

# **UNITE Michigan:**

*Understanding provider Networks by Identifying  
services for human Trafficking and Exploitation*

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# Abstract

Despite the fact that there are more than 250 self-identified "anti-trafficking" organizations in the state of Michigan, trafficking victims and their advocates report significant barriers to accessing services. The UNITE Michigan project investigates factors that contribute to this problem. In particular, it is interested in the extent to which this problem stems from a lack of capacity or whether it is located within the referral process itself. To answer these questions, UNITE will produce an inventory of Michigan organizations that are involved in anti-human trafficking efforts and gathering information about the services these groups provide. To do this work, U-M PhD candidate Jessica Lowen is leveraging the community partner and personal contacts she developed over multiple years of doing ethnographic fieldwork among anti-trafficking providers in SE Michigan (federal, state, and local law enforcement, health and human service providers, and non-profit activist organizations).

# Goals

- Provide additional data for a dissertation on the Christian anti-trafficking movement and religiously motivated intervention in the sex industry.
- Gather information about what services are available in Michigan for individuals who have experienced human trafficking.
- Identify gaps and redundancies in services currently offered.
- Map the network of service providers in ways that will highlight the institutional and political influence of faith-based actors.

# Objectives

- Map of Network of Faith-Based Anti-Trafficking Organizations in Michigan
- Report Findings to Joint Anti-Human Trafficking Task force and to Public (University of Toledo Human Trafficking Conference - September 2017)
- Online Referral Resource (TBD)

# Challenges & Solutions

Problem: Scheduling - Community Partners vs. Academic Calendar

Solutions: Gather Information about Schedules

Know the Institutional Culture

Written Agreement

Problem: Pre-existing Conflicts or Internal Disagreements

Solutions: Research and cultivate a wide network of contacts.

Anticipate possible weak points in your network, back-ups.

Written Agreement

Problem: Sharing Information

Solution: Set expectations and take the time to build trust.

Written Agreement

# Impact

- Leverage university resources (funding, labor, expertise) to collect information about what services available: Trafficking Law Clinic, CASCAID, Public Health.
- Process of designing the project (writing the survey and soliciting feedback) facilitated new relationships *between* community partner groups who work in the same field but who would otherwise not work together (LGBTQ, faith-based groups).
- Uncover information about current state of funding for anti-trafficking human trafficking efforts, which may be relevant for policy makers and researchers.

# Preliminary Survey of Faith-Based Providers

- Distributed via M.A.P. and J.A.T.T in December 2016 and January 2017.
- Eight six (86) Respondents, primarily direct service providers (54.4%), education and awareness organizations (31.9%) active in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb County.
- Limited due to incomplete responses.
- Heavy emphasis “sex” trafficking vs. labor (31%)  
*Is sex trafficking a subset of the larger category of labor trafficking? When are they different categories? What are the implications for policy? (TVPA vs. social theory vs. public perception)*
- Lack of services exclusive for men and trans individuals.  
*Does this have to do with sex trafficking emphasis? Does it have to do with institutional constraints?*
- Lack of follow-up services – Info/Referrals (58.6%); Assessment (31%); Follow-up (8%).
- Most respondents claim to be “trauma-informed” (69.2%).  
*Given that that on 36% of respondents provide clinical care and a mere 2% are law enforcement, what do these respondents mean by “trauma informed?”*
- Most claimed to provide advocacy services (81%).  
*Given that fewer than 40% help individuals by “explaining their legal rights and protections” and that even fewer (less than 15%) formally assist with legal processes, what does individual “advocacy” mean for these respondents?*

# Other Learning Outcomes

- More than two-hundred fifty organizations in Michigan that have “human trafficking” as a part of their mission statement.
- More than five hundred who don’t focus on trafficking specifically, but who provide services appropriate for this population.
- How are these organizations funded?
- What role do non-profits play in driving policy?
- How has/will this change with new rules in 2017 for DHS licensing requirements?



# Library Partnership

- Qualtrics
- Cytoscape
- More to come

# Further Work

- ~~Write Preliminary Survey – December 2017~~
- ~~Distribute Preliminary Survey – January 2017~~
- ~~Write Final Survey – February 2017~~
- Build Distribution List – March to April 2017
- Data Collection (Survey Opens) – May 2017
- Analysis of Results – June 2017
- Report to Community Partners – August 2017
- Integrate into Dissertation – July 2017
- Public Presentation – September 2017

# Acknowledgements

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- U-M Library System
- Rackham Graduate School Public Scholar Program (formerly Arts of Citizenship)
- Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropology
- U-M Institute for Research on Women and Gender
- U-M GEL group (Gender-Based violence and Engaged Learning)
- Human Trafficking Clinic at the U-M Law School
- CASCAID (Complex ACEs Complex Aid)

## Community Partners:

- Joint Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force of SE Michigan (JATT)
- Sex Worker Outreach Project (SWOP)
- Alternatives for Girls (AFG)
- Michigan Abolitionist Project
- Michigan State Police
- Ruth Ellis Center

*Many others*

*UNITE Michigan - Understanding provider Networks by Identifying services for victims of human Trafficking and Exploitation in Michigan*

**Primary Investigator:** Jessica Lowen (PhD candidate in Anthropology)

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### 1. Summary

Despite the fact that there are more than 250 self-identified "anti-trafficking" organizations in the state of Michigan, trafficking victims and their advocates report significant barriers to accessing services. The UNITE Michigan project investigates factors that contribute to this problem. In particular, it is interested in the extent to which this problem stems from a lack of capacity or whether it is located within the referral process itself. To answer these questions, UNITE will produce an inventory of Michigan organizations that are involved in anti-human trafficking efforts and gathering information about the services these groups provide. To do this work, U-M PhD candidate Jessica Lowen is leveraging the community partner and personal contacts she developed over multiple years of doing ethnographic fieldwork among anti-trafficking providers in SE Michigan. While UNITE provides additional data that is helpful for Lowen's dissertation, it is a distinct project with additional funding needs.

### 2. Study Staff

The project is led by Jessica Lowen (PhD candidate in Anthropology), with help from undergraduate research assistances (U-M UROP), and in close collaboration with community partner organizations including members of the Joint Anti-Trafficking Task, the Governor's Anti-Trafficking Commission, the Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP), and the Michigan Abolitionist Project (MAP). (For a complete list of community organizations involved in this work, please refer to the community partner section below.) Additional guidance is provided by faculty from the U-M Law School Human Trafficking Clinic, the U-M School of Social Work, and the U-M Stephen S. Clark library's Visualization Librarian.

### 3. Outcomes and Objectives

Primary project objectives include organizing data for a dissertation on anti-trafficking social movements; identifying service gaps and redundancies; creating a referral directory for service providers.

- **Product 1: An interactive digital map**, which displays anti-trafficking agencies, groups, and providers in the state of Michigan according to the populations they serve and services they provide. The map will also capture the financial, personal, and referral relationships among these organizations. This map will be used to help inform a dissertation project on anti-trafficking intervention in the state of Michigan. As such, UNITE is an example of digital humanities project. (Stephen S. Clark library's Visualization Librarian assists with visualization software to capture humanistic research themes.) In my dissertation, I explore broad ethical questions related to language, culture, sexuality, and religion. With the UNITE Michigan project, I will attempt to represent these themes visually, using network mapping software.
- **Product 2: A white paper policy piece and presentation to members of the Joint Anti-Human Trafficking Task force and the University of Toledo Human Trafficking Conference (September 2017).** These presentations will provide information about gaps and redundancies in services currently offered to those affected by human trafficking in Michigan, including services available victims of labor or sexual exploitation who may be undocumented immigrants, transgendered, and non-English speaker, etc. Providers may use this information in making decisions about what services to offer, to whom, and in which locations.
- **Product 3: A future online referral resource** to help individuals connect victims to the resources they need. The specific nature and scope of this online resource is yet to be determined.

#### 4. Methods

UNITE gathers data primarily through a **statewide survey** of anti-trafficking groups and organizations. The preliminary version of this survey was a Google form that included overview questions about services that organizations provide. The final version of the survey is in Qualtrics software and that version seeks to be a comprehensive assessment of what organizations are available, for whom, and how they are funded. It includes questions about service provision (what services are offered and how people access them), questions about non-discrimination policies and client "fit," and questions about groups' structure, history, referral networks, and funding mechanisms.

The **distribution list for this survey** includes nearly one thousand potential anti-trafficking providers gathered from referral lists provided by the U-M Human Trafficking Clinic, Michigan State Police, Salvation Army, Alternatives for Girls, and MAP as well as the large list that Jessica Lowen developed during her ethnographic dissertation research. In addition, internet-based research and word-of-mouth referrals will be used to identify new groups to add to my existing inventory of organizations.

In addition to the survey, **data will also be gathered via Internet-based research, cold calling (telephone), and email.** Calls will be made from a private location, using headset

equipment and a dedicated Google account. Phone interview questions will follow a standard survey protocol. Researchers will travel as necessary to conduct in-person interviews and evaluate facilities. Target data is non-sensitive and/or otherwise publically available.

Once the survey information is gathered, we will work with digital librarians to map the Michigan provider network (Cytoscape: [www.cytoscape.org/](http://www.cytoscape.org/)). This will involve **coding data and using it as input for the Cytoscape mapping software**. Using color, size, and weighted diagrams, we will produce a visual representation of the landscape of services provided and the network(s) by which they are connected.

Because UNITE collects publically available non-sensitive data about organizations, **UNITE is exempt from IRB review.**

## 5. Timeline

11/2016	Outreach Summit and Project Kick-Off Event at Alternatives for Girls (AFG) in Detroit	Inter-agency Summit involving all organizations currently doing anti-trafficking outreach in Detroit.
12/2016	Preliminary Survey (Google Form) Live	This preliminary survey was distributed primarily to non-profit organizations in the JATT service area (Wayne, Oakland, Macomb County) who have an organization mission related to human trafficking and/or direct service provision.
01/2017 to 03/2017	Develop Qualtrics Survey and Build Distribution Lists	
04/2017	Statewide Survey (Qualtrics) Live	
05/2017	Initial Data Analysis	
06/2017	Data Presented to JATT Members	
06/2017 to 09/2017	Public Distribution of Final Findings (Journal Submission and Conference Presentation)	

## 6. Scholarly Relevance

This project stems out of my dissertation fieldwork in and around the city of Detroit. My dissertation follows a group of former-sex-workers-turned-born-again-Christians who are attempting to inspire religious revival and eradicate human trafficking within the city's sex industry. These missionary efforts are underscored by racial discourses, which permeate broader anti-trafficking conversations. I illuminate these connections by tracking ideologically inflected outreach efforts across multiple domains of anti-trafficking activism

and government intervention. As such, my dissertation expands our understanding of public intervention, just as it tells a story of women's survival in the post-industrial Midwest.

In the course of my dissertation fieldwork, I developed a list of approximately 120 public agencies and private groups who are involved anti-trafficking education, fundraising, outreach, intervention, and service provision in the state of Michigan. My field contacts in the public and private sectors have repeatedly requested this information for themselves, which they say will be extremely helpful for their work. Currently, there is no resource of this kind in the state. As such, this project will enhance my dissertation and also contribute to the public good by responding to a community-identified need.

## **7. Community Partner Collaboration and Public Benefit**

UNITE Michigan exemplifies my continued commitment to strengthening community partnerships. My dissertation research benefits from input from community partners in law enforcement, social service agencies, and non-profit activist groups. Through them, I have learned first-hand about the challenges they face when they intervene and/or advocate for survivors of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. In turn, I have applied this knowledge to shape my dissertation and create objects of tangible public benefit. These include: presentations about "best practices" for government and private sector anti-trafficking task forces, bringing guest speakers to the U-M campus, and coordinating field trips for my undergraduate mentees.

Specific community partners who are helping with this project include Members of the Joint Anti-Trafficking Task Force, including the Salvation Army of SE Michigan, Michigan Health and Human Services, Michigan State Police, and Alternatives for Girls. Other community partners include the members of the Governor's Trafficking Commission, the Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP), and the Michigan Abolitionist Project (MAP).

A significant body of research points to a mismatch between victims of human trafficking (as defined by Michigan state and U.S. federal law) and appropriate support services for survivors. My own research shows that while many organizations state their intention to serve this population, most are under-funded, and fewer are capable of providing trauma-informed treatment for survivors with PTSD. In creating a comprehensive public map of the network of organizations that provide services to trafficking victims (and/or who seek to intervene on their behalf) in Michigan, I am responding to a community identified need. A less tangible, but equally significant intervention relates to the political economy of anti-trafficking efforts in our state.

Historically, churches and religious groups have played a key role in the U.S. social safety net. This is especially true in the anti-trafficking world in Michigan where federal and state anti-trafficking grants are routinely funding duplicate programs (including in the same city) and/or awarded to religiously affiliated service providers, in addition to private and church donations. UNITE Michigan is my first attempt to track these financial flows. I will do so by documenting how anti-trafficking groups are funded and tracking how organizations share money between them.