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Meridith Hochstetler

Taylea Mills

Hannah Odell

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**Small Town, Big Impact: Bringing Awareness to Human Trafficking**

Meridith Hochstetler, Taylea Mills, Hannah Odell

Under the direction of Dr. Valerie Stokes, LISW

Social Work Department, Northwestern College

SWK420: Community Systems Theory and Practice

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**Abstract**

The goal of this community project was to bring awareness to human trafficking in rural communities. Researchers completed research to further educate themselves so that they would be able to educate persons in the community about the issue. The collected information of the issues surrounding human trafficking and how to bring awareness to the issue. Researchers organized two community events, a trivia night and awareness walk, and encouraged community members to participate. Through these events organizers were able to initiate conversations with members of the community and educate them about what human trafficking looks like in their community. Organizers collected funds through free will donation to gift a local victim of human trafficking.

*Keywords:* Human trafficking, community, victims

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## **Literature Review**

### **Statistics about the population**

Human trafficking is defined as “the act of recruiting, transporting, harboring, obtaining, or providing a person for compelled labor or commercial sex acts through the use of force, fraud, or coercion”. The traffickers’ goal in human trafficking is to exploit and enslave (Ortiz, 2021). Millions of people are trafficked each year in the U.S. alone. A majority of those trafficked are minors, specifically girls. According to the Houston foundation, over 56% of women prostituted were runaway youth (Ortiz, 2021).

### **Limitation to Worship**

One of the most common issues that are found when trying to research the topic of human trafficking is the lack of research and information on human trafficking. Sweileh writes “No data is available on the volume, research trends, and key players in this field” (Swelieh 2018). It was the aim of this study to find research trends on human trafficking. In 2016 there were 40.3 million people in the form of modern slavery. Those most at risk of HT are women and children. 71% of trafficking victims were women and 28% were children. One of the major concerns is the focus on mental health. Of the 2,044 documents reviewed for this study, only 183 touched on the mental health of victims. As for engagement victims of human trafficking are often hesitant to talk about their experiences as they sometimes live in fear of speaking out against those that held them. However, the United States ranks first in the world for the number of published articles describing this issue.

There are also limitations to gathering information due to the lack of prevalence when it comes to hard-to-reach populations such as human trafficking victims. Having accurate information is important when trying to gather information about a certain issue. Schroeder, et.

al. writes, “Accurate, population-specific prevalence estimation is necessary for effective public health interventions...”. To form policies and other forms of intervention to help this population, the researchers needed to make sure they gathered accurate and plentiful amounts of research. Because researchers are not able to get the amount of prevalent information that is needed, they cannot say that they have an abundant amount of research and therefore this contributes to the problem of the lack of information on the issue of human trafficking.

This lack of research makes it difficult to train professionals on what to do when they encounter a victim of human trafficking. Because there is little research, clinicians do not follow the protocols when working with a victim. It is believed that this phenomenon's flexibility not only makes it difficult to implement effective tackling measures but also demonstrates to be an obstacle to providing accurate information on the subject (Cusick et al. 2009). By forming a consistent way of interacting with victims of human trafficking researchers can better understand the care that they need when they come seeking help from clinicians. This would also allow for information to be taken at intake that would hint at a previous treatment and then the correct information can be gathered from previous clinicians that the victim has worked with.

With this lack of research also comes a lack of knowledge in the eyes of the public. People often do not know what the warning signs of human trafficking are and as a result, they do not know when they encounter a victim. Therefore, education on trafficking terms is important. By understanding the language that is used within trafficking, people may identify someone they feel is a victim and call to get them help. Understanding terms such as ‘out of pocket’, ‘stable’, ‘the game’, and ‘turn out can be the first step to this education. Traffickers use language that does not stand out in conversations to avoid detection. However, even if a person

has a slight suspicion that they have had an interaction with a victim or organizer of human trafficking can help bring awareness to the issue and even save someone's life.

While there is a continual lack of research, there are groups that are trying to bring awareness to the issue of human trafficking. One of those groups is the Polaris Project. They aim to bring awareness to human trafficking while also reaching out to those who may be victims. They try to learn as much as they can and “we use what we learn to pilot big, new ideas for slowly, carefully, finally, dismantling big, old systems that make trafficking possible” (Polaris). If more groups like this were to share what they are learning about human trafficking and the statistics that they have produced, researchers feel they may be able to bring more awareness to human trafficking. I think that this would also help bridge the gap in the lack of research that currently exists on the issue.

### **Relationship between International and U.S. Human Trafficking**

“Human trafficking (HT), or ‘modern slavery,’ includes sex and labor trafficking, forced labor, debt servitude, and other forms of involuntary and illegal servitude” (Moukaddam et al, 2021). Human trafficking has become a major issue in our nation. This issue affects people of all ages, but the literature states that certain populations are at higher risk. The top three countries for human trafficking rates include the US, Mexico, and Honduras. Statistics showed that 40.8 % of the victims were between ages 9-17, and over 93% of women are at higher risk in the US compared to 73% internationally (Moukaddam et al., 2021). These are simply the statistics for the U.S. Research showed that a common theme both internationally and in the U.S. is that the most usual form of human trafficking is sex trafficking or prostitution.

### **Sex Trafficking**

The literature states that the most common form of human trafficking in most countries is sex trafficking. In an article about human trafficking in Africa, the authors reference a definition of sex trafficking stating: “Greenbaum (2014) defines sex trafficking as the manipulation, coercion or control of an adult engaging in a commercial sex act.” (Mlambo & Ndebele, 2021). Millions of people are sex trafficked each year. Sex trafficking can happen to anyone at any time. Each article states clearly that while trafficking of many kinds happens across all international areas the most common is sex trafficking. “While there are multiple types of human trafficking (e.g., forced labour, forced criminal activities, etc.), sex trafficking is a specific form of human trafficking that involves coercion and the “recruiting, transporting or holding [of] victims for sexual exploitation” (Jacobson et al., 2022). Sex trafficking as well as any other form of human trafficking can happen to anyone, but certain populations are more at risk than others.

### **Socio-economic, Migrant, and Minority populations**

Another similarity from the literature includes the relationship between socioeconomic conditions and minority populations. Based on the literature, many of the countries showed signs of those with poor socioeconomic conditions were more likely to be trafficked than those with higher socioeconomic conditions. Certain tribes in Vietnam and China are specifically targeted due to socio-economic conditions and being a minority population. An article about human trafficking from Vietnam to China talks about the H’mong people (L T H Le & Wyndham, 2021). These are people affected both by poor socioeconomic conditions and being the minority in a country that is mostly Kinh. Another article spoke out saying “Researchers have identified some ubiquitous social determinants of health that facilitate trafficking across sectors, including poverty, sex/gender, labor migration, and interpersonal violence.” (Elyssa et a.,2022). While anyone can be trafficked, certain populations can be more affected based on socioeconomic

factors such as gender or poverty. According to the US department of state, the reason for these populations being affected is “debt bondage” meaning that people get so wrapped up in debt that they are manipulated into acts of trafficking to pay them off (About Human, n.d.). This leads to a downhill spiral into forced acts considered trafficking.

Many of the places that are most affected by human trafficking are those with large migrant populations. Migrants and minority groups are at higher risk of being trafficked in many countries. One journal states that “researchers point out that human trafficking exploits both restrictive migratory policies and the desire of people to seek a better livelihood” (Petrunov, 2014). Migrants who are seeking out a better life have been recognized to be more at risk for human trafficking. Similarly, in studies in Mexico, they have recognized that traffickers “...actively targeting” migrant women for sex trafficking (Sanchez, & Zhang, 2020).

### **Types of trafficking**

According to Interpol, there are at least 5+ distinct types of trafficking. Forced labor is when people are trafficked through lying and coercion to work. Victims can be engaged in agriculture, mining, fisheries, or construction work, along with domestic servitude and other labor-intensive jobs” (Interpol, n.d.). Forced criminal activities are when victims must do some type of illegal activity. These activities will generate income. Some examples of forced criminal activities are stealing or selling drugs. Sexual exploitation is a common type of trafficking. This is when victims are forced to do different sexual acts against their will. Trafficking for the removal of organs is when vulnerable people are exploited to have certain organs removed. Finally, people smuggling can be seen as a type of trafficking. While it is not a typical type of trafficking, people smuggling often leads to individuals being forced to do many different forced

activities over their time together and even after they have arrived at their destination (Interpol, n.d.).

### **Venues/Industries for trafficking**

According to Lifeway Network, 10 major industries are known for human trafficking. The agriculture, animal husbandry, and fishing industry often exploit their workers by making them feel indebted to their sponsors. Domestic service can be seen in many different forms. They can be a housekeeper, childcare worker, or any other type of employee within a home. Domestic service forces employees who live within their homes to work extremely long hours with no wages. Trafficking within construction classifies workers as independent. In saying that these workers are independent, the employees do not receive any type of benefits or a wage that is livable. Manufacturing and factory work will use cheap labor to create products that will receive a profit. Within hospitality work, such as hotels, there are many potential types of trafficking. These may be the well-known sex, housekeepers, front desk attendants, and even bellhops. When looking at health/beauty salons and restaurants there is often exploitation or theft of wages.

These workers may be working unknown and irregular hours while receiving little to no money for their service. Traveling sales crews were often forced into going door-to-door. If the individual does sell something, the customer rarely receives their order and the individual selling does not receive much, if any, wages for their work. Many immigrants are working in landscaping causing it to be a prime area for trafficking. These workers often have their visas restricted, a commonly reported type of trafficking. Finally, individuals working in carnivals have a high potential for being exploited, having money thefts, unconventional hours, and lack of benefits (Lifeway Network, n.d.).

### **Warning signs of trafficking**

When looking at individuals, there are many different warning signs that someone is being trafficked. You can start by asking yourself if the person is distant from those around them. This could be their family or friends. The individual who is being trafficked might miss several days of school up to not attending for months. They may have a change in their behavior for the worse or start participating in risky behaviors. You might then start to see physical signs of the individual being abused or in a stage of healing. This could be from physical abuse, lack of food/water, or medical care. The individual might also show signs of mental disorders (Office on trafficking in persons, n.d.). This could be through mental abuse, fear, or even acting submissive. These fears might lead a person to be more susceptible to being coached in how to act or what to say, meaning that these actions or words seem preplanned. Finally, you might look at their living situations. You would look to see if an individual is living in a safe place, if they own anything, or if they can go about their lives freely (Lifeway Network, n.d.). Each of these signs can be seen intertwined with each other or individually seen. There might also be more of one warning over another.

### **Risk factors**

While there is not one distinct thing that causes an individual to be more susceptible to being trafficked, there are characteristics that can lead to an individual being more at risk. Looking at the risks, it is important to know that no two situations are the same and every trafficking victim/survivor has gone through their own unique experiences. These risks might be from past/current abuse, adversity within the family, lack of support, drug and alcohol use, mental health disorders, gang affiliation, marginalized populations, and unaccompanied minors. Each of these situations might cause an individual to be more vulnerable and more susceptible to individuals who want to take advantage of them (American Institutes for Research, n.d.). See

Appendix A for a list that the *National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments* says can cause an individual to be more at risk of human trafficking and Appendix B for a list from the U.S. Department of Health and Services.

Likewise, it has been prevalent that an individual who classifies as a member of the LGBTQ+ population becomes more at risk of being trafficked. According to the *Trafficking in Persons Report*, there are many reasons that the LGBTQ+ community is more at risk than other populations. The main of these is when families reject an individual because of their sexuality. When this happens, many times individuals can only take with them what they can carry. One individual said, “That first month I was learning the ‘safe’ spots to park my car to sleep” (2021 Trafficking, 2021). On top of this, many churches also turned on individuals who fell under the LGBTQ+ population. While it is considered discrimination, some workplaces also have pushed individuals out of positions for being different. It also does not help when hate crime is a relevant and highly dangerous form of discrimination. 40% of the homeless population consists of LGBTQ+ individuals leading them to be at higher risk of sex or labor trafficking (Polaris, 2016).

### **Life After Trafficking**

#### **Resources**

Throughout each of the articles read, one common theme was resources or lack of resources that are available to survivors of human trafficking. These services consist of rehabilitation, counseling/therapy, and general information on how to survive. With many human trafficking survivors being isolated, forced to be dependent on the trafficker, and the mental/physical health struggles there is not much knowledge of how to survive on one’s own out in society.

There is also the issue of scarcity of reintegration assistance programs (Idemudia et al., 2021, p. 450). The programs that do exist, need a lot of work to best help the survivors. This can be done through better education for the workers/programs and in many cases, more money put into the programs. The lack of education and money to help with the programs causes “pressure on survivors to present themselves as ‘good victims’, worthy of reintegration assistance” (Brennan & Plambech, 2018, p. 7). Where there are not enough programs or adequate programs available for victims of human trafficking, many of the articles felt that there is a higher chance of being re-trafficked (Idemudia et al., 2021, p. 450).

In many countries, the government also takes away and causes many struggles with allowing resources for victims of human trafficking. One way this is done is through the status application process. “In the UK, trafficked people must apply for asylum if they wish to remain thereafter. Rituals of entry and access that comply with notions of approved membership are unlikely” (Murphy, 2020, p. 629). One person stated that “If we did the same for a victim of domestic abuse or a victim of rape, I am sure people, parliamentarians and others, would be standing there in shock and horror” (Murphy, 2020, p. 630).

### **Characteristics: Mental/Physical Health**

Due to all the traumas done when being trafficked, there are many mental and physical health struggles. While some people or types of trafficking can cause a higher risk for certain types of mental or physical health struggles, that does not mean there is not the possibility no matter what you are being trafficked for.

Several of the mental health struggles stated throughout the literature consist of fear, shame, guilt, hopelessness, loss of self-esteem, poor interpersonal relationships, humiliation, depression, anxiety, dissociation, PTSD, eating disorders, self-harm tendency, and suicidality. Each of these

mental health struggles can be seen in individuals that were not trafficked, but it is not surprising to be seen in individuals that have suffered with what these survivors have been through. These mental health issues are also why so many survivors struggle with making a life after trafficking if they do not receive help working through what they have been through.

Trafficking can also cause several physical health struggles. Some of the main health struggles consist of potential developmental issues for children, elevated risk of sexually transmitted infections, reproductive health problems from unsafe abortions, fractures/broken bones, lacerations, malnutrition, dental problems, pregnancy, and somatic symptoms such as headaches, fainting, and memory problems (Marburger & Pickover, 2020, p. 17).

Alongside the struggles that come from trafficking abuse, violence, and slavery life, many victims also become addicted to some type of substance (Marburger & Pickover, 2020, p. 17). This addiction does not simply go away once they have become free from their trafficker. With this addiction, in many cases, come many other physical health struggles that could end up following the survivors for the rest of their life if they are not able to get the resources to overcome these addictions.

### **Characteristics: Basic Needs**

Everyone deserves to have their basic needs met. This includes survivors of human trafficking. Yet after an individual has become free from human trafficking, they are left without so many of the necessities to live everyday life. These necessities consist of housing/shelter, jobs/financial stability (economic well-being), support systems, education, safety, and medical care/health care (Branscum & Fallik, 2021, p. 264). When there is a lack of a person's basic needs being met, an individual is constantly in survival mode causing them to struggle with healing.

While some programs can help provide temporary housing, this is still temporary and, in some cases, can still cost survivors money that they are not able to make due to lack of education and lack of jobs that are willing to hire human trafficking survivors and the low pay that comes when jobs do hire survivors (Brennan & Plambech, 2018, p. 8). Once a person is kicked out of the temporary housing, they cannot always go home as many of their homes were abusive or put them into trafficking in the first place.

These basic needs are all connected and when there are not enough good programs to help with rehabilitation, it can feel impossible to reach the ability to have your basic needs fulfilled (something that many trafficking victims have not had in a long time).

### **Self-Success in the Future**

While many struggles come with being a victim of and surviving human trafficking, there is a common theme of how these survivors see a successful future. Throughout the literature, the survivors stated that they would feel successful if they were able to reconnect with or reconcile with their families, start a family for themselves (marriage and children), become independent, create a good support system through friends, receive education and finding a job (Viergever et al., 2019, p. 8).

For many of the survivors, there was not a great home life before they were trafficked but there are still many individuals that did have a decent home time. For these individuals, all they want to do is reconcile with their family and friends. For those without a good home life or who did not wish to reconcile with their family, becoming independent and starting a family was a big incentive to success.

Overall, most survivors want to be able to sustain themselves and see doing so as a good successful future. Having family, friends, and receiving education only adds to the success many of the survivors see.

### **Description and analysis of the designated community**

#### **Demographics**

The area that our community organization reaches out to is Sioux County, Iowa. This county is made up of mostly rural farming communities. Sioux county's population in the 2020 census was/is 35,872 with 49.7% of the population being female and 50.3% of the population being male. 7% of this population is under the age of 5, 27.2% is under the age of 18, 49.6% of the population is between 19-64 years old and 16.2% are people aged 65+. Sioux county's population is majority white with 86.1% of the population falling in the white alone population. Of the minority populations in the area, 11.7% of the population is Hispanic or Latino.

#### **Barriers**

Within this community, several barriers might cause a problem in resolving human trafficking in the rural community of Sioux County, Iowa. One of these is the outward appearance of the community. Sioux County has a "perfect" aesthetic. Everyone in this community has put up a front that makes it seem as if there is nothing wrong and in doing so, they become closed off to the injustices that are happening in their backyard. Part of this could come from the Dutch Christian background that settled in this area.

#### **News**

When looking up current events on human trafficking every article is about recent arrests of men that have been accused of trafficking victims. There are articles of instances from the U.S. and internationally. These articles depict situations of one or two victims being trafficked

while others depict 20-30 people that were found to be trafficked by one person. There are also articles about events that have been going on recently to try and bring more awareness to the issue of human trafficking. There have been walks, speakers, and other educational tools being used in these events.

One of the biggest key players in the fight against human trafficking is The A21 Campaign. They aim to end modern forms of slavery, especially human trafficking. They want to reach, rescue, and restore victims of human trafficking. They have developed many different programs that can work both together and separately so that they can be used all over the world in the battle against human trafficking. They also have an education program that aims to bring awareness to the public on what they can help in the fight against human trafficking. Finally, they also organize a yearly walk to try and bring awareness to human trafficking victims. In this walk, they request that participants wear black and walk in complete silence. This is done to try and simulate the way that victims of human trafficking have felt silenced. A21 has played a big part in trying to combat human trafficking and their efforts have not gone unnoticed.

Researchers investigated recent acts of human trafficking using local news articles. It was discovered that an Iowa college, Western Iowa Tech Community College in Sioux City, had been sued alleging that they had engaged in human trafficking. The lawsuits were filed on behalf of 14 students from Chile and 11 students who were from mainly Brazil. Lawyers claimed that the school issued student visas for them to attend the school and take classes through their international program but instead were placed in “debt bondage”. They claim that the students were then forced to work at a food-processing plant and a dog-food factory. They branded this work as ‘culinary arts and the students were forced to work in these factories.

Students were paid \$15 an hour to work. However, the school had arranged for \$7.75 of that \$15 to be paid directly to them to offset the expense of the students attending their institution. This left students working in these plants and earning a minimum wage of \$7.25. The school claims that the work students were being forced to do was preparing them for work after their graduation. School officials certified to the State Department that the students would only be shadowing the factories but instead, the students were forced to work. Some students were required to work 12-hour overnight shifts and then report to their classes at 8 a.m. There have been court dates set up for 2024 and there have been no criminal charges filed within the case.

Link to article:

<https://iowacapitaldispatch.com/2022/12/06/human-trafficking-lawsuits-against-iowa-school-expected-to-be-tried-in-2024/>

## **Planning Decisions**

### **Type of Community Project**

The researchers chose to engage the community using events and open dialogue between community members. The goal of the researchers was to educate the community of Orange City on the issue of human trafficking. They wanted to educate community members that human trafficking does not only happen in larger cities but also smaller communities. Researchers wanted to inform individuals that human trafficking may only affect one person as well as on a larger scale. On an individual level, a pimp might only drive a victim somewhere if she commits a sexual act. Researchers also informed the community that they also wanted to provide support for victims of human trafficking using free-will donations at our planned events.

Researchers helped plan two separate events to bring awareness to the problem of human trafficking. They did this with the help of a staff member from Promise Community Health and a

staff member from Hope Haven. Both members felt strongly about the issue. First, they organized a trivia night on Northwestern's campus. Researchers contacted the Dewitt library to reserve a room to hold the event at no cost. Researchers then contacted AV on campus to make sure they could use the microphone and projector to ensure the event went smoothly. Researchers also contacted the owner of A Very Good Trivia company requesting that she host the event and she graciously donated her time at no cost. They then created posters, printed them out, and hung them up around campus and the community. An email was also sent campus-wide to try to promote the event. Finally, researchers spoke at a chapel event informing students and faculty of the event and encouraging them to come. This event was organized to try and promote the later event.

The main event planned for the community was a walk sponsored by the A21 organization. The event was planned for October 22nd, 2022. This event brings awareness to victims of A21. Researchers and other community members organized the walk. Researchers helped promote the event by hanging up flyers around campus (See Appendix C and D). Participants were encouraged to wear all black to the event and to walk in silence. There was also a speaker that spoke before the walk about the issue of human trafficking. A free-will donation was also collected at this event. At the end of the walk, there were refreshments set out for the participants. All free-will donations were given to a local survivor of human trafficking to try and help them start a new life.

### **Intervention**

When looking at the Sioux County community, many different interventions could happen. The big one that our group is looking at is education. For there to be any change or growth in Sioux county with human trafficking, the community needs to be educated. This can

happen through simply getting information out or through community activities that bring awareness to human trafficking.

### **Decide on Goal/Target**

The first thing that must be done in an intervention is to determine a goal. Determining and finding goals that are both achievable and push the community to excel can take time and patience. To find the best goals, you also need to identify what problem or struggle a community and the social worker are working toward solving or improving. In the Sioux County area, to better the communities, there needs to be the recognition of a problem and the community needs to be informed of this problem to help the community grow.

### **Recognizing the Problem**

In Orange city, the community struggles with accepting that there is a problem and the solutions or ways that the community should go about solving these 'problems'. For the issues to be noticed and accepted by the community is for trusted and well-known individuals who come together and bring awareness of the issue to the community.

### **Identifying the Problem**

Once the community has realized that there is a problem involving this situation, those working to help solve the problem can move forward with achieving their goal. To do this, they will need to funnel down the problem into something that is more specific to the community and can be solved within the community. An example of this might be taking the problem of human trafficking down to housing for human trafficking victims in the area. This problem has a much more attainable goal and can be recognized by many. This group has decided to home in on an awareness of human trafficking in the Sioux County area.

### **Gather Information**

The best way to gather information about the problem chosen would be to find people in the community who are knowledgeable about the situation. While this person may not be the expert on the problem nationwide, living in the community would cause them to be an expert on the problem within their area. You can also create a qualitative study that would help you understand where the people in the community stand on the issue and what they know about this specific issue. Throughout our community project, our group did a lot of research and asked a lot of questions to those that are considered experts in our local area.

### **Potential Solutions**

After talking with the community organization A21, the group decided that researchers needed to investigate several different potential solutions to help bring awareness of human trafficking. These solutions consisted of public education, addressing the lack of recognition of the problem, A21 walk, policy changes, or better training to notice and help. After discussing the different solutions, researchers settled on public education, addressed the lack of recognition, and the A21 walk.

## **Methods**

### **Method of Inquiry**

Researchers sought out information for this study by working alongside A21 and promise. The goal was to gain information through research and the firsthand experiences of others. Information was obtained through research with A21 and in peer-reviewed journals. Researchers reached out to promise what it would take to raise awareness of human trafficking in small-town communities and the impact that we could make. They lead us to A21 to research and raise awareness. Researchers, then, partnered with our campus justice ministry to help continue to raise awareness for a march/walk.

## **Method of Engagement**

### **Flyers**

Researchers created flyers to advertise a trivia night for human trafficking awareness. On them, we included the date and time of the event as well as our goals to raise awareness as well as information about the donation for a survivor of human trafficking in the area. The intent was to encourage people to seek further about human trafficking. Researchers wanted to encourage people to attend to further raise awareness.

Researchers then took it a step further by partnering with promise and A21 and posting posters about a march/walk to raise awareness and bring attention to human trafficking in our area. These posters were made to encourage more bodies to desire a change. Researchers wanted to see policies changed and intentional acknowledgment to be made against human trafficking. They want people to see it is truly an issue right here in front of us by encouraging people to attend a march proceeding a conversation with an advocate.

### **Public Speaking**

Together, researchers attended chapel and went up to share information about our trivia night to speak out and encourage people to make the changes needed to further educate individuals. Researchers shared the time, location, and goal of our trivia night.

This was then followed by announcing and communicating our goal with trivia night by standing in front of the guests and informing them of who researchers were and how the goal of this was to raise donations and speak out for awareness of human trafficking. They then introduced our partners and shared their goals as well.

Researchers then spoke out again with campus ministry in introducing our walk and the goal that they and their community groups have of raising awareness for human trafficking. For a

desire to be noticed so that people can learn how to prevent human trafficking from affecting them and the ones they love.

### **Engagement**

The researchers engaged the audience through questions that had to do with pop culture and current events. We created a fun environment that could be welcoming to the larger community.

### **Method of Strategy**

Strategies and Tactics. We decided to use treats and lemonade as an incentive to attend. Our partners worked to create homemade treats, while we sent out posters and publicized them on social media to the mainstream community. Researchers went and put-up posters in a few small businesses and all the buildings on our college campus. Their next steps were to spread by word of mouth and talk to people about our goal to see this event play out.

### **Rationale**

Because our main population was young adults, we sought out things that would most attract their attention. As college students ourselves, we decided that competition and free food tend to be two of the biggest things that attract college students. When we added a prize to the mix this helped to encourage students and reach for a desire to attend an event.

### **Strategy**

Researchers intentionally put together fact sheets that shared stories of individual victims of human trafficking and made them available to everyone to farther educate people on different ways trafficking can happen and affect people. They also provided sheets that informed them about donations and where those donations were going.

### **Method of Organizing**

## **Organizing**

The researchers decided to meet weekly with our partners to discuss our plans. Their first meetings talked about what exactly we wanted to happen. Researchers talked over event ideas and decided on a trivia night. Then, they talked through what we hoped to achieve. They talked over the goals and interpretations of what could happen as the event unfolded. Researchers decided on what we would need and set up the arrangements to book a room and have help setting up as well as picking a date.

The researchers then took it a step further to discuss the walk and the goals they wanted to achieve with that. The researchers talked about poster ideas and the navigation of advertisements. Researchers also talked over dates and times and what would go into the day itself.

Once researchers set up a time that was on an evening when not much was happening, they started to plan. They arranged for a family in the community to donate homemade treats while researchers bought lemonade as a group. Researchers organized tables in a way that allowed access to all the screens we had in the room so that the guests could read the questions and could see the speakers that were present. Researchers arranged a professional trivia company to provide trivia.

## **Results**

### **Evaluation**

After the events, researchers gathered their results. Researchers complied with the significant effects of the community events first. The walk that was organized had a better turnout than the trivia night. Researchers feel that this was due to those who attended the events. While the trivia night was advertised to Northwestern's campus and the community, all those in

attendance were college students. The walk was also advertised to both college students and community members. However, there were many community members and students from Dordt University in attendance at the walk. For future events, it may be beneficial for researchers to start advertising earlier and also use other methods to advertise and promote the organized events.

Researchers also collected and organized data after the community events that had been organized. Researchers calculated that 107 people attended the two events that were put on. 34 of those 107 people attended the trivia night while 73 attended the community A21 walk. Researchers concluded that the reason for this was the targeted audience for the events. The trivia night was held in the library on Northwestern's campus and was also later at night. Researchers felt that this may have enticed college students to attend the event while turning away community members. It may be beneficial to choose a more neutral meeting place for future events.

The researchers also raised funds to donate to a local victim of human trafficking. After both events, there was \$512.00 raised and then given to this victim. Because of the volume of participants in the events, the researchers were content with the amount of money that was raised. The researchers hope that with the hoped higher attendance at future events, there will be greater funds raised that can then be donated.

The researchers then used the person-in-environment theoretical framework to interpret the collected data. Researchers could see how participants interacted and behaved at each of the community events held. Those that attended the trivia night seemed to act in a more lighthearted way. They were laughing and joking with those that were around them. This was to be expected as the main goal of the event was to spread awareness about the main event, the walk. Those that

attended the walk acted with a more somber effect. Researchers concluded participants understood the seriousness of the issue and its severity.

Researchers also used human behavior in the social environment theoretical framework to evaluate their results. The environment that a person is in indirectly influences the behaviors that person has. As explained above, those attending the trivia night seemed to hold a more joyful mentality. Participants could talk with others, and the questions were lighthearted. This was compared to the way that people acted at the A21 walk. At this event, there were personal stories of those that had been affected by and victims of human trafficking. This resulted in people having a more somber effect during the events. During the walk portion of the event, participants were asked to walk in silence. Researchers concluded that this resulted in participants continuing the somber effect that they held.

Researchers used the evaluation of outcomes to then interpret the data that was collected during the two events. This was done through qualitative evaluation. Researchers used qualitative evaluation to evaluate what they could see during the events. Researchers concluded that the number of people that were attending the events was this way. Researchers counted the number of participants at each event. They also used this method to evaluate how participants acted at each of the two events. Researchers also talked with participants about the events. They gather data on how they thought the events went. They were also asked how they thought the events could have been improved. Researchers then used these interviews to come up with ways in which the events could have been improved if they are held in future years.

Throughout the events, the researchers were able to create several goals and objectives. Our goals were to educate and inform individuals about human trafficking within the Sioux

County area. During the two events, these goals were met as we worked to educate the community. The research team also worked to raise some money for a survivor of human trafficking. While there was not a specific amount of money that we wished to reach, we were able to raise money to donate to the survivor.

When looking at the social change effort, our team played a large part in a small step to success. There will always be a need for more communities and individuals to be educated. The events held would be considered a success in social change because they educated individuals and opened their eyes to the reality of human trafficking within their community (See Appendix E-G). The team wishes that the research team could have informed and educated more individuals within the community, but the team also knows that any step to informing is a step in the right direction.

The strategies and tactics employed were effective. The researchers were able to entice individuals to our trivia night with free cookies, lemonade, and prizes for those who won the trivia (See Appendix H-J). This allowed our team to share information about human trafficking. This then helped to promote the A21 walk that happened a few weeks after the trivia night (See Appendix K). Partnering with the Northwestern College ministry team also proved effective as researchers were able to share the events with large numbers during chapel. Finally, partnering with the A21 organization allowed our team the ability to get a better understanding of the community and their view on human trafficking within the area.

Overall, the events went well. The research team felt as if they had taken a step toward educating the community about human trafficking. When looking at the two events that the researchers held, some things worked, and some things could have gone better. With the trivia event, having an incentive worked well. Food, drinks, and prizes brought college-aged

individuals to the trivia night. This allowed the researchers and partners to tell the stories of human trafficking victims. It also allowed an open space for questions while still being in a fun environment. The walk also worked well. There were many individuals who attended both events and both were able to bring awareness to the community (See Appendix L).

One thing that didn't work as well as the advertising. This might have been because the researchers joined the larger team after the planning had started. Having more time to advertise would also give individuals more time to clear their schedules. While the researchers were happy with the number of individuals that attended, there is always room to grow. Having more time and setting a day that will be consistent each year will help bring awareness. Doing this would also allow all individuals to mark that day on their calendars.

When looking at the results, the researchers would say that their goals were achieved. There could have been more individuals that were present at the events but educating one person can cause a ripple effect to bring awareness to many. The researchers wanted to bring awareness to as many people as possible, even if only one person was touched. Thus, in the researchers' eyes, the goals to educate and bring awareness were met. Likewise, the researchers did not measure their success by the number of individuals that attended the events or that had heard about the events. Instead, the researchers measured success by the impact that the stories might have had upon individuals.

### **Reflection**

Throughout the experience, the researchers learned about developing and hosting events. The researchers also learned how to partner with experienced organizations to get a better understanding of community planning. Researchers also learned how to reach out to organizations and individuals on how best to reach smaller communities. Doing this also taught

the researchers how to use resources to put forth the best interventions when looking at events and situations. While the researchers held two events with their partners A21, each event needed different plans and ways to reach the community. This allowed the researchers to get an understanding of how to reach out to college-age individuals as well as community members.

When looking at different concepts in the book *The Practice of Macro Social Work*, the researchers found that social denial is a very common problem within the targeted community. Social denial is when a community refuses or denies that a problem exists or that it is not a social problem but instead a personal problem (Brueggemann, 102). The researchers also found that social networking was used to create and implement the events put on. Social networking is “connections that are created through stable, recurrent, formal, or informal interactions among individuals” (Brueggemann, 159). Knowing that the community had a history of social denial and that the researchers would need to network, the researchers used an information campaign. An information campaign “engage your members in educating the public so they clearly understand the problem, its importance, its costs, and its consequences” (Brueggemann, 266).

### **Community Action Plan**

After the events were completed, the community should continue to consider the standards that have been placed as they continue to raise awareness and educate others. The community took steps to try to raise awareness through a walk and a trivia night. By being involved they were able to show that victims are not alone in their fight to be heard. Thus the community should continue to educate people going forward about the effects that human trafficking has on small towns.

The community should be considering the stories of victims in the area. They should consider what types of tips and suggestions they should be taking to keep themselves safe and to

educate others to keep them protected. By educating themselves on the precautions they should take they can protect themselves and others around them. They should consider the laws that are in their areas against human trafficking. They should seek change and influence in their communities to show people how human trafficking affects small-town communities.

Small-town communities like Sioux county Iowa still face human trafficking and still need education on the issue. In short term, researchers plan to continue to do research and post on social media sites and they encourage the community to do the same.

Going forward researchers plan to continue communications with promise and A21 to see how they can best stay involved in educating the community as well as advocating for future bills and policies. They plan to continue to educate themselves on human trafficking and what it looks like in small-town communities.

Individuals can better educate themselves going forward. They can think about the effects that human trafficking has played on other members of their community by reading stories and asking people about their experiences. They must be aware of what human trafficking looks like and how it has affected individuals.

This could look like:

- Going on YouTube and watching stories of human trafficking
- Taking self-defense classes
- Having a family meeting to talk about the dangers of online dating or friendships online
- Participating in Dressember
- Research peer-reviewed facts about human trafficking on google, A21, or other human trafficking sites

On a mezzo level, communities can continue to reach out to boards and seek further change in communities by encouraging harsher punishments for traffickers or starting events to help raise awareness. Communities can continue with marches and donate to antitrafficking funds as a means of seeking change. Individuals in the community can seek to share local stories and seek change in policies in their communities.

This could be:

- having a local fundraiser to raise awareness
- hosting a documentary sharing the stories of human trafficking survivors
- talking to public officials to seek change in the community

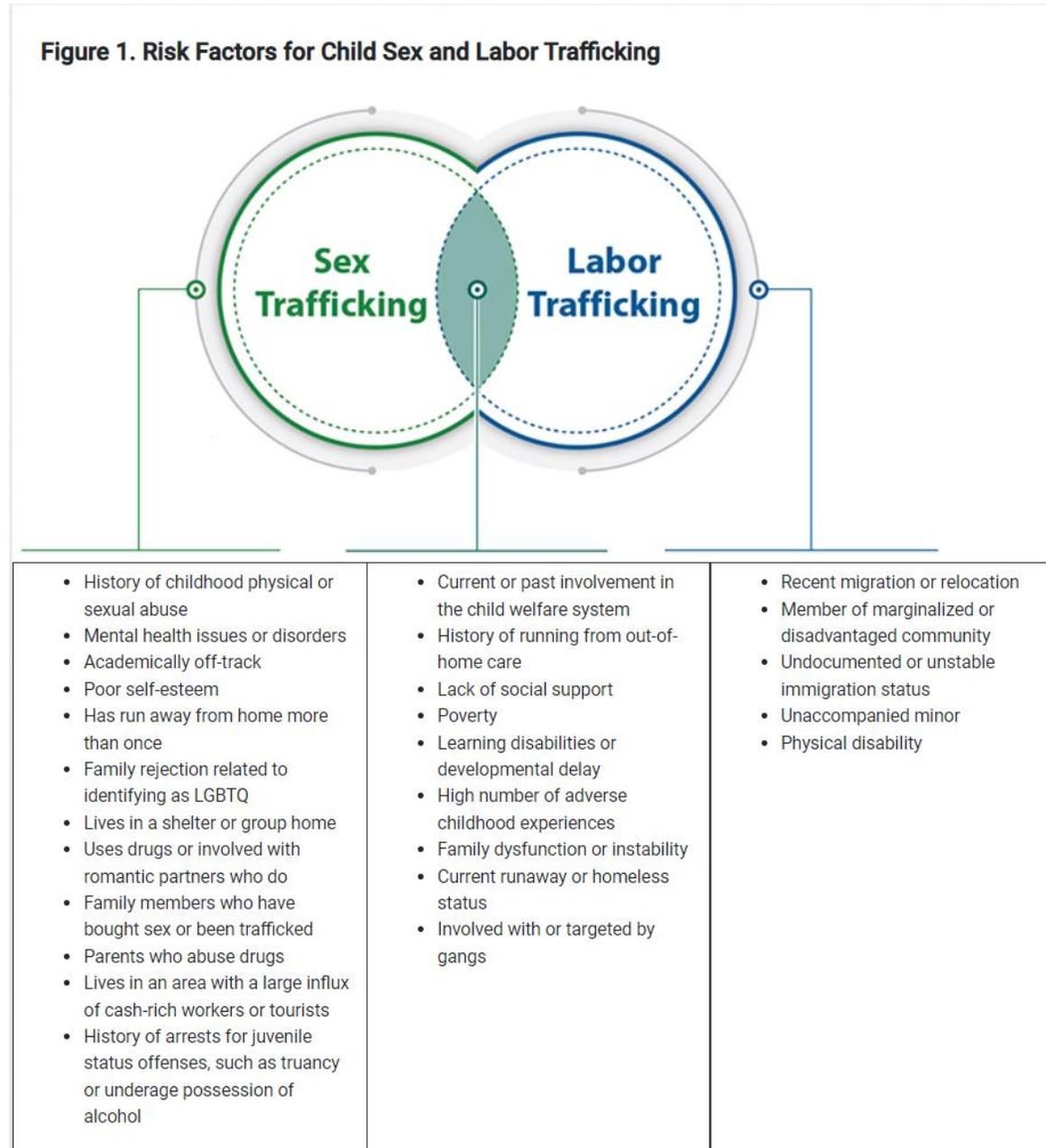
On a macro level, communities can seek change on a federal level. The more communities that get actively involved the more that the government notices that a change needs to be made. Individuals from communities can travel and speak to officials in Washington DC to see policy changes.

This could appear through:

- a walk through Washington DC
- online publicity of policy changes that need to be made or are being changed
- Working with advocacy agencies to advocate for change

There are still so many things that could make a world of difference in raising awareness for human trafficking. The more communities get involved the more chance that researchers can influence community members to fight against human trafficking.

Appendix A



(American Institutes for Research, 2022)

**Appendix B**



(U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, n.d.)

Appendix C

**TRIVIA NIGHT**

**BROUGHT TO YOU BY NWC SOCIAL WORK MAJORS**

A VERY GOOD TRIVIA COMPANY HOSTING

**FREE WILL DONATION -**  
proceeds going to local survivors

Come with teams of 3-5  
No team? No problem! We will pair you up with others!

Bringing awareness to human trafficking in our community

**WED. OCT 5TH @ 7:30P**

**VOGEL ROOM**  
2ND FLOOR OF THE DEWITT LIBRARY

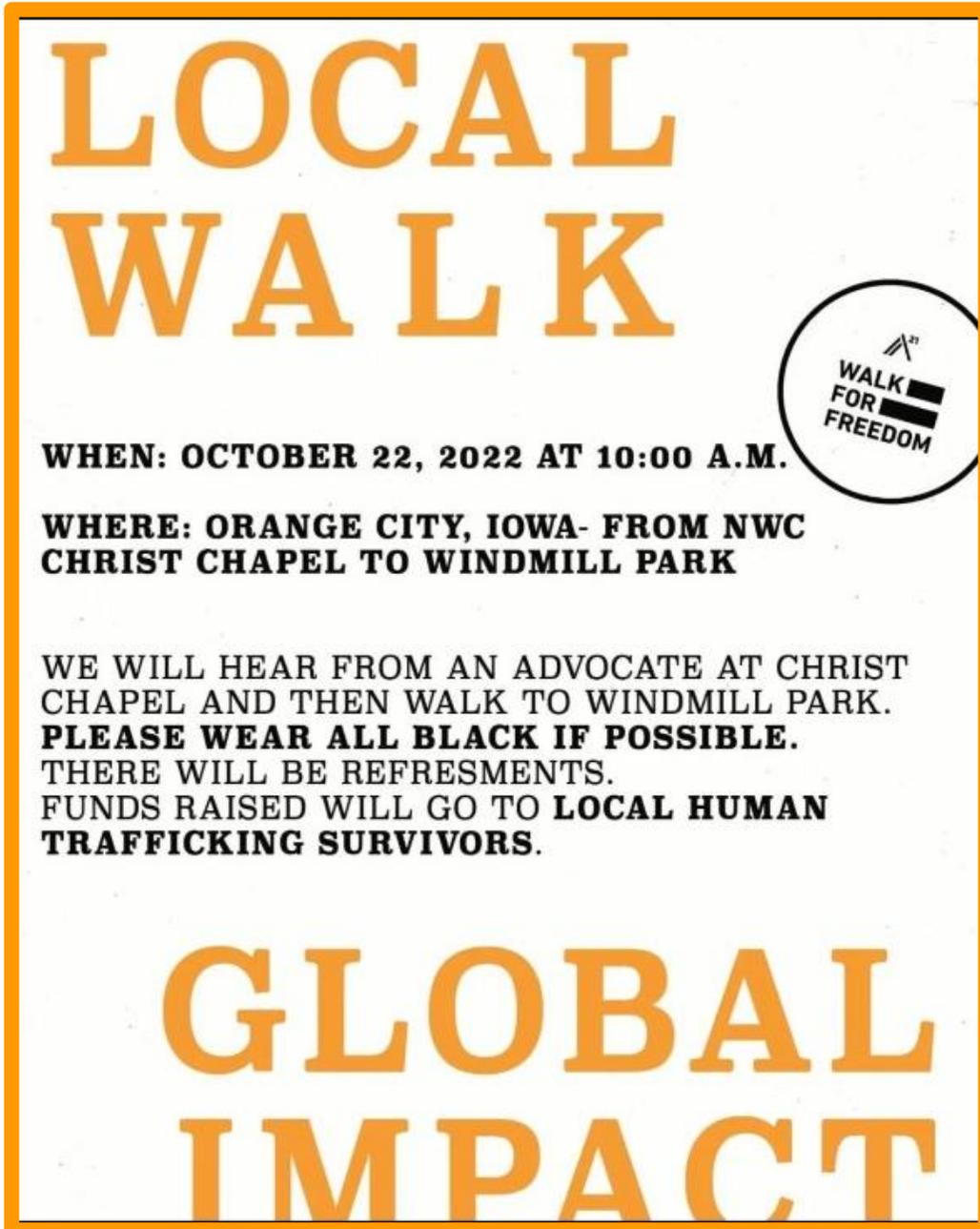
**COOKIES AND DRINKS PROVIDED**

**OPEN TO NW STUDENTS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC**

(Merideth Hochestetler, 2022)

Flyer made for the event

Appendix D



(Kaylee Jennis, 2022)

Flyer made for the event

Appendix E



(Dustin Rodger, 2022)

Appendix F



(Taylea Mills, 2022)

Appendix G



(Taylea Mills, 2022)

Appendix H



(Taylea Mills,2022)

Appendix I



(Taylea Mills, 2022)

Appendix J



(Taylea Mills, 2022)

Appendix K



(Taylea Mills, 2022)

Appendix L



(Dustin Rodger, 2022)

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