



# 2017 Rackham Research Grant Funded by Margaret and Shashikant Gupta



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*“The kind of work that I do would not be possible without donor support such as yours.”*

profits in Michigan, this project explores religiously motivated intervention in the sex industry in order to make claims about evangelical sociality and to reveal something new about the mechanisms by which religion polices sex in American public life.

My dissertation reflects my long-term interest in religiously motivated gender-based social movements. It also stems from my commitment to public scholarship in which researchers engage with the community to deepen understanding of complex ethical issues, especially through community-engaged teaching and learning.

Human trafficking is a pernicious problem whose harms are exacerbated by a lack of data, cultural bias, and persistent misconceptions about the social determinants that make individuals vulnerable to exploitation. Recent research reveals nearly one thousand professional stakeholders are involved in providing anti-trafficking programs in Michigan. Despite this, survivors and their advocates report significant barriers to accessing services in our state. Research points to a mismatch between victims' needs and appropriate support services, which is compounded by a lack of interagency collaboration. My work addresses this problem.

In addition to the dissertation, I am guiding efforts to assess the state of anti-human trafficking resources in Michigan. This work includes a statewide survey of health and human service providers (the Michigan Human Trafficking Resource Survey) and a series of

Taking Detroit, Michigan as a case study, my dissertation follows former-sex-workers-turned-born-again-Christians as they attempt to inspire religious revival and eradicate human trafficking at sites where sex is sold. Existing research on religiously-motivated anti-trafficking activism focuses on such groups' lobbying efforts, especially at the international level. However, little is known about the day-to-day operations of this kind of outreach on the ground and within the United States. Over three years of fieldwork, primarily in Michigan (also in Chicago, Miami, and Portland) I attended rallies, trainings, and closed-door government anti-trafficking task force meetings. I interviewed church leaders, volunteers, law enforcement, and social service providers. I also shadowed missionary outreach efforts in strip clubs, massage parlours, and outdoor locations where sex is sold. Drawing on ethnographic observations from approximately 300 hours of shadowing outreach in Detroit and also original data from a state wide survey of over two hundred faith-based anti-trafficking non-

events to foster collaboration among anti-trafficking outreach agencies and organizations (the Detroit Anti-Trafficking Outreach Summit 2016-17). To lead these interagency efforts, I am leveraging my Ph.D. work to identify gaps and redundancies in service and to ease the referral process for those affected by human trafficking. I draw on the extensive contact network I established during the course of my student fieldwork to identify and recruit key stakeholders. In addition, I am building on my initial (ethnographic) findings, to identify future directions for our efforts.

My ethnographic research revealed a lack of resources to address labor trafficking and disparities in referrals for sexual and ethnic minorities, especially for African American transgendered women in Detroit. The survey and the event series address these and other problems. They also attempt to highlight possible best practices for collaboration and intervention in diverse communities, especially among organizations who may have failed to connect previously due to deep ideological or cultural divisions. For example, Christian outreach ministries, secular feminist harm reduction agencies, LGBTQ+ advocates, and sex workers' rights activists. As such, this aspect of my work responds to a community-identified need and enhances public understanding.

This award will provide support for me as I finish the first complete draft of my dissertation and complete the data collection for the Michigan Human Trafficking Resource Survey.

Mr. and Mrs. Gupta,

Thank you for your support. In addition to my dissertation and my public research, I also contribute to the intellectual community of the university. Currently, I hold leadership positions in the Detroit School Series Rackham Interdisciplinary Workshop, the Michigan Graduate Student Conference in Linguistic Anthropology (May 2017), and the Gender-Based Violence and Engaged Learning Initiative (U-M GEL), which I founded with faculty in the School of Nursing. Although time-consuming, these experiences have directly benefited my dissertation by facilitating my data collection. They have also helped me establish relationships with scholars who work on similar research questions, but from different disciplinary perspectives (e.g., human trafficking, sexual and gender-based trauma, health and human services in Detroit). Thank you for recognizing the value of these opportunities towards my scholarly development. The kind of work that I do would not be possible without donor support such as yours. Through these valorous service roles, I am also helping lay the groundwork for collaborations that will continue on after I leave the University of Michigan. Thank you for helping make that possible.