

Attitudes About Human Trafficking: Individual Differences Related to Belief and Victim Blame

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Abstract

Human trafficking is believed to oppress millions of people worldwide. Despite increased media attention and public awareness campaigns in recent years, no empirical research has examined public attitudes about human trafficking. The present study examined gender, sexual trauma history, and attitudes about human trafficking as they related to belief of a sex-trafficking scenario and willingness to blame the victim for the situation. Undergraduate students ($N = 409$) at a large private university in the Northeastern United States completed measures in which they responded to a vignette portraying sex trafficking in the United States. Participants also reported their personal trauma history and completed a Human Trafficking Myths Scale. Results indicated that gender and human trafficking myth acceptance, but not sexual trauma history, were significantly related to participants' belief of the sex-trafficking scenario and their perception of the victim's responsibility. Potential implications and directions for future research are discussed.

Keywords

sexual assault, cultural contexts, sexual abuse, child abuse, prostitution/sex work, human trafficking

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Human trafficking is a human rights issue that has increasingly garnered public attention in recent years, yet there is little empirical research related to the topic. The U.S. Department of State (2013) estimated that there are millions of trafficking victims worldwide, and victims are primarily women and children (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2009). Human trafficking encompasses multiple forms of exploitation, including forced labor, child soldiers, and sex trafficking (U.S. Department of State, 2013). Sex trafficking has been a primary focus of concern in the United States, especially in efforts to protect exploited children (U.S. Department of Justice, n.d.). There are no scientifically reliable estimates of how many children in the United States are trafficked into sex work or who are at risk of being commercially sexually exploited. Stransky and Finkelhor (2008) noted that at-risk youth, for example, runaways, are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and that there are numerous barriers to victim identification.

In light of the importance of this issue and the lack of empirical literature, the present study sought to explore the prevalence of false beliefs about human trafficking (i.e., myths) and how such beliefs might influence perceptions and attitudes toward victims of sex trafficking. Prior to introducing our study, we will first review literature on related myths, namely, rape, prostitution, and child sexual abuse. This review will provide a theoretical foundation for hypotheses regarding the potential influences of human trafficking myths. Myths related to rape (e.g., Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010), child sexual abuse (e.g., Collings, 1997; Cromer & Freyd, 2007), and prostitution (e.g., Sawyer & Metz, 2008) have been shown to justify sexual violence toward women and children. It is equally important to examine myths about human trafficking and its victims to better understand the deleterious impact such beliefs may have on trafficking victims.

Rape Myths

Rape myths were first introduced to the psychological literature by Burt's (1980) milestone article on rape myth acceptance. Burt posited that culturally supported myths about the characterization of rape, rape victims, and perpetrators contributed to the persistence of rape by blaming the victim and minimizing the responsibility of the perpetrator. Rape myths include false beliefs, such as "any woman can resist a rapist if she really wants to" (Burt, 1980, p. 217). Subsequent research on rape myths found that men were more accepting of rape myths than were women (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010) and that more acceptance of rape myths was associated with an increased likelihood of blaming the victim (e.g., Frese, Moya, & Megias, 2004). These findings

suggested that rape myth acceptance contributed to disbelieving, stigmatizing, and blaming the victim.

There are practical implications when victims are not believed. One important finding is that when victims doubt that they will be believed, they are less likely to disclose, and subsequently less likely to receive victim assistance and social support (Ullman & Filipas, 2001a). In addition, social factors may contribute to a victim's psychological and emotional sequelae of rape. Research has shown that negative reactions to disclosures and low social support following rape are related to negative outcomes for the victim, including posttraumatic stress disorder (Ullman & Filipas, 2001b). Doubting victims and myth acceptance may also influence the outcome of judicial proceedings (e.g., Taylor, 2007). For example, jury members who hold false beliefs about rape may be more inclined to find a defendant not guilty (Gray, 2006; Krahe, Temkin, Bieneck, & Berger, 2008).

Child Sexual Abuse Myths

Researchers have identified myths about child sexual abuse (Collings, 1997; Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010). Child sexual abuse myths deny the prevalence or impact of abuse, deny the perpetrator's responsibility, and reinforce misconceptions about perpetrators and the nature of abuse. These myths include the belief that child sexual abuse is rare and that a child would seek help if he or she had truly experienced abuse (Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010). Child sexual abuse myths contribute to blaming children for their abuse, which could result in lower disclosure rates. Myths could also contribute to increased victimization given that caregivers may only be alert for "stranger danger" (Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010), when in fact children are more likely to be abused by people known to the victim's family (Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner, & Hamby, 2005).

Prostitution Myths

Similarly, myths about prostitution justify the exploitation of women (Cotton, Farley, & Baron, 2002) and minimize the perception of harm (Farley et al., 2003). Prostitution myths apply to all types of prostitution regardless of the context (i.e., indoor vs. street). Myths purport that prostitutes gain wealth and enjoy having sex with johns (Basow & Campanile, 1990; Cotton et al., 2002). Other myths include beliefs that prostitutes cannot be raped or deserve to be raped (J. Miller & Schwartz, 1995; Sullivan, 2007) and that they cannot be harmed by rape (Farley, 2003). Prostitution myths justify the exploitation of women, increase violence against prostitutes, and reduce reporting.

Differences in Myth Acceptance

Consistent gender differences have been observed in attitudes about rape (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010), prostitution (Cotton et al., 2002), and child sexual abuse (Collings, 2003; Cromer & Freyd, 2007, 2009). In these research studies, men have consistently endorsed higher myth acceptance than have women in all these areas. Although a thorough review is beyond the scope of this article, it is important to note that commonly presented explanations of these differences have included socialization of other attitudes, especially those related to sex, gender role norms, and violence against women. For example, acceptance of traditional gender roles has been related to rape myth acceptance (Burt, 1980; Caron & Carter, 1997).

Another proposed explanation is perceived similarity. Barnett, Tetreault, Esper, and Bristow (1986) suggested that women who have experienced rape tended to be more empathetic toward a rape victim. Similarly, Cromer and Freyd (2007) tested the hypothesis that personal life experience may play a role in the gender differences observed in believing reports of child sexual abuse. Results showed that men who had experienced a childhood history of interpersonal trauma were as likely as were women to believe disclosures of child sexual abuse victims (Cromer & Freyd, 2007, 2009). Differences in personal trauma history appeared to have moderated gender differences observed in belief.

Personal trauma history may have a similar moderating effect on myth acceptance. It is possible that myth acceptance may be lower in women, because women experience sexual victimization at higher rates than do men (Banyard et al., 2007). Likewise, men with a sexual trauma history may share women's heightened awareness of victimization, which in turn could lead them to endorse attitudes similar to those generally held by women.

Human Trafficking Myths

The National Human Trafficking Resource Center (Polaris Project, 2006) has asserted that a proliferation of myths about human trafficking have contributed to the difficulty in identifying trafficking victims. Myths could impede victim identification if criminal justice professionals are misinformed about the nature and characteristics of trafficking and its victims (Menaker & Franklin, 2013). For example, victims of sex trafficking in the media are portrayed as very young, innocent, and vulnerable children, in contrast to seemingly hardened, promiscuous youth who are viewed as willful sex workers (Menaker & Franklin, 2013).

Although there has been considerable research about rape myths, and the empirical study of child sexual abuse myths and prostitution myths is

emerging in the literature, attitudes about human trafficking are understudied. An unrestricted keyword search in PsycINFO® (performed May 26, 2014) returned 399 entries for “human trafficking,” 139 for “sex trafficking,” and 3 for “human sex trafficking.” These results are low compared with 3,121 entries for “prostitution” and 26,093 entries for “child abuse.” A PsycINFO® search (performed May 26, 2014) for “human trafficking” and “myths” returned a result of 4, 2 of which were a book review and an editor’s note on the contents of a journal issue. The other two sources were qualitative and anecdotal. To date, there has been no empirical work examining myths specifically related to human trafficking.

The present study sought to explore the extent to which participants endorsed myths about human trafficking and how these myths related to individuals’ willingness to believe or to blame a sex trafficking victim. In addition, as participant gender (e.g., Cotton et al., 2002; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010) and personal trauma history (e.g., Cromer & Freyd, 2007) affected attitudes toward victims in previous research, this study also examined whether these factors related to perceptions of a sex trafficking victim.

We hypothesized that

Hypothesis 1. Men would be less likely to believe a vignette portraying sex trafficking, more willing to assign blame to the victim, and more accepting of human trafficking myths than would women.

Hypothesis 2. Personal sexual trauma history and trafficking myth acceptance would each uniquely predict belief and victim blame, so that those who reported a personal history of sexual trauma would be more likely to believe the vignette and less likely to blame the victim, and those who endorsed belief in trafficking myths would be less likely to believe the vignette and more likely to blame the victim.

Method

Participants

Participants were undergraduate students ($N = 409$, 57% female, 42% male) at a private university in the Northeastern United States. The mean age was 18.9 years ($SD = 1.57$). Participants were 67% Caucasian, 16.1% Asian, 5.9% Black or African American, 5.9% Hispanic, 3.7% Bi-or Multiracial, and 0.7% Native American. Ethnicity data were missing for 0.7% of the sample. Almost 28% of the total sample (29% of the women and 25.7% of the men) reported having experienced sexual abuse at some time in their lives.

Procedure

The psychology department utilized a human subjects pool that was managed with an experiment management system, Sona System™. Participants completed research for partial course credit. Participants chose when to log on and selected studies based on a brief description. For the current study, participants self-selected to “Individual differences in human exploitation.” The brief description stated, “We are interested in learning more about peoples’ opinions about human exploitation. We will ask you to fill out several surveys. This study will take about 30 minutes to complete. All information will be kept anonymous.” No other advertising promoted the study. Informed consent was indicated with a button press online. This procedure enabled participants to complete the study in a private setting and to not identify themselves.

Participants answered demographic questions, then responded to a vignette portraying a case of child sex trafficking in the United States. After being presented with the vignette, participants completed the Human Trafficking Myths Scale. Last, participants completed two additional measures relating to other types of myths, which were not examined for the present study. Participants could decline to answer any question or discontinue the study at any time without penalty.

Measures

Demographics. A demographic questionnaire inquired about age, gender, and race/ethnicity.

Belief and victim blame. The vignette reflected the average age at which a child is first victimized by prostitution in the United States (Allen, 2010). Because both males and females can be trafficked, a gender neutral name was chosen based on U.S. census records (“A List of Gender-Neutral Names,” 2007). The vignette was as follows:

At 13 years of age, Jessie ran away from home to get away from an abusive father. Within a couple of days, Jessie was befriended by a man who said he would take care of Jessie. Jessie had sex with him in exchange for shelter, food, and clothing. The man said he would keep Jessie safe, but soon he began to make Jessie do sexual acts with other people for money.

After reading the vignette, participants responded to statements, which they rated on a scale of 1 to 6, where 1 = *definitely false*, 2 = *mostly false*, 3 = *probably false*, 4 = *probably true*, 5 = *mostly true*, and 6 = *definitely true*.

The two statements used in these analyses referred to the believability of the situation portrayed (belief; *This situation is believable*) and the victim's perceived responsibility in the situation (victim blame; *Jessie is responsible for the situation*).

Human trafficking myths. The Human Trafficking Myths Scale was developed for this study. After initial item compilation, a principal components factor analysis resulted in 17 human trafficking myth items (see the appendix). The myth items were face valid and verified by a human trafficking expert. The myths reflected false beliefs about the nature of human trafficking, characteristics of trafficking victims, and victim agency. The majority of the items reflected characteristics applicable to all forms of human trafficking, and two items specifically referred to sex trafficking. Participants rated each of the statements on a scale of 1 to 6, where 1 = *definitely false*, 2 = *mostly false*, 3 = *probably false*, 4 = *probably true*, 5 = *mostly true*, and 6 = *definitely true*. Cronbach's alpha was .81 in this sample.

Trauma history. Participants responded to the 12-item Brief Betrayal Trauma Survey (BBTS; Goldberg & Freyd, 2006), which queried traumatic experiences. Each item consisted of two parts enquiring about events that occurred (a) *before the age of 18* and (b) *at the age of 18 or after*. Analyses for this study used two items that inquired about sexual abuse perpetrated by (a) *someone with whom you were very close (such as a parent or lover)* and (b) *someone with whom you were not so close* (Goldberg & Freyd, 2006). These two items were coded into a dichotomous variable reflecting either the presence or absence of a history of sexual trauma. Additional items in the BBTS may be found in the developers' original publication with psychometric data supporting validity and reliability (Goldberg & Freyd, 2006). Cronbach's alpha was .83 in this sample.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Due to missing data, 409 of an original 429 participants were retained for the present analyses. Overall, participants' responses indicated moderate belief in the veracity of the trafficking situation in the vignette ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 1.21$, on a scale from 1 to 6 where a score of 4 or higher indicated some level of belief). Nearly a quarter of the sample (23%, $n = 98$) indicated that they doubted the veracity of the vignette. On average, participants' responses indicated that the victim as not viewed as responsible for the situation ($M = 2.82$,

$SD = 1.35$). Nonetheless, 31% ($n = 134$) attributed at least some blame to the victim. On the Human Trafficking Myths Scale, participants' overall average indicated slight disagreement with myths ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 0.62$, range = 1-6); however, 36.5% of the participants ($n = 154$) had a mean score of 4 or higher, indicating general agreement with human trafficking myths. In other words, slightly more than one third of the sample indicated belief in misinformation about human trafficking and its victims.

Hypothesis Testing

The first hypothesis was that gender would have a main effect on belief, victim blame, and myth acceptance such that men would be less likely to believe the vignette, more willing to assign blame to the victim, and more accepting of human trafficking myths. To test this hypothesis, we conducted a MANOVA with gender as a two-level independent variable and scores on belief, victim blame, and human trafficking myth acceptance as three dependent variables. Statistically significant differences between genders emerged for the combined dependent variables, $F(3, 405) = 12.52$, $p < .001$, Wilks's $\lambda = .92$. The univariate results indicated that gender produced statistically significant differences in belief, $F(1, 407) = 33.16$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .08$; victim blame, $F(1, 407) = 8.11$, $p = .005$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$; and human trafficking myth acceptance, $F(1, 407) = 5.59$, $p < .02$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$. Men had lower means on belief than did women ($p < .001$), and men's responses had higher means on both victim blame and human trafficking myth acceptance than did women ($p < .01$ and $p < .02$, respectively). Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 1.

To test the second hypothesis that personal trauma history and belief in human trafficking myths would influence belief and victim blame above and beyond the effects of gender, we conducted a pair of hierarchical linear regressions. We examined the predictive power of gender, sexual trauma history, and human trafficking myth acceptance as the independent variables on vignette belief and victim blame as the dependent variables. Gender and sexual trauma history comprised the first two steps of the regression, and human trafficking myth acceptance was the third step. In Model 1 of the hierarchical regression examining belief, gender explained 7.5% of variance in whether participants rated the vignette as believable, $F(1, 407) = 33.16$, $p < .001$. Adding sexual trauma history in Model 2 did not significantly increase the total variance explained, $\Delta R^2 = .006$, $\Delta F(1, 406) = 2.81$, $p = .10$. Model 3 added human trafficking myth acceptance, which increased the total variance explained to 13.1%, $\Delta R^2 = .05$, $\Delta F(1, 405) = 22.91$, $p < .001$. In the final model, gender remained a significant predictor for believing the vignette

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations for Dependent Variables by Gender and Sexual Trauma History.

	Belief		Victim Blame		Trafficking Myths	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Total sample						
Female	4.52	0.08	2.64	0.09	2.75	0.04
Male	3.85	0.09	3.02	0.10	2.90	0.05
Without sexual trauma						
Female	4.53	1.12	2.59	1.30	2.73	0.59
Male	3.97	1.24	2.98	1.32	2.86	0.64
With sexual trauma						
Female	4.49	1.09	2.76	1.35	2.81	0.57
Male	3.51	1.16	3.11	1.35	3.02	0.65

Note. See text for significant differences between groups.

($\beta = -.25, p < .001$), and myth acceptance made a significant unique contribution to explaining variance beyond the effects of gender and sexual trauma history ($\beta = -.22, p < .001$). Sexual trauma history did not make a significant contribution to predicting whether participants would rate the vignette as believable ($\beta = -.06, p = .19$).

In Model 1 of the second hierarchical regression examining victim blame, gender explained a small but statistically significant proportion (2.0%) of the variance in whether participants agreed that the victim was responsible for the situation, $F(1, 407) = 8.11, p = .005$. In Model 2, total variance explained by both gender and sexual trauma history remained 2.2%, $\Delta R^2 = .003$, $\Delta F(1, 406) = 1.12, p = .29$. Adding myth acceptance in Model 3 increased total variance explained to 13.5%, $\Delta R^2 = .11$, $\Delta F(1, 405) = 52.77, p < .001$. In the final model, gender ($\beta = .10, p = .03$) and human trafficking myth acceptance ($\beta = .34, p < .001$) made significant contributions to predicting whether participants believed the victim was responsible for the situation. Sexual trauma history ($\beta = .02, p = .61$) was not a significant predictor of victim blame in the final model.

Discussion

The present study used a vignette to explore public perceptions of sex trafficking. Specifically, this study examined evaluative decisions regarding scenario veracity and assignment of blame to the victim, as well as general understanding of human trafficking as indexed by a myth scale. This study

was analogous to earlier work on rape myths (e.g., Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010), child sexual abuse myths (e.g., Cromer & Freyd, 2007), and prostitution myths (e.g., Cotton et al., 2002). Results about trafficking in the present study were aligned with those found in previous research on myths about rape, child sexual abuse, and prostitution. Men were less believing of the portrayal of sex trafficking, more likely to blame the victim for the situation, and more accepting of human trafficking myths than were women. One potential explanation for these robust gender differences across studies is that women experience sexual victimization at higher rates than do men (Banyard et al., 2007). Women's heightened awareness of potential victimization appears to be related to women's willingness to believe disclosures of abuse (Cromer & Freyd, 2007; K. E. Miller & Cromer, 2012).

Earlier work had found that sexual trauma history contributed to believing others' disclosures. Cromer and Freyd (2007, 2009) found that men with no history of interpersonal childhood trauma had less belief in victims' disclosures than did all women, regardless of women's trauma history, and also less belief than did men who endorsed having a history of interpersonal childhood trauma. This was not the case for the sex trafficking vignette used in the present study. When trauma history was entered into regressions in which believing a trafficking scenario and assigning blame to the victim were two dependent variables, participants' own trauma history did not uniquely contribute to the models. Although it has been suggested that a personal trauma history may increase empathy for victims of interpersonal violence, this did not generalize to the scenario of sex trafficking in the present study.

Human trafficking myth acceptance emerged as a significant predictor of both belief and victim blame. In the present study, human trafficking myths were related to less belief in the vignette and increased victim blame. These results were similar to findings that have shown acceptance of other types of myths to be related to belief of disclosures and victim blame (Cromer & Freyd, 2007; Frese et al., 2004). Myths about rape (Burt, 1980; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010), child sexual abuse (Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010), and prostitution (Cotton et al., 2002) serve to justify violence against women and children, thereby reinforcing the social norm of denial and victim blame. Human trafficking myths appear to serve a similar function by denying or justifying the sale or trade of human beings. Trafficking myths appear to denigrate the victim, excuse the perpetrator, and obfuscate human trafficking.

Further research is needed to clearly understand public attitudes about human trafficking and trafficking victims. Although this study showed

preliminary support for the concept of human trafficking myths and their relationship to belief and victim blame, human trafficking may possess unique characteristics that influence attitudes toward trafficking victims. In addition, this study used a vignette reflecting sex trafficking, and further research is needed to examine human trafficking myths in relation to other types of human trafficking. Myths relating to sexuality may be an overarching construct that influences how individuals perceive and respond to victims of sex-related crimes, but it is also possible that individual categories of myths (e.g., rape, child sexual abuse, prostitution, and human trafficking) relate differently to distinct mental schemata (e.g., J. Miller & Schwartz, 1995). For example, the presence of violence or the exchange of money for sex may affect perceptions of victims in different ways.

The concept of sex trafficking may present unique challenges in the perceived combination of violence and economic exchange. Individuals may be conflicted by this apparent contradiction, especially if they lack accurate knowledge about human sex trafficking. The perceived or assumed use of violence and coercion in trafficking may reduce the victim's perceived responsibility, whereas the economic exchange may increase the victim's perceived responsibility. This conflict may contribute to apparent inconsistency, ambivalence, or uncertainty in attitudes about and responses to sex trafficking victims. The influence of perceived locus of control on attitudes about human trafficking and trafficking victims will be an important area for future research.

Myths about rape, prostitution, and child sexual abuse imply that crimes involving sexuality inherently involve moral judgments (e.g., Bieneck & Krahe, 2011; Walsh, Eckhardt, & Russell, 2006). Historically, a rape victim's character has been called into question as a relevant factor in her responsibility in precipitating her own victimization (e.g., Schuller & Hastings, 2002), and participation in prostitution has been equated with guilt regardless of external influencing factors (Brown, 2004; Farley, 2003; Sullivan, 2007). Future research may explore the influences of the cultural mores reflected in human trafficking myths, especially in relation to sex trafficking, and the role of moral development and reasoning in the attribution of blame to victims. Such knowledge may be especially important in regard to the complicated issue of human trafficking. It may be possible for the public to view a trafficked person as a victim and yet still believe he or she should be punished, because his or her behavior (regardless of locus of control) is illegal, for example, prostitution, illegal immigration, illegal drugs, or other criminal activity.

Society assigns stigma to persons who violate social norms regarding sexuality, regardless of whether those norms are violated by one's own volition.

Stigma is driven by stereotypes, some of which overlap with the myths described in this article. Stigma can promote the oppression and exploitation of one group by another by devaluing the stigmatized individuals (Goffman, 1963; Phelan, Link, & Dovidio, 2008). Stigma can present barriers to fair treatment within the criminal justice system (Gray, 2006; Page, 2008, 2010) and to adequate health care access (Lazarus et al., 2012). Myths could be viewed as aspects of stigma, but this issue has yet to be examined by empirical research. Future research examining the relationship between myths and stigma is warranted.

Limitations and Strengths

The present study methods did have limitations. Participants were undergraduates, and their responses may not be representative of non-student populations. This notwithstanding, it is important to understand the attitudes and beliefs of college students, because many will sit on juries or work in law enforcement, criminal justice, politics, and in public and social service provision. The Northeastern location of the university may also limit the generalizability of the results to other areas of the United States. Another limitation was that participants self-selected to the study. Self-selection may have contributed to the high proportion (one quarter) of male participants who reported a personal history of sexual trauma. This proportion was high compared with the reported national averages in the United States being 7.5% for boys experiencing child sexual abuse (Pereda, Guilera, Forns, & Gómez-Benito, 2009) and only 3% for male college students experiencing sexual assault (Rothman & Silverman, 2007). Self-selection also could have reduced between-group differences and contributed to null findings, given that individuals who are not empathic about human exploitation may not have chosen to participate.

Despite its limitations, the current study provided important information on which to build future research about human trafficking. We introduced a carefully compiled measure to operationalize and measure human trafficking myths that can be used in future research. To the authors' knowledge, this is the first study to empirically examine human trafficking myths and how these beliefs are related to perceptions of sex trafficking victims. According to anti-trafficking organizations, false beliefs about human trafficking are problematic, because they can obscure and perpetuate human trafficking in the United States and around the world (Polaris Project, 2006).

Human trafficking myths have the potential to influence legal decisions, public policy, immigration reform, law enforcement, advocacy, and social services. Examining attitudes in specific populations such as law enforcement

officers, service providers, and legal professionals would provide important information about the practical implications of human trafficking myths. As rape myth acceptance has been shown to affect such things as judicial decisions (Krahé, Temkin, & Bieneck, 2007; Krahé et al., 2008) and behavior of law enforcement officers (Page, 2008, 2010), human trafficking myth acceptance may result in similar effects in situations involving trafficking victims. A better understanding of public perception about different forms of human trafficking based on empirical research would inform awareness and reform efforts which could lead to better victim identification, protection of human rights, and service provision. Furthermore, a means of measuring human trafficking myths will allow for examination of the effectiveness of awareness trainings and other educational campaigns in reducing human trafficking myth acceptance.

Appendix

Human Trafficking Myths Scale

1. Human trafficking is another term for smuggling.
2. Human trafficking must include elements of physical force, restraint, bondage, and/or violence.
3. Human trafficking does not happen in the United States.
4. If someone did not want to be trafficked, he or she would leave the situation.
5. U.S. citizens are trafficked in their own country (reverse coded).
6. Human trafficking victims will seek help as soon as they have the opportunity.
7. People from other countries who are trafficked in the United States are always illegal immigrants.
8. Normal-appearing, well-educated, middle-class people are not trafficked.
9. Human trafficking victims will tell authorities they are being trafficked as soon as they have the opportunity.
10. Human trafficking must involve some form of travel, transportation, or movement across state or national borders.
11. If persons are trafficked in the United States, they are always from poor, uneducated communities.
12. If a child solicits sex from an adult in exchange for money, food, or shelter, he or she is not a victim.
13. Only foreigners and illegal immigrants are trafficked.
14. Human trafficking is always controlled by organized crime.

15. A person who is trafficked will always feel negatively toward the person(s) trafficking him or her.
16. If a person receives any kind of payment for sex, he or she is not being trafficked.
17. Human trafficking only occurs in undeveloped countries.

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