service organizations (Snaveley and Tracy 2002; Salomon 2003).

In contrast to close, informal networks of trust, factors that create challenges and barriers to professionals and organizations in rural areas are several: spatially, the scattering of people over a large geographic area; inadequate public transportation; low incomes and lack of financing, certain norms of behavior and values arising from traditions of self reliance and distrust of formal institutions (Snaveley and Tracy 2002; Salomon 2003).

2.2.3 Information Technology and Training in Nonprofit Organizations

Information technology (IT) has been rapid in transforming work of nonprofit organizations. As the pace of change accelerates, new learning is required of nonprofit professionals to keep up-to-date and competitive. IT has been found to enhance nonprofit professional development and training in terms of electronic communications and electronic learning. For instance, email, chat rooms, video-conferencing, and e-learning⁶ can offer accessible and flexible learning opportunities anytime, any place and any how. Since nonprofit professionals perceive that they face challenges providing adequate training and resources to their staff due to financial and staffing constraints, IT can be seen as an efficient provider of information, advice, and training with low costs (Saidel and Cour 2003; Sambrook 1999). However, some organizations are more adaptable to the effective use of technology than others. According to Couto, et al. (2001:3):

Adopting new IT depends upon familiarity with the resources and technology tools available, organizational stability, willingness to change, leadership responsibilities in respect to technological improvement, and understanding of possibilities.

Especially organizations, which excel in learning and adaptation, tend to become more effective users of IT. These organizations may use the IT to support advocacy and online organizing, community clearing houses, networking, and online communications (Osten and McCambridge 2003)

⁶ Sambrook (2003:507-8) defines e-learning:

E-learning (electronic learning), also online distance education or computer-based education refers to learning that is carried out by individuals or groups outside of a physical class room, over the internet or an internal network. E-learning can be defined as many learning activity supported by information and communication technologies such as computer-based learning, Internet-based training, CD-ROMs, World Wide Web services, help lines, chat rooms, e-mails, and video conferencing.

Studies have indicated that the nonprofit organizations have progressed in the use of IT. There are several reasons to this. First, nonprofit organizations are often described as sources of innovation and diversity and they adapt to change quickly. Second, nonprofit leaders are open and willing to train their staff, and thus nonprofit professionals are likely to be able to learn new technical skills that are now required of many executives and managers. Finally, recent advances in IT such as the reduction of the cost of using the internet and the growth of information available means it is more realistic than before for nonprofit organizations to use the internet as a way of ensuring that their staff and volunteers have access to adequate resources and training (DiMaggio and Anheier 1990; Saidel and Cour 2003; Sambrook 1999).

There are growing numbers of nonprofit organizations that are adapting to web-based resources such as email discussion lists, electronic newsletters, event calendars, online training and web-based forums. IT has increased workers interest in work because of quick access to information and cost effectiveness, but also because of the user convenience, up-skilling, and control over work (Saidel and Cour 2003; Sambrook 1999). According to Saidel and Cour (2003:13):

Given the nonprofit workforce's willingness to move laterally into more challenging jobs and the difficulty in hiring technologically skilled employees, nonprofit organizations may be in a better position to use the implementation of new technologies to reward and motivate workers.

IT has made small nonprofit organizations more effective. For instance, the internet gives small groups the ability to have the same presence as much wealthier groups by displaying a more impressive face to the public. Other advantages of IT include spanning in time and distance and cost savings in communications (McNutt and Boland 1999).

Through the use of IT, communication reaches across geographical, communal and organizational boundaries (that limit nonprofit service delivery and advocacy) breaking down the feeling of isolation or autonomy. IT also enhances the ability to quickly connect and share with staff, board members and volunteers, and creates newly strengthened collaborations (Osten and McCambridge 2003).

Furthermore, due to increased technology-based communication, human face to face contact can be seen as less important than it once was, and replacing some level of face-to-face interaction with online chatting or emailing has become more acceptable and useful. However, because the use of communication technology can damage the depth of relationships built in person, and because the technology cannot always work effectively without well-functioning human interaction, it is beneficial to supplement online interactions with face to face. For instance, technology can be humanized by face to face communications through video conferencing and display of images (Osten and McCambridge 2003).

The research on the use of IT among nonprofit organizations emphasizes that IT can be an important tool to gain greater publicity, better communications, and training for nonprofits, as long as they know how to use the computer and recent technology, but also reminds that there are still nonprofit professionals who do not have easy access to the internet and computers. Although the explosion of data on the internet is making it easier and cheaper than before for small organizations to access information, due to budget constraints, only few nonprofit organizations have the resources or capacity to maintain computer systems, offer training, employ computer support personnel, or create new community-based applications, which explains why nonprofit organizations have not

fully adapted to the IT (McNutt and Boland 1999; Saidel and Cour 2003). Additionally, according to Couto, et al. (2001:3):

Nonprofit organizations' lack of knowledge of the possibilities IT can offer also inhibits adoption. Many nonprofits have outdated information systems because they feel it is not worth the time, effort or money to step into unknown technologies without the support of a technology committed, knowledgeable partner.

Furthermore, in most small to medium sized organizations, there is not enough staff and time available to absorb the workload of others attending computer courses and still provide appropriate levels of service to their clients (Saidel and Cour 2003:17-19). Funding organizations have been neither understanding nor proactive in supporting nonprofits with technological needs (Couto, et al. 2000).

Another reason why the nonprofit sector has been relatively slow in adapting to technological innovations include user frustration, the fear of technology, lack of face to face interaction, learner isolation, and difficulties in judging and thus selecting appropriate computer based learning. For instance, the time and effort required for finding web sites and online training with useful, updated, accurate, and reliable information can become a source of considerable frustration (Mc Nutt and Boland 1999; Saidel and Cour 2003; Sambrook 2003).

2.3 Social Capital Theory on Rural Nonprofits

The concept of social capital⁷ explains the nature and interaction of nonprofits, especially those in rural areas. As Campbell (2000:641) quotes Putnam (1995), “social capital refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit”. Thus, social capital is the shared goals, knowledge, understandings, and patterns of interaction that a group of people brings to any productive activity that contributes to a stronger community and builds bonds of information, trust, and interpersonal solidarity. Social capital is a means for public good, relative to quality of life. It emphasizes community consciousness, individual creativity and feeling of collectively (Salomon 2003; Roseland 1999).

Social capital means the networks of mutual support, safety, and obligation available within social groups, such as families, community, organizations, churches, schools, bars and social clubs. Therefore, social capital is available to nonprofit organizations as well, and the social capital perspective provides a framework for interpreting how nonprofit organizations interact and function. Social capital theory is related to the discussion in the two previous chapters about how rural nonprofits have solidarity and they are sensitive to local norms of reciprocity and trust. Nonprofit work often contributes to the public good and social trust. Helping others is a core value in addition to collegiality and participation in shared decision-making (Wollebaek and Selle 2002). “Participation is easiest to manage when relationships are comfortable and

⁷ Social capital partly refers to relationships of trust embedded in social networks, (Silverman 2004).

committed” (Salomon 2003:187). This shows that nonprofits, particularly in rural areas⁸, have social capital, which helps them to build networks, contacts to cooperate, mobilize resources, organize for development, and solve problems (Flora and Flora 2003). “Strong connections emerge when trust is derived from knowing people and being able to count on them” (Salomon 2003:187). The stronger the social networks among nonprofits and communities, the more opportunities a norm of reciprocity will have to develop (Campbell 2000). For instance, social capital becomes essential in the ways in which nonprofit professionals’ relationships provide access to needed information, resources, and supports (Roseland 1999). However, social capital and values within it can also create barriers, as “thick trust between insiders may be related to distrust toward outsiders” (Wollebaek and Selle 2002:33). According to Voss, Cable and Voss (2000:343), "theoretically, when two institutional actors perceive that they share values, they tend to seek each other out for reasons including basic comfort, expectations of trust, and better communication".

If nonprofit organizations value altruism and collegiality, they tend to engage in activities that reflect these values. Also, they expect their partners to share the same values. In this way social capital values narrow organizations’ chances to expand their networks and reach their fullest potential as partners in collaborations (Wollebaek and Selle 2002).

⁸ People in rural areas have social capital because they have historically been socially cohesive and have depended on each other. Social capital has held communities together and generated competition and viability. Thus, historical and emotional ties that unite rural residents help build social capital (Flora and Flora 2003).

2.4 Open Systems Theory for the Use of Technology

When theorizing and analyzing the use of technology in organizations among structures and individuals, the relationship between the environment and technology must be addressed. In doing so, the open systems approach⁹ provides an appropriate theoretical framework for technology (assessment). The open systems theory enables the integration of objective and subjective theoretical approaches with which the interaction between the organizational environment, individuals, and technology can be examined. In this way, technology can be seen both as enacted by human agency and as institutionalized structure in which geographic, economic and socio-cultural factors are equally influencing the outcomes. For instance, technology reflects a strategy the organization uses to deal with its environment and the choices made by managers. Also, the culture of the workplace, the professional ideology, and networks affect, what technologies are adopted and in which ways they are used. As organizations try to survive in complex environments, they learn to be more flexible in adopting technology, “Different assumptions about and diverse interactions with technology may both shape and be shaped by new forms of organizing” (Orlikowski 1992:423). The integrated approach helps in understanding the limits and opportunities of individual choice and the use of technology in organizational context (Orlikowski 1992; Rousseau 1979).

⁹ The open systems approach emphasizes that “the nature of the environment may largely determine the effectiveness of an organization and its technology” (Rousseau 1979:538).

2.5 Institutional Theory on Organizational Behavior

In this study, nonprofit organizations and individuals are interpreted and analyzed in regards to institutional theories, in which both holistic¹⁰ and individualistic¹¹ theoretical approaches are used. The reason why both irrational-rational and collective-individual elements of organizational behavior are taken into consideration is due to structural complexity and active human agency that characterize the diverse world of nonprofit organizations. Also, the possibility of making strict theoretical choices is minimal, since the sociology of nonprofits is only recently gaining theoretical relevance. The following chapter discusses these different approaches of institutional theories and explains how organizations tend to be similar in formal structure, reflecting their common institutional origins, but how organizations may show much diversity in actual practice (Andrews and Edwards 2004; Meyer and Rowan 1977).

Institutional theories help to understand how institutional features of organizational environments shape the goals and means of individuals and vice versa. On one hand, institutionalization is the process by which actions become repeated over time and taken for granted, and individuals come to adopt a shared understanding of social reality. On the other, Colignon (1989:95) quoting Perrow explains, "institutionalization is a product of human action, and organizations become institutionalized when organization adapts to the strivings of internal groups and the values of external society". Thus, all

¹⁰ The holistic approach in organizational behavior is based on the structural-functional position, where macro-social phenomena are explained as functions of other collective organizational properties (Colignon 1989).

¹¹ The individualistic approach in organizational behavior is based on human agency, where micro-social phenomena are explained as activities of observable individuals (Colignon 1989).

organizations, as social systems, exist in institutional environments, which are diverse and change over time (Scott 1987).

When looking at institutionalized organizations from the holistic perspective, organizations exhibit a formal structure by which organizations tend to become more similar, bureaucratic, rationalized, and legitimate in their environments. Formal structures that are highly institutionalized include, for instance, rules, roles, professionals, programs, and technologies. These institutional elements influence organizations significantly, and organizational behavior is seen as consciously and rationally administered, for instance, to improve the level of efficiency (Colignon 1989). Also, networks among organizations and their agents within the field drive organizations toward formality and similarity. For instance, professionals in structurally similar positions are expected to express similar attitudes, values, and opinions (Galaskiewicz and Burt 1991). However, the formal structures and generalized rules of the institutional environment often conflict with specific situations and 'irrational and unintended' day to day activities, which disturb the rational action of organizations creating uncertainties. Thus, control and coordination problems are addressed through organizational adaptation and institutionalization (Meyer and Rowan 1977). For instance, professionals tend to use institutional tactics and formalize organizations in order to persist when facing threats and challenges (Andrews and Edwards 2004). Also, according to Meyer and Rowan (1977:40), "professionalization, goal ambiguity, and maintenance of face are ways for absorbing uncertainty by showing confidence and acting in good faith within and outside the organization while preserving the formal structure of the organization".

Organizations preserve similarity and conform to institutional formality, commonality, and legitimacy mainly to strengthen their support and secure their survival. Organizational ideology and language can be used as a collective tool to achieve this goal, because they help to define the character of the organization, the institutional rules, and the outlook of the employees. Ideology and language serve also as a message to the public. They show what formal practices and common values belong to the organizations' structures, which support organizations' social acceptance and survival (Andrews and Edwards 2004; Colignon 1989; Meyer and Rowan 1977).

In addition to institutional theory, organizational behavior can be approached from the holistic or individualistic viewpoint. The holistic approach explains rational-collective aspects of organizational behavior, but it often neglects or ignores the agency of individuals and the impact of complex environments, seeing them as external and objective to organizational behavior. The individualistic approach, instead, is subjective and context-related. The approach incorporates the rational choices and motivations of individuals and geographic, economic and socio-cultural character of the environment into the analysis of organizational behavior. Seeing that organizational behavior (and rational organizational features of goals and structure) are outcomes of complex situations and based on subjective individual actions reflecting interests, interpretations and meanings, the individualistic approach emphasizes individual decision-making and action in a situation as a key in the survival of the organization (Colignon 1989). It also stresses the transformative nature of collective behavior, its individual dynamics, and an active, conscious view of individuals capable of mobilizing resources to achieve their own interests. For instance, organizational ideology is not a naturally or collectively

emerging phenomenon, but constructed by its actors, and characters of the individuals are characters of the organization. Also, adaptation happens not because of the irrational actions and unexpected consequences, but because of the intended and recognized consequences of purposive actions and interests of the members of the organization, who actively develop strategies, reveal choices and consequences, and bring alternatives to goals and outcomes (Colignon 1989).

As the holistic approach explains organizations' adaptations to internal and external uncertainties, likewise the individualistic approach explains how organizations seek to keep equilibrium between organizational structures and internal modes of operating, and their environments. Organizations have to adapt to the problems of day to day activities by modifying their structure, goals, and environments. For instance, some environmental uncertainties that nonprofit organizations face are "dependence on external funding, problems involved in the coordination of services and the need to comply with complex government regulations", (Blau and Rabrenovic 1991:328). As organizations actively modify to internal and external pressures, they may not necessarily mimic their counterparts, preserve similarity, and conform to institutional rationalities: formality, commonality, and legitimacy to survive and succeed, as the holistic approach suggests. Instead, the individualistic approach suggests that organizations actively adopt and utilize human agency and resources and thus reshape and influence their formal institutional environments to become more diverse (Colignon 1989; Kraaz and Zajac 1996). In this way, adaptation can lead to differentiation rather than commonality, and over time organizations can become less homogeneous and more heterogeneous (Kraaz and Zajac 1996). For instance, nonprofit organizations differentiate themselves by

working to alter the environment for their own benefit or by adapting to the demands of the environment. Still, it is important to emphasize that differentiation is a fundamentally socio-cultural act. To alter the environment and gain support, nonprofit organizations are subject to and must draw from external and institutionally based definitions of success and prestige. Within these uncertainties and constraints, nonprofit professionals work to differentiate themselves from other organizations, to survive, obtain resources, and compete (Barman 2002).

3 MONTANA NONPROFIT SECTOR AND RESEARCH SUPPOSITIONS

Montana is a relatively poor¹² and large state¹³, which consists of many small, rural communities. Due to the low-income level and distance, Montana nonprofit professionals perceive that they have difficulties in seeking training, career development, financial support, and other necessary resources. Nonprofit professionals who work and live, especially in small rural communities, can feel isolated from resource opportunities they would receive if located in larger, urban areas (Bennien, et al. 2005). However, rural communities are said to have more potential for professional development than urban areas due to close relationships and networks of trust, which can provide a greater base for collaboration, training, and professional excellence.

Nonprofit organizations operate in many Montana communities, despite the size or population. According to Bennion, et al. (2005:1):

Montana is home to 5,630 charitable and private foundation nonprofits registered with the Internal Revenue Service. The nonprofit professionals of these organizations are responsible for managing the day-to-day operational tasks as well as securing funds, fostering employee and board development, and keeping an eye on issues affecting their cause.

The nonprofit sector¹⁴ in Montana is large, diverse, and growing. Montana's nonprofits exist in every county with a diversity of service areas including religion, arts, culture,

¹² Persons in poverty in Montana, 2004 is 13.4% (U.S. Census Bureau and Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2005).

¹³ Montana covers 145,552 square miles with less than 927, 00 citizens, who inhabit the area with 6, 2 square miles per person (U.S. Census Bureau and Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2005).

¹⁴ According to Andrews and Edwards (2004:484):

Nonprofit sector refers to the diverse set of organizations that are neither profit making nor governmental...Nonprofit scholars often focus on the role of nonprofits in service provision as a core function of the sector, but other scholars highlight the political, representative, or advocacy roles of nonprofits.

humanities, education, health care, human services, research, technology, community improvement, and all others. Together nonprofits strengthen the quality of life in the state in building community and fostering civil society (Montana nonprofit Sector 2005).

The literature of this study is used to understand Montana nonprofit professionals, organizational culture and the use of information technology. The previous literature explained how rural nonprofits are different from urban nonprofits, and is relevant for describing Montana's nonprofit sector. For instance, rural nonprofits may have fewer resources available for training than out-of-state nonprofits in more urbanized areas due to lack of funding, infrastructure, marketing, and audience. On the other hand, rural nonprofits may have more training potential in informal support networks based on trust and reciprocity than their urban counterparts. Additionally, the literature explained and described current IT training offerings and barriers for nonprofits, and was used to examine the feasibility of e-learning as a training alternative in rural America. Therefore, based on the previous descriptive literature, theories, and the discussion on the state of Montana, and Montana nonprofit organizations and professionals the following suppositions are to be examined and applied.

Organizational and Professional Characteristics of Nonprofits:

1. Montana nonprofit professionals perceive that they are professionalized, but due to increasing challenges, variety of tasks, and responsibilities, Montana nonprofit professionals seek professional development and training, in order to stay competitive and cope with change.
2. Training and professional development among Montana nonprofit professionals are seen as less important than serving the community under resource constraints,

because Montana nonprofit professionals see themselves as caring and engaged citizens committed to their missions involving public benefits.

3. Because Montana nonprofit professionals have small staffs and budgets, they perceive that they have few formal, in-person training opportunities.

4. Because Montana nonprofit professionals think they have access to few formal, in-person training opportunities, the collegiality among Montana nonprofit professionals provides a personal and informal form of learning and access to needed information, training, and advice.

Distinction between Rural and Urban Professionals in Nonprofit Organizations:

5. Montana nonprofit professionals perceive that they differ from their more urban counterparts in other states, because Montana nonprofit professionals perceive that they have unique characteristics that are common and suitable to rural settings¹⁵, culture, and values such as small community size, personal communications, and close relationships.

6. In comparison to their more urban peers, Montana nonprofit professionals think they have fewer resources such as less formalized training and smaller budgets and they share a type of solidarity, and thus they are willing to pull their resources together to provide services.

7. Montana's socio-cultural, economic and geographical features such as the scattering of small number of people across the large more rural than urban state, the lack of training budgets, and the distrust of formal institutions such as the government and the

¹⁵ In this study, I am not focusing on defining what it means to be a rural nonprofit in Montana, since today rural-urban boundaries are blurring.

university system create barriers that Montana nonprofit professionals have to face when seeking professional development and training.

Information Technology and Training in Nonprofit Organizations:

8. Montana nonprofit professionals are adaptive to IT and use IT for information, advice, and training because they think that IT can bring more opportunities to professional development and training breaking down geographical and financial barriers and easing the feeling of isolation of Montana nonprofits in small rural communities.

9. The use of IT among Montana nonprofit professionals is hindered because of lack of time and funding, and technological experience, expertise, and face to face interaction.

10. Montana nonprofit professionals feel they have difficulties in finding the accurate and up-dated computer-based information, advice, and training.

11. E-learning and e-communications such as web-based clearing houses, event calendars, e-list serves, e-newsletters, and e-mails are ways to strengthen collaboration and communication in regards to Montana nonprofit professional development and training.

Social Capital Theory on Rural Nonprofits:

12. Because Montana nonprofit professionals say they have close relationships to their peers and because they have informal support and information sharing networks based on trust and reciprocity, there is social capital among Montana nonprofit.

13. Because Montana nonprofit professionals perceive that they have strong ideological values such as altruism, solidarity, and collegiality, and because they are willing to work together, social capital becomes essential in collaboration and

partnerships, which is ideal for improving the nonprofit professional development and training opportunities in Montana.

14. Because Montana nonprofit professionals expect their partners to share the same values such as solidarity and collegiality, Montana nonprofit professionals are less likely to partner with for-profit organizations or governmental agencies.

Institutional Theory on Organizational Behavior:

15. Montana nonprofit professionals are more likely to be similar to each other, because they work in organizations that have similar organizational environments and formal institutional elements such as resources, ideology, programs, norms, and values, which give Montana nonprofit organizations their common, more rural than urban, nature.

16. Montana nonprofit professionals are more likely to be similar to each other because they have similar socio-cultural, economic and geographical characteristics and challenges than other rural nonprofit professionals and thus they perceive that they differ from other more urban nonprofit professionals in other states.

17. Because Montana nonprofit professionals utilize human agency and resources, there is diversity of attitudes, practices, and opinions among Montana nonprofit professionals.

18. Individuals' peer networks can be better utilized in bringing improvements to Montana nonprofit professional development and training.

19. Montana nonprofit professionals work to differentiate themselves from other out-of-states organizations, to survive, obtain resources, and compete.

In addition to these nineteen suppositions, the results will include suggestions for the nonprofit professional development and training could be improved in regards to coordination and collaboration between the state, the nonprofit sector, and the universities in providing better training opportunities and future development for nonprofit professionals in Montana statewide.

4 METHODS

Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, based on personal contact with informants and descriptions of their perceptions, are implemented in this study to form a case study of nonprofit professionals in nonprofit organizations. By placing the focus on nonprofit professionals as the smaller unit of analysis, the results can be used to address the larger nonprofit sector. However, the data gathering does not provide enough information for explaining the training needs of the entire nonprofit sector. My interest is in particular aspects and phenomena of selected individuals and organizations in the nonprofit sector in Montana. The results rely on special cases and the interpretation of the researcher, in which the possibility of making empirical generalizations is minimal (Berg 2004).

4.1 Recruitment of Informants

I recruited Montana nonprofit professionals for this study by using a key informant sampling method. The key informant method is based on obtaining insider's views and information over time from people working in the nonprofit sector in Montana. The strength in using the key informant method is that the informants are in a position to know the community and the nonprofit sector well. I created a list of key informants with the help of the executive directors at the Montana Nonprofit Association (MNA) and the Office for Civic Engagement (OCE) at The University of Montana. The executive directors were able to name 17 experienced nonprofit professionals in major cities. This saved me time in finding key informants and building trust. MNA was supportive at this

research expecting that the results of this study will help them better serve their members and the nonprofit sector in general. Therefore, six informants were members of MNA¹⁶.

Eventually, thirteen informants from the key informant list agreed to participate to the study. Some informants refused due to time constraints. Additionally, I was able to recruit three informants through my personal contacts. The final seven informants were located using their information in the internet such as job titles, service area, and location. The seven informants helped bring more diversity to the study. Four of the seven informants were selected also because they had time to participate in the study on the same day as the key informants. This helped cut traveling costs and increased the number of personal, face to face interviews in Helena, Billings, and Bozeman.

The twenty-three informants for this study were adult nonprofit professionals from whom sixteen were female and seven were male. Ten informants had over ten years experience working with nonprofit organizations, and four informants had working experience with nonprofits for over twenty years. Among the rest, nine informants who had less than ten years working experience, only three had less than five years of experience with nonprofits.

The informants represent ten different cities in Montana, as the table shows below (see Table 1, p.34). Most informants (16 of 23) came from four major cities: Missoula, Helena, Bozeman, and Billings, because these cities have the highest number of nonprofit organizations in the state. Seven informants and their organizations are considered to be located at more rural than urban areas: Hamilton, Stevensville, Livingston, Cut Bank,

¹⁶ MNA has 270 members representing the diversity of Montana's nonprofits. MNA's members address a broad array of missions statewide and range in size from the largest organizations to the smallest nonprofits with limited staff. MNA's core functions include professional and organizational development; education and training; public policy and advocacy; and discount goods and services; research and communications (www.mtnonprofit.org).

Browning, Havre, and Kalispell. According to the informants' various job titles and occupational responsibilities, the informants were categorized as executive directors, staff, board members, consultants, funders, or government agency staff which work closely with nonprofit organizations (see Table 1 p.34). Professionals who were categorized as consultants also worked as trainers or technical assistants. The informants were also representatives of eight different service areas (with number of informants listed in parenthesis): Hunger (1), Environment (2), Health (2), Youth and Family (2), Consulting Services (4), Arts and Culture (2), Education Services (3), Community Foundations (4 informants), and Economic Development (3).

I conducted 13 personal, face-to-face, interviews in the offices of the informants and four in a public café, since that was a preferable place for these informants. Due to travel expenses and time, I organized interviews in the major cities, Helena, Billings, and Bozeman on the same day, and conducted six interviews via telephone (see Table 1, p.34). I conducted the six telephone interviews at the private and quiet office room at the Office for Civic Engagement on campus in Missoula. In order to preserve confidentiality, any identifying information about the informants or their organizations is not used in this study. Thus, instead of the real names of the informants, the informants in the interviews are coded in numbers, as showed in Table 1 (p.34). Later, the codes will be used to refer to the informants in the text.

Table 1 Personal Interviews and Telephone Interviews (Pohjoispuro 2005-2006).

Personal Interview	Informant's Job Title	Informant's Location	Interview Date	Interview Place
I:1	Executive Director	Missoula	11/02	Office, Missoula
I:2	Staff	Missoula	11/03	Office, Missoula
I:3	Consultant	Kalispell	11/17	Café, Kalispell
I:4	Executive Director	Helena	11/22	Office, Helena
I:5	Government Agency Staff	Helena	11/22	Office, Helena
I:6	Board Member	Helena	11/22	Office, Helena
I:7	Staff	Helena	11/22	Office, Helena
I:8	Executive Director	Missoula	11/28	Office, Missoula
I:9	Board Member	Missoula	11/28	Café, Missoula
I:10	Funder	Billings	12/05	Office, Billings
I:11	Executive Director	Billings	12/05	Office, Billings
I:12	Funder	Billings	12/05	Office, Billings
I:13	Consultant	Bozeman	12/06	Café, Bozeman
I:14	Staff	Bozeman	12/06	Café, Bozeman
I:15	Consultant	Bozeman	12/06	Office, Bozeman
I:16	Executive Director	Livingston	12/06	Office, Livingston
I:17	Staff	Hamilton	12/15	Cafe, Missoula
Telephone Interview				
T:1	Executive Director	Helena	12/02	Office, Missoula
T:2	Executive Director	Cut Bank	12/02	Office Missoula
T:3	Consultant	Billings	12/02	Office, Missoula
T:4	Executive Director	Browning	12/14	Office, Missoula
T:5	Government Agency Staff	Stevensville	12/15	Office, Missoula
T:6	Executive Director	Havre	01/30	Office, Missoula

The informants were not paid for their participation, but the recruitment of the informants was unproblematic. The informants shared their experiences with me and were willing to help in understanding nonprofit professional development and training needs in Montana, so that future training opportunities can be developed to address the identified needs. The goal was for informants to be given an opportunity to voice their own concerns and problems in a supportive interview situation.

4.2 Procedures and Confidentiality

The data collected in this study has been kept confidential, as promised the informants of the study. I assured the informants that their names would never be attached to the final data and their responses were completely confidential. Thus, subjects' privacy is protected in all published and written data resulting from this study. None of the identifying information about the subjects or their organizations is associated with outcome data from the study. Moreover, I stored the signed Participant Information and Consent Forms separately from the data in a secure file cabinet and erased the audiotapes of the interviews after the data was compiled and the final thesis was written and approved.

The risks and discomforts for the informants in this study were minimal. If any of the interview questions made the interviewee feel uncomfortable, he or she may have chosen to refrain from continuing to answer the question, skip a question, or end the interview at any time. I made the interviewees aware of this procedure before they participated, but no signs of refusals occurred during the interviews.

I initially contacted the nonprofit professionals in Montana by email and telephone (see Appendix A, Email Contact Script and Appendix B Phone Call Contact Script). I told them about the project on training needs of nonprofit professionals in Montana and asked them to participate voluntarily in the study as an interviewee. Based on qualitative research methods, I conducted 23 semi-structured interviews with 26 open-ended questions in each during three months (see Appendix C, Interview Questions). The total length of all the interviews was 881 minutes, about 14 hours. An average interview

took about 40 minutes based on a mean of 38.3 minutes of all 23 interviews, which were conducted and tape-recorded.

For the interviews conducted in person, I asked the informants to read a form (see Appendix D, Participant Information and Consent Form) before the interview took place. The interviewees had an opportunity to withdraw from the interview if they did not agree to the audio tape recording of the interview or to signing the informative consent form. After agreeing with the interviewing procedures, the interviewees started answering the interview questions. For interviews I conducted via telephone, I told the informants about the research procedures and asked for verbal consent before the interview took place (see Appendix E, Verbal Consent Form). At the end of the interviews, I thanked the interviewees for their participation and gave them an opportunity to comment on the interview questions and procedures. I reminded the informants of my contact information, and encouraged them to get in touch, if they had any further questions or concerns.

4.3 Analysis

This study seeks insight into the nature of nonprofit professional development and training in Montana with the help of the theories, literature and empirical data. The aim is to understand the work of rural nonprofit professionals and to explore their views and needs about the training and professional development in a subjective interpretation. The unit of analysis, nonprofit professionals, is measured at individual level in regards to their work experience, education, skills, training resources, and peer networks. Also, challenges and problems such as funding and time constraints that nonprofit professionals face are taken into consideration. However, to understand nonprofit professionals, it is important to place them in the broad socio-cultural, economic and geographical context of nonprofit organizations and Montana. Thus, the physical, demographic, and structural-cultural characteristics are also considered.

Studying and explaining social phenomena, not only concepts of the society and individuals, but also meanings of the practices must be understood. Therefore, in this study, I seek to know not just what the culture in the nonprofit community means to the nonprofit professionals who put them into practice, but also under what situations and in what ways the practices have been used. I approach nonprofit professionals in their organizations as social systems embedded in dynamic institutional environments, which describes how professionals and their organizations seek similarity in formal structure but also show diversity in actual practice when adapting to the internal and external pressures. Particularly, I emphasize human agency and look at formal structures of

organizations as an open system¹⁷ and as a mixture of cultural elements, when structural rationality of formal organizations tend to disappear.

The concept of social capital is measured by looking at the support and information sharing networks among Montana nonprofit professionals. Thus, I analyze social capital in regards to peer networks, collaboration, and coordination, where social capital becomes essential for strengthening Montana's nonprofit sector and improving Montana nonprofit professional development and training.

The use of IT among Montana nonprofits is interpreted and analyzed using the open system approach, which enables the integration of human agency and institutional structure without ignoring socio-cultural, economic and geographic factors in the technology assessment. The integrated approach helps in understanding the choices of nonprofit professionals and the use of IT in organizational context.

It is important in qualitative research to explain the research subject in a local context. The gathered empirical data of this study consists of particular cases. The selected nonprofit professionals in Montana are a special group, not a representative one. The group is not supposed to concern all nonprofit professionals in Montana or rural America, because it is purposely designed for a particular location and does not include a very great variety of informants with different backgrounds from different places. The effort is to comprehend wider conditions and shared understandings of the Montana's nonprofit community, and to learn from their culture and socio-economic concerns and conditions.

¹⁷ "An open system means that the organization is in constant interaction with its environment, affecting it and being affected by it" (Colignon 1989:99).

In spite of the relatively small number of the informants, I was able to identify some common experiences and characteristics. However, the results also show that there is diversity of opinions, practices, and experiences among the informants. The individuals, the culture, and Montana are multidimensional and complex. There are great differences among the communities, the customs and practices are heterogeneous, and the conditions and meanings vary considerably across space and time.

I transcribed the interviews word by word from the recorder on the papers. The detailed transcribed material of the interviews totaled 135 pages long. The evaluation of interpretive understanding was continually reading through the data, memorizing, taking notes, analyzing, and reading through again. The empirical data was relatively difficult to organize, but categorizing it into two stages, initial coding and then focused coding, helped in the analysis. The initial coding served to summarize the data and included as many categories as possible. Themes such as education, job title, work day, networks, training organizations, coordination, resources, current training, ideal training, allocation, barriers, IT, and positive and negative issues in regards to Montana nonprofit professional development and training gave a descriptive overview about the data. As I continued the analysis, I focused on details and included the new datum with the existing codes, if it matched. If the new data did not match with an existing code but seemed related, I created a new code that would integrate both bits of data such as work experience, skills, culture, partnerships, communications, budgets, training topics and methods, and advantages or disadvantages. As I continued my focused coding, I categorized the existing codes to more detailed codes such as informal and formal, geographical, demographical, cultural or financial barriers, online training, certificates, internet, or

web-calendar in regards to the use of IT, and funding organizations, government, university, MNA, for-profits or individuals. Lastly, I coded the rest of the data in separate codes such as professionalization, role of the sector, public education, development, ideological values, and organizational change (Murray 1996; Sayer 1992).

After coding, I continued the qualitative analysis by making open questions in relation to the research questions and suppositions. The research questions served as headings under which the data was categorized. The purpose was to compare my findings with existing theory and see if the data supported the research suppositions or not. Thus, I needed to get deep into the material, combine detail by detail different categories and codes, and develop ideas in order to reveal special cases and to find similarities and differences. I focused my analysis on the themes that occurred time after time, but made sure that I would not leave out any details (Murray 1996; Sayer 1992).

5 RESULTS

5.1. Skills and Responsibilities of Montana Nonprofit Professionals

Understanding what skills and responsibilities Montana nonprofit professionals have to manage their everyday challenges and practices, explain the resources, experience, and meanings behind the training and career development needs. Thus, the informants were asked about their job title, education, average work day, tasks and knowledge, and resource allocation they needed to do their job effectively.

As far as the average working day and work responsibilities are concerned, the results show that the informants rarely have an average day when working in a nonprofit. The informants are busy and challenged while doing their different tasks, which change from day to day, and require, for instance, multi-tasking, coordination, financing, and computer skills. The following examples support these statements and give an idea of the variable days, different skills, and responsibilities of nonprofit professionals such as executive directors, staff, and consultants.

I think that like a lot of people at a nonprofit, my day to day job changes. There are different needs that need to be filled on different days. So I don't hesitate there isn't a stereotypical day. But I'll get here in the morning. I check and see what's going on in our main facility...I'm checking my voice messages, I'm checking my email, seeing if there are things I need to respond to. Those are the only things that I would say I do every single day, but beyond that, whatever is needed. I oversee a lot of our fundraising activities (I:2).

Ok, arriving is a lot of making sure that everything is set up and prepared for the day. The rest of my day goes off in different ways. For instance, this morning I sat down and had a pile of invoices and bills to sort through, and I'm trying to do that when it's a nice, quiet time. I know I can't do it when everybody else being here, because I need to be available for the staff, as they have questions. So, I come in early and do that, because in my job, there are lots of interruptions. When opportunities come up and you have to address them right a way, and just random phone calls (I:1).

I am responsible in coordinating some of our in staff work. And I probably have fifteen different tasks in a day. So my day is all about these things. It's way more that one person can do (I:10).

My typical day is not typical. I will change focus on what I am working on sometimes five times in an hour, because as an executive director, I'm the bottom line about everything that is going on. If I have to put it in areas one, of course, is management of the organization financially. Two, personnel issues and also fundraising take a great deal of my time, because without fundraising our doors cannot be open. Working with the board of directors, takes good junk of my time including board training, development and working with the board on different projects...Plus, I am the public face of the organization. I get phone calls from the media, students, organizations, asking me to come speak. So I've got a lot on the plate (I:8).

My days are very variable, I teach and I do consulting. I do work on the project, whether it is surveys or evaluation, but really I do consulting in board development and fundraising or organizational structure (I:13).

I am still learning. I am responsible for the members and programs. I also work at the office. I answer the phone, but as far as memberships are going, once a month I send letters to members and write an email newsletter. I also update our web page on coming events (I:14).

The results show that the informants are well educated workers. Among the 23 informants, there are 18 Bachelor's, 8 Master's, and 1 Doctorate level degree. Only one of the informants had not earned a degree in higher education. Only one of the informants had a Master's level degree in Nonprofit Management and another one was pursuing it. According to the informants' education, it is possible to say that 13 of 23 informants' education is by some means related to their current working field as a nonprofit, but the results indicate that Montana nonprofit professionals do not get much support from their previous education to effectively perform their jobs as a nonprofit. The informants emphasized that they had gained the skills and knowledge they needed in their work mostly on the job: learning by doing, and learning from their colleagues as follows.

Primarily on the job training. It's difficult in this position to imagine a formal academic curriculum that would properly prepare one for this job (T:6).

Basically just by having a passion to accomplish things. And learning pretty quickly what you need to know. And I've been fortunate to be surrounded by some very intelligent people who have mentored me. As you move forward, you learn more what is needed to know (I:16).

The way that I have been learning is literally in the field outside. And nonprofits are so busy with their organizational activities, so your training is just trying to get as many people as you can to support your efforts. I've learned by doing (T:5).

A lot of it is just time and getting those skills, whether it is communications skills or just a combination of anything. So, I think in a nonprofit world, you have to be an excellent multi-tasker and you have to be willing to say- I have no idea how we do master planning, but we have this big facility and we need to figure out how to do that! And looking at what are the other resources available- I have no idea how to approach this problem, who can I talk to? So it's been willing to reach out and connect with that bigger network (I:1).

One informant who was pursuing an online Master's degree in Nonprofit Management emphasized how people can learn the same skills taught in a degree program just by doing and having the experience as follows.

I came to my degree program for other resources, to have some goals, but there are plenty of people who learn the same skills just by doing. For example, our executive director didn't get a degree in a similar thing, but she knows how to do it all, because she's been doing it for thirty years (I:2).

The informants brought up professionalization, when they were asked about the strengths of the sector. The results show that Montana nonprofit professionals thought that they are professionalized and qualified workers. They realize the growing need for professional development and training and thus more resources for nonprofit training are starting to be available. The following excerpts from the transcript illustrate such opinions.

Positive I think is the professionalization of people in the nonprofit sector. There is a high quality of individuals in that sector in Montana (T:3).

The strength is that there is a growing awareness of professionalism within the nonprofit arena and because of that there is a growing awareness of need for training...I

think there is a lot of expertise within the field and there are starting to be resources available (I:13)

I would say that training opportunities are scattered, but developing. I think right now nonprofits are becoming more professional. Even though they don't have staff, they are trying to move to this new level of professionalization. You know, pieces are starting to form and hopefully come together (I:3).

As far as professionalism in the sector is concerned, in contrast to the previous results, the informants also thought that nonprofit professionals are not so highly professionalized, because they are not expected to be, especially in comparison to professionals in other fields such as lawyers, doctors, and teachers. In fact, this so called “under professionalization” of nonprofit professionals increases the need for nonprofit professional development and training as follows.

I think nonprofits just have to get professionalized and start building trainings into their budgets, if they are going to compete in the 21st century (I:15).

Nonprofits should do continuing education courses. For instance, teachers, lawyers and doctors are required to take courses, and nobody thinks the second time. They are expected to do continuing education to stay in current. In nonprofit world, and the rest of the for-profit world, there is no such expectation (I:7).

You have to have a degree to be a doctor, but you can be a nonprofit leader having no certification at all. So I think it is an issue who values this education. A certificate program could be a one way to become a confident professional (I:3).

We truly need properly trained professionals in the nonprofit sector in our state. Everybody assumes that in certain professions people receive training, whether legal profession, accounting profession, or what ever. But in our profession, I think that people think that this is the nonprofit sector, where people get going and can't get real jobs. So I think there is a definite need to advance the professionalism of those individuals (T:6).

Therefore, the results agree with the first supposition in that Montana nonprofit professionals perceive that they are professionalized workers, but due to increasing challenges and variety of tasks and responsibilities, Montana nonprofit professionals seek professional development and training, in order to stay competitive and cope with

change. The results also add to the first supposition in the way that Montana nonprofit professionals thought they are becoming more professionalized, because of the growing awareness in the sector that nonprofit training is needed and because of the increasing resources for nonprofit training. Additionally, the following statements from the informants explain that training is needed, for nonprofits, but also for the public to understand the important economic role of the sector so that nonprofits can sustain their organizations' stability in serving the society.

I think something needs to be done also for nonprofits on how we sustain. I think the donors get discouraged, if they are asked to support nonprofits and then those nonprofits fall apart. Those people who give to nonprofits might feel that their investment was lost. I think it is incredible burden put on nonprofits. We need training not just for the personnel and staff, but we need training for the public to understand the role of the sector and what a burden the sector is carrying in terms of addressing the unmet needs of our society that the government doesn't pick up or the for-profits don't pick up (I:8).

I think it is really important to have a stronger recognition of the importance of the nonprofit sector in Montana. Understanding that the nonprofit sector in Montana isn't simply something we should take it for granted (T:6).

In the results, the growing need for professional development and training is, however, questioned. The informants said they had gained their skills and knowledge mainly on the job, from their colleagues or by experiencing and learning independently, which can decrease the need and interest for formal training and education. Additionally, the results support the second research supposition in specifying that training and professional development among Montana nonprofit professionals are seen as less important than serving the community under resource constraints, because Montana nonprofit professionals see themselves as caring and engaged citizens who are committed to their missions involving public benefits. The following examples support this

conclusion and describe how Montana nonprofit professionals dedicate and prioritize their limited resources for serving the community, which leaves fewer resources such as less time and funding for professional development and training.

Huge numbers of nonprofits are attempting to do more than they have resources to support. So coming up with how to set a side time for training, is a very big challenge. And I don't have a solution strategy for that other than, if groups were better founded they wouldn't have to spend as much time fundraising and they might have more resources to get their job done more efficiently. Therefore they would have more time for training. But I think time to get the training is a real significant issue (T:1).

I think the people, who are leaders and staffing the nonprofits, are really engaged and caring citizens and I think they work really hard. And that to me is a great environment. I would be so bored, if in the end of the day I should sit in the board and talk about how much profit we made. Instead, I think the dynamics- have we made difference to our community and why?- is such a richer conversation to be working on (T:5).

I think in every organization that we are so busy with fighting fires. And this is immediate; things need to get done so that we don't think long term. We need to get this done, so why take time off for education and training (I:13).

The results are consistent with the second supposition also in that the informants explained how putting money in training is not seen as important as putting money to the mission and programs of the organization and that training is not deeply embedded in the culture (including values, attitudes, and practices) of the nonprofit sector in Montana.

What I have found in the nonprofits is that most organizations allocate resources for their programs first. And after that there is very little left for allocating for trainings. They usually don't allocate anything for training purposes, especially for smaller ones. If they do it, it is after thoughts" (I:13).

I think one of the other barriers for training is that it's not strongly in the culture of the nonprofit sector in the state. Training is something that is almost like a privilege rather than seen as one of your core responsibilities as a member of the staff to keep increasing skills and getting access to training. When budgets are tight, training is one of the first things to go (T:I).

5.2 Current Nonprofit Training Opportunities in Montana

The informants were asked to describe the training and professionals development resources that were currently available for them locally or statewide. The results show that the current availability of nonprofit professional development and training resources vary depending on organizational location and service area, individual job position, and years of experience as follows.

I think the way you see the availability of current training resources depends on what you are doing, or where you are at. Like Missoula would probably be a very good place as supposed to Sidney Montana (T:3).

As much I'd like to say that all nonprofits have a lot in common, they only have a segment of their work in common, the reporting requirements. In terms of the business development requirements, they are in very different fields. For instance, in MNA conference the main topic was burn out because of too many clients, but we don't have the same dynamics. We don't have too many clients. We try to build our arts' audience. So there are different enough dynamics that we always seek different kind of training that seems to be out there (T:5).

I just started my position, so I am still learning. I enjoy conferences because it helps me to connect with a larger picture and deeper meaning of what I am doing. So then I can see that these are all of the different things that somebody is thinking about, a bigger picture of nonprofits, so I wouldn't necessarily come up with these on my own. So for me a conference would be helpful and I do read a lot. So for me multi-type strategies are helpful. I like to learn from people and books. My experiences with online training haven't been positive. Most computer based trainings I've had are boring, not interactive, but I can see doing very specific skills like software, MS Excel (I:14).

At this point of my career, I don't get a lot from state and national conferences, although when I was younger, I thought they were very important...But the best is my peer training and peer networking opportunities (I:12).

In the results, the informants have limited access to formal training opportunities, which are described as inadequate and pricey with conflicting schedules, as the informants noted.

There is no formal, well resourced and visible mechanism to provide training (I:3). I would say there are scarce, generally expensive or at least pricy. Also, maybe not inconvenient, but it is always the issue of conflicting schedules, events, workload. It is just not always convenient to be able to participate when the chance arises (I:4).

I have to say that I've had to go out of state for the most useful training that I have gotten in my position (I:8).

There isn't much out there. And then there are something going on that nobody knows about and then it is too late to become involved...You really have to look for it. You have to read the paper, ask and call, or Google, where thousands miles away there is something in Boise or Spokane, but very rarely. You maybe find something in twice a year (I:5).

I just don't see a whole lot for anything for training and professional development. I just don't see it in Montana (T:4).

The results show that the informants have difficulties in accessing national conferences and local training. There are not enough training opportunities for in-depth training. Especially, small, rural communities have a lack of training opportunities, as the informants stated.

I don't think there are a lot of conferences that we are talking about. I think, they kind of brush on a whole bunch of issues. You get to meet a lot of great people and it provides a nice overview, but they don't provide a great deal in-depth (I:2).

I think the biggest challenge is in accessing those national conferences. And for me to fly to New Orleans and to stay there for a week is expensive. So the challenge is to bring those resources to the local area (I:1).

I think one gap is lack of training opportunities for small rural communities, because of population and distance. Another gap is that there are very few opportunities for in-depth training (T:1).

The results explain that part of the reason why the informants have limited access to formal training opportunities are due to small staffs and budgets as follows.

The weakness is that it is difficult to attract experts on topics partly because of money and distance. We tend to deal with smaller budgets than some other places, but I think it is just the manner to get the right folks here for trainings (I:4).

I think trainings are expensive. Funding for two people to go and then it is also two people out of the office, we don't have so many people for staff here (I:2).

Therefore, the results are consistent with the third supposition: Because Montana nonprofit professionals have small staffs and budgets, they perceive that they have few formal, in-person training opportunities.

However, the results also disagree with the third supposition. Even though the results show that Montana nonprofit professionals have resource constraints for training such as small staffs and budgets, the results also indicate that the informants have diverse opinions and experiences in regards to the budgets for nonprofit professional development and training. For example, when querying the informants about their professional development and training resources, the informants were asked if their organizations allocated resources for training or education programs that were available to them. The results indicate that, on the one hand, financial resources for nonprofit professional training are minimal, basically self-supported, while on the other hand, nonprofit professionals have budgeted in financial support for training. For instance, nonprofit professionals had their mileages, entrance or attendance fees for conferences and workshops paid for. Budgets for training are between \$200 and \$500 per employee. The following examples confirm this conclusion.

Minimally. I guess, entrance fee or whatever for that conference was paid by the organization, but I have to pay for my degree on my own. So, there is some money, but not a great deal (I:2)

Yes for me and for the staff, but I wish we had more (I:4).

I go ask my supervisor can I take this training and I get a yes or no answer. They pay my mileages and stuff, which is nice (I:17).

We historically have done it on a case by case basis. This year with the budget I'm working in starting of 200 dollars per employee and everybody has their own way to use this money" (I:1).

It's in the budget. It's really important. The executive director is getting his Master's in human resource development and the organization pays some of that (I:12).

One of my board members paid me to go east to Boston to a conference, the board always approves about 500 dollar budget for staff to get training and the board too, we do recognize that we need it (I:16).

If we have a need for training, it is always paid. Travel and conferences are paid, but it depends what you ask. It has to be reasonable (I:10).

The use of professional development and training resources and the different needs that they served were taken into consideration in this study to explore in what ways Montana nonprofit professionals gained knowledge and information to help them better do their job and work with others. The results indicate that the informants use a variety of resources such as books, magazines, conferences, workshops, certificate programs, internet web pages, and online courses for training and professional development, but the informants emphasized peer networks and collegiality as resources for information, advice, and training. The following examples support these statements.

Books have probably been...well I've had formal training in organizing. I did that through a training program. And mostly it's been reading about management and fundraising (I:16).

There are not many training opportunities in Montana, but we do have a staff training plan, national conferences, workshops, and online training (I:5).

Well I think there are a lot of different resources. You look into formal and informal either associations and books, or universities and certificates. A lot of it was informal when working with people. I've found within the last five years that I've learned a lot through peer discussions with people that have a relatively good degree of experience (I:13).

A lot of online management related web sites and a lot of peer learning. And I would say that's a very common thing in nonprofits (I:3).

It's looking at that network. Especially in Missoula, there are so many nonprofits and folks in a similar position that I can go to...The workshops help, but it's really having those people that I can call up (I:1).

Big and important is really talking and sharing information with colleges. I have a person on my board, who has been in college for 20 years who ships me professional articles or links in the internet. So I just get a lot of information in that way. So it points to the importance and value of building up a network with colleagues who have interests in the areas that are important for my work and professional development (T:1).

There is another woman my age working in an organization at the same level as I. And we are thinking of taking the computer class together in January. The man who was in the position before me trained me on software and I am able to call him with any questions that I have. And then talking to my parents' friends who have been in nonprofits for few more years (I:14).

I have not participated in many formal training opportunities to assist in performing my job better. However, having said that there has been a number of meetings, conferences and different things that I have participated in, because that has assisted me networking with other professional in Montana to allow me to have a better knowledgebase (T:6).

Therefore, the results support the fourth research supposition: Because Montana nonprofit professionals think they have access to few formal, in-person training opportunities, the collegiality among Montana nonprofit professionals provides a personal and informal form of learning and access to needed information, training and advice. The results also add to the fourth supposition. As shown previously in the results (p.33), the informants had gained their skills and knowledge they needed in their work partially by learning from their colleagues. Additionally, the peer networks and the collegiality among Montana nonprofit professionals provide an easy access to needed information, advice, and training, especially by saving time and money, as mentioned by the informants.

A lot of that is driven by cutting cost. If we can have a first aid trainer coming in and we can fill the room with people, rather than having just the seven of us, can we open it up for other nonprofits or organizations? If a consultant is coming, I have to first pay \$300 - 400. So, can I split the cost with somebody else? Who is the right person? (I:1).

People that I consider my peers; they know what this position entails and they come from that background. Sometimes you get the experts that are maybe experts in that field, but they don't have a clue what you are doing. At the same time this also is something, like saving time and money, if somebody goes to a national conference, they can teach it to others, you as well. I would just say because they know who you are, the access is easy (I:4).

However, the results also disagree with the fourth supposition, because in addition to colleagues, the informants say they use multiple means of professional development and training resources, including literature, information technology, formalized training, and certificates. In addition to the few formal, in-person training opportunities, the informants also have diverse opinions about the availability of nonprofit professional development and training opportunities in Montana. The informants noted that professional development and training for Montana nonprofits had grown and become better in recent years.

I feel pretty comfortable that I've been able to train myself with resources that are here, but my comment is that there's never enough education. I do get a lot of calls people looking for training and what I say to them is really look and call colleagues (I:11).

There isn't much training available, but with MNA there seems to be more resources, the financial resources here are very slim (I:16).

I think organizations that have a national parent have phenomenal access to training resources. For locally based nonprofits that are only in Montana, I think if there is no affiliation with Montana Shares or MNA, there is very little access to training and professional development (I:6)

I think they are getting better and better. I think that more people are finding that nonprofits are a big business. Twenty years ago, there used not to be a lot, but now I think it's changing (T:3).

I think it is good that we have colleagues both within the state and outside of the state who are very willing and interested to make this opportunity available for training. We have a growth in providing more training opportunities and that growth is almost like self-fulfilling. It's almost like the more you offer the more people become interested in participating training. So I think that it creates momentum (T:1).

Understanding what alternatives Montana nonprofit professionals needed for professional development and training helps in understanding the current nonprofit training opportunities in Montana. Thus, the informants were asked if they could think of some training and professional development resources that they would like to use if they were available. The informants expressed that more intensive, interactive, 'hands-on', in-depth local training is needed. In addition to national conferences, quarterly training opportunities, and one or two day-long sessions would be helpful as well. The informants suggested that roundtable meetings with peers and colleagues would be a good and practical way to apply new information and knowledge, exchange ideas, solve problems, share best practices, and support. The following examples show evidence to this conclusion.

In addition to having these broad conferences, bringing in specific, local trainings for like two or three days of intensive work (I:2).

I think generally most adults learn best by doing. So interactive, kind of hands-on learning is good. I learn from having best practices shared (I:10).

Instead of once a year, maybe trainings throughout the year would help. I think the ones we have offered in Montana are awesome, but we need more...I would like quarterly maybe and a day or two trainings somewhere (T:2).

I think there is a lot of weakness in the traditional training model, one hour long or two hour long session. People learn best when they have the opportunity to apply the new information and have some one knowledgeable working by their side when they apply it (T:1).

When you are a leader of the organization you are alone, it's not like you can share with all what you are dealing with all the coworkers. So to be able to get together with other executive directors and have a roundtable would be very useful, and we identified that as a need (I:8).

I think it is very powerful both to meet with people who are ahead of you in the organization. And I think it is also vital to meet with people that are on your level (I:14).

Describing what alternatives to current training opportunities are hoped for, the informants mentioned video conferences, online and team training, mentoring, and role playing as useful training methods as follows.

More education the better it keeps the nonprofit programs going. Satellite is also a great way for training like video conferences. That would be an excellent opportunity (I:17).

Instead of flying or driving, let's just do it as a webinar, which is a PowerPoint presentation and telephone. It is just like a seminar, but you never leave your office. You can also respond, send emails, make questions anytime is the best, instead of writing questions down and waiting the presentation to end. It is more personal than being talked at. Even in the office, the people can attend...Neat way to do it. It is not as effective as you and me talking, but it is good (I:7).

You have to be present with a team in the training. It helps the institutional knowledge to be safer, but also it helps to think about the future (T:5).

I think having somebody as mentor is really good because you can go to them with specific questions. They can also get you over with the fear. So I really find that best way to learn is to find somebody who is very skilled in the area and to be mentored (I:16).

I think we learn when we push our comfort level. When we all have to stand up, give our opinions and be involved. Last seminar forced us to do some acting. It was uncomfortable but afterwards when we talked about it, we really learned (I:7).

In conclusion, Montana nonprofit professionals prefer relatively informal and interactive, in person, peer training opportunities, in which experiences and knowledge can be shared and applied between two individuals or among group of people.

5.3 Common and Unique Features of Montana Nonprofit Professionals

5.3.1 Strengths in Close Relationships

The informants were not asked about the unique and common features of Montana nonprofit professionals, but answers to this research question emerged from the data, when the informants were asked about the barriers, strengths, and weaknesses of the sector. The results support the fifth supposition: Montana nonprofit professionals perceive that they differ from their more urban counterparts in other states, because Montana nonprofit professionals perceive that they have unique characteristics that are common and suitable to rural settings, culture, and values such as small community size, more personal communications, and close relationships as follows.

I think that, even though Montana is a big state geographically, it's almost like a small town feel to the whole state. I've only worked here in the nonprofit sector three years and I feel like I've met a lot of the movers and shakers of the nonprofit community and I have some relationships that are very valuable that would be maybe more difficult to form in New York City" (I:2).

I think that Montana is still small enough, so if I call MNA and need something I get a human person. I'm not getting a voice mail that runs me 20 minutes long just to leave my name and number. So I think we still have a lot of personalization, which I feel is important (T:2).

I think the biggest strength is that we all know each other and we can share resources and communicate fairly well, because we run into each others at the grocery store (I:6).

The results explain why Montana nonprofit professionals differ from their more urban counterparts in other states. In addition to close relationships, the informants thought that Montana nonprofit professionals have different focus and better understanding of rural nonprofit management than urban nonprofits and that local and practical knowledge should be brought into training. For instance, the informants emphasized that close relationships and collaboration are considered to be more

important in rural than urban nonprofit management. Also, rural nonprofit management differs from urban nonprofit management in terms of fundraising and demography, because rural nonprofits have less people from whom to raise money and the resources for fundraising are fewer than in urban areas. The following examples support these statements.

We'd rather learn by sample by like minded or similar profiles, leaders in organizations. So like in rural areas, we are not interested in hearing what is going on in Minneapolis or Denver, we want to hear what is going on in similar sized communities in the state or in other state (T:5).

But what I am concerned about, I've seen this with a couple of organizations who come in and offer workshops in Montana. They really don't know Montana, but they charge big bucks for the trainings. So I'd rather see a home grow in trainings than people coming from Seattle and San Francisco, because I think we have a lot of expertise and I think we have an understanding of trying to run a nonprofit organization in a rural state, which they don't (I:15).

One thing that we see using the networks is that in being such a hurry to get something done, we forget the value of building relationships first. So we jump into things and people start to hold back. I think a lot of leaders should understand the value in developing groups and learning to work collaboratively and build relationships, those are the keys. I think that is a whole another area to train skills at (T:5).

I think we need clever fundraising ideas that would work in a small state. I think that is something that is frequently missed. For instance, when an organization has a national parent like we go to D.C or San Francisco, the training is geared toward urban areas. It does not necessarily apply to living in a rural state (I:6).

I think our national level is not recognizing the large difference in demographics. What I hear constantly- even though you are in the rural community, you still use the same practices of a club that is in the city. With the poverty level that it is in Montana, you cannot expect to fundraise 50 000 dollars like you can in a big city, even though that is what your national organization would us to believe (T:2)

When asking about the strengths of the sector, the results indicate that Montana nonprofit professionals distinguish themselves from their more urban counterparts. The informants expressed that they have fewer resources than their urban counterparts, but they thought that they collaborate and network with each other more than urban

nonprofits. They also know each other well because of the small community size and close relationships, which leads to the sixth supposition: In comparison to their more urban peers, Montana nonprofit professionals think they have fewer resources such as fewer formalized training opportunities and smaller budgets and they share a type of solidarity, and thus Montana nonprofit professionals are willing to pool their resources together to provide services. The following examples indicate this phenomenon.

In New York City, I think that you have more formalized and structured training opportunities and much more frequently than we have here in Montana (I:2).

I think more local training and development is needed. And I think because the budgets of nonprofits, if you can create a venue where many different organizations can come together, because most organizations can't afford the cost bringing any individual training (I:13).

Strength is that in Montana we all know each other, but there probably is disliking in other larger states, more highly densely populated states. So there is a higher likelihood that on some level we are already networking with one another on either projects or programs or for what ever reasons. So I think because we have a smaller population, those that are in the nonprofits sector are probably already fairly familiar with each other. So getting all the additional hurdle of introduction and trust and that kind of things. I think that we probably have taken care of some that simply because of our size from the population perspective (T:6).

I think we collaborate and work together and try to get everybody's needs...We have a good framework, which might not be a wide spread network, but there is one, and I think Montana, which is a rural state, and that is a huge benefit that exists (I:5).

5.3.2 Barriers in Accessing Training

In terms of the unique and common features of Montana nonprofit professionals, the informants were asked about the weaknesses of the sector and what barriers they or other nonprofits faced in accessing training in Montana. According to the informants' responses, geographical distances, weather, lack of time, funding, partnerships, and child care create barriers in accessing training in Montana. Especially, small communities in

remote areas and reservations have a lack of resources, for instance, limited access to other professionals and transportation. The following examples support these statements.

We have actually done some research on that. So distance, cost, and time (I:15).

Traveling. Sometimes you can't get to the place where you need to. And also finding child care is an issue. I am a single mom with two kids. I find that very difficult (I:17).

We have lots of barriers, also weather, snow storms can prohibit attendance (I:7). Funding and recognizing good partnerships are obstacles (I:16). Negative is that there is always a concern for not finding money, especially for nonprofits and training (T:3).

We are spread out. Luckily many nonprofits are based in Helena. So it is extremely helpful for those who are located in Helena, but it kind of leaves out those who would want to house a nonprofit outside the capital city. They don't necessarily have an access using the same resources that we do (I:6).

We are very rural up here in the reservation. It takes me two and a half hours to go to an airport... We don't have so great access, even though we have the internet and email. I don't have anybody professional in the community. We just don't have that access to resources (T:4).

One barrier in this state is really just the geography and a lack of resources. It is so remote and people are far away from each other and meetings are difficult to organize, yet they are so rich when they happen (T:5).

One set of barriers is nonprofit located in more remoter, smaller communities and that the training doesn't come to them. And all too often it's either too expensive in terms of mileage or even plane fare, or it takes too much time to get to the trainings (T:1)

The informants also talked about how demographics and culture of Montana nonprofits created barriers in accessing training. The informants described how there are not enough nonprofit professionals who would take advantage of the training and how nonprofit training is not seen as a priority for Montana nonprofits professionals, the public, and for the funding organizations. Other barriers related to the culture of Montana nonprofits, was the feeling that Montana is different and thus isolated from rest of the country, because of the limited resources and the small community size. The diversity in

the sector makes it more difficult to bring masses of people from different places into training sessions. The informants characterized these phenomena in the following ways.

Part of it is that we are a small state. We don't have the number of people engaged in the nonprofit community as you have in Colorado or California. There are just less of us here. And so the relative cost of providing that training is perhaps a little bit more than it would be in another areas, since you don't have a critical mass of individuals, who would take advantaged of the training itself. So I just don't know if we have a large enough nonprofit community to have that kind of continues loop of training opportunities always available to us. If we where in Los Angeles, my guess would be that there would be potential training opportunities available weekly, as we might get it annually (T:6).

People don't know that they don't know. They might think that everything is going well with the organization, but they may not have any clue about that they need board development. I think that's where training is very critical in teaching people and opening their eyes to possibilities (I:3).

We invite all nonprofits to attend our training, they just may not take advantage or may not realize the value of it (I:6).

A lot of organizations, they have so many expectations and few resources that it is hard to get training to be priority. In terms of in-state foundation assets, there is very little money available to help support training. It's a long list of things that basically are part of the barriers that result in the fact that it's not deeply embedded in the culture of nonprofits to have this to be a priority (T:1).

My guess is that another stumbling block could be the fact that many people don't understand the dramatic impact that nonprofits have on Montana's economy (T:6).

Other barriers are generally feeling that Montana is different from rest of the country. And sometimes that is an unnecessary barrier, because the reality is that people with limited resources in small communities who are poor, no matter where they are, have a lot in common. So if Montanans would see that there are other places to go to gain valuable information and they don't have to do it all by themselves (T:5).

Participants' priorities- Is training important and will I go? And the Montana culture, it is a challenge to get all the folks form different places to the same place. There is a ton of diversity and that's the challenge to get all together and talk about stuff (I:5).

Additionally, the informants explained that a weakness or barrier is that Montana nonprofit professionals have not had, until recently, a statewide nonprofit association that was committed to strengthening of the sector including professional development and training as follows.

Another obstacle is that not until recently, there was no such thing as a state wide nonprofit association that committed itself to leadership development and professional training individuals. But now we have MNA who provides some of that (T:6).

The informants were also asked what they thought could be done to ease the barriers. The informants' responses emphasized the increase of financial resources because it would ease barriers such as geographical distance, travel, and time. Therefore, the informants were asked also if they could think ways where additional funding could be attained. According to the informants, barriers can be eased by trying to get more funding from in-state foundations for capacity building, training, the use of IT, technical assistance, and traveling, instead of funding only for programs and projects. In addition, the results show that nonprofit professionals and their organizations should start to understand that training is an important part of their budgets. Among these kinds of answers, the informants' responses to these questions were as follows.

When looking at the funding resources, I think a piece of it is educating the foundation world so that they wouldn't only provide money for the programs (I:13).

If there would be more money available that would not be tied to projects. So there is very little that you can use for capacity building. So it would be very helpful if there would be some capacity money, where we could actually have money to attend training or have some money to have an assistant to help us with day to day stuff. So capacity building money, I think would be enormously helpful (I:16).

In Montana we don't have a lot of state foundations. But we have to change funders' mind set because now they have disinterest in funding capacity building. They have to realize and value capacity building, so that they can say- fine you can use the money on going to a conference (I:10).

I think that nonprofits just have to start building training into their budgets and that's a hard thing for them to grasp...And I think it is naïve to think that other people will do and pay your training and technical assistance for you in the long term (I:15).

I think organizations have to realize the value of training and put in their budgets. And I think that this is just as important as anything we do. But it would help if they shouldn't have to travel and they could connect and get training in town via telecommunications or online. I think it could be real valuable (I:12).

One informant brought up how Montana foundations are different and unique from other states' foundations, because Montana foundations are small with small budgets and they do not prioritize their investments in nonprofit professional development and training. Thus, Montana nonprofits should try to attract national foundations which are more likely to invest in nonprofit professional training and development in Montana as follows.

I think we have huge problems in Montana that the foundations in the state are very small and they are given priorities very much for human resources, human services, and scholarships to go to college...So to get this idea in front of Montana foundations that investing in helping organizations become more effective is an important investment to make. Montana has no foundation in grant making program, where groups can go and get a grant to hire a consultant to help them. Those kinds of grant making programs are very prevalent in many other states that have larger foundations, bigger budgets, and professional staff, who are able to spend more time with the organizations. So the second part of where could this money come from is I think that we need to find ways to attract to interest of and involvement of national foundations that believe in this kind of organizational development and training, consulting resources, capacity building and find ways to get them invest in Montana (T:1).

In addition to the in-state and out-of-state foundations, the informants' suggested that the funding could come from state and federal government as well as. The informants emphasized partnerships and were relatively optimistic, but also distrusting and hesitant as far as the state and federal funding for Montana nonprofits were concerned. The following examples support this statement and describe how the state and federal spending, and philanthropy from the general public should be geared toward citizens' needs and social services instead of military action.

I haven't spent much time in the policy arena, but my suspicion is that if there were a desire there would be ability. The state could say, this is free, here are some of the programs we can help you get. Let's partner. I think the state government could very easily step up to the plate. Not only provide straight dollars, but work with nonprofits to make it easier for nonprofits to find matching funds that would come from the state and federal government (I:7)

I don't know if the government is a right vehicle, but a partnership that where you have federal dollars and local foundations could provide that training (I:3).

It would be nice if the government would provide the money. But given the fact that our political situation in this country is that it has been cutting money for social services consistently, but I personally believe that as a society, as tax payers, we are already putting money out there to federal government. So reallocating where we spent our money as a society should be the biggest priority. I think when you look in the pile where our tax dollars go and so much goes toward the war and towards providing domestic services that are needed. I think that's where the biggest pot of money lies and I think it needs to be reorganized and needs to go helping citizens needs. That's number one. And the number two would be philanthropy from the general public and those dollars are shrinking as the society is continuing more and more money to prioritizing funding wars (I:8)

In terms of the easing of the barriers, the informants were asked if there were ways that the state universities could be involved in Montana nonprofit professional development and training. The results show that Montana nonprofits are optimistic, but also hesitant and distrusting about whether the university system would understand the culture of Montana nonprofits and be suitable for providing the training. The following examples support this statement in explaining how the informants hope that the university system would be more involved with nonprofits, but how the informants were concerned that there would be a disconnection between the academic and practical knowledge, and question who benefits economically.

I think it would be great if universities could be involved because there should be a body who understands how people learn. And you also have very bright minds that really only the students get to benefit of those minds, really. So it would be great if the university would get more involved with nonprofits, but it has to be matched with the grounding of the body who understands the culture of nonprofits, since education system has its own culture. So it has to be incredible practical. There is not enough time and money to be academic (I:16).

Disconnection that I am concerned about is that if all the trainings are at universities or done by them, I really wanna make sure that not just academic people, but bringing in community people, and nonprofits, so really inform what the real picture is. Planning a year from now, and not just a theory, because I think if you are not in the sector, it is easy to miss the real changes that are happening in the sector. And if it is only seen as

an academic program, it won't get support from the sector. We need involvement of professors and theorists, but we really wanna have the hands-on practical applications", (I:3).

I think that the university system can have a dramatic impact in a positive way on properly training the nonprofit sector. The university system has a presence in every sector in Montana, in terms of just geographically where universities are located. So I think they would be particularly well suited to create a curriculum that is meaningful to people who work in a nonprofit sector. Understanding of course that they've got to partner with those of us who work in the nonprofit to assure that we are not just getting academic case work or just academic perspective on the nonprofit sector, but a real hands on this is how things happen in a nonprofit sector perspective (T:6).

Universities could provide guest lecture series that were not just located at the university, cause some people just won't go to the university, but they would love to hear about it (I:16).

The way that the universities could be involved is really to make it a win-win, because if they truly partner with training emphasis like ours, it needs to be something that economically advantages both party and not just the university (T:3).

When taking the seventh supposition into consideration, the results support that Montana's socio-cultural, economic and geographic features- such as the scattering of small numbers of people across the large, more rural than urban state, the lack of training budgets (among nonprofit professionals and funding organizations) and the distrust of formal institutions such as the government and the university system- create barriers that Montana nonprofit professionals have to face when seeking professional development and training. Also, weather, the lack of child care and transportation, the diversity of the sector, the feeling of isolation, and the lack of federal and public spending for social services, create barriers as well. Despite this conclusion, the results also disagree with the seventh supposition in that the socio-cultural, economic and geographical features of traveling long distances and the lack of funding are not seen as barriers in accessing training.

I think another potential advantage is that in Montana, because of how big our state is geographically, we don't hesitate to travel, as what happens sometimes in other states. People don't think anything about getting into a vehicle in Missoula and getting into Billings" (T:6).

"I think that we are having some modest success in the development of training. MNA has had some great success in attracting more funds to help underwrite trainings, because delivering it cost effectively is one of the huge challenges (T:1).

I don't mind paying for a good program, but it has to be worth it... The money is not the key issue for me, the time is (I:4).

I think it is nice that we have these trainings, we are able to go to them, and they are not too expensive. I find a lot of trainings that are free, which is excellent (I:17).

Later the results discuss social capital, collaboration, and networking in Montana nonprofit training and provide more evidence that disagrees with the seventh supposition in regards to partnerships with the state and federal government and the state universities.

5.4 Information Technology and Montana Nonprofit Professionals

The informants were asked about their experiences and opinions relating to information technology (IT) to understand how Montana nonprofit professionals utilize IT. The informants were asked if they used the internet to inform themselves about training and/or current events impacting the nonprofit sector, and if they thought that there was a need for a web page that would contain information about nonprofit training in Montana such as a calendar of up-dated events and training opportunities. The informants expressed that they use the internet to get information on training, but emphasized that it would be important to develop a detailed and up-dated calendar of training events, so that there would be a central place, in the form of a web-based clearing house, on the internet to find all training in Montana. The informants suggested that collaboration and information sharing would be important in the development of web-based information on nonprofit training, so that resources that already exist, will be more available and can be utilized and improved. Additionally, the informants mentioned how list serves, e-mails and e-newsletters, for instance, the ones that the Montana Nonprofit Association sent out monthly, were helpful in informing about training opportunities in the state and outside. The following examples further clarify the informants' responses to web-based information on nonprofit training.

A calendar would be wonderful. We were just discussing about that with my coworkers. She was going to training, but they didn't have any information, where to stay and how much it cost. So she had no way to contact that hotel in the place. That needs to be when the training is posted (I:17).

I would like to see one website that has a huge amount of information compiled. You could click on financial management, how to run a nonprofit, and best practices for lobbying and donating. And I think a centralized place to go. That's another difficult thing. I mean you get a flyer from one organization and a flyer from another

organization, and if you would have one place that you could look and see all the trainings that have been offered for nonprofits, then you can kind of scroll through and choose what works best for your organization (T:2).

If the calendar is done well. I think the question is how can you improve on that is already in existence, cause I think we all like to create new things, which is fabulous, and maybe there is something that is already existing and can be just improved. People are so tapped that it would be just too much to bring in one more new thing (I:14).

MNA has put out a calendar of events and I think that's gonna be a great resource. They also have an e-news letter. I probably use the internet more than anything else to get informed about training opportunities. And sometimes I am not even looking, but I get informed about training. Many organizations have their own e-news and list serves and I hear from them through email, cause I am on their serve list (T:1).

The informants were asked if they had participated in online classes, online seminars, or online conferences. According to the informants' responses, they were also asked about their online learning experiences or reasons why they have not participated in any online training. The results show that the informants have different opinions and experiences with online training, but they see the value of IT in bridging communications and easing the barriers, such as cost, time, and distance. The results also show how the informants believe that IT is efficient in providing more training opportunities, especially in rural areas. The following examples further illustrate the informants' diverse opinions and experiences about online training.

For me pretty dull, but very necessary. And we are really moving into that direction, like online webinars, and we are really trying to work with web conferences (I:5).

I have participated in one online seminar. It was ok. I was just doing very little bit of learning and it was more technical than I was ready for, but I certainly saw the value of it and could see that as a very positive training opportunity in the future. I think particularly when you got a group of people, and if they have time to continue the discussions after the formal part of presentation is over, it comes even richer (T:1).

There is lack of training very much within the state boundaries. So a web-based training would be really great so I could do it here in my own time. And kind of pick and choose, even though I also like some face to face (T:4).

I have not, but I know people who have. I use the internet to look for information and there are very effective online courses on nonprofit management provided by the universities, but online training takes a lot of personal motivation. I've never done it myself, but I think it is viable. You can do it on your own schedule. The value in time spend is significant (I:10).

I have and I think it was very valuable. Web-paged applications, interactive form, you can send a question and respond. I think it is very valuable breaking down the distance and bringing in trainings. I found several of them very useful (I:6).

In Montana, we need to use technology to be able to bridge the geographical large distance, but technology can put the price up. Finding the money to be on the road, or using the technology to be off the road, is our best solution (I:7).

Number one, to make sure that training is efficient so that you can keep it cost effective, online is a very good way to do that (I:13).

I think you can have very comprehensive courses online. You can put in activities and discussion into online courses and really get people thinking. My experience with online is that it is time and cost efficient and if the course is set up right there is no back to class and everybody gets to participate and there is a lot of good exchange (I:13).

I believe that online is very successful for people who are in rural areas and who wanna engage in the universities' services, but are not near by. I think there is a huge value, but personally I haven't had any experience (T:5).

I think there is a need, especially in the rural areas. And the use of internet is growing in the rural areas (I:11).

The results on the use of IT among Montana nonprofit professionals support the eighth supposition: Montana nonprofit professionals are adaptive to IT and use IT for information, advice, and training, and they think that IT can bring better communications and more opportunities to professional development and training breaking down geographical and financial barriers and easing the feeling of isolation for Montana nonprofits in small rural communities.

The following examples are presented to support the ninth supposition: The use of IT among Montana nonprofit professionals is hindered because of lack of time and funding, and technological experience, expertise, and face to face interaction. The

examples also describe the diverse opinions and experiences regarding the use of IT and online training among the informants and the importance of peer networking and changes in attitudes in regards to the use of IT.

It is really complicated. If you don't understand, you have nobody to go to right there and you can't answer the questions and go on. So I really don't care online courses (I:17).

No, I haven't. I go and hunt the information I need...but I would be open to it, but I don't have a lot of time. It would be an additional thing (I:3).

I haven't, only in college for my BA I did some online stuff. I would be interested to try it, although I might wanna get it mixed with some face to face (T:4).

My experiences with online training haven't been positive. Most computer based trainings I've had are boring, not interactive...I'm really good at teaching myself (I:14).

I personally enjoy more having relationships with people. There might be some stuff that might be useful online, but people should have to be able to meet in between the online work. So a combination of personal, because another thing you do when you are in personal courses, you develop a peer network. And if everything is online, you don't develop that network. So an online course should meet every other weekend in class between online. That would be effective (I:15).

I think online training and teleconferences are extremely valuable and I think it's not utilized enough, especially for young professionals. And when it comes to peer networking, online meetings and projects, I think there's a lot what we could be doing, but we are not doing (I:12).

I have. It's good. It depends also on how it is delivered too. If it is just online discussion, it is not effective because learning is so much more visual to me too. If it is an internet web-based program with graphics, it takes a variety to make it effective like the interaction... The more engaged you are the better the experience (I:4).

A lot of nonprofits say that we cannot afford that, but they don't wanna pay anything for training. And if they want to get better they have to pay...webinars and video training, it doesn't have to be expensive. So it's about changing mind sets (I:10).

The following examples support the tenth supposition: Montana nonprofit professionals feel that they have difficulties finding accurate and up-to-date computer-based information, advice, and training as follows.

I think the web is a cheap and easy, but just knowing where to look. Knowing where those resources are available and figuring out, which web site, where do I find that. But I use the internet a lot cause I don't have to go anywhere or pay (I:1). Personally I don't really interact, what happens, I see massive amounts of information of what people are offering by their e-newsletters and notices, but I don't read that (T:5).

Our national service participants, they don't use the internet, but they call up and ask. I am like- go to the internet! But they are waiting for someone to give that information, although they should go to our web page (I:5).

As presented previously in this section, the informants' responses on the use of IT among Montana nonprofit professionals also support the eleventh supposition: E-learning and e-communications such as web-based clearing houses, event calendars, e-list serves, e-mails, and e-newsletters are ways to strengthen collaboration and communication for Montana nonprofit professional development and training.

5.5 Collaboration and Coordination in regards to Montana Nonprofit Training

The informants were asked if they collaborated or got in contact with other nonprofit professionals or organizations when it came to training themselves or others at their organization. In the response, the informants expressed close relationships to their peers because they shared support and information networks based on trust and reciprocity which were developed openly and relatively informally as follows.

There are two to three development directors here in Missoula, who I know from on sitting in boards with them, or other sorts of collaboration. I know I can just call them and they would give me an honest answer. And I hope that I can play that role as well, share some of my expertise with people who might benefit from it. I think that place like Missoula it is based on very informally rather than having a formal gathering. If I know someone personally, and we have a good working relationship personally, it makes those kinds of things easier than simply listed as a resource (I:2).

I have organized lunch, and everybody really appreciated it. I am an open book, so I also get asked a lot to do presentations to boards and fundraising. I spend a lot of time doing that. I'm always happy to do that. I do a lot of supporting, so we chat a lot (I:12).

We actually have a number of us, executive directors, and we have got together. We drink wine. We just talk and we develop friendships, and that is helpful (I:16).

The results support the twelfth supposition: Because Montana nonprofit professionals say they have close relationships with their peers and because they have informal support and information-sharing networks that are based on trust and reciprocity, there is social capital among Montana nonprofit professionals.

The results also show that close relationships and the support and information-sharing networks among Montana nonprofit professionals were developed formally through meetings/conferences, state associations, and national organizations as follows.

My networks have developed, I think just being involved. I think it is pretty easy, once you work in a nonprofit sector. You get to just meet these people at these formalized meetings, but then you have a contact to go back and ask specific questions (I:2).

Primarily, the networks that I have built, is a network of Montana Economic Developers through the Montana Economic Developers Association. They have two conferences every year that are multi day conferences. Over a hundred economic developers get together to network with one another, and share success stories and best practices as well as learn about new programs and funding opportunities (T:6).

I really use our national service organizations. For example, the national assembly of arts agencies that is a resource for all organizations to go to. We really steal from each other regularly. And the other part of that is that underneath the national umbrella are a series of regional service organizations. For instance, we are a part of the west service. So we really have this formalized learning network (T:5).

When informants were talking about their peer networks, they emphasized how passionate, informal, and open they are about working as a nonprofit professional in Montana. The following examples support this statement and lead to the conclusion that Montana nonprofit professionals have strong ideological values such as altruism, solidarity, and collegiality.

I love being in a community based organization. I get to interact every day with many different kinds of people. I get to meet people...We connect and collaborate, and for me it is informal, peer networking, meeting for lunch, or round tables. Just to meet those people on the regular bases and have some fun conversations (I:14).

We get people like me; when I was out of college who was young and enthusiastic. I didn't have children. So I was willing to work for less money. I worked for less money in my five years in nonprofits after college than I earned when I went to college. I was making lower wages and little benefits. And today I make much less than I would have in the private sector. So I stayed in it because I loved the work I do (I:8).

If you work as a nonprofit, you'll be rich, not with money but in hundred and millions many other ways. Being a service to the world is incredible rewarding (I:16).

Montana is not a state. It s a neighborhood spread out over a huge area. It's the connections that are easy to break into, as people are more hungry for resources. A lot of times, I think it is just the openness that people have to talk to people and share what they are going through. There isn't a lot of formality. I think it is very informal approach. As far as I have seen, with few exceptions, there isn't a lot of territoriality. We had an issue in California when we were bumping into our service areas. I see Montana as a more open system (I:3).

The informants were asked what kinds of partnerships they were aware of in the development of training for nonprofit professionals in Montana. The informants were also asked if the state universities or other statewide entities should be involved in helping to address some problems in the development of training for Montana nonprofit professionals. These questions were asked to compare social capital values, such as altruism, solidarity, and collegiality among Montana nonprofit professionals with collaboration and partnerships.

The informant's responses showed that there are various entities who are involved in collaboration and partnerships regarding Montana nonprofit training. Especially, MNA is recognized as an effective and promising partner and resource in the development of nonprofit training. Also, the state universities and the state and federal governments are recognized among many other associations, institutions, and individual nonprofit organizations¹⁸. The following examples support these statements and show how Montana nonprofit professionals are willing to work together and with MNA, for-profit organizations, the university system, and governmental agencies.

¹⁸ Missoula Nonprofit Network, Governors Office, Department of Commerce, Department of Health and Human Services, Association of Nature Center Administrators, American Museum of Natural History, AmeriCore, Women's Center, Missoula Donors Network, Yellowstone Resource Center, Montana Association of Symphony Orchestras, Montana Performing Arts Consortium, Montana Art Gallery Directors Association, Montana Community with the Humanities, Montana Community, Department of Commerce, Commission on Community Service, Community Building Institute, Association for Fundraising Professionals, Boys and Girls Club, Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch Foundation, Consulting Businesses. Universities in Missoula, Billings, Bozeman, Great Falls, Office for Civic Engagement at The University of Montana, State CPA Society, Montana State BAR Association, Campus Compact, Nonprofit Development Partnership in the Flathead Valley Community College, Sustainability Fund, Northwest Nonprofit Resources, Hospital, United Way, Association for Fundraisers, American Society for Training and Development, Big Sky EDA., First Interstate Bank., Montana Economic Developers Network, Job Service, Montana Shares, Bozeman Tech Center, Chamber of Commerce, Libraries, Montana Association of Chamber Executives, Montana Society of Association Executives, Council of State Chambers, Council of State Manufacturing Association, Society for Human Resource Management, Rocky Mountain College, Leadership Institute.

We make our facility available to partners. And sometimes, having a neutral territory where people can meet, like the library here that the Missoula Nonprofit Network has used. The Missoula Nonprofit Network is also looking at having a resource library, so we have offered that because we have a library here, that it can be housed here rather than having it to adjust to a public library. You know, here's an open house and open invitation (I:1).

I think for our state, MNA is probably the biggest partnership for training. I think there are also quite a few consultants as me that are working with partnerships. There's probably also the university system. I am teaching right now over at the MSU, and I know the UM is working on projects (I:13).

We are working right now with the MSU Billings, and we work with MNA. We are willing to partner with whoever who feels they would be a good partner (T:3).

My role is to try to foster relationships and partnerships between artists and at organizations in the state to help their businesses. We are trying to foster opportunities for people to work together between economics, government, and nonprofit associations (T:5).

We are pushing people to work together. Local partnerships, state and federal partnerships, and there are the universities in the state. So I think there is a pretty good cross section of partnerships (I:5).

I think there is fertile ground for developing more partnerships...I am a huge believer in internships as tremendous opportunity not for students to get training only, but to get exposure to the fact that for their career, there is an opportunity to work in nonprofits (T:1).

We wanna create this partnership/institute system with the university and the university system puts some deadlines to force you do what you need to (I:10).

The results agree with the thirteenth supposition: Because Montana nonprofit professionals perceive that they have strong ideological values such as altruism, solidarity, and collegiality, and because they are willing to work together (and with MNA, for-profit organizations, the university system and governmental agencies), social capital becomes essential in collaboration and partnerships, which is ideal for improving nonprofit professional development and training opportunities in Montana. Later, the results (pp.63-4) explain more about the relationship between the university system and Montana nonprofit professionals. However, the results also disagree with the thirteenth

supposition in that informants thought that Montana nonprofit professionals do not partner or work together well due to competition for scarce resources as follows.

I find it difficult in Missoula, because there are lot of us that do the same thing, and they compete without partnering (I:1).

I think that they all don't work together or collaborate really well, especially when it gets to money...Each organization does that separately (I:9).

Additionally, the results show how relationships can damage the Montana nonprofit community and how nonprofit professionals may feel limited from expanding their training opportunities outside their sector as follows.

Relationships can be a weakness if someone doesn't like someone, it can really break down the nonprofit community (I:6).

Maybe one place is that we don't look at the business and for-profit community to help training for nonprofits. We shouldn't just limit our ability to the nonprofit sector. For instance, a bank can do a training session... So big corporations do have the ability to train workers and I wonder how much this could be used for nonprofits statewide (I:10).

I think nonprofits need a little help in realizing how to partner without feeling so overwhelmed. So you really need to help folks to change that mind set by helping them see that if they actually expand their circle, they will have more help. It won't be difficult, it will be less difficult. So I guess nonprofits need help in how to engage the civic opportunities and the partnerships (T:5).

Therefore, the results partially support the fourteenth supposition: Because Montana nonprofit professionals expect their partners to share values such as solidarity and collegiality, Montana nonprofit professionals are less likely to partner with for-profit organizations or governmental agencies.

The informants were asked if they had encountered any kinds of coordination problems in the development of training for nonprofit professionals in Montana. The informants were also asked if they had any suggestions regarding how the training for

Montana nonprofit professionals could be better coordinated or collaborated. Answers to these questions emphasized that there are coordination problems in the development of training due to poor communication, which could be improved upon. The following paragraphs further explain how poor communication and coordination could be improved upon.

According to respondents, better communication is needed to develop and maintain a central entity, which would share the information about all nonprofit training statewide. The informants stressed that they believe there are good training resources available, but the problem is letting people know that they exist. Thus, as illustrated previously in the results, (pp. 52-3), a central entity is needed for instance, to send out e-news letters and maintain an updated, web-based training calendar as follows.

Well, I do see some problems. And my guess is that there is probably training opportunities that are currently happening in Montana that me and other nonprofits are not aware of. If we were aware of, we perhaps would take advantage of it. So there probably needs to be more coordination between nonprofits, perhaps through organizations like the Montana Nonprofit Association. Just to make sure that we won't miss opportunities that do come to Montana. And to utilize this kind of clearing information to all nonprofits is pretty important (T:6).

Respondents also suggested that better communication is needed in the coordination of training to avoid misunderstandings and duplication. The informants emphasized that the problem is that the training is expensive and it tends to take place at the same time, on the same topics, and at the same places. A physically centralized place, where everybody can go and have large events, is needed as well. Also, major cities should improve their communications with each other and with other towns statewide, and start thinking beyond their own borders, so that information and knowledge can be shared more openly.

Well, there are some conflicts or coordination problems, there's a fair amount of overlap, and I know the cost is definitely a factor there (T:4).

Statewide, there are always coordination problems: finding the right day and the location, where do you hold the session, what facilities are big enough to handle 500 to 300 people. That is huge statewide. Also, I think you find locally territorialism within the nonprofit organizations (I:13).

Certainly, thinking of an individual nonprofit who is hosting training and making it available to other nonprofits, would be useful. And support to bring training to another community would be helpful (I:6).

According to respondents, better communication is needed to inform about the quality/level of training, so that training will attract the most potential participants and thus become a vivid and useful learning environment. For instance, executive directors suggested peer roundtable discussions, in which ideas and experiences can be shared openly. Additionally, the knowledge given in the training should be implemented with the culture of nonprofits in Montana in mind.

For me personally, a very powerful learning environment was in the training where the entire group had the same level of experience and understanding and had the desire to develop their skills to the best they could be. There was no effort that had to be done to bring everybody to the same page. So that learning community became so inspiring and challenging to me, because I always wanted to make sure that we would shine. So we had this wonderful healthy competition (T:5).

I have a group of executive directors and we have some shared, common interests on how to make our organization work more effectively. So to basically have that working group meeting in a structured way, monthly, to have discussions, problem solving and exchange, has been helpful (T:1).

Whoever would administrate the training they should have a very strong background in nonprofits and have to understand the culture of nonprofits and learning. Maybe the Montana Nonprofit Association tied together with the University could be a parent of what is the newest thinking about the way how people learn and what is the culture of the nonprofits (I:16).

According to the informants, concerns about the coordination in the development of training are financial or geographical due to distance and travel. For instance, training

should be coordinated with a major funding partner so that the training can be cost effective, but also valued by nonprofit professionals.

I think our problem is only logistical. We are not gonna be able to change the size of our state or the prize of the gas. But we do need support to offer people to travel (I:6).

To me the most effective way would be training for increasing capacity that would be in relation to a major funding partner. There would be many grants too, not only cover the tuition and travel, but also the funding would be available to write off some staff time. I think the most important would be giving us resources to be able to bargain on training, which we don't have (I:16).

I think there is a tremendous need in the state for the smaller chambers and associations to have a financial resource. Time is definitely an issue too, but even if they would have the time, they don't have the money. On the other hand, you don't wanna make it completely subsidized either, because people have to have value, their own money in it. But that's really the coordination problem. It is all over the state and it is hard for some of the other folks to get to it (T:4).

Additionally, the informants' responses showed that the university system is seen as an important resource for Montana nonprofits in terms of research, information sharing, and continuing education. The following examples support this statement and describe how universities can be more involved in improving the nonprofit training and professional development statewide by sharing information and building communication networks and by providing training such as degree or certificate programs, workshops, seminars, and courses.

I think it seems like the University might be a place that would make sense to create a clearing house information or to manage that (I:2).

I think there are a lot of good resources available and I think just letting people know what and where the resources are and having a website, a calendar...The university, because of their networking presence, can really be a leader in doing that (I:1).

Basic marketing is needed, and the University could be the big name under the training (I:5).

There are people within the universities that are really experts within this field too...I think there are resources within the system that a lot of people don't even know about, and that could be better brought to light. The university tends to lend some credibility

too, a weight to a person when they bring them in. I would be more happy to go to a university related program, than if I would just get the same invitation and not know the people behind it (I:4).

Universities could provide the actual certificate program. They could do continuing education courses, a series of courses, night classes...just timely topics to keep people aware what is happening outside their very specialized niche (I:7).

Their whole theme is learning, so the universities should help in providing the training. It shouldn't have to be a degree program, but continuing education union, and workshops and seminars (T:4).

I think having a degree program that is more formal BA and MA level thing. Those are great ways that university can support nonprofit sector. Research is definitely big part of it (I:3).

When the informants talked about the involvement of the universities in improving Montana nonprofit professional development and training, the informants stressed the differences between rural and urban nonprofit management. The informants emphasized that there is a lack of expertise in rural nonprofit management, and the state university system should be involved with nonprofits and become leader in rural nonprofit management as follows.

To me it is almost insanity that none of the universities has picked up nonprofits, because it is a hugely expanding sector in our economy. Through my education, there seems to be very little rural nonprofits. And I think there is a huge difference between the big urban nonprofits where a lot of resources and education is focused (I:13).

I think one of the challenges is that the state of Montana and the university system have only recently become more engaged and focused in developing curricula and degree offerings for nonprofits...So the negative thing is that the university is late in entering, but thank goodness it is entering (T:1).

There is a lack of expertise in rural organizing for nonprofits, nationally and locally. And I think the universities could kind of tap into that and become experts in rural nonprofit management, because their challenges are different, their strengths and requirements for functioning well are different than a nonprofit in Denver. So I think Montana has an opportunity to become expert in rural nonprofits that should apply to all Rocky Mountain states (I:6).

5.6 The Improvement of Montana Nonprofit Professional Training

To understand how Montana nonprofit professional development and training can be improved it is important to understand in what kind of organizational environments Montana nonprofit professionals are embedded in. When looking at Montana nonprofit professionals and their organizations through the theory on organizational behavior, the results show that Montana nonprofit professionals perceive themselves similar. As illustrated previously in the results, Montana nonprofit professionals work in organizations that have similar organizational environments such as small staffs and budgets, values based on altruism, solidarity, and collegiality, and programs that are designed to promote public benefits and meet the needs of the community and the larger society. Montana nonprofit professionals say that they are sensitive to local norms and values such as close relationships and in-person communications, and these characteristics of Montana nonprofit professionals are found more often in rural than urban organizational environments. Also, Montana nonprofit professionals say that they know each other well and are relatively willing to work together and collaborate with various partners such as businesses and public entities to improve nonprofit professional development and training. Thus, the results support the fifteenth supposition: Montana nonprofit professionals are more likely to be similar to each other, because they work in organizations that have similar organizational environments and formal institutional elements such as resources, ideology, programs, norms, and values, which give Montana nonprofit organizations their common, more rural than urban, nature.

When summarizing the previous results and analyzing Montana nonprofit professionals and their organizational environments in a broader context, the data

supports the sixteenth supposition: Montana nonprofit professionals are more likely to be similar to each other because they have similar socio-cultural, economic and geographic characteristics and challenges as other rural nonprofit professionals and thus they perceive that they differ from other more urban nonprofit professionals in other states. Thus, the improvement of Montana nonprofit professional development and training must be sensitive to Montana's nonprofit culture and recognize the challenges that Montana nonprofits are facing in their daily operations.

Despite the similarities among Montana nonprofit professionals identified in this study, the results illustrate that Montana nonprofit professionals have various opinions and different needs when it comes to professional development and training. As far as improvement of nonprofit training opportunities are concerned, Montana nonprofit professional development and training opportunities should serve different audiences among Montana nonprofit professionals in regards to organizational location and service area, individual job position, and years of experience. Also, according to the informants' responses, Montana nonprofit professionals are more likely to prefer participatory, in-depth, 'developmental', roundtable meetings, where learning happens with 'like minded' colleagues with similar 'rural' occupational profiles. In the results, there is diversity among Montana nonprofit professionals also because they use multiple means of training and have diverse opinions about the barriers, partnerships, and coordination in terms of Montana nonprofit professional development and training. The diversity in the results explains how Montana nonprofit professionals perceive themselves as active and creative individuals in satisfying their training needs. One informant characterized this phenomenon in a similar way.

Creativity or adaptability or whatever you call it. We've brought back the programs that are done somewhere else and re-taught it here in Montana. I think it has been a creative way of addressing some of those training needs, even though it is not as good as having the program (I:4).

In conclusion, the results support the seventeenth supposition: Because Montana nonprofit professionals actively utilize human agency and resources, there is a diversity of attitudes, practices, and opinions among Montana nonprofit professionals.

In the result section (pp.40-4, 62), it is noticeable that peer networks are emphasized in various areas in regards to the training and professional development of Montana nonprofit professionals. Peer networks provided access to needed information, advice, and training. Peer networks were seen as a useful training method and important in information sharing, cooperation, and collaboration. Thus, based on the previous results, a conclusion can be drawn that partially supports the eighteenth supposition: Individuals' peer networks can be better utilized in bringing improvements to Montana nonprofit professional development and training.

The results explain the uncertainties and constraints that Montana nonprofit professionals face in professional development and training. Montana nonprofit professionals express they have time and resource constraints, which bring uncertainties for success in the future. The unique Montana geography and demography create barriers that are inevitable or difficult to overcome. It is impossible to change the size of the state and of communities or to ignore the limited audience, long distances, or lack of proximity and funding in the improvement of training. Also, the feeling among Montana nonprofit professionals that they are different from more urban nonprofits, makes them even more isolated from other nonprofits, for instance, in the east coast of the United States.

However, the results show that under these unique uncertainties and constraints, Montana

nonprofit professionals tend to share a feeling of togetherness and they have reasons to pool their resources and utilize social capital. The feeling of isolation from other nonprofits and the feeling of togetherness among Montana nonprofits could be used to attract national foundations which are more likely than in-state foundations to invest in professional development and training (ref. p. 47). Thus, the results partially support the nineteenth supposition: Montana nonprofit professionals work to differentiate themselves from other out-of-state organizations, to survive, obtain resources, and compete.

5.6.1 Suggestions for Improvement of Montana Nonprofit Professional Training

The future Montana nonprofit professional development and training could be improved in response to the identified nature and needs of Montana nonprofit professionals in this study. As the results of this study indicate, Montana nonprofit professionals perceive themselves as qualified workers and caring citizens. They say they are familiar with each other and with their communities. They feel they share a common openness and are dedicated to fulfilling their missions to improve community life across the state. However, these individuals say they lack resources, especially when seeking training, career development, and financial support, and they most likely rely on their close relationships to stay efficient. The results describe how Montana nonprofit professionals are relatively willing to work together and build partnerships to improve professional development and training opportunities, because without adequate training and development experiences they will not be able to reach their fullest potential as leaders and employees. Thus, in the improvement of Montana nonprofit professional development and training, the potential in close relationships and shared networks of

knowledge should be maximized and brought into future training opportunities. For instance, informal roundtable meetings and/or interactive, creative, and intensive, one or two-day in-depth workshops and seminars with practical implementations and local experts would be ideal ways to provide training among Montana nonprofit professionals.

It is important to note that findings also indicate that training is one part of the larger picture of continuous organizational development, improvement and change, and will not by itself lead to a more effective nonprofit organization or sector unless all of the needed actors and resources are available, as illustrated by the following remarks from the study informant.

I kind of question the whole assumption that we can start with training. What I'm interested in is organizational change not organizational knowledge. Organizational change comes from knowledge, but it does not stop there. So training, in my experience, it's good to get together and talk about other ideas, best practices. But when you get back to your office, you forget and you don't implement what was in the training. My argument is that training is part of continuous change and in order to take place you have to have all the actors in the room together as a starting place. I think it is very difficult for training to be seen as the influence. I think it is only one step in the continuum that leads to a more effective nonprofit, basically, through a more applied knowledge, facilitators, consultants, it needs all this...so training often only teaches you what you don't know, but it does not result in itself into a change that we are hoping for (I:3).

The results explain that improvement in Montana nonprofit professional development and training depends upon collaboration among various actors. In the results, nonprofit professionals need help in creating partnerships outside of their sector to expand their training opportunities. Montana geography and demographics create barriers for providing local training, which would reach enough participants and be cost effective, especially for nonprofits in small and rural communities. Unless resources are pooled together among universities, nonprofits, businesses, and public organizations, associations, and individual actors, the improvement of nonprofit training will be difficult

to reach. The development of nonprofit training depends also on in-state and out-of state foundations and state government. The challenge is to attract these entities to fund capacity building and development, of which training is an obvious part. If more funding can be brought to Montana nonprofit organizations, they will become more efficient in fulfilling their missions, which will also leave more time and resources for professional development and training.

In addition to collaboration and increased financing, the minds of local citizens, funders, and nonprofit professionals must be changed so that the importance of Montana nonprofit sector and nonprofit training will be recognized and prioritized, and the improvement of Montana nonprofit professional development and training will gain support and succeed. The Montana Nonprofit Association has been successful in strengthening Montana's nonprofit sector and nonprofit training, and there is a rising awareness that current training opportunities must be improved and utilized to build a stronger, more competitive and professionalized Montana nonprofit sector. When looking at the future of Montana nonprofit professional development and training, one informant stated.

It will ultimately, sooner or later, create a stronger nonprofit sector. It will increase the visibility, and people are doing more and better work. I see it helping tremendously, to have more training and professional development (I:7).

The results indicate that the use of information technology (IT) can help to improve the current inadequate and pricey training opportunities. IT can reach nonprofits in small and rural communities and break down geographical and financial barriers. Since Montana nonprofit professionals are receptive to IT and use it for information, advice,

and training, IT (and resources within it that already exist) should be utilized and improved to bring better communication and more opportunities to professional development and training for Montana nonprofits. E-learning, e-communications and e-information sharing such as online courses, video conferencing, web-based clearing houses, event calendars, e-list serves, and e-newsletters are ways to strengthen the collaboration, communication, and training among Montana nonprofit professionals. For instance, a detailed and up-dated calendar of nonprofit professional development and training opportunities must be provided and maintained online, so that there will be a central place in the internet to find all training in Montana. Moreover, to increase the use of IT in a training model, face to face interactions, cost effective prices, equipment, and expertise must be included and provided in online nonprofit professional development and training.

According to the results, the state university system should be more involved in improving the training of Montana nonprofit professionals because none of the state's higher education institutions appear to have taken seriously the large, diverse, and expanding Montana nonprofit sector. The state university system could be a more important resource for nonprofits in terms of research, information sharing, partnering, and continuing education. As the results suggest (pp. 63-4), the universities and other higher education institutions in the state can be involved in the improvement of Montana nonprofit professional development and training by investing in rural nonprofit research, gaining expertise in rural nonprofit management, and supporting statewide efforts in providing continuous education for nonprofits.

6. CONCLUSION

This study gave an in-depth view on the nature of nonprofit professional development and training in Montana and examined the similarities and differences between rural-urban professionals and nonprofit organizations in the United States. The study described the skills and responsibilities of Montana nonprofit professionals and identified the existing training resources including the use of information technology for Montana nonprofit professionals. The effort was to fill a gap in the recent sociological research that has not yet been able to theorize or adequately address the nature of nonprofit organizations. As questions about nonprofit professionalization and continuous learning have been left out of theories and research, this study looked at nonprofit professional development and training needs in regards to rural settings, values, attitudes, culture, problems, and challenges.

With the help of relevant descriptive literature and theories on organizational behavior, social capital, and open systems, I was able to approach the research problem and questions by making research suppositions, which guided the analysis. The unit of analysis was individuals embedded in their organizational environments. The effort was to interpret nonprofit professionals and their organizations by integrating holistic and individualistic approaches, emphasizing human agency, and looking at formal structures in organizations as an open system. In this way, I analyzed the nonprofit professionals' actions, beliefs, interests, and their organizations in regards to their geographic, economic, and socio-cultural environments.

The limitation of this study is that the informants who participated in this study were not randomly selected. Although it was useful and somewhat convenient to recruit experienced Montana nonprofit professionals as informants (with the help of the directors from OCE and MNA), the selection neglected the perspectives of young nonprofit professionals, who were under presented in the selection. Overall, the selection does not include a great variety of informants with different backgrounds from different places. Most informants came from major cities in Western Montana, while Eastern Montana and very rural/remote areas were not presented in the study. Additionally, since nonprofits operate in diverse fields, it was difficult, due to financial and time constraints, to include representatives from all nonprofit service areas. For instance, the study does not include nonprofit organizations in religion, aging, technology, or disability services. Thus, the results of this study cannot be generalized. Some nonprofits were overlooked and some features may have ignored. The results are sensitive to multiple meanings and interpretations because subjectively produced information is always questionable.

Another limitation of this study is that it lacks comparative evidence. It would have been interesting to analyze and compare the informants' perceptions and differences between young and experienced, rural and urban, women and men among, or between executive directors and staffs. This study does not, however, show reliable evidence about the differences between nonprofit professionals in Montana. Bias that may have influenced the results is that before the analysis, I had already set research suppositions on the basis of certain approaches and theories of the literature. When analyzing the data, I may have ignored other questions and issues that were not included in the suppositions, but would have been somewhat related to the research topic. Additionally, the unit of

analysis was individuals embedded in their organizational settings. However, the empirical data did not provide enough information related to the institutional theory. To make reliable findings about nonprofit organizations, I should have modified my questions differently in the interview guide. I also should have interviewed at least two nonprofit professionals from the same organization and used organizations as units of analysis. In this way, I could have been able to produce more findings on the structure, uniqueness, and commonality of Montana nonprofit organizations.

Thus, I conclude that this study does not strongly link with the institutional theory including holistic and individualistic approaches. Neither, the results link strongly with the open systems theory in the use of technology in organizational context. For instance, this study does not enable the integration of objective and subjective theoretical approaches in technology assessment, and does not show evidence about the interaction between the organizational environment, individuals, and technology. Therefore, the data resulting from this study is more related to the social capital theory and the descriptive literature. For instance, the results show strong evidence on how shared networks of trust and reciprocity among Montana nonprofit professionals provide access to needed information, resources, and support. The results also describe characteristics of rural nonprofit professionals and their organizations and explain how they differ from their urban counterparts. Lastly, the results explain IT training offerings and barriers for Montana nonprofit professionals.

Despite the limitations, the twenty-three interviews became rich and the data responded, agreed, disagreed, and added to each research supposition, revealed new findings, and answered the research questions. As a result, the findings supported most,

12 of 19, research suppositions (first, second, fifth, sixth, eight- ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth, fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth), and partially supported three suppositions (fourteenth, eighteenth and nineteenth). For four research suppositions, the data was conflicting. In the result section (pp.20-1), data both supported and rejected these suppositions (third, fourth, seventh, thirteenth). The following paragraphs summarize the findings and describe the nature of nonprofit professional development and training in Montana.

Montana nonprofit professionals use multiple means of professional development and training resources, including literature, IT, formalized training, and especially peer networks, because nonprofit professional development and training opportunities in Montana are generally inadequate. The current professional development and training opportunities are almost nonexistent, especially for small, rural communities, whose professionals feel isolated from resource opportunities and training. There are very few opportunities for accessing national conferences and local, in-depth training. Finding resources and accessing current training is problematic due to geographical distances and weather, and lack of funding, time, staff, childcare, and transportation. Despite the close relationships, the results show a lack of collaboration among Montana nonprofits and available resources for nonprofit training and development are unequally distributed in the state, for instance, due to lack of coordination, funding, and potential audience. Training often lacks rural nonprofit expertise and is often geared towards urban areas. Also, the university system has not provided enough professional development and training opportunities.

Despite the gaps in current training opportunities, there is a rising awareness of the fact that current training opportunities can be improved to build a stronger professional nonprofit sector. Thus, nonprofit professional development and training opportunities in Montana are developing, for instance, with help from the Montana Nonprofit Association. Also, Montana nonprofit professionals are becoming more aware of the importance of training and are interested in moving towards a new level of professionalization to stay competitive and efficient in fulfilling their missions. However, the data suggest that Montana nonprofit professionals construct a different way of professionalization through their peer networks than what was taught in their formal education and have learned their skills mostly on the job: learning by doing.

Results show that Montana nonprofit professionals present themselves as engaged citizens, who dedicate and prioritize their limited resources for serving the community, which leaves fewer resources such as time and funding for professional development and training. Montana nonprofit professionals perceive that they have unique characteristics that are suitable to rural settings, culture, and values such as small community size, personal communications, and close relationships and thus they are more likely to differ from their more urban counterparts in other states. Therefore, the data suggest that Montana nonprofit professionals share many similar experiences and expertise with other rural workers and that training emerging from an urban context does not fit the rural community and has to be modified. Also, Montana nonprofit professionals think they rely more on collegiality and close peer relationships than formalized training, which provides a personal and informal form of learning and access to needed information, advice, and training. This informal and open style of Montana nonprofit professionals suggests that

rationality is not the sole basis of their relationships and professional development and training.

The results show that Montana nonprofit professionals think they have few formal, in-person training opportunities due to fewer resources, smaller staffs, and budgets. The geography, demographics, and the culture of Montana nonprofits create barriers in accessing training as well. For instance, the relative cost of providing training in Montana is more than it would be in other (more urban) states because the critical mass of individuals who would take advantage of the training in Montana is limited, especially in rural, remote areas. Other barriers include the feeling that Montana is different and thus isolated from rest of the country and that training is not deeply embedded in Montana nonprofit culture, and thus not seen as part of the core of organizational responsibilities. Furthermore, there is a lot of diversity within Montana nonprofit sector and thus it is difficult to get nonprofits together from different places and service areas to participate in training. Due to the smaller number and budgets of Montana's funding organizations in comparison to other states, Montana's funders often prioritize resources to programs and not to capacity building and training. However, Montana nonprofit professionals and their organizations should start to understand that training is an important part of their budgets. A barrier or challenge is also that, until recently, there has not been a statewide nonprofit association that was committed to strengthening Montana nonprofit sector including nonprofit professional development and training. Additionally, greater recognition of the important role of the sector is needed, because many people do not understand the importance that nonprofits play on Montana's economy and people's well-being.

The results indicate that there are diverse opinions and experiences among Montana nonprofit professionals regarding whether they are interested in the use of IT, but that they use IT for information, advice, and training, and they perceive that IT can bring better communications and more opportunities to professional development and training, breaking down geographical and financial barriers. However, the use of IT among Montana nonprofit professionals is hindered by lack of time, funding, and technological experience, expertise, and face to face interaction. In the results, there is a significant need expressed for a detailed and up-dated calendar of nonprofit professional development and training opportunities.

Data from the study indicate that better communication is needed to coordinate nonprofit professional development and training opportunities, and to increase access and participation, because training resources that are available in the state are not known statewide among the potential audience. Thus, better coordination is needed to develop and maintain a central entity, which would share the information about nonprofit training statewide. Better communication is needed also to avoid misunderstandings and duplicates, to increase information sharing, and to inform about the quality of training, since nonprofit professionals with different career profiles have different training needs. Also, training should be coordinated with a major funding partner so that training could be cost effective and accessible.

In the results, Montana nonprofit professionals report that they have close relationships to their peers and they are willing to work together and with other organizations, because they have strong ideological values such as altruism, solidarity, and collegiality. The data suggest that strong ideological values are partly a response to

the limited availability of resources and are influenced by particular rural and nonprofit professional norms. Thus, there is great potential among Montana nonprofits, the university system, government agencies, and other associations to build stronger collaborative partnerships to improve coordination, increase access, and participation among various actors and organizations in regards to future nonprofit professional development and training in Montana.¹⁹

When looking at the sociological research that has already been done on nonprofit organizations and rural-urban professionals, the findings of this study show importance in that nonprofit professionals and their organizations tend to be diverse. It is difficult to make predictions or generalizations about their behavior and thus further research about any issues involving the nonprofit sector in the U.S. is valuable. Since sociological literature on research and theories of nonprofit organizations is only recently developing and expanding, I want to bring up a suggestion for future research and raise the question about the future improvement of nonprofit professional development and training. It would be interesting to explore the nonprofit professional perceptions and organizational behavior in an actual training setting. It would be interesting to see if nonprofit professionals would change their attitudes and behavior about the professional development and training, when participating in the training. Also, it would be interesting to find out how collaboration between nonprofit organizations, the university system, and the government works out in practice, and if social capital becomes more essential in rural than in urban collaborations. Thus, further research on the nonprofit professional

¹⁹ The results of this research will support planning a collaborative program delivery model coordinated by The University of Montana's American Humanics program, the Montana Nonprofit Association, Governor's Office for Community Service, and other statewide organizations involved in training and professional development targeting the needs of the nonprofit sector in Montana.

development and training would focus on the evaluation of the collaboration and training between rural-urban nonprofit organizations, the university system, and the government agencies. The comparative research methodology would be based on focus groups, observations, and experiments in organizational settings.

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Appendices

- Appendix A Email Contact Script
- Appendix B Telephone Call Contact Script
- Appendix C Interview Questions
- Appendix D Participant Information and Consent Form
- Appendix E Verbal Consent Form

Appendix A Email Contact Script

Dear (recipient's name)

Please, let me introduce myself first. My name is Jenni Pohjoispuro and I am a graduate student in Sociology at The University of Montana. The reason why I am contacting you is the following:

I'm conducting a project on training needs of nonprofit professionals in Montana. The purpose is to make an assessment of what Montana currently has to offer when it comes to training of nonprofit professionals, and what could be improved in meeting the training needs. The aim is also to understand the barriers that Montana nonprofits face in receiving adequate training and examine how training and professional development opportunities could be better coordinated at state level in order to increase access and participation.

My plan is to interview about 25 Montana nonprofit professionals: directors, managers, staff, board members and consultants of nonprofit organizations. It will be important to hear experiences and opinions from professionals in different fields with different backgrounds. Therefore, I am hoping that you or one of the members of your organization would have the time and interest to be one of my informants. I obtained your contact information through the Montana Nonprofit Association, the Office for Civic Engagement at the University of Montana, and the internet.

If you would like to participate in the project and the possible interview could take place during the next few weeks, I would be happy to talk to you more about further details, for instance, where to meet and when. Moreover, I will have Participant Information and Consent Form for you, before the interview will take place, in order to protect your rights as an interviewee. The whole interview session would take about an hour. The interview data will remain secure and anonymous and the audio-taping is required. If you disagree on audio-taping the interview will not take place.

I understand that you may have many responsibilities and your time is valuable. Thus, I want you to understand that participating in this project is voluntary.

I appreciate your response

Sincerely,

Jenni Pohjoispuro

If you have any questions about the study contact the study director: Jenni Pohjoispuro at (406) 243 2586, jennipohjoispuro@hotmail.com or the faculty supervisor, Professor Kathy Kuipers at (406) 243-4381, kathy.kuipers@umontana.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Chair of the IRB through the University of Montana Research Office at (406) 243 6670.

Appendix B Telephone Call Contact Script

Good Morning/ Good afternoon (recipient's name),

Please, let me introduce myself first. My name is Jenni Pohjoispuro and I am a graduate student in Sociology at the University of Montana. I hope you would have some time for me to tell you why I am contacting you.

I'm conducting a project on training needs of nonprofit professionals in Montana. The purpose is to make an assessment of what Montana currently has to offer when it comes to training of nonprofit professionals, and what could be done in meeting the training needs. The aim is also to understand the barriers that Montana nonprofits face in receiving adequate training and examine how training and professional development opportunities could be better coordinated at state level in order to increase access and participation.

My plan is to interview about 25 Montana nonprofit professionals: directors, managers, staff, board members and consultants of nonprofit organizations. It will be important to hear experiences and opinions from professionals in different fields with different backgrounds. Therefore, I am hoping that you or one of the members of your organization would have the time and interest to be one of my informants. I obtained your contact information through the Montana Nonprofit Association, the Office for Civic Engagement at the University of Montana and the internet.

I assume that you have many responsibilities and your time is valuable. So I want you to understand that participation in this project is voluntary. But would you have interest in participating and hearing a little bit more about the interview?

If the informant agrees on participating she or he will be told the following:

Thank you for your interest. So the interview data will remain secure and anonymous, but the audio-taping is required. If you disagree on audio-taping the interview will not take place. However, what would be a good time for you to meet up for an interview? I would be happy to meet you in your office in person, unless there is any other place that you would prefer such as a public café or library. If you prefer doing the interview over by the phone, I would be happy to do that as well. The whole interview session will take about an hour. I also will have the Participant Information and Consent Form for you, which explains more about your rights as an interviewee before the interview will take place.

If you have any questions about the study you may contact me. My name is Jenni Pohjoispuro and my phone number is (406) 243 2586. You can also contact my faculty supervisor, if any questions, her name is Professor Kathy Kuipers and her phone number is (406) 243-4381. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Chair of the IRB through The University of Montana Research Office at (406) 243 6670.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to seeing you/ talking with you. Have a good day, bye bye.

If the informant disagrees on participating she or he will be told the following:

I understand, thank you for your time. And if you have any questions about the study you may contact me. My name is Jenni Pohjoispuro and my phone number is (406) 243 2586. You can also contact my faculty supervisor, if any questions, her name is Professor Kathy Kuipers and her phone number is (406) 243-4381. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Chair of the IRB through The University of Montana Research Office at (406) 243 6670.

Have a good day, bye bye.

Appendix C Interview Questions

First I would be interested in hearing about your occupation:

1. Tell me about an average day for you in your job- for instance, if you could tell me about the three most important tasks that you perform in your job?
2. What is your job title?
3. How long have you been in your current position?
4. What is your educational background?
5. How have you gained the skills and knowledge you need to do your work here effectively? (e.g. school, learn by doing, professional development/training?)

Next I would like to ask you about training and professional development resources and the different needs that they might serve:

6. What are some of the training and professional development resources that you have used to help you better do your job?
7. What are some of the training and professional development resources that you have used to help you in working with others? (get along, network, share information, communication, etc.)
8. What are some of the training and professional development resources that you have used to give you more information on nonprofit management issues in your field (industry/service area/what ever)?
9. a) How would you describe the training and professional development resources that are currently available? (For you and other nonprofits, locally and statewide?)
b) Do you feel like there is a lack of training in Montana?
10. a) What other training and professional development resources would you use if they were available to you?
b) How often would you want/need to access them?

Next I would like to ask about training relating to nonprofit management and hear how your organization is involved in providing the nonprofit management training.

11. Does your organization provide any sort of training related to working in a nonprofit organization to people in the community outside of your organization? If so, what are they? How often are they offered?

12. Does your organization allocate resources for training and education programs that are available to you? If so, what are they? How are/might they be helpful?

Next I would like to ask you some questions training methods and barriers and therefore I have another table which I will show you soon, but before that:

13. a) In your experience, what kind of training methods do you learn best from and why?
14. Have you ever participated in online classes, online seminars, or online conferences? If yes, how was that learning experience/method for you? If not, why not?
15. What do you think about online training (would you be interested in credit courses or certificate programs at graduate or undergraduate levels)?
16. a) What barriers do you or other nonprofits face in accessing adequate training in Montana?
b) What could be done to ease the barriers (either internally or statewide)?
(If the answer is needing more money then ask where it would come from)

Next, I would like to hear your experiences relating to the information technology and collaboration in the nonprofit sector in Montana

17. Do you use the internet to inform yourself about training and/or current events impacting the nonprofit sector? Why? Why not?
18. Would a Web page that contains information about nonprofit training in Montana be useful for you? For example, a calendar of up-dated events, seminars, workshops, and courses? Why? Why not?
19. What kinds of partnerships are you aware of in the development of training for nonprofit professionals in Montana?
20. Have you encountered any kinds of coordination problems in the development of training for nonprofit professionals in Montana? If yes, how could these problems have been avoided?
21. a) How could the training for nonprofit professionals be better coordinated or collaborated in your geographic region and/or training topic areas?
b) What would it look like? What would the coordination be based on?
22. Do you collaborate or get in contact with other professionals or organizations when it comes to training yourself or others at your organization? How and why?

Lastly, I would like to ask few more wrap up questions.

23. What are the current strengths and positive things about training and professional development for nonprofit professionals in Montana?
24. What are the problems or negative things about the current state of training and professional development opportunities for nonprofit professionals in Montana?
25. Are there ways universities in Montana could address some of these problems?
26. Are there other statewide entities that should also be involved in helping to address these problems? If so, who are they?

Is there anything else that you would like to add or tell me more about?

Appendix D Participant Information and Consent Form

PROJECT TITLE: TRAINING NEEDS OF NONPROFIT PROFESSIONALS IN MONTANA

Project Director: Jenni Pohjoispuro, M.S.; Department of Sociology, The University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812; Phone (406) 243 2586; email: jennipohjoispuro@hotmail.com

Faculty Supervisor: Kathy Kuipers; Phone (406) 243 4381; email: kathy.kuipers@umontana.edu

PURPOSE AND PROCEDURES: You are invited to participate in a research study investigating training needs of nonprofit professionals in Montana. You have been selected because you are a nonprofit professional in Montana. The purpose of this study is to better understand how nonprofit professional development and training in Montana could be improved. The study will include a taped interview approximately one hour in length.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS: I do not foresee any risks associated with participation in this study. If any of the questions asked make you feel uncomfortable, you may choose to refrain from continuing the answer to a question, skip a question, or end the interview at any time. Audio-taping is however required. If you do not agree on the audio taping of the interview, the interview will not take place.

BENEFITS: Your help with this study will aid in understanding training needs of nonprofit professionals in Montana. The findings will be shared with the national American Humanics organization, the Montana Nonprofit Association and the Governor's Office for Community Service so that a statewide training model can be developed to address identified needs.

CONFIDENTIALITY: The data collected in this interview/study will be kept confidential; only the researcher and the faculty supervisor will have access. Your privacy will be protected in all published and written data resulting from this study. Your name or the name of the organization will never be attached. The audiotape of the interview will be transcribed without any information that could identify you or your organization. The tape will be erased after the study has been completed.

COMPENSATION FOR INJURY: In the event that you are injured as a result of this research, you should individually seek appropriate medical treatment. If the injury is caused by the negligence of the University or any of its employees, you may be entitled to reimbursement or compensation pursuant to the Comprehensive State Insurance Plan established by the Department of Administration under the authority of M.C.A., Title 2, Chapter 9. In the event of a claim for such injury, further information may be obtained from the University's claims representative or University Legal Counsel.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION/WITHDRAWAL: Please understand that your participation is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw or decline to answer any question at any time without consequence.

QUESTIONS: If you have any questions about the study now or during the study contact the study director: Jenni Pohjoispuro at (406) 243 2586, or the faculty supervisor, Professor Kathy Kuipers at (406) 243-4381. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Chair of the IRB through The University of Montana Research Office at (406) 243 6670.

SUBJECT'S STATEMENT OF CONSENT: I have read this form and have decided to participate in this research. I have been informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. Furthermore, I have been assured that any future questions I may have will also be answered by the researcher. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study and allow the interview to be audio taped. I also understand I will receive a copy of this consent form.

PRINTED NAME OF SUBJECT _____

SUBJECT'S SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

Appendix E Verbal Consent Form

Thank you for participating in this study. Before we start the interview, I would like to make sure that you understand the purpose, procedures, risks and benefits relating to this study. Thus, I ask you to listen to the text in the Participant Information and Consent Form that I have developed for this project.

PURPOSE AND PROCEDURES: You are invited to participate in a research study investigating training needs of nonprofit professionals in Montana. The purpose of this study is to better understand how nonprofit professional development and training in Montana could be improved.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS: I do not foresee any risks associated with participation in this study. If any of the questions asked make you feel uncomfortable, you may choose to refrain from continuing the answer to a question, skip a question, or end the interview at any time. However, audio-taping is required. If you do not agree on the audio taping of the interview, the interview will not take place.

BENEFITS: Your help with this study will aid in understanding training needs of nonprofit professionals in Montana. The findings will be shared with the national American Humanics organization, the Montana Nonprofit Association and the Governor's Office for Community Service so that a statewide training model can be developed to address identified needs.

CONFIDENTIALITY: The data collected in this interview/study will be kept confidential; only the researcher and the faculty supervisor will have access. Your privacy will be protected in all published and written data resulting from this study. Your name or the name of the organization will never be attached. The audiotape of the interview will be transcribed without any information that could identify you or your organization. The tape will be erased after the study has been completed.

COMPENSATION FOR INJURY: In the event that you are injured as a result of this research, you should individually seek appropriate medical treatment. If the injury is caused by the negligence of the University or any of its employees, you may be entitled to reimbursement or compensation pursuant to the Comprehensive State Insurance Plan established by the Department of Administration under the authority of M.C.A., Title 2, Chapter 9. In the event of a claim for such injury, further information may be obtained from the University's claims representative or University Legal Counsel.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION/WITHDRAWAL: Please understand that your participation is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw or decline to answer any question at any time without consequence.

QUESTIONS: If you have any questions about the study now or during the study you may contact me, the study director: Jenni Pohjoispuro at (406) 243 2586, or my faculty supervisor, Professor Kathy Kuipers at (406) 243-4381. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Chair of the IRB through The University of Montana Research Office at (406) 243 6670.

VERBAL SUBJECT'S STATEMENT OF CONSENT: Do you agree that you have listened to the text in the Participant Information and Consent Form and have decided to participate in this research? Do you agree that you have been informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all of your questions have been answered to your satisfaction? Do you voluntarily agree to take part in this study and allow the interview to be audio taped?