

THE INFLUENCE OF RAPE MYTH ACCEPTANCE ON SELF-REPORTED  
PERCEPTIONS OF PROSTITUTION AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING AMONG  
COLLEGE STUDENTS

by

Eva Fontaine

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**DEFENSE COMMITTEE AND FINAL READING APPROVALS**

of the thesis submitted by

Eva Fontaine

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The following individuals read and discussed the thesis submitted by student Eva Fontaine, and they evaluated her presentation and response to questions during the final oral examination. They found that the student passed the final oral examination.

Laura King, Ph.D. Chair, Supervisory Committee

Andrew Giacomazzi, Ph.D. Member, Supervisory Committee

Cody J. Jorgensen, Ph.D. Member, Supervisory Committee

The final reading approval of the thesis was granted by Laura King, Ph.D., Chair of the Supervisory Committee. The thesis was approved by the Graduate College.

## DEDICATION

To Mom, Lars, and Dr. Jaren Riley,  
who encouraged me to be relentless in all of my pursuits,  
especially this one.

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## ABSTRACT

Adler (1975) contends that, over time, few things in society have changed less than sexual behavior, while few things have changed more than attitudes about sex. As such, myths pertaining to sex work, such as prostitution, human trafficking, and rape myths, support culturally reinforced attitudes that rationalize the sexual exploitation of sex workers (Cotton et al., 2002). Using a convenience sample and revised versions of the Human Trafficking Myths Scale (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016), Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale (Levin & Peled, 2011), and Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (McMahon & Farmer, 2011), the current study sought to examine the following research questions: (1) Are men more likely than women to harbor misperceptions about rape, prostitution, and human trafficking? (2) What effect does rape myth acceptance have on self-reported perceptions of sex workers, human trafficking, and prostitution? Using multivariate OLS regression models, findings indicate that rape myth acceptance is associated with an increased acceptance of human trafficking myths and perceiving sex workers as victims. The implications of these findings are discussed as well as suggestions for future research.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Regarded as the world's oldest profession, prostitution is not unique to modern day society (Adler, 1975). In contemporary America, organizations aimed at combating prostitution on the grounds of its injustice and degradation to women sprang up in response to organizations combating prostitution on moral grounds of prostitution's ability to disintegrate marriages and families (Jackson, 2004). Similar debates about legislating morality have ensued on topics such as gay marriage and abortion. However, with prostitution, the demand created by clientele seeking out extra-marital relations, 'stress relief,' and excitement, creates an unwavering profit margin for those involved in sex work (Jackson, 2004). Although it is frequently perceived that prostitutes choose to engage in sex work, research indicates that many are actually victims of human trafficking (U.S. Department of State, 2016).

Histories of sexual and physical abuse and familial dysfunction render young prostitutes vulnerable to coercion and manipulation by traffickers (Franklin & Menaker, 2014). Human traffickers are motivated by strong-arming victims into the sex trade, as bodies are a renewable resource that retain profit, unlike drugs and arms (Stanley, 2005). Thus, it is not likely that someone, unknowing of a sex worker's circumstances, can easily distinguish an individual who is a victim of human trafficking from a prostitute by choice. Quantifying the extent of "whore stigma" (Herzog, 2008), which is attached to those who work in the sex industry and applies to those forced—known as human trafficking victims—and those who choose to be a sex worker—known as prostitutes—is

imperative in identifying victims and creating a safe environment for victims to recover from the trauma they have endured.

Perceptions of prostitutes, prostitution, and human trafficking have yet to be thoroughly documented. The most predominant need in this field of research is for quantitative data to examine myths about sex work and their predictors. Perceptions are important to study as they influence an individual's behavior. As such, perceptions of sex workers are worthy of systematic academic attention as people may come into contact with human trafficking victims and not recognize or believe they are a victim. Subsequently, the denial of an individual's victimization could result in further trauma. This study aimed to supplement the paucity of research by adopting a descriptive, quantitative, and deductive research design. The research question that guided the course of this study was: What effect does rape myth acceptance have on self-reported perceptions of sex workers, human trafficking, and prostitution?

This study resulted in a descriptive analysis of university students' perceptions about sex workers, human trafficking, and prostitution and their relationship to rape myth acceptance. University students' perceptions are pertinent to study as these individuals are likely to become the future professionals staffing the criminal justice system and, as extant literature indicates, criminal justice professionals hold similar perceptions of sex workers as the general population (Franklin & Menaker, 2014). If individuals who are trafficked are perceived to be victims, while prostitutes are viewed as offenders, many victims of trafficking, camouflaged as prostitutes, will likely be trapped in a relentless cycle of victimization and offending. Sex workers who are perceived to be criminals, and processed through the criminal justice system as such, have a compounding stigma of

being immoral in addition to being a criminal. The stigma attached to both active and former sex workers may contribute to trapping these individuals in a cycle of victimization and offending. This study was not designed to explain the origin or the transmission of myths. However, future research can be informed by this suggested research question.

The following sections reviews both previous research and the gaps in research regarding human trafficking, prostitution, and rape myth acceptance to describe the need for this study. Next, the methodology utilized in this study is extensively detailed followed by the results and a discussion thereof. Last, needs and directions for future research are discussed.

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Human trafficking and prostitution have recently erupted onto the forefront of the American psyche and have garnered a vast amount of media attention, specifically in relation to sexual exploitation. The media broadcasts and sensationalizes the most abhorrent cases of human trafficking and prostitution, subsequently influencing American's perceptions about the prevalence of the crime, while perpetuating stereotypes of the characteristics of victims and offenders (Babbie, 2010; Cunningham & Cromer, 2016; Levin & Peled, 2010). General social trends in the United States indicate issues of free choice, coercion, deviance, morality, and human rights as inherent to the perceptions of human trafficking and prostitution; however, scant empirical research has been conducted on this topic (Levin & Peled, 2011).

### **Human Trafficking**

Human trafficking is regarded as the third largest organized crime in the world, trailing only drug and arms trafficking (Gozdiak & Bump, 2008). The United States is one of the top 10 destinations for human trafficking in the world (Hepburn & Simon, 2010). Currently, profits for human trafficking exceed \$150 billion per year worldwide (Polaris Project, 2015a). Recently, human trafficking has been linked to white-collar crime, such as money laundering, intensifying the scope and harm caused to society (Petrunov, 2011). The scope of the damage caused to victims will continue to intensify until appropriate prevention and victim identification tactics are created and properly executed.

Until recently, official data on human trafficking have not been trustworthy due to the covert nature of the crime and lack of systematic collection. In 2013, the Uniform Crime Report (UCR) officially classified human trafficking as a Part II index crime, creating a standard method for law enforcement to report human trafficking investigations and arrests (Urban Institute, 2014). Creating an avenue to systematically report human trafficking does not increase the likelihood of state prosecutors' willingness to apply anti-trafficking statutes, such as the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) laws that established methods to prosecute traffickers, but does create systematic data from which future researchers, policy makers, and the criminal justice system can benefit. After the UCR has systematically collected data on human trafficking for a satisfactory period of time, typically 10 years, analysis of quantitative data can supplement perceptions research (Maltz, 2006).

#### Common Routes of Victimization

Individuals become victims of trafficking via two common avenues. Victims either respond to a work or study abroad advertisement or the victim enters a foreign country with the assistance of a sought out human smuggler, optimistic of gaining more promising employment opportunities (Schauer & Wheaton, 2006). Debt bondage then contractually ensues under the ploy that the victim will be free once the fee has been paid. Traffickers employ various tactics to control and manipulate the individuals they are trafficking, such as threats against the individual and their family members, physical and sexual assaults, and taking away legal, travel, and immigration documentation (Schauer & Wheaton, 2006). Arguably, a trafficker's most coercive tool is his/her ability to adapt to and effectively maneuver legislative and law enforcement efforts to crack

down on trafficking individuals against his/her will, making adequate legislation and law enforcement of such legislation a hard pressed and urgent issue (Schauer & Wheaton, 2006). At-risk youth, particularly runaways, are notably vulnerable to sex trafficking and exploitation (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016). Additional risk factors include poverty, unemployment, desperation, homelessness, a need to be loved, and histories of abuse (U.S. Department of Justice Task Force, 2014).

### Prominent Myths about Human Trafficking

The clandestine nature, lack of quantitative empirical research, and the abundance of media attention that human trafficking garners, enables myths and misconceptions to be dispersed ceaselessly to the general American population (Polaris Project, 2006). In 2001, 76 percent of the public reported forming their opinion on crime based on what they read in newspapers and saw on the news compared to 22 percent of respondents who formed their opinion of crime based on personal experience (Marsh & Melville, 2009). Such myths among the public need to be addressed and demystified in order to aid in the identification of potential victims, survivors, and traffickers, whose ability to adapt to adverse circumstances places them in a position to allude law enforcement. To adequately address the issues surrounding human trafficking, we must first recognize the myths.

#### Myth One: Human Trafficking Does Not Happen in the United States

With our modern luxuries, Americans are privy to the idea that human trafficking only takes place in other countries and never in the United States (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2013). However, the Urban Institute's 2014 report estimated underground commercial sex economies in eight major United States cities with



appraisals ranging from \$39.9 million in Denver, Colorado, to \$290 million in Atlanta, Georgia. With such substantial underground sex economies in multiple cities, it is implausible to believe that all sexual activities excluded unlawful commercial sex acts, meaning all sex acts were between consenting adults. Thus, the notion that human trafficking does not occur in the United States is erroneous.

#### Myth Two: Human Trafficking and Human Smuggling are Synonymous

Another common source of confusion is the subscription to the myth that human trafficking and human smuggling are the same (Department of Homeland Security, 2013). Smuggling and trafficking are not synonymous; the former, a crime against borders, requires transporting a consenting individual, who knows the movement is a violation of immigration laws, across a country's border. The latter, a crime against persons, does not require transportation (Department of Homeland Security, 2013; National Human Trafficking Resource Center, 2014). Human smuggling does become trafficking when "the smuggler uses force, fraud, or coercion to hold people against their will for the purposes of labor or sexual exploitation" (Department of Homeland Security, 2013). Transportation, though not required, can be a tool that traffickers use to control victims by inundating them with unfamiliar places or cultures to further seclude them from society (National Human Trafficking Resource Center, 2014).

#### Myth Three: Human Trafficking Victims Are Foreign or Poor

Americans are also reluctant to reject the belief that human trafficking victims are only foreign born individuals and those who are poor (Department of Homeland Security, 2013). The U.S. Department of State (2011) reports that 83 percent of sex trafficking victims identified in the United States were United States citizens. Additionally, the

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) suggests that one in every six runaways reported to NCMEC in 2014 were likely to be sex trafficking victims, up from one in seven the year prior. Sixty-eight percent of reported runaways were in the child welfare system at the time they ran away (NCMEC, 2014). Regardless of where the trafficking victim was born, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA) protects and includes both U.S. citizens and foreign nationals alike in the definition of human trafficking under federal statute (National Human Trafficking Resource Center, 2014). Moreover, victims of human trafficking are not always of low social and economic status and uneducated; some victims have attained a college degree (Schauer & Wheaton, 2006) and can be any nationality, race, gender, or age (Department of Homeland Security, 2013).

No demographic is exempt from human trafficking. According to the Forced Labor Statistics, 21 million men, women, and children are victims of human trafficking each year, 22 percent of whom are sexually exploited (Polaris Project, 2015). According to the U.S. Department of Justice (2011), labor trafficking victims are more likely to be Hispanic (63%) or Asian (17%) and sex trafficking victims are more likely to be black (40%) or white (26%). The average age of entry into the commercial sex industry in the United States is 12 to 14 years old for females, and 11 to 13 for boys and LGBTQ youth (U.S. Department of Justice Task Force, 2014). However, all trafficking victims share the trait of vulnerability (Polaris Project, 2015b).

#### Myth Four: Human Trafficking Victims Know They Are Victims

Conversely, just because victims of human trafficking are vulnerable, does not mean that all human trafficking victims will attempt to seek help when in public as not all

victims of human trafficking are aware that they are victims (Department of Homeland Security, 2013). Many foreign nationals pay significant sums of money to be transported to another country with the promise of work and a new life. To wield control over their victims, traffickers use to their advantage the victim's unfamiliarity with a novel environment, culture, language, laws and legal rights, in addition to the non-portability of the majority of work visas (Polaris Project, 2015b). Traffickers often cut the victim off from communication with society and their loved ones, increase distrust in victims by using manipulation tactics, and confiscate identification documents and money, metaphorically stranding victims from obtaining help (Polaris Project, 2015b).

#### Assessing Perceptions about Human Trafficking

According to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (Polaris Project, 2009), the proliferation of myths with respect to human trafficking has exacerbated criminal justice professionals' already arduous task of identifying victims of human trafficking (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016). Cunningham and Cromer's (2016) study, which developed and used the Human Trafficking Myths Scale, was the first study of its kind to empirically investigate prominent myths held about human trafficking and how these myths relate to victim-blaming perceptions of sex trafficking victims.

Cunningham and Cromer (2016) found that men are more likely to subscribe to victim-blaming tendencies toward human trafficking victims. Interestingly, men were more likely than women to accept myths of human trafficking, but were less likely to believe the portrayal of sex trafficking by the media. Acceptance of human trafficking myths was a significant predictor with a moderate effect size (partial  $\eta^2 = .08$ ) of belief and victim-blaming. However, personal trauma history did not increase empathy for

human trafficking victims (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016). The dearth of empirical research on perceptions about human trafficking must be addressed to gain a better understanding of which myths remain prominent to make progress in dispelling the myths.

### **Prostitution**

Much like human trafficking, the portrayal of prostitution in the media differs greatly from the reality of the situation. Prostitution is observed in multiple forms that fall within a distinct dichotomy: street prostitution versus indoor prostitution. According to Weitzer (2005), only a small portion (10-30%) of prostitutes work on the streets, even though most academic writing and media sources portray the majority of sex workers as street prostitutes. Prostitution operates under a hierarchy, with the lowest strata being occupied by street prostitutes (Weitzer, 2005). As stated by Weitzer (2005; 2007), street prostitutes work in deplorable conditions and mainly engage in 'survival sex' to support their drug addictions. Many street prostitutes have endured abuse by adults from childhood to the present and currently experience abuse and exploitation at the hands of their pimps. Moreover, street prostitutes are commonly socially isolated, have an increased risk of victimization of crimes such as robbery, rape, and assault, and are likely to experience significant psychological problems (Weitzer, 2005; 2007). This class of prostitutes risk contracting and transmitting sexual diseases, including HIV, at an increased rate due to their intravenous drug addictions and willingness to have unprotected sex for higher pay.

Indoor prostitutes, on the other hand, account for 70-90% of prostitutes and include sex workers who solicit their services in massage parlors, tanning salons,

brothels, and work as escorts and call girls (Weitzer, 2005; 2007). The adaptability of traffickers has been demonstrated by utilizing legal and unregulated strip clubs as a front for prostitution (Hepburn & Simon, 2010). Compared to street prostitutes, indoor workers are less likely to have experienced abuse as a child, they enter sex work later in life, have completed at least some higher education, and choose soft drugs, such as marijuana, over addictive drugs, like heroin and crack (Weitzer, 2007). Indoor workers have a decreased proportion of high-risk one-time clients, making the contraction of a sexually transmitted disease a rare occurrence. Additionally, indoor sex workers are expected to engage in ‘emotion work’ (Weitzer, 2005; 2007). Emotion work is the term for the ‘girlfriend experience.’ Conversation, romance, cuddling, and foreplay prior to sex, resembling a dating experience, are the hallmarks of this type of encounter (Weitzer, 2007); this is an aspect of indoor prostitution that is never seen in street prostitution. Indoor workers tend to have a higher income, enjoy a reduced risk of arrest, and have a safer work environment in comparison to street prostitutes. Two out of three brothel workers and seven out of ten call girls report that they would “definitely choose this work” again as they felt validated and empowered by sex work (Weitzer, 2007).

Despite the fact that indoor workers comprise a greater proportion of prostitutes, a vast majority of myths draw from the stereotypes of the 10-30% of prostitutes that are categorized as street prostitutes. When myths are derived from a small portion of a population it is likely that public perceptions are more closely related to the myths rather than the realities of a social problem (Weitzer, 2005).

## History

Prostitution and the women in this line of work have endured differing acceptance levels dependent on time and place in the world. According to Adler (1975), both Japanese geishas and Greek hetaerae retained elevated social status for their knowledge and skill in art, which was accompanied by sex. Much of the power and virtue geishas and hetaerae held was due to their overt femininity in a patriarchal society. However, the social status of prostitutes began to sharply decline at the end of the fifteenth century due to the syphilis epidemic and the Protestant Reformation (Adler, 1975). Prostitutes were no longer viewed as virtuous, but rather as a threat to the middle-class value of marriage. The value society put on female pre-marital virginity, post-marital fidelity, and the acceptance of the male need for sex regularly and often conflicted with and compromised the expectation for females based on social roles. Prostitutes then were a viable solution to fulfill the sexual needs of men while keeping the marriage-worthy women chaste until wedlock, though a trend of an increase in premarital sex is observed with each new generation (Adler, 1975).

Adler (1975) contends that the shift from one extreme of glorifying prostitution to the other extreme of completely repressing lust exemplifies the notion that few things have changed less than sexual behavior, while few things have changed more than attitudes about sex. In time periods where the role of the wife is to provide a satisfying emotional relationship, but neglects a sexual relationship, a prostitute can be utilized solely for sexual services. Thus, the type of prostitute that flourishes and perceptions of prostitutes in a time period are a result of the prevailing family structure at the time (Adler, 1975).

### Radical Feminism

According to Weitzer (2005), the image of prostitution has been distorted at the hands of radical feminism. Prostitution, from the radical feminist lens, is perceived to validate traditional roles of male domination over women, characterized by subordination, degradation, and victimization regardless of consent on the behalf of the sex worker (MacKinnon, 1987; 1989). Traditional gender roles dictate the duty of women to serve any needs of their man at the time he wants his needs fulfilled. In this sense, victimization due to male domination is a direct result of a woman's disobedience and failure to comply with his requests.

Radical feminism invokes an essentialist perspective that makes claims that are applicable throughout history, in every society, and in all forms that sex work encompasses, including prostitution and sex trafficking (Weitzer, 2005). Thus, radical feminism contends that subordination and degradation of sex workers by men was as present in ancient Japan and Greece, which believed sex workers were virtuous, as was present during the Protestant Reformation when sex workers were regarded as filthy and immoral. Furthermore, violence is intrinsic in prostitution under radical feminism, and no distinction between voluntary and forced prostitution exists (Weitzer, 2005). Radical feminism's fundamental argument, as showcased by using terminology such as 'prostituted woman,' 'sex slave,' and 'survivor,' is that sex workers have no agency, and thus, sex workers are victims of 'paid rape' (Raymond, 1995; Raymond, 1998; Weitzer, 2005). Radical feminism conforms to, validates, and perpetuates what is believed to be the general population's stereotypes pertaining to sex work.

### Distinctions between Human Trafficking and Prostitution

The covert operations of the sex industry create conditions for human trafficking to thrive. Engaging in sex work as a prostitute does not inherently fuel sex trafficking; however, sex trafficking is fueled by the exploitation of choice in prostitution (Batsyukova, 2007). Though the nature of both sex trafficking and prostitution is exploitative, the difference is in choice. Sex trafficking victims participate via involuntary involvement, on the other hand, prostitutes voluntarily participate in a sexual activity. However, prostitutes “may not have control over the choice of client and the nature of sexual activity” (Batsyukova, 2007, p. 48). Victims of sex trafficking are compensated negligibly to not-at-all for their services, whereas prostitutes are paid for the services they provided. Sex trafficking is always illegal, but the legal status of prostitution is dependent on the regulations of a location. Nevertheless, both sex trafficking victims and prostitutes are likely to be viewed as commodified bodies. The male demand for sex services is the most prominent factor upon which prostitution is dependent (Batsyukova, 2007).

### Assessing Perceptions about Prostitution

The perception of prostitutes as commodified bodies is likely to result from prostitution myths which serve as culturally supported attitudes that rationalize violence toward and sexual exploitation of sex workers (Cotton, Farley & Baron, 2002). College-age males are significantly more likely to accept prostitution myths compared to their college-age female counterparts; however, men who report being johns, or patrons of prostitutes, endorse rape myths at a lower rate than their non-patron counterparts (Cotton et al., 2002). Johns may endorse prostitution at a lower rate due to having direct



experiences with prostitutes, providing a perspective formed by personal experience to evaluate such myths (Cotton et al., 2002). Thus, perceptions of prostitution may be positively correlated with the amount of interaction an individual has had with prostitutes.

Perceptions held by professionals in the criminal justice system of young prostitutes do not differ significantly from perceptions of prostitutes held by citizens (Franklin & Menaker, 2014). Local law enforcement officers are typically the first contact young prostitutes have with the criminal justice system. Halter (2010) found that young prostitutes are often perceived as sex workers who made the choice to engage in the sex industry, and thus, are perceived to be offenders by law enforcement. Menaker and Miller (2013) found that the more an individual subscribed to traditional sex roles and sexism, the perceiver had more negative reactions toward and less empathy for young sex workers. In addition, these individuals perceived sex workers to be culpable for their victimization. The perception of young prostitutes as offenders, rather than victims, denies them the services, support, and protection they need to address the underlying cause of their prostitution, which is often necessary to leave the life of prostitution (Cotton et al., 2002; Franklin & Menaker, 2014; Halter, 2010; Menaker & Miller, 2013).

Unlike law enforcement, probation officers—which are afforded the opportunity to understand the trauma and adversity young prostitutes have overcome in their life—still view this population as “manipulative” and “promiscuous” like their stereotype suggests (Franklin & Menaker, 2014, p. 142). Although probation officers are allowed greater insight into young prostitutes’ previous trauma and how such experiences have shaped their present criminal behavior, many probation officers still perceive young

prostitutes to be partially responsible for their victimization. Failure on the behalf of the probation officer to identify other available life course options for young prostitutes often leads to young prostitutes being referred to treatment that is not suited to the underlying problem, and thus, perpetuates the cycle of victimization and prostitution (Franklin & Menaker, 2014).

While victims of sexual assault report receiving more positive support from informal supporters, such as family and friends, they also report receiving more negative responses from formal advocates, such as law enforcement and lawyers, in the criminal justice system (Franklin & Menaker, 2014; Ullman, 1996). These findings are significant as young prostituted women are unlikely to have informal social support due to alienation from their family and friends as well as physical and emotional isolation created by their pimps or traffickers. Thus, young prostitutes are likely to rely solely on the formal criminal justice system for support to escape prostitution. As such, this is an area that the criminal justice system needs to make great strides to improve.

### **Rape Myth Acceptance**

Exploring the relationship between rape myth acceptance and perceptions of sex workers is a crucial starting point in identifying the stigma that applies to whether or not sex workers can be victims of sexual crimes. Coupling both of the stigmas associated with the acceptance of rape myths, such as those that pertain to who qualifies as a rape victim, with negative perceptions of sex workers, may successively affect whether or not sex workers seek help either from a medical institution or the criminal justice system after their victimization.

Rape myths, first measured by Burt (1980), are culturally supported myths that place blame on victims of sexual violence, subsequently displacing blame from the perpetrators of these crimes (Cunningham & Cromer, 2014). In Burt's (1980) study, demographic variables were found to correlate less with the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale than attitudinal variables did. However, younger and better-educated people revealed less stereotypical, adversarial, and pro-violence attitudes and accepted less rape myths than their older and less-educated counterparts. Attitudinal variables that were strongly connected to rape myth acceptance, such as acceptance of traditional sex role stereotypes, acceptance of interpersonal violence, and distrust of the opposite sex, are pervasive beliefs suggesting that rape myths are deeply engrained in society. Burt (1980) posits that current rape myths will garner less acceptance only as societal values evolve. Further, it is advantageous to utilize the aforementioned attitudinal measures to analyze the current state of rape myth acceptance. While Burt's (1980) study was one of the first to assess rape myth acceptance, researchers have continued to study rape myth acceptance among several populations in examining predictors of these beliefs (Ching & Burke, 1999; Cowan & Campbell, 1995; Franklin & Menaker, 2014; Gray, Palileo & Johnson, 1993; Giacopassi & Dull, 1986; Kleinke & Meyer, 1990; Nagel, Matsuo, McIntyre & Morrison, 2005; Malamuth, Addison & Koss, 2000; Malamuth & Check, 1985).

#### Assessing Rape Myths and Its Correlates

The relationship between sex and victim culpability is such that males have attributed greater responsibility and blame toward rape victims, which is accompanied by reduced empathy and sympathy toward these victims, than females (Ching & Burke, 1999; Franklin & Menaker, 2014; Gray, Palileo & Johnson, 1993; Kleinke & Meyer,

1990; Nagel, Matsuo, McIntyre & Morrison, 2005). Similarly, individuals of color are more likely to endorse rape myths and convey less empathy toward rape victims because the victims are more likely to be perceived as culpable in their victimization (Franklin & Menaker, 2014; Giacopassi & Dull, 1986; Nagel et al., 2005). Individuals who watch pornography often demonstrate a higher acceptance of rape myths, violence against women, and support for coercive and aggressive sexual behavior (Cowan & Campbell, 1995; Franklin & Menaker, 2014; Malamuth, Addison & Koss, 2000; Malamuth & Check, 1985).

Attitudes about prostitution and acceptance of rape myths have been found to be correlated such that individuals who scored high in rape myth acceptance underestimated traumas associated with rape and also reported an increased tolerance for rape perpetrators and a decreased tolerance for rape victims (Cotton et al., 2002; Franklin & Menaker, 2014; Frese, Moya & Megias, 2004; Miller, Amacker & King, 2011). Individuals with a history of sexual assault victimization are less likely to perceive a sexual assault victim as culpable for their victimization and more likely to perceive scenarios of date rape to be rape compared to their non-victim counterparts (Franklin & Menaker, 2014). Additionally, victims of childhood sexual abuse report less sympathy for physical and sexual abuse victims, as individuals who were sexually victimized in childhood were more likely to also be physically victimized (Franklin & Menaker, 2014; Ginsburg, Wright, Harrell & Hill, 1989).

#### Effects of Victim-Blaming on Survivors

As sex workers experience frequent acts of sexual violence and rape, and rape victims and prostitutes are often judged based on their risky behavior, the sexual assault

literature is deemed relevant to this population (Franklin & Menaker, 2014). Individuals in the sex trade, like sexual assault and rape victims, are particularly sensitive to negative social reactions, victim-blaming, and whore stigma (Franklin & Menaker, 2014; Herzog, 2008). Victims of sexual assault, victims of rape, and prostitutes are more likely to suffer from poor psychological adjustment, have an unwillingness to disclose future episodes of sexual violence to others, and have a sense of self-blame when met with negative responses from the criminal justice system and informal social supports (Franklin & Menaker, 2014). For negative social reactions to be reduced, myths pertaining to sex work and rape must be studied to further identify the source of negative perceptions.

### **Summary**

Though prostitution and human trafficking both entail sex work, the difference between the two sits in the sex worker's agency to engage in sex work or not. The prostitute, an individual who chooses to engage in sex work, is often conveyed as an offender while the individual who has been trafficked is perceived as a victim (Batsyukova, 2007). Myths pertaining to sex work, such as those related to prostitution, human trafficking, and rape myths, support culturally reinforced attitudes that rationalize the sexual exploitation of sex workers (Cotton et al., 2002). Attitudinal variables, such as acceptance of sex role stereotypes, have been found to correlate more with rape myth acceptance than demographic variables do (Burt, 1980). However, previous research indicates that sex, a demographic variable, correlates with myth acceptance such that males are more likely than females to accept myths about prostitution (Cotton et al., 2002), human trafficking (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016), and rape (Ching & Burke, 1999; Nagel et al., 2005). Furthermore, professionals in the criminal justice system hold

perceptions of prostitutes that are not significantly different from perceptions held by citizens (Franklin & Menaker, 2014). The widespread proliferation of sex work-based myths in society and the criminal justice system suggest that the damage caused to victims of sexual violence and exploitation will continue to accrue until prostitution, human trafficking, and rape myths are dispelled and rejected by society.

Ultimately, simplistic is something that human trafficking and prostitution research is not. Social science research, in regards to crime, is inherently complex as it predominantly intends to measure social irregularity, rather than regularities. The clandestine nature of human trafficking and anathematic essence of prostitution only exacerbate the challenge to conduct research in this area (Babbie, 2010).

Most research on human trafficking focuses on sex trafficking rather than labor trafficking. In addition, sex trafficking and prostitution research is largely conducted and funded by activists for anti-prostitution campaigns resulting in skewed data by combining the terms 'forced trafficking' and 'voluntarily migrated' (Benjamin, 2014, p. 11). This partisanship lends itself to reduced validity. Babbie (2010) asserts that authority of these activists, especially those concealed behind neutral bureaucratic titles, can both help and hinder human inquiry. Essentially, data that are presented in a favorable light to the cause of the activists form a starting point for subsequent human inquiry. This creates a snowball effect as new research that uses the previous findings of the activists' research leads to further research in an inaccurate direction. In the end, perceptions of human trafficking and prostitution are skewed to reflect acclaimed partisan research. Unbiased research from third parties must be conducted to gain the most accurate picture of such

perceptions. This gap in the research justifies the need for examining the effect of rape myth acceptance on perceptions about prostitution and human trafficking.

## CHAPTER III: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The literature discussed above gives direction to this study's research questions:

(1) Are men more likely than women to harbor misperceptions about rape, prostitution, and human trafficking? (2) What effect does rape myth acceptance have on self-reported perceptions of sex workers, human trafficking, and prostitution? Although prior studies have aimed to answer parts of these questions, no study has sought to examine perceptions of both prostitution and human trafficking (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016; Levin & Peled, 2011). Further, no study has examined these perceptions and their relationship to acceptance of rape myths. It is imperative to inquire about how prevalent myths regarding rape, human trafficking, prostitutes, and prostitution are because victims of human trafficking are often masqueraded as prostitutes (U.S. Department of State, 2016). If it is found that the respondents view those who are trafficked as victims, but prostitutes as offenders, these findings would have important implications for awareness and educational efforts aimed at dispelling myths about rape, human trafficking, and prostitution. Thus, the hypotheses for this study are:

H1: Men will be more likely to assign blame to the victim and accept myths about rape, prostitutes, prostitution, and human trafficking compared to women.

H2: The less an individual subscribes to rape myths, the more likely he/she will be to view sex workers as victims rather than offenders.



### Sample Selection

The sample for this study was gathered by stratifying lower and upper division undergraduate criminal justice courses within a western metropolitan public university. The criminal justice department at the western public university did not have 200-level courses; therefore, the lower division stratification included only 100-level courses as upper division courses included both 300- and 400-level courses. For a course to be considered for inclusion, the course had to be instructed in a traditional face-to-face method on the main campus for the full duration of the Fall 2016 semester. Due to the traditional method restriction, workshops, internet-based courses, and courses that did not run the duration of the semester were excluded from the sampling frame. This restriction was expected to help create homogenous strata as it was predicted that individuals enrolled in traditionally designed college courses on the university's main campus were more likely to be traditional college students continuing their education immediately following high school. By utilizing homogenous strata required by stratified sampling, sampling error is greatly reduced due to representativeness present in the sample (Babbie, 2010). The goal was to have a near equal representation of students from each stratum. To achieve a medium effect size at  $\alpha = .05$ , the desired sample size for this study was a minimum of 200 students, approximately 100 from lower division courses and 100 from upper division courses (Cohen, 1992). However, due to varying class sizes, the strata were not perfectly equal.

During the Fall 2016 semester, there were 10 lower division course sections and 18 upper division course sections that met the requirements for inclusion and were subsequently sampled for participation in the study. Random sampling of courses was

completed via the use of a random number generator (Urbaniak & Plous, 2015). In an effort to obtain homogenous strata, the researcher chose to include two lower division criminal justice courses and five upper division criminal justice courses in the study as a result of typical class sizes in each division. Whereas lower division criminal justice courses had enrollments between approximately 40 to 80 students per course per section, upper division criminal justice courses had enrollments between approximately 15 and 40 students. Therefore, in an attempt to obtain roughly homogenously sized strata and acknowledging that upper division students may be in multiple upper division courses that are selected for participation in the study, two lower division criminal justice courses and five upper division criminal justice courses were selected for inclusion. Furthermore, in an attempt to include non-criminal justice majors, one general elective University Foundations course outside of the criminal justice department was also selected for inclusion in the study. The typical enrollment for a section of University Foundations ranged from 100 to 150 students and every section of the course was open to all majors university wide.

Upon two lower division criminal justice courses, five upper division criminal justice courses, and one University Foundations course being randomly selected from the stratified sample, the researcher contacted the instructor of each course, explained the nature of the study, and asked for permission to recruit participants in their class on the date of the instructor's choosing (See Appendix A for Surveyed Courses and Times; See Appendix B-1 for the Classroom Recruitment Script). Course instructors had the option to offer extra credit as an incentive for their students to participate in the study. However, instructors were told that they must provide an alternative non-research activity to

students who declined to participate in the study. As per the Internal Review Board (IRB) requirement, the alternative non-research activity was to be comparable to the time and effort a student would spend taking the survey. An instructor choosing to offer extra credit could have resulted in an increased response rate for those particular courses, but offering extra credit as collateral was not required by the design of the study.

The technique of utilizing a random sample, stratified by lower versus upper division courses, was most feasible for this study as the undergraduate population was relatively accessible to researchers who are part of the campus community, with an added benefit of the criminal justice department being one of the largest departments on campus. Additionally, introductory criminal justice courses are accepted toward the partial fulfillment of general education courses and, thus, expand the population of students to include non-criminal justice majors. Though participants in lower division courses have the potential to be in majors other than criminal justice, this is not likely to be true for participants in many upper division courses, as most upper division courses are not available to non-criminal justice majors. Thus, the inclusion of both lower and upper division criminal justice courses in this study allowed for an examination of perceptions among criminal justice and non-criminal justice majors. However, since the sample was limited to students in traditional criminal justice courses at one university, results might not be generalizable to students in other fields of study, nor to students at other universities. Nonetheless, the college population is important to study as this population will soon encounter opportunities to influence and mold societal values in the professional world and in raising the next generation of children.

In this descriptive, quantitative, and deductive research study, the unit of analysis was the individual with a sampling frame of students enrolled in criminal justice courses at a public western university. A total of 243 surveys were distributed via email from the seven traditional criminal justice courses and one University Foundations course. Out of the 243 possible participants, five emails were returned as undeliverable and 14 surveys were opened and left blank constituting a refusal, yielding a possible sample size of 224 surveys. Of the possible 224 respondents, 78 did not open the survey, leaving 146 surveys filled out to various degrees. From there, 14 surveys were omitted for non-response issues in one or more scales and one was omitted as the respondent was under 18 years of age, leaving possible 131 respondents. An additional seven surveys were omitted as the respondents failed to complete the demographics section. As the seven respondents did not indicate their sex, these seven surveys were not salvageable for use in testing hypothesis one, nor could they be used in the full models due to the missing information. A total of 124 respondents completed the survey in full (N=124). The response rate using the number of respondents who provided their email for inclusion in this study was 60%, which constitutes a good response rate for the method of survey administration (Nulty, 2008). However, the total sampling frame inclusive of all students enrolled in the eight courses was 412. Thus, the overall response rate was 35.4%, which constitutes an acceptable response rate for an online survey (Nulty, 2008).

### **Survey Methodology**

The researcher emailed the instructors of the eight randomly selected courses from the stratified sample to explain the nature of the study and ask for permission to recruit participants in their class on the date of the instructor's choosing. In class during

the allotted time on the date of the instructor's choosing, the researcher discussed with potential respondents the nature of the study and the risks associated with participation (See Appendix B-1 for Classroom Recruitment Script). The researcher explicitly stated that participation would remain anonymous and requested that individuals who were interested in participating provide an email address to which they would like the link to the survey to be sent. The researcher passed around a sheet of paper that contained two columns to collect emails. Participants were instructed to write their email in one box, filling each box from left to right. Thus, participants randomly assigned themselves to receive Version A of the survey if they placed their email in the left column and Version B of the survey if they placed their email in the right column. The distributions between Version A and Version B were even in all courses. The researcher reiterated that participation in the survey would be anonymous as the lists of email addresses provided were to be shredded once the survey was dispersed, the emailed survey link was likewise anonymous, and no identifying information, such as name or ID number, was to be collected on the survey (See Appendix B-2 for Email Recruitment Script). Participants were instructed in the email to take the survey in a comfortable location and use as much time as they needed. Respondents submitted their survey taken from the anonymous link by scrolling through all pages of the survey and clicking "Submit."

A survey method was most appropriate for this study for multiple reasons. First, information pertaining to perceptions of sex work and sexual victimization can only be gathered by asking participants to share their thoughts; this information is not available from another source. Second, utilizing an online survey format, such as Qualtrics, rather than in an in-class survey format, allowed the participant to complete the survey in a

location that was comfortable to them. Allowing the participant to take the survey in a comfortable location likely helped to elicit honest answers and improve the validity of the data as well as the overall response rate. Finally, compared to asking participants to respond to the survey utilizing a fixed amount of time during a class period, using an online survey format allowed for participants to take as much time as they needed to carefully read and respond to each item. The online survey format granted participants the ability to carefully consider their organic response to each item as well as an opportunity to reflect on whether the organic response aligned with their conscious beliefs prior to recording an answer for each item.

The survey was anonymous to elicit honest answers to improve accuracy, and thus, validity. In addition, employing an anonymous survey was conducive to this study as this method allows for perceptions about prostitutes, prostitution, and human trafficking to be revealed and empirically measured with as sparse of a response bias as possible (Mirzaee, 2014). As perceptions of a traditionally taboo subject are very personal, a method such as an anonymous survey, is essential to collecting honest data; however, some bias is inevitable in social science research. If a face-to-face interview were conducted in lieu of a self-reported survey, the interviewer would likely have a negative effect on the quality of the interview with verbal and nonverbal cues. This would subsequently affect the data as the respondent could be reporting perceptions based on desirability and not on their organic beliefs, which is known as the desirability bias (Babbie, 2010). Because scant research has been conducted pertaining to these perceptions, the anonymous survey utilized in this study was an exceptional way to gain

information from an increased number of respondents. This in turn increases reliability, which is a necessary condition for validity.

### Human Subjects Protections

In compliance with the IRB standard, an informed consent notice (see Appendix B) stating the purpose of the study, an estimated length of time necessary to complete the survey, the voluntary nature of participation, and the ability to withdraw from the study at any time by closing their web browser or contacting the researcher, appeared as the opening page of the online survey. The informed consent page explicitly expressed that all participants in the study must be 18 years or older. This stipulation removed those who are legally considered children, as a vulnerable population, from participation. To ensure anonymity, participants were not required to sign the informed consent; rather, implicit consent was obtained by the completion of the online survey.

Foreseeable risks for individuals who participated in this study were re-victimization as a result of previous sexual assaults or abuse and a rehashing of secondary victimization from victim-blaming attitudes the participant or individuals close to the participant received from social service agencies or others when disclosing their victimization. Though benefits of participation were minimal to the participant, individuals gained a chance to participate in important research. Participants also gained an opportunity to assess the myths they personally subscribe to pertaining to sexual violence and sex workers. The informed consent notice appeared as the opening page of the online survey and enumerated potential risks and benefits to the participants, affording them the opportunity to make a choice regarding their participation. Contact information for the IRB and the researcher were listed in the informed consent notice in

the event that participants had any questions or concerns that arose about the study or their participation in the study. Victimization-related resources were also enumerated in the informed consent notice for participants. Suggested resources include the university's Counseling Center and The Gender Equity Center, as well as the state's Care Line, which provides counseling resources and referral services.

### **Measurement**

The focus of this study is to assess perceptions about human trafficking, prostitution, and rape myths. The United States Department of State (2016) defines sex trafficking as “a commercial sex act [such as prostitution, that] is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age” (p. 9). Under this definition, physical transportation is not a necessary element to be classified as a victim of sex trafficking (U.S. Department of State, 2016). Furthermore, a substantial impediment to the identification of sex trafficking victims is perceptions of prostitutes and prostitution, such as the popularly held belief that prostitutes are offenders rather than victims. According to the UCR, prostitution is defined as “the unlawful promotion of or participation in sexual activities for profit, including attempts” (Federal Bureau of Investigations, 2010). Finally, rape myths, which are culturally supported myths that place the blame on victims of sexual violence and displace blame from perpetrators, are assessed in relation to perceptions of sex workers as victims (Burt, 1980).

### Scales Utilized in This Study

Versions of three established measures were used to collect data in this study: the Human Trafficking Myths Scale, the Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale,



and the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale. Data were collected via self-report surveys for all three measures, in addition to demographic variables. Using the three aforementioned scales in this study was compelling as the results of this study may affect the subsequent use of these measures in future studies.

#### The Human Trafficking Myths Scale

The Human Trafficking Myths Scale (see Appendix C) is comprised of 17 myth items that have been verified to be content valid by a human trafficking expert (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016). The myth items coincide with antediluvian false beliefs regarding the nature of human trafficking, characteristics of trafficking victims, and victim agency (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016). Two of the 17 myth items refer directly to sex trafficking, while the remaining 15 items are applicable to all forms of human trafficking. All items on the questionnaire were derived from the U.S. Department of State's definition of sex trafficking. In addition, the items in the Human Trafficking Myths Scale capitalize on the stereotypes of human trafficking either as a crime (items 1, 2, 3, 10, 14, and 17) or in terms of the characteristics and circumstances of the victim (items 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, and 16). Possible scores for the Human Trafficking Myths Scale range from 17 to 102, in which a score of 102 indicates a strong belief in human trafficking myths, while a score of 17 indicates a strong rejection of human trafficking myths. Cronbach's Alpha for this measure was .83 in prior research; an indication of strong reliability (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016).

The original Human Trafficking Myths Scale included a vignette that was to be read before the 17 scale items. The "vignette [utilized a gender-neutral name to reduce the chance of influencing the participant's preexisting myths based on the sex of the

victim], reflects the average age at which a child is first victimized by prostitution in the United States” (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016, p. 7). The vignette appeared 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 (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016, p. 7).

For this study, one-half of the surveys, Version A, was administered randomly to respondents who entered their email in the right column of the sign-up sheet and included the vignette while respondents who entered their email in the left column of the sign-up sheet received Version B. Version B did not include the vignette to allow for the assessment of whether the presence of the vignette influenced the acceptance of human trafficking myths. After reading a combination of the instructions and/or the vignette, dependent upon which version of the survey was received, respondents were instructed to rate each of the statements on a Likert 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* to assess beliefs and victim-blaming tendencies (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016). Of note, due to the researcher’s error of failing to unlock the item, “Human trafficking is another term for human smuggling’ on the Qualtrics survey resulting in responses from roughly half of all participants, the item was excluded from analyses. Excluding this item from analyses may have affected the validity of the scale. Thus, due to researcher error, possible scores for the 16 item Human Trafficking Myths Scale used for analyses in this study ranged from 16 to 96, where higher scores were indicative of strong beliefs in human trafficking myths.

### The Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale

Levin and Peled's (2011) Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale (see Appendix C) was designed to assess perceptions of prostitutes and prostitution as normative versus deviant and a choice versus victimization. The 29 item scale, which uses a Likert scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = *fully disagree*, 2 = *somewhat disagree*, 3 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *somewhat agree*, and 5 = *fully agree*, was developed based on an analysis of literature (Levin & Peled, 2011). Possible scores for the Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale range from 29 to 145, in which a score of 145 indicates a victim- and problem-oriented perception of prostitution, while a score of 29 indicates an offender- and choice-oriented perception of prostitution. To bolster content validity, improvements were made to the scale upon peer review by eight professional and academic experts working with or studying prostitutes and prostitution (Levin & Peled, 2011). Cronbach's Alpha for the revised scale was .81, indicating high internal consistency. The two dimensions, attitudes toward prostitutes and attitudes toward prostitution, accounted for 36.9% of the variance, with a moderate correlation of  $r = .49$ ; thus, satisfactory construct validity was achieved (Levin & Peled, 2011). Items 3, 5, 6, 18, 19, 24, 26, and 28 on the original scale utilize facets of the conceptual definition of prostitution from the UCR. All other items in the questionnaire, such as 'Most prostitutes are drug addicts' and 'Prostitution provides men with stress relief,' pertain to stereotypes held in regards to prostitution.

To condense the estimated time necessary to complete the survey for the present study from 30 minutes down to 20 minutes, the Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale was reduced utilizing Levin and Peled's (2011) four original subscales

(Prostitutes as Normative/Deviant, Prostitutes as Choosing/Victimized, Prostitution as Normativeness/Deviance, Prostitution as Choice/Victimization) and corresponding factor scores. Items with factor scores equal to or less than .60 were considered for elimination. However, items believed to possess substantive meaning that were below the .60 threshold, such as 'Prostitutes are unable to get out of the situation they are in,' were retained. Each subscale was pared down to four or five items to create a revised Attitudes Toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale totaling 18 items. In addition, to maintain consistent direction with the other scales utilized in this study, thirteen items were reversed so low scores were indicative of victim-oriented perceptions and high scores were indicative of offender-oriented perceptions. After the scale was reduced and reverse coded, possible scores for the Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale in this study ranged from 18 to 90, in which a score of 90 suggested offender- and choice-oriented perceptions of prostitution, while a score of 18 suggested victim- and problem-oriented perceptions of prostitution.

#### The Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale

Rape myths are prejudicial, stereotypical, or unfounded beliefs about the act of sexual assault, the perpetrators, and the victims (Burt, 1980). The Short Form Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale created by Payne, Lonsway, and Fitzgerald (1999) has demonstrated its use as arguably the most reliable rape myth scale, however, issues of validity are a potential concern. McMahon and Farmer (2011) contend that a scale must be updated to reflect an evolution of prejudices and language used in the population's culture to remain valid. Over time, expressions of victim-blaming have shifted from overt sexism, characterized by flagrant unequal and unfair treatment of women, to deliberately

hidden unequal treatment of women, known as covert sexism, and hidden unequal treatment of women due to the normalization of the behavior, subtle sexism (Swim & Cohen, 1997). For example, rape myths that are prominent in college settings in the 2010s indicate that rape can be accidental or unintentional, particularly when both or either party is intoxicated, and that in these situations, the perpetrator should not be held accountable for the rape (McMahon & Farmer, 2011).

To update the Short Form Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale, McMahon and Farmer (2011) conducted focus groups at a large Northeastern public university to gain a deeper understanding of subtle rape myths and the language used to describe the myths. A 22 item Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (see Appendix C), which utilizes a five-point Likert scale where 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *somewhat disagree*, 3 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *somewhat agree*, and 5 = *strongly agree*, was yielded as a result of the aforementioned focus groups and psychometric analysis. Possible scores for the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale range from 22 to 110, in which a score of 110 indicates a strong belief in rape myths, while a score of 22 indicates a strong rejection of rape myths. The overall Cronbach's Alpha of McMahon and Farmer's (2011) updated measure was .87, indicating high internal consistency. Correlations among the five factors, (1) She Asked for It, (2) He Didn't Mean To, (3) He Didn't Mean To (Intoxication Items) (4) It Wasn't Really Rape, and (5) She Lied, were all significant and ranged from  $r = .30$  to  $r = .67$ , indicating satisfactory construct validity was attained.

To facilitate participation by reducing time spent taking the survey utilized in the current study (Babbie, 2010), the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale was reduced from 22 items to 17. The scale was reduced using McMahon and Farmer's

(2011) five subscales (She Asked for It, He Didn't Mean To, He Didn't Mean To (Intoxication Items), It Wasn't Really Rape, She Lied) and corresponding factor scores. The items that loaded the lowest in each subscale were considered for exclusion. All subscales, except It Wasn't Really Rape, were reduced by one item. The lowest loading item in It Wasn't Really Rape, 'If a girl doesn't say 'no' she can't claim rape,' was retained due to substantive meaning. Due to researcher error, the item, "A rape probably didn't happen if a girl has no bruises or marks,' was not made available to all participants. Specifically, the researcher failed to unlock this item in Qualtrics on Version B until most participants had already completed the survey; therefore, 57 percent of the sample did not complete this item. Consequently, this item was removed from analyses, which may have affected the validity of the scale. Thus, possible scores for the revised Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale ranged from 17 to 85, in which a score of 85 indicated a strong belief in rape myths, while a score of 17 indicated a strong rejection of rape myths.

## **Variables**

### Independent Variables

In line with the study's first hypothesis, which stated that men would be more likely to assign blame to the victim and accept myths about rape, prostitutes, prostitution, and human trafficking compared to women, respondent sex was examined as an independent variable. It was appropriate to utilize sex as an independent variable as a meta-analysis of rape myth studies suggests that men endorse rape myths significantly more than women do (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). Moreover, with an overall effect size of 0.58 ( $p < .001$ ), Suarez and Gadalla (2010) found that sex showed the strongest

relationship with rape myth acceptance compared to other demographic variables. Consistent with the study's second hypothesis, which stated that the less an individual subscribes to rape myths, the more likely they would be to view sex workers as victims rather than offenders, the participants' scores on the self-report scale measuring rape myth acceptance constitute the second independent variable. As described earlier, respondents indicated agreement on a scale ranging from 1 (indicating strong disagreement with rape myths) to 5 (strong agreement with rape myths) for each of the 17 items on the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (McMahon & Farmer, 2011). The scale item scores were then summed to obtain a total score for each respondent where higher scores indicated stronger agreement with rape myths.

#### Dependent Variables

The dependent variables for hypothesis one in this study were the respondents' scores on the amended Human Trafficking Myths Scale, scores on the Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale, and scores on the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale. All three dependent variables were self-reported. The 16 item Human Trafficking Myths Scale, which included one reverse coded item, was on a six-point scale ranging from 1 (indicating disagreement with human trafficking myths) to 6 (agreement with human trafficking myths). The scale item scores were summed to obtain a total score for each respondent where higher scores indicated stronger agreement with human trafficking myths. The 18 item Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale, which included 13 reverse coded items, was a five-point scale ranging from 1 (indicating victim and problem-oriented perceptions of prostitutes and prostitution) to 5 (indicating more offender-oriented and normative perceptions of prostitutes and prostitution). As with the

other scales, all item scores were summed for a total scale score where a higher summed score indicated offender-oriented and normative perceptions of prostitutes and prostitution. Finally, the 17 item Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale was a five-point scale ranging from 1 (indicating rejection of rape myths) and 5 (indicating acceptance of rape myths). A higher summed score on this scale reflected strong agreement with rape myths.

#### Sex Workers as Victims Scale

To test hypothesis two, multiple items from the Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale were condensed into the dependent variable. The dependent variable, a participant's perception of sex workers as victims, inherently appeals to morality, and was comprised of the items, (1) 'Prostitution is forcing undesired sexual behavior,' (2) 'Most prostitutes are morally corrupt,' (3) 'Prostitution damages society's morals,' (4) 'Prostitutes spread AIDS,' (5) 'Prostitution is a violation of women's human dignity,' (6) 'Prostitution is a form of violence against women,' (7) 'Prostitution is a form of rape in which the victim gets paid,' (8) 'Prostitution harms the institution of marriage,' and (9) 'Prostitutes are unable to get out of the situation they are in.' The items on the Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale are on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *fully disagree* to 5 = *fully agree*. Thus, possible scores for the variable assessing a participant's perception of sex workers as victims ranged from 9 (indicating perceptions of sex workers as victims) to 45 (indicating perceptions of sex workers as offenders).

#### Demographic and Control Variables

Items that were utilized as control variables in this study were presented in the form of close-ended questions successive to the Human Trafficking Myths Scale, the



Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale, and the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale. This study controlled for participants' sex, race/ethnicity, age, class standing, major and minor course of study, whether the participant has taken a victimology course, religiosity, frequency of consumption and primary source of news, and previous victimization experienced by the participant or a participant's loved one (see Appendix C for survey items and how items were coded; See Table D-1(a) for demographic survey items) (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016; Herzog, 2008; McMahon & Farmer, 2011; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010; Weitzer, 2010). These items appeared at the end of the survey to avoid influencing previous answers and to effectively enable comparisons between groups of respondents (Mirzaee, 2014).

Demographic variables are imperative to include in the models due to previous research. Sex was utilized as a control variable as the literature indicates that males are more likely to assign blame to the victim and accept myths about rape (Ching & Burke, 1999; Nagel et al., 2005) and human trafficking (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016) than females. Previous research has found that individuals of color are more likely to endorse rape myths and convey less empathy toward rape victims because the victims are more likely to be perceived as culpable in their victimization (Franklin & Menaker, 2014; Giacomassi & Dull, 1986; Nagel et al., 2005). This suggests that minorities will be more likely to accept human trafficking and rape myths, and view sex workers through an offender-orientation. Age and class-standing were included as control variables because Burt (1980) found that younger and better-educated people revealed less stereotypical, adversarial, and pro-violence attitudes and accepted fewer rape myths than their older and

less-educated counterparts. Thus, it was expected that younger and better educated university students would be less accepting of human trafficking and rape myths.

Participants' major and minor were utilized as a control variable as it may influence the respondent's acceptance or rejection of myths due to exposure to victimology, either in the format of an entire course or as a unit within a course, which could subsequently influence the individual's responses. Criminal justice majors and minors at the western public university from which this study drew participants are not required to take a victimology course, though victimology courses are offered as electives. Exposure to a victim's plight and dispelling of victim-blaming myths with credible resources in such a course can lead to less acceptance of human trafficking and rape myths and less negative perceptions of prostitutes and prostitution. Participants in lower division criminal justice courses were enrolled in an introductory criminal justice course that partially fulfills the university-wide requirement for general education courses. Individuals who have not declared a major or minor in criminal justice have the option of using this class to fulfill graduation requirements, thus, the major and minor course of study for the respondent were controlled. The researcher additionally recorded the course in which the participant learned about the survey.

Religiosity, or how important religion is in an individual's life, was controlled for as religiosity may impact exposure to the media, and thereby, perpetuate stereotypes. Additionally, certain religious affiliations promote traditional gender roles, which in turn, may result in increased victim-blaming tendencies, particularly concerning rape. Items pertaining to whether the respondent identifies as religious first appeared as, "Do you consider yourself to be religious?" The next item asked, "How important is religion in

your life?” Response options were in the form of seven item Likert scale where *1 = not at all important, 2 = low importance, 3 = slightly important, 4 = neutral, 5 = moderately important, 6 = very important, 7 = extremely important.*

Frequency of consumption of and source of news was imperative to control for. Sensationalism, characterized by presenting the most egregious cases of a criminal act or victimization, is not uncommon in the media; therefore, controlling for this variable was in the best interest of the study. Respondents were asked, “How many hours a day do you watch a news source? Listen to a news source? Read a news source? What do you consider your primary news source to be?” All of the above items were in the form of close-ended responses and presented as separate questions. Receiving news via social media, compared to a paper or electronic newspaper or broadcast news, may perpetuate myths that the individual already subscribed to, known as confirmation bias (Babbie, 2010).

Finally, sexual victimization was controlled for as victims of sexual assault report greater perceived similarities to other victims of sexual assault compared to their non-victim counterparts (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016; Miller & King, 2010). Victims of sexual assault additionally report greater empathy for sexual assault survivors than non-victims and attribute less culpability to a victim for their sexual victimization. Participants who report less empathy for sexual assault victims and attribute greater culpability to sexual assault victims also endorse more rape myths (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016; Miller & King, 2010). Thus, items on the survey addressed whether participants have been or know someone who has been a victim of rape or sexual assault.

## CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

### **Analytic Strategy**

A total of 243 surveys were distributed via email yielding a total of 124 surveys completed in full. The final response rate using the total number of surveys distributed as the denominator for this study was 60%, which is considered a good response rate for online survey administration (Nulty, 2008). However, 412 students were enrolled in the eight courses used in the sample, making the overall response rate approximately 35.4% (it is not possible to determine which students were present on the day the study was described and e-mail addressed were collected). Nulty (2008) contends that the approximate overall response rate of 35.4% is acceptable for an online survey administration, but acknowledges possible selection bias. Once data collection was complete, several analyses were performed. First, descriptive statistics and frequencies of the sample (e.g., sex, race, class standing, religiosity, and prior victimization) were calculated using SPSS 23.0. These data were compared to the population statistics of the public western university to examine the extent to which the sample was representative of the population of the university. An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine any differences in perceptions about human trafficking between respondents who received a survey with or without a vignette. Next, in addition to scale reliability, frequencies and descriptive statistics of the scales and dependent variables were computed. An independent samples t-test was used to test the first hypothesis and a

bivariate OLS regression was employed to test the second hypothesis. Finally, full models were run including all control variables for each of the dependent variables.

### **Sample Characteristics**

#### Demographic Variables

Table D-1(b) presents the individual characteristics of the respondents which included sex, race/ethnicity, age, class standing, major and minor course of study, whether the participant has taken a victimology course, religious affiliations, frequency of consumption of and source of news, and previous victimization experienced by the participant or a participant's loved one.

#### Sex

Respondents were asked to indicate their sex on the survey. Consistent with the University's ratio of male (44.3%) to female (55.4%) diversity (Enrollment Profile, 2016), males (n=55) accounted for 44.4% of respondents and females (n=69) accounted for 55.6% of respondents.

#### Race/Ethnicity

Survey participants were asked to indicate which racial or ethnic group they most identified with. Of the 124 respondents, 83.9% (n=104) indicated that they identified as Caucasian/White and 8.9% (n=11) identified as Hispanic. Respondents that identified as Asian comprised 3.2% (n=4) of the survey sample and 1.6% (n=2) identified as Pacific Islander. One respondent identified as African American and Arab (0.8%), one was African American and White (0.8%), and one did not claim an ethnicity as "not all white people are the same" (0.8%). The racial composition of the survey participants is similar to the University's population, which identify as overwhelmingly Caucasian/White

(74.7%), but also as Hispanic (11.1%), and two or more races (3.8%) (Enrollment Profile, 2016). It is interesting to note that no survey participant identified as Black/African American; however, the sample is consistent with University's population as 1.5% of the population identified as Black/African American (Enrollment Profile, 2016).

### Age

The mean age of respondents (n=118) was 21.83 years (SD=4.929) with a median of 21 years. The age distribution of respondents ranged from 18 to 43 years of age with a mode of 18. The majority of respondents (57.6%, n=68) were 19-22 years of age. This sample overrepresented students between the age of 19-22 years of age as less than 44 percent of the population was between 19-22 years of age (Enrollment Profile, 2016). Thus, the sample appeared to be slightly older than the population.

### Class Standing

As the level of course the participant was in when they learned about the survey is not necessarily indicative of where they are in their college career, participants were asked to divulge their class standing. The participants in the study were mainly upperclassmen as 31.5% of the respondents indicated they were freshmen (n=39), 5.6% sophomores (n=7), 24.2% juniors (n=30), 32.3% seniors (n=40), and 5.6% reported being fifth year or above undergraduate students (n=7).

### Major and Minor Course of Study

Respondents were asked to report their major and minor courses of study. Majors and minors were additionally collapsed and coded into the College where the program was located. For example, the Department of Criminal Justice is part of the School of Public Service at this university. These findings are presented in Table D-1(c). It was

found that 64.5% of respondents listed a major in the School of Public Service (n=78), 23.1% of respondents listed a major from the College of Arts and Sciences (n=28), 4.1% of majors were in the College of Business and Economics (n=5), 3.3% were from the College of Health Sciences (n=4), 2.8% were from the College of Education (n=3), and 0.8% indicated they were pursuing a degree from the College of Engineering (n=1). Two respondents (1.7%) indicated they had not declared a major at the time of the survey. The top majors among respondents from each College respectively were criminal justice (n=76; 62.8%), psychology (n=9; 7.4%), business (n=1; 0.8%), nursing (n=3; 2.5%), elementary education (n=2; 1.7%), and mechanical engineering (n=1; 0.8%).

Eighty-three respondents indicated that they did not have a minor course of study. Of the 37 respondents who did report a minor, 75.7% of respondents listed a minor from the College of Arts and Sciences (n=28), 13.5% indicated that they were pursuing a minor in the School of Public Service (n=5), 8.1% were pursuing a minor from the College of Engineering (n=3), and 2.7% of minors were in the College of Business and Economics (n=1). The top minors among respondents from each College respectively were psychology (n=8; 21.6%), criminal justice (n=2; 5.4%), political science (n=2; 5.4%), cybersecurity (n=2; 5.4%), and business bridge to career (n=1; 2.7%).

### Victimology

As the majority of respondents have either declared a major or minor in criminal justice, it must be recognized that some criminal justice courses discuss victimology. Though the completion of a victimology course is not required to complete the criminal justice curriculum at this particular University, victimology is offered as an elective course. As such, 12.1% of respondents indicated that they have taken a victimology

course (n=15), while 87.9% reported they have not taken a victimology course (n=109) (see Table D-1(b)).

### Religiosity

Respondents were first asked whether they considered themselves to be religious. Of the respondents who answered this question, 45.2% reported that they did consider themselves to be religious (n=56), while 54.8% reported that they did not consider themselves to be religious (n=68) (see Table D-1(b)). Respondents were then asked to indicate how important they consider religion to be in their lives. Twenty-three respondents reported that religion was not at all important (18.5%), 17.7% reported that religion was of low importance in their life (n=22), and 9.7% indicated a slight importance (n=12). Religion was indicated to be of neutral importance to 13.7% of respondents (n=17), while 14.5% reported that religion was moderately important in their life (n=18). Finally, 16.9% of respondents indicated that religion is very important (n=21) and 8.9% reported that religion was extremely important in their life (n=11). Thus, 46% of respondents indicated that religion was not at all important to slightly important (n=57) and 40.3% of respondents reported that religion was moderately to extremely important (n=50).

### Source of News

The media with which an individual engages has the potential to challenge or support the myths they accept. As such, respondents were asked about their news consumption. Of those who reported watching the news (N=119), 49.2% indicated that they watched the news less than one hour a day (n=61), 36.3% watched 1-2 hours per day (n=45), and 10.5% watched 3-4 hours per day (n=13) (see Table D-1(b)). Of the 118



respondents who reported listening to the news daily, 41.9% reported that they listened to the news less than one hour per day (n=52), 44.4% listened 1-2 hours (n=55), 8.1% listened 3-4 hours (n=10), and 0.8% listened 5-6 hours per day (n=1). In addition, of the 114 respondents who indicated that they read the news, 16.9% read the news for less than an hour per day (n=21), 52.4% did so for 1-2 hours per day (n=65), 19.4% of respondents read the news for 3-4 hours per day (n=24), and 1.6% of respondents reported reading the news for both 5-6 hours (n=2) and 7-8 hours (n=2) per day. Overall, nearly half of the sample indicated they consumed news from each platform—watching, listening, or reading—for less than an hour per day.

The primary news source of respondents was also an item on the survey. Thirty-four respondents (27.4%) indicated that their primary source of news is an electronic newspaper, 11.3% primarily watch their local broadcast news station (n=14) and 7.3% primarily watch national broadcast news (n=9). As a sign of increased access to social media, 47.6% of respondents indicated that social media is their primary news source (n=59). Seven respondents (5.6%) reported ‘other,’ such as friends, teachers, BuzzFeed and podcasts, as their primary news source.

#### Victimization Experience

The final two questions asked of survey respondents were the most sensitive and pertained to sexual victimization experiences. The penultimate question inquired if the respondent personally knew someone who has been a victim of rape or sexual assault. The overwhelming majority of the respondents, 76.6% (n=95), reported they did personally know a victim of rape or sexual assault, while 23.4% of respondents (n=29) reported that they did not personally know a rape or sexual assault victim (see Table D-

1(b)). This finding is consistent with previous literature, as Talbot, Neill, and Rankin (2010) found that 72.9% (n=1169) of undergraduate students in their study assessing rape-accepting attitudes reported personally knowing someone that was a victim of sexual violence. Finally, the last question queried about the respondent's (N=123) personal rape or sexual assault victimization. Ninety-three respondents (75.0%) reported that they had not personally been a victim of rape or sexual assault, while 30 respondents (24.2%) disclosed that they had personally been a victim of rape or sexual assault. These results are consistent with previous literature that suggests that between 20-25% of undergraduate women nationwide have personally been a victim of an attempted or completed rape (Talbot et al., 2010).

### **Scale Characteristics**

#### **Scale Descriptives and Reliability**

Table D-2 displays the descriptive statistics for the three survey scales utilized, as well as the Sex Workers as Victims Scale. In order to assess the internal consistency of the scales, Cronbach's alpha was employed to assess the reliability, or the strength of consistency in measuring a unidimensional construct (i.e., internal consistency), for all of the scales utilized (Goforth, 2015).

#### **Human Trafficking Myths Scale**

The Human Trafficking Myths Scale, created by Cunningham and Cromer (2016), was the first scale employed in the survey. Two of the 16 scale items referred directly to sex trafficking, while the remaining 14 items were applicable to all forms of human trafficking. One scale item was reverse coded prior to analysis. The variable Human Trafficking Myths Scale Score was created in SPSS by computing the summed core of

the Likert Scale responses to all 16 items. Possible scores on the scale ranged from 16 to 96, where the latter indicates a strong belief in human trafficking myths. Sample scores ( $n = 124$ ) ranged from 16 to 59 ( $M = 35.98$   $SD = 9.462$ ). Based on the fact that possible scores could be as high as 96, the average of 35.98 was on the lower end (i.e., less accepting of human trafficking myths). However, there was still notable acceptance of myths among the sample. For example, the myth “Human trafficking must include elements of physical force, restraint, bondage, and/or violence” ( $M = 3.36$ ;  $SD = 1.650$ ) was the most accepted. The sex-related human trafficking myths, “If a child solicits sex from an adult in exchange for money, food, or shelter, he or she is not a victim” ( $M = 1.67$ ;  $SD = .935$ ) and “If a person receives any kind of payment for sex, he or she is not being trafficked” ( $M = 2.09$ ;  $SD = .980$ ), were accepted less than the average item in the scale ( $M = 2.25$ ). In addition, the Human Trafficking Myths Scale was internally consistent with an alpha of .812. Despite the fact that an amended version of the scale was used for this study, the alpha obtained was on par with Cunningham and Cromer’s (2016) alpha of .810 obtained during the creation of the scale.

### Vignette

As noted in Chapter III, one-half of the surveys administered randomly included a vignette (Version A) that was designed by the scale creators to reinforce preconceived human trafficking myths, while Version B did not include a vignette (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016). An independent samples t-tests was computed to determine if Human Trafficking Myths Scale Score means were significantly different for those who received Version A compared to those who received Version B.

The results suggest that the mean Human Trafficking Myths Scale Score for those who read the vignette (Version A) ( $n = 53$ ;  $M = 35.57$ ;  $SD = 9.133$ ) was not significantly higher than the mean Human Trafficking Myths Scale Score for those who did not read the vignette (Version B) ( $n = 71$ ;  $M = 36.30$ ;  $SD = 9.753$ ), ( $t(122) = -.423$ ,  $p = .673$ ). Thus, the data suggest that the vignette did not have an effect on perceptions of human trafficking.

#### Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale

The Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale, which was reduced from 29 items to 18 items, was intended to measure stereotypes held in regard to prostitution (Levin & Peled, 2011). Nine of the items measured perceptions of prostitution as normative versus deviant, while the remaining nine items evaluated the perception of prostitutes as victims versus choosing their lifestyle. Prior to analysis, 13 scale items were reverse coded for consistency with high scores indicating normative/offender-orientation perceptions and low scores indicating problem- and victim-orientated perceptions. The variable Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale Score was created in SPSS by computing the summed core of the Likert Scale responses to all 18 items. Possible scale scores ranged from 18 to 90, where lower scores were indicative of more victim-oriented perceptions of prostitution and higher scores were indicative of offender-oriented perceptions of prostitution. Scores in this sample ( $n = 124$ ) ranged from 33 to 75 ( $M = 55.23$ ;  $SD = 9.037$ ). Based on the possible range of 18-90, the average of 55.23 was close to the mid-point indicating both offender- and victim-oriented perceptions. The scale items “Without prostitution, more women would get raped” ( $M = 4.08$ ;  $SD = 1.033$ ) and “Women become prostitutes because they were not properly

educated” ( $M = 4.03$ ;  $SD = .901$ ) were the strongest offender-oriented perceptions of prostitutes, while “Prostitution increases the rate of sexually transmitted diseases” ( $M = 1.96$ ;  $SD = .850$ ) was the most rejected negative perception of prostitutes. Further, satisfactory internal consistency of the scale was achieved ( $\alpha = .795$ ). Though an amended version of the scale was used for this study, the alpha obtained was only slightly lower than Levin and Peled’s (2016) alpha of .850 obtained during the creation of the scale.

#### Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale

McMahon and Farmer’s (2011) Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale was penultimate to the demographics questionnaire in the survey. This scale was created to update Payne et al.’s (1999) Short Form Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale to reflect the shift in prejudices and language used in popular culture to describe rape myths. The variable Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale Score was created in SPSS by computing the summed core of the Likert Scale responses to all 17 items, none of which were reverse coded. The original 22 item scale was pared down to 17 items, in which possible scale scores ranged from 17 (indicating a strong rejection of rape myths) to 85 (indicating a strong belief in rape myths). Scores in this sample ( $n = 124$ ) ranged from 17 to 55 ( $M = 33.70$ ;  $SD = 10.204$ ), which fell on the lower end of possible scale scores indicating less acceptance of rape myths. However, some acceptance of rape myths was evident. For example, the most commonly accepted myth was that “Girls who are caught cheating on their boyfriends sometimes claim that it was rape” ( $M = 2.88$ ;  $SD = 1.145$ ), reflecting the notion that false reports of rape are common. The most commonly rejected myth was that “If the accused ‘rapist’ doesn’t have a weapon, you really can’t

call it rape” ( $M = 1.05$ ;  $SD = .250$ ). The reduced Updated Illinois Rape Myth Scale employed in this study was found to be internally consistent ( $\alpha = .882$ ). Though an amended version of the scale was used for this study, the alpha obtained was slightly greater than McMahon and Farmer’s (2011) alpha of .870 obtained during the creation of the scale.

#### Sex Workers as Victims Scale

The Sex Workers as Victims Scale was created by condensing nine morality based questions from the Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale, to test hypothesis two. The items on the Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale, and subsequently this scale, are on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *fully disagree* to 5 = *fully agree*. Thus, possible scores for the variable assessing a participant’s perception of sex workers as victims ranged from 9 to 45, where higher scores indicated perceptions as offenders and not victims. Scores in this sample ( $n = 124$ ) ranged from 12 to 42 ( $M = 27.68$ ;  $SD = 6.423$ ), which was around the mid-point. The most prominent offender-oriented perception was that “Most prostitutes are morally corrupt” ( $M = 3.81$ ;  $SD = 1.070$ ), while the least accepted offender-oriented perception was “Prostitutes spread AIDS” ( $M = 2.52$ ;  $SD = 1.047$ ). This scale was found to be internally consistent ( $\alpha = .805$ ).

#### Scale Correlation Matrix

A correlation matrix was created using the total scores from the Human Trafficking Myths Scale, Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale, Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale, and the Sex Workers as Victims Scale (See Table D-3). These correlations were calculated to determine if the individual scale scores were

related to each other and, if so, whether the relationship was significant. It was anticipated that the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale would positively correlate with the Human Trafficking Myths Scale Score (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016) and both the Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale and Sex Workers as Victims Scale (Cotton et al., 2002; Franklin & Menaker, 2014; Frese et al., 2004; Levin & Peled, 2016; Miller et al., 2011).

The results suggest that four of the six correlations were statistically significant. Moderate correlations were observed between the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale and the Human Trafficking Myths Scale ( $r = .402$ ,  $p = .001$ ), Sex Workers as Victims Scale ( $r = -.249$ ,  $p = .005$ ) and the Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale ( $r = -.247$ ,  $p = .006$ ). Contrary to expectations, the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale was inversely related to both the Sex Workers as Victims Scale and Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale, suggesting that acceptance of rape myths is associated with viewing sex workers as victims. As indicated in Table D-3, the strongest relationship was found in the correlation between the Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale and Sex Workers as Victims Scale ( $r = .945$ ,  $p = .001$ ). As the Sex Workers as Victims Scale is comprised of items from the Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale, it is not surprising that they are highly correlated as they are measuring similar perceptions. The correlations between the Human Trafficking Myths Scale and both the Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale ( $r = -.151$ ,  $p = .094$ ) and Sex Workers as Victims Scale ( $r = -.165$ ,  $p = .067$ ) were not statistically significant.

## Hypothesis Testing

In the subsequent two sections, each stated hypothesis is independently tested and the findings are discussed. As previously noted within the Analytic Strategy section of this chapter, an independent samples t-test was used to test the first hypothesis, while a bivariate OLS regression was used to test the second hypothesis. Finally, multivariate OLS regression models including all of the control variables were run for each of the dependent variables.

### Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis posited that men would be more likely to victim-blame and accept myths about rape and sex work compared to women. In order to test this hypothesis, independent samples t-tests were calculated for each of the three individual scales. Thus, the sample means of the Human Trafficking Myths Scale Score, Attitudes Toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale Score, and the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale Score for males were respectively compared to the sample means of the Human Trafficking Myths Scale Score, Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale Score, and the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale Score for females using three independent samples t-tests (see Table D-4). The purpose of the independent samples t-tests is to determine if the means of the two groups—males and females—are significantly different for each scale (Tokunaga, 2016). Independent samples t-tests are additionally appropriate as the dependent variables for each test are interval level and are approximately normally distributed. Fulfilling the assumption of normality, which was confirmed through Shapiro-Wilk tests for the Human Trafficking Myths Scale Score ( $p = .421$ ), Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale Score ( $p = .341$ ), and the



Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale Score ( $p = .197$ ), allows for parametric testing utilizing these variables.

The results for the first independent samples t-test indicated that the mean Human Trafficking Myths Scale Score for males (range = 22 to 61,  $M = 37.89$ ,  $SD = 9.568$ ) was significantly higher than the mean Human Trafficking Myths Scale Score for females (range = 16 to 53,  $M = 34.46$ ,  $SD = 9.163$ ), ( $t(122) = 2.029$ ,  $p = .045$ ,  $d = .366$ ). Although the difference between the means was statistically significant, the value of Cohen's  $d$  represents a small effect size. In addition, it is important to note that the 95% confidence interval of the mean differences between the sexes did not contain zero (.083 to 6.771). The results of the second independent samples t-test indicated that the mean Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale Score for males (range = 35 to 75,  $M = 54.58$ ,  $SD = 9.605$ ) was not significantly different than the mean Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale Score for females (range = 33 to 72,  $M = 55.74$ ,  $SD = 8.595$ ), [ $t(122) = -.707$ ,  $p = .481$ , 95% CI: (-4.398 – 2.083)]. Finally, the results for the third independent samples t-test indicated that the mean Updated Illinois Rape Myth Scale Score for males (range = 19 to 55,  $M = 36.85$ ,  $SD = 10.391$ ,  $d = .572$ ) was significantly higher than the mean Updated Illinois Rape Myth Scale Score for females (range = 17 to 55,  $M = 31.19$ ,  $SD = 9.388$ ), ( $t(122) = 3.184$ ,  $p = .002$ ). The value of Cohen's  $d$  for this analysis indicated a moderate effect size. Last, the 95% confidence interval of the mean differences between the sexes did not contain zero (2.143 to 9.189).

As such, hypothesis 1 garnered support from the data in that males were found to have significantly higher mean scores for two of the three scales than females, suggesting that males are more likely to assign blame to the victim and reject myths about rape and

human trafficking less strongly compared to their female counterparts. However, no statistical difference was found regarding perceptions of prostitutes and prostitution between males and females. The finding that sex has an effect on victim-blaming and perceptions of rape and human trafficking is consistent with previous empirical inquiries; however, due to low to moderate effect sizes, the substantive significance of these findings must be considered (Ching & Burke, 1999; Cotton et al., 2002; Cunningham & Cromer, 2016; Franklin & Menaker, 2014; Gray et al., 1993; Kleinke & Meyer, 1990; Nagel et al., 2005; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010).

### Hypothesis 2

To assess the second hypothesis—the less an individual subscribes to rape myths, the more likely they will be to view sex workers as victims rather than offenders—a bivariate OLS regression was employed. As mentioned previously, the independent variable, Updated Rape Myth Acceptance Scale Score ( $\alpha = .882$ ), and the dependent variable, Sex Workers As Victims Scale Score ( $\alpha = .805$ ), were found to be reliable (see Table D-2). The results of the bivariate OLS regression are displayed in Table D-5.

A bivariate OLS regression was used to determine if acceptance of rape myths significantly predicted perceptions of sex workers as victims. Although this regression model was found to be statistically significant ( $b = -.157$ ,  $t(122) = -2.845$ ,  $p = .005$ , 95% CI:  $-.266 - -.048$ ), these results do not provide support for the second hypothesis as a one-unit increase in Updated Rape Myth Acceptance Scale scores resulted in a .157-point decrease in Sex Workers as Victims Scale scores. In other words, as rape myth acceptance increased, perceptions about sex workers became more victim-oriented. This unexpected finding is likely due to a conceptual issue in the Attitudes toward Prostitutes

and Prostitution Scale, which is addressed in more detail in the next section. In addition, the results of this analysis indicated that an individual's acceptance of rape myths explained only 6.2% of the variance in perceiving sex workers as victims ( $R^2 = .062$ ). The low variance explained by this model warrants the use of full models to explain more of the variance.

### Full Models

The results of hypothesis one and two indicate that there is a relationship between perceptions of sex workers, acceptance of rape myths, and sex; however, an in-depth analysis of predictors of each scale is necessary. As such, multiple regression models were utilized for each scale as multiple regression allows for the examination of the impact of several variables on the dependent variable, as well as the impact of one variable while controlling for others. It is possible that respondent demographics and previous vicarious or personal sexual victimization experiences would be associated with perceptions of sex workers and acceptance of rape myths, and as such, separate multiple regression models were run for each of the dependent variables to test whether respondent demographics and experiences predict attitudes toward sex workers and acceptance of rape myths.

The preconditions of multiple OLS regression are such that the data were drawn from a random sample and there is no perfect multicollinearity between the variables (McClendon, 1994). To assess whether multicollinearity was present, a correlation matrix was constructed inclusive of all the variables in the full model (not shown). The correlation matrix indicated that multicollinearity was not present as all correlations were below the threshold of .70. Another assumption of multiple OLS regression, that the

relationship between the independent and dependent variable cannot be spurious due to omitted variables, was addressed through including independent variables that were suggested through prior research (McClendon, 1994). Next, the assumption of homoskedasticity, meaning that the variance of the error term is constant for all values of the independent variable, was assessed using residual versus fitted plots. The plots for all four dependent variables, the Human Trafficking Myths Scale Score, Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale Score, Updated Rape Myth Acceptance Scale Score, and Sex Workers as Victims Scale Score, resembled a football-like shape indicative of homoskedasticity (McClendon, 1994). The data is not clustered, thus the assumption that errors are independent (i.e., no autocorrelation), is not violated. Finally, multiple OLS regression assumes that all dependent variables are normally distributed (McClendon, 1994). As discussed previously, the dependent scale score variables are approximately normally distributed.

The independent demographic variables included in these four models were sex, race, age, class standing, major, having taken a victimology course, religiosity, primary news source, vicarious sexual victimization, and personal sexual victimization; minor course of study was excluded from the full models due to limited variability. Prior to running the models, ordinal level variables were recoded into dummy variables due to limited variation in the sample (see Table D-1(b)). For instance, race was recoded into white (0) and minority (1) due to 83.9% of the sample identifying as white. Additional variables that were recoded included: class standing where 1 = upperclassmen and 0 = underclassmen, major where 1 = non-criminal justice major and 0 = criminal justice and primary news source where 1 = social media and 0 = other. In addition, the Updated

Illinois Rape Myth Scale Score was included in the full models of the Human Trafficking Myths Scale Score, Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale Score, and Sex Workers as Victims Scale score as prior research indicates that there is a relationship between perceptions of sex workers and acceptance of rape myths (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016; Cotton et al., 2002; Franklin & Menaker, 2014; Frese et al., 2004; Levin & Peled, 2016; Miller et al., 2011).

#### Human Trafficking Myths Scale Score

Table D-6(a) displays the results of the first multivariate OLS regression using the Human Trafficking Myths Scale score as the dependent variable and the demographic and experiential variables as well as the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale score as independent variables. This regression model was found to be statistically significant ( $F = 2.807$ ;  $p = .003$ ) and explained 23.1% of the variance in Human Trafficking Myths Scale scores ( $R^2 = .231$ ). Two variables, race and Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale score, were found to be significant in the model such that minorities scored 5.422 points higher on the Human Trafficking Myths Scale than whites ( $\beta = .209$ ;  $p = .023$ ). In addition, for every one point a respondent scored on the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale, they scored .367 points on the Human Trafficking Myths Scale ( $\beta = .391$ ;  $p = .001$ ), suggesting that acceptance of rape myths is associated with an acceptance of human trafficking myths (see Table D-6(a)). Though none of the other variables in the model were significant, the finding that respondent sex is not significant is the most noteworthy as it contradicts the results from hypothesis one. Sex may no longer be a significant predictor as Burt (1980) indicates that attitudinal variables are better predictors of acceptance of sex-related myths than demographic variables and

attitudinal measures, such as the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale score, were controlled for in the model.

#### Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale

In the second model, the effects of the demographic and experiential variables, as well as the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale score were examined in relation to Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale scores. The results are displayed in Table D-6(b). This regression model was found to be statistically significant ( $F = 3.705$ ;  $p = .001$ ) and the model explained 28.4% of the variance in the Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale score ( $R^2 = .284$ ). Two variables were found to have a statistically significant effect on the model. First, whether a respondent had taken a victimology course was statistically significant such that those who have taken a victimology course scored 9.630 points lower on the Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale compared to those who have not taken a victimology course ( $\beta = -.354$ ;  $p = .001$ ), suggesting that taking a victimology course is related to increased victim-oriented views of prostitution. Similarly, a one point increase in scores on the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale was associated with a .258 point decrease in scores on the Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale ( $\beta = -.299$ ;  $p = .001$ ), indicating that the more an individual accepts rape myths, the more likely they are to view prostitution with a problem- or victim-orientation. Though counterintuitive, this finding is consistent with the finding in hypothesis two.

#### Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale

The Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale score model is displayed in Table D-6(c). Beyond the demographic variables included in the previous full models, the

Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale score model included the Human Trafficking Myths Scale score, Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale score, and Sex Workers as Victims Scale score as prior research suggests that there is a relationship between acceptance of rape myths and perceptions of sex workers (Cotton et al., 2002; Franklin & Menaker, 2014; Frese et al., 2004; Levin & Peled, 2016; Miller et al., 2011). This regression model was found to be statistically significant ( $F = 4.311$ ;  $p = .001$ ) and the model explained 35.7% of the variance in the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale ( $R^2 = .357$ ). Three variables were found to be statistically significant in this model: Human Trafficking Myths Scale scores, having taken a victimology course, and being a rape victim. A one-point increase in Human Trafficking Myths Scale scores was found to be associated with a .338 point increase in Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale scores ( $\beta = .317$ ;  $p = .001$ ), suggesting that the more myths an individual accepts about human trafficking, the more myths they accept about rape. Furthermore, respondents who did report taking a victimology course scored 7.099 points lower on the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale ( $\beta = -.226$ ;  $p = .017$ ) than respondents who had not taken a victimology course, suggesting that taking a victimology course helps to dispel rape myths. Lastly, respondents who indicated that they were a personal victim of rape or sexual assault scored 4.767 points lower on the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance scale than respondents who were not a victim of rape or sexual assault ( $\beta = -.199$ ;  $p = .035$ ), indicating that being a victim of rape or sexual assault reduces beliefs in rape myths.

### Sex Workers as Victims Scale

Finally, the effects of the demographic and experiential variables and the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale scores on the Sex Workers as Victims Scale were examined (see Table D-6(d)). The regression model was found to be statistically significant ( $F = 3.995$ ;  $p = .001$ ) and the model explained 29.9% of the variance in the Sex Workers as Victims Scale ( $R^2 = .299$ ). Three variables were found to be statistically significant in the model. Respondents who reported taking a victimology course scored 8.185 points lower on the Sex Workers as Victims Scale than their counterparts who had not taken a victimology course ( $\beta = -.417$ ;  $p = .001$ ), suggesting that taking a victimology course reduces offender-oriented perceptions of sex workers. In addition, a one point increase in scores on the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale was associated with a .202 point decrease in scores on the Sex Workers as Victims Scale ( $\beta = -.323$ ;  $p = .001$ ), indicating that the more an individual accepts rape myths, the more likely they are to view sex workers as victims. This finding is not consistent with the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale score model as the Sex Workers as Victims Scale score was not found to significantly predict the rape myth acceptance score. One potential explanation for this is that these two models included different predictor and control variables. Last, vicarious sexual victimization was significant ( $\beta = .196$ ;  $p = .029$ ) such that those who reported knowing a rape or sexual assault victim scored 2.931 points higher on the Sex Workers as Victims Scale than those who did not report knowing a rape victim, which suggests the counterintuitive notion that having experienced vicarious sexual victimization is associated with a perception of prostitution that is more offender-oriented than their counterparts.



## CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The intention of this study was to explore the relationship between rape myth acceptance, self-reported perceptions of sex workers, and sex. While studies have previously examined perceptions of prostitutes or human trafficking, no study has examined perceptions of both prostitutes and human trafficking (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016; Levin & Peled, 2011). Thus, this study sought to examine perceptions of both prostitution and human trafficking and their relationship to rape myth acceptance.

The findings of this study are important because perceiving sex workers as culpable for their victimization has real-world implications. The perception of sex workers as offenders, rather than victims, denies them access to the services, support, and protection they need to address underlying causes of their sex work. Without addressing the underlying causes of an individual's sex work, it is unlikely they will be able to leave the life of prostitution (Cotton et al., 2002; Franklin & Menaker, 2014; Halter, 2010; Menaker & Miller, 2013). In addition, it is important to assess the perceptions of university students as these individuals are the future professionals that will likely aid in helping sex workers desist.

The overall findings of this study indicate that, on average, respondents rejected human trafficking myths and rape myths. However, respondents were also more likely to perceive prostitutes and sex workers in general through an offender-orientation. Moreover, previous empirical literature has suggested that factors such as sex, age, education, race, and sexual victimization experience have an effect on perceptions of sex

work and rape myth acceptance (Ching & Burke, 1999; Cotton et al., 2002; Cunningham & Cromer, 2016; Franklin & Menaker, 2014; Giacopassi & Dull, 1986; Gray et al., 1993; Kleinke & Meyer, 1990; Nagel et al., 2005; Suarez & Gadall, 2010). The findings of this study suggest that only sex and sexual victimization experience have an effect on perceptions of sex work and rape myth acceptance, though neither factor was found to be predictive in all models and sex was found to have small to moderate effect sizes in the bivariate analyses.

### Convergent Validity

To assess convergent validity, which is the degree to which measures of constructs that are theoretically related are in fact related, the Human Trafficking Myths Scale was administered concurrently with the condensed Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale and reduced Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Babbie, 2010). As discussed earlier, the main hypothesis of this study was that correlations would be moderate to high in strength and negative in direction as the less-accepting participants are about rape myths, the more their perceptions of prostitutes, prostitution, and human trafficking would become increasingly positive, characterized by a decrease in the classification from offenders to the victims. Simply stated, the less an individual subscribes to rape myths, the more likely they are to view sex workers as victims rather than offenders. However, the results of this study contradict the hypothesis and extant literature as it was found that the less an individual rejects rape myths, the more likely they are to view sex workers through a victim-orientation (Cotton et al., 2002; Franklin & Menaker, 2014; Frese et al., 2004; Miller et al., 2011). This finding that is inconsistent with the literature caused concern for the validity of the Sex Workers as Victims Scale

and the scale from which it originated, the Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale.

### Hypothesis 1

As discussed in Chapter II, previous empirical literature has suggested that sex has an effect on perceptions of sex work and rape myth acceptance (Ching & Burke, 1999; Cotton et al., 2002; Cunningham & Cromer, 2016; Franklin & Menaker, 2014; et al., 2005). Consistent with the literature, the results of this study found that males had significantly higher mean Human Trafficking Myths Scale scores and Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale scores than their female counterparts, indicating that males reject myths about rape (Ching & Burke, 1999; Nagel et al., 2005) and human trafficking (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016) less strongly than females. However, the finding that sex does not have an effect on victim-oriented perceptions of prostitutes and prostitution is surprising as it contradicts Cotton et al.'s (2002) finding that college-age males are significantly more likely to accept prostitution myths than females. In addition, as will be discussed more below, the significance of sex disappeared when attitudinal controls were introduced in the full models. Last, the weak effect sizes found in the relationships between sex, the Human Trafficking Myths Scale, and the Update Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance scale scores suggests that there is statistical significance, but not necessarily substantive significance. This is expounded upon in the discussion of the full models.

### Hypothesis 2

This study additionally sought to identify if there is a positive correlation between rejecting rape myths and perceiving sex workers as victims; thus, a bivariate OLS regression was employed to test the hypothesis. The results did not provide support for

the hypothesis as participants who accepted rape myths were more likely to perceive sex workers as victims, not offenders. In addition, an individual's acceptance of rape myths explained a small amount of the variance in perceiving sex workers as victims. Though explaining variance in social science research is a difficult task, this model's low explanation of variance creates a large limitation that should be addressed in future research (Babbie, 2010). Nevertheless, this finding is important as perceiving sex workers as offenders could compound the stigma they experience as being immoral in addition to being a criminal. Without the criminal stigma attached to sex workers, they may have a greater chance at desisting from the lifestyle and breaking the cycle of victimization and offending (Cotton et al., 2002; Franklin & Menaker, 2014; Halter, 2010; Herzog, 2008; Menaker & Miller, 2013). In an effort to explain more of the variance in perceptions, full models were also run.

#### Full Models

In addition to specifically testing the stated hypotheses, participants' perceptions were further explored by examining the impact of the demographic, experiential, and attitudinal variables on each of the dependent variables (See Tables D-6(a)-(d)). Overall, the results of the full models indicate that demographic variables predict perceptions of sex workers and acceptance of rape myths less than experiential and attitudinal variables. In fact, the demographic variables of sex, age, class standing, religiosity, and primary news source were not found to be statistically significant predictors of perceptions of sex workers or acceptance of rape myths. These findings are not consistent with previous research, particularly as prior research consistently finds that being male increases the acceptance of sex work myths and rape myth acceptance (Ching & Burke, 1999; Cotton

et al., 2002; Cunningham & Cromer, 2016; Franklin & Menaker, 2014; Gray et al., 1993; Kleinke & Meyer, 1990; Nagel, et al., 2005). Furthermore, the finding that sex is not a statistically significant predictor of perceptions of sex workers in the full models corroborates findings from hypothesis one suggesting that the differences in perceptions about prostitutes and prostitution between males and females were not statistically significant. The inconsistency between findings could also be a result of controlling for attitudinal variables in the full model, which were found to be better predictors of rape myth acceptance and perceptions of sex workers. However, with that said, these results are consistent with Burt's (1980) findings that demographic variables correlated less with rape myth acceptance than attitudinal variables did. These findings could be inconsistent with some previous research due to the lack of generalizability generated from the small sample size utilized in this study or the lack of diversity in the composition of the geographic area.

However, some of the demographic and scale score variables—race, having taken a victimology course, knowing a victim of rape or sexual assault, being a victim of rape or sexual assault, Human Trafficking Myths Acceptance Scale scores, and Updated Illinois Rape Myth Scale scores—were found to be significant in at least one the four models (See Tables D-6 (a)-(d)). Race was significant only in the Human Trafficking Myths Scale model, such that minorities subscribed to human trafficking myths more than their white counterparts, though no prior research has examined this relationship. Respondents who reported taking a victimology course more strongly rejected rape myths and viewed sex workers as victims. This finding was expected such that perceptions of sex work and rape myth acceptance are likely influenced by exposure to evidence that

dispels myths about sex work and sexual assault, which is often covered in a victimology course or a unit in a criminal justice course. In addition, counterintuitively, being a vicarious victim of rape or sexual assault was a significant predictor of viewing sex workers more through an offender-orientation than their counterparts. Lastly, personally being a victim of rape or sexual assault was associated with rejecting rape myths. This is consistent with prior research which suggests that individuals with a history of sexual assault victimization are less likely to perceive sexual assault victims as culpable for their victimization (Franklin & Menaker, 2014). However, future research should separate personal sexual victimization into victimization as a child or an adult as previous research indicates that victims of childhood sexual abuse report less sympathy for sexual abuse victims and, thus, may perceive sex workers more through an offender-orientation (Franklin & Menaker, 2014; Ginsburg et al., 1989).

The Human Trafficking Myths Scale scores and the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale scores were found to have a significant relationship such that the more myths an individual accepts about human trafficking, the more myths they accept about rape, and vice versa. This relationship was expected based on previous research (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016). Nevertheless, a contradictory finding emerged as it was found that the more an individual views sex workers through a victim-orientation, the more they accepted rape myths. This finding is inconsistent with extant literature which suggests that individuals who accept rape myths underestimate the trauma associated with rape and sex work (Cotton et al., 2002; Franklin & Menaker, 2014; Frese, Moya & Megias, 2004; Miller, Amacker & King, 2011). However, this finding may be contradictory due to a measurement issue in the Sex Workers as Victims Scale, which

was drawn from the Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale. The conceptual issues in the Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale include collapsing a four-fold division of normativeness v. deviance and choice v. victimization into normative and problem-oriented approaches, whereby the normative approach emphasizes prostitution is a choice and serves a functional role in society compared to the problem-oriented approach which associates prostitution with social deviance and victimization (Levin & Peled, 2011). As such, future research should re-evaluate this hypothesis using a different tool to measure perceptions of sex workers. Of note, the Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale score was not a significant predictor of any scale score, possibly due to employing a severely reduced measure or a temporal issue such that perceptions of prostitutes are formed after perceptions of rape.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

Consistent with all research, this study has both strengths and limitations. This study utilized a relatively accessible undergraduate population in a college setting, where rape myths are prevalent (McMahon & Farmer, 2011), with the additional bonus of the criminal justice department being one of the largest on campus. Introductory criminal justice courses are available to all major courses of study, university wide, which allowed for diversity of educational paths in the study, not just those primarily interested in social science, to participate and be represented. However, this study did not achieve satisfactory external validity as the respondents in this study were undergraduate students in criminal justice courses at a public western urban university. The results may not be representative of other populations, and thus, are not necessarily generalizable (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016). In addition, due to the small sample size and low

response rate, the findings may not be generalizable to the population from which they were drawn.

A reduction of cost was achieved by this online self-report survey study design as there is no postage cost as would be associated with a mail survey, nor does an agency have to be hired to conduct a random sample and survey respondents afterward. In addition, human error was reduced by the use of an online survey as the online format negated the need for the researcher to manually enter data. However, human error was introduced into the study when the researcher failed to unlock two items on Version B of the survey, requiring the items to be removed from analysis. Nevertheless, all of the scales used in this study were found to be internally consistent, suggesting the possibility of their potential use in future research. It also must be mentioned that using an anonymous online survey was a strength of the study as respondents were more likely to answer honestly to the potentially uncomfortable subject matter of sex work and rape.

Moreover, abbreviated versions of established measures were utilized in this study, assisting in increased reliability and a decreased time investment conducting a method of pre- and post-tests. Although, a weakness of including the Human Trafficking Myths Scale, one of the three established measures, is that only two of the 17 items directly addressed sex trafficking. Though many broad human trafficking myths, such as those measured by the items 'Human trafficking must include elements of physical force, restraint, bondage, and/or violence' and 'Human trafficking victims will seek help as soon as they have the opportunity,' may indirectly capture attitudes towards involuntary sex work, a scale constructed to explicitly measure such attitudes would likely prove more useful for subsequent research. The validity of the Human Trafficking Myths Scale



is also called into question as the scale measures myths by a participant's agreement or disagreement with factual information. In other words, it is unclear whether the scale is measuring myths about human trafficking or knowledge about human trafficking.

Furthermore, the items pertaining to vicarious and personal sexual victimization in the survey did not contain a definition of sexual assault or rape. This introduced a limitation into the study as using items without definitions allowed for each participant's selective interpretation when responding to these items.

Finally, though triangulation of data collection methods was considered, this study did not use triangulation as face-to-face measures, such as interviews, could potentially have led to desirability bias, mail surveys were not cost-effective, and secondary data analysis was out of the realm of possibilities as no prior research on this specific topic has been conducted. However, limitations such as insufficient external validity and lack of triangulation of data collection measures, can, and should, be addressed in future research.

### **Future Research**

Although this study added to the body of research on perceptions about sex workers and rape myths among university students, perceptions of sex workers held by professionals in the criminal justice system need to be directly assessed in future research in conjunction with adding additional attitudinal variables, such as sex roles, to the measure (Burt, 1980). Sex workers are often ostracized from their family and friends, making it unlikely that they will have informal social support to leave the life of sex work. As such, sex workers are likely to rely exclusively on formal advocates in the criminal justice system to escape (Franklin & Menaker, 2014; Ullman, 1996).

Unfortunately for the individuals relying on the criminal justice system to assist in their desistence from sex work, Franklin and Menaker (2014) found that perceptions of prostitutes held by professionals in the criminal justice system do not significantly differ from perceptions of prostitutes held by the general population. Law enforcement officers, who are the gatekeepers to the criminal justice system, report perceiving prostitutes as offenders who made the choice to engage in sex work, and are thus culpable for their own victimization (Halter, 2010). Likewise, probation officers, who, unlike law enforcement, have the opportunity to understand the plight and trauma sex workers overcome in their life, still report perceptions of sex workers as “manipulative” and “promiscuous” (Franklin & Menaker, 2014, p. 142).

Though some criminal justice actors who report cynical perceptions of sex workers are consciously aware of their negative perceptions, it may be that criminal justice actors are unaware of their biases toward sex workers and the resulting effect their biases have on sex workers desisting from the life with the help of treatment programs and formal support. Future research should attempt to discern whether criminal justice actors are aware of their perceptions of sex workers and work to perceive sex workers as worthy of appropriate treatment. Moreover, future research should explore how general law enforcement perceptions of sex workers compare to perceptions of sex workers held by law enforcement who are assigned to specialty units in which they frequently come into contact with sex workers. If law enforcement can recognize their implicit biases toward sex workers and work to correct them, there is a potential for many sex workers to escape the life of exploitation with the help of a formal support system.

## CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSIONS

This study sought to explore the relationship between self-reported rape myth acceptance and perceptions of sex workers. Previous research indicates that males are more likely than females to accept myths about prostitution (Cotton et al., 2002), human trafficking (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016), and rape (Ching & Burke, 1999; Nagel et al., 2005); however, findings of this study suggest that males are only more likely than females to accept myths about human trafficking and rape, not prostitution. Moreover, sex was not a predictor of scale scores in any of the full models. In addition to examining the effect of sex on perceptions of sex work and rape myth acceptance, multivariate OLS regression models were utilized to assess the effect of rape myth acceptance on perceptions of sex workers. Findings indicate that increased rape myth acceptance is associated with an increased acceptance of human trafficking myths, though it is also associated with perceiving sex workers as victims.

The widespread proliferation of sex work-based myths in society and the criminal justice system suggests that the damage caused to victims of sexual violence and exploitation will continue to accrue until myths about prostitution, human trafficking, and rape are dispelled and rejected by society. Nevertheless, the finding that taking a victimology course helps to dispel rape myths and increases victim-oriented views of sex workers suggests that educational efforts may lead to a reduced acceptance of sex-work based myths in society.

These findings are important as professionals in the criminal justice system hold perceptions of prostitutes that are not significantly different from perceptions held by citizens (Franklin & Menaker, 2014). Future research should attempt to discern whether both university students and criminal justice actors are aware of their perceptions of sex workers and work to perceive sex workers as worthy of appropriate treatment. As previously discussed, many sex workers could potentially escape a life of exploitation from the acknowledgement of one's implicit biases by criminal justice actors and students aspiring to be such actors so long as they strive to correct these personal shortcomings.

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## APPENDIX A

**Surveyed Courses and Times**

### Surveyed Courses and Times

Course Number (Section) and Name	Days & Times	Total # Of Surveys Emailed Out in Course	# Of Surveys Emailed Out With Vignette	# Of Surveys Emailed Out Without Vignette	# Of Surveys Returned As Undeliverable
<b>CJ 101-001 Introduction to Criminal Justice</b>	MW 1:30-2:45 p.m.	38	19	19	0
<b>CJ 103-004 Introduction to Law &amp; Justice</b>	TR 3:00-4:15 p.m.	48	24	24	2
<b>CJ 315-001 Theories of Crime</b>	TR 10:30-11:45 p.m.	28	14	14	0
<b>CJ 315-002 Theories of Crime</b>	M 6:00-8:45 p.m.	31	16	15	0
<b>CJ 340-001 Interviewing and Counseling in Criminal Justice</b>	MW 1:30-2:45 p.m.	13	7	6	0
<b>CJ 363-001 Criminal Justice Management</b>	W 6:00-8:45 p.m.	15	8	7	2
<b>CJ 426-001 Statistics</b>	TR 1:30-2:45 p.m.	10	5	5	0
<b>UF 100-007 University Foundations: The History and Future of Education</b>	F 10:30-11:45 a.m.	60	30	30	1

APPENDIX B  
**Recruitment Scripts**

### **Appendix B-1. Classroom Recruitment Script**

Hello, my name is Eva Fontaine and I am a second year graduate student in the Criminal Justice Department. I am currently collecting data for my Master's thesis. The purpose of my study is to examine how college students perceive sexual violence and sex work.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study as you are a student at Boise State University in either a Criminal Justice course or in an introductory university wide elective. Participants will be asked to complete a 15 to 20 minute online survey regarding their perceptions of sexual violence and sex work. Participation is completely voluntary and anonymous. There will be no way to link your name or any other identifying information to your survey responses. You may refuse to answer questions that you do not want to answer or exit the survey at any time. Foreseeable risks of participation in this study include triggering re-victimization from previous sexual assaults or abuse. Contact information for campus resources, such as BSU's Counseling Center, and community resources, such as the Idaho Care-Line will be provided to participants.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Boise State University's Institutional Review Board. However, the final decision about participation is yours.

If you are interested in participating, please place your email on the signup sheet. I will email you a link to the survey that includes a more detailed consent form.

I am here to answer any questions you may have. If you have any questions at a later date, you can email me at [evafontaine@u.boisestate.edu](mailto:evafontaine@u.boisestate.edu) or my faculty mentor, Dr. Laura King, at [lauraking2@boisestate.edu](mailto:lauraking2@boisestate.edu). Our emails are provided at the top of the signup sheet as well.

## Appendix B-2. Email Recruitment Script

### Perceptions of Sexual Violence and Sex Work Survey

Hello,

My name is Eva Fontaine and I am a graduate student in the Criminal Justice Department at Boise State University working under the guidance of Dr. Laura King. The purpose of this study, my Master's thesis, is to examine how college students perceive sexual violence and sex work. You indicated that you were interested in participating in this survey by providing me with your email.

Participation in this research includes taking a survey about your perceptions of sexual violence and sex work, which will take approximately 15 to 20 minutes. Participation is completely voluntary and anonymous. There will be no way to link your name or any other identifying information to your survey. You may refuse to answer questions that you do not want to answer or exit the survey at any time.

Foreseeable risks of participation in this study include re-victimization from previous sexual assaults or abuse. Contact information for campus resources, such as BSU's Counseling Center, and community resources, such as the Idaho Care-Line is provided toward the end of the initial page in the survey link below.

If you are interested, please click on the link for the survey and additional information:

[https://boisestate.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_ezBbLTGRF7um4yF](https://boisestate.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_ezBbLTGRF7um4yF)  
(First group with vingette) or

[https://boisestate.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_5u8sCPmUxisDPlr](https://boisestate.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_5u8sCPmUxisDPlr)  
(Second group no vingette)

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me (evafontaine@u.boisestate.edu) or Dr. Laura King (lauraking2@boisestate.edu).

Thank you for your time.

Eva Fontaine  
Graduate Student  
Boise State University



APPENDIX C

**Sample Survey**

## Informed Consent



BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY

### CONSENT TO BE A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

#### A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Eva Fontaine, a graduate student from the Department of Criminal Justice at Boise State University, is conducting a study to assess perceptions of sexual violence and sex work. You are being asked to participate in this research because you are enrolled in a Criminal Justice course or university wide introduction course during the Fall 2016 semester.

#### B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a survey concerning your perceptions of sexual violence and sex work. The survey is completely voluntary and anonymous and should take you about 15-20 minutes to complete. You must be at least 18 years old to take this survey. If you are not at least 18 years old, please do not complete the survey.

#### C. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

1. Participation in this research is entirely anonymous. There will be no way to link your name or any other identifying information to your survey responses. You will be asked to provide general information about yourself such as my sex, race/ethnicity, age, and the course you learned about the study in. Due to the make-up of Boise State University's population, the combined answers to these questions may make an individual person identifiable. Every effort will be made to protect participants' privacy. However, if you are uncomfortable answering any of the survey questions, you may leave them blank. The purpose of this study is to examine how college students perceive sexual violence and sex work.
2. This study involves the foreseeable risk of triggering re-victimization from previous sexual assaults or abuse. The researcher asks that you try to answer all questions; however, if there are any items that make you uncomfortable or that you would prefer to skip, please leave the answer blank. Your responses are anonymous. If you find this upsetting or experience any kind of negative effects, you can contact the Idaho Care-Line at 2-1-1 for counseling services referral information in your area, the Rape Abuse Incest National Network (RAINN) at 1

(800) 656-4673, Boise State University's Counseling Center at (208) 426-1459, or The Gender Equality Center at (208) 426-4259.

**D. BENEFITS**

Participation in this study will help you to assess your perceptions of sexual violence and sex work. This information may be used to evaluate how perceptions regarding sexual violence and sex work have changed over time in college populations.

**E. COSTS**

There will be no costs to you as a result of taking part in this study.

**F. PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY**

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to be in this study or to withdraw from it at any point by not completing the survey or contacting Eva Fontaine or her faculty advisor, Dr. Laura King, at the e-mail addresses provided below. Your decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on your grade in your course. You can withdraw your participation at any time by exiting the survey window on your browser.

**G. QUESTIONS**

If you have further questions, you may email Eva Fontaine at [evafontaine@u.boisestate.edu](mailto:evafontaine@u.boisestate.edu) or Dr. King at [lauraking2@boisestate.edu](mailto:lauraking2@boisestate.edu). If you have any comments or concerns about participation in this study, you should first talk with Eva Fontaine. If for some reason you do not wish to do this, you may contact the Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. You may reach the board office between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday, by calling 208-426-5401 or writing to Office of Research Compliance, Boise State University, 1910 University Drive, Boise, ID, 83725-1138.

This project has been reviewed by the Boise State University Institutional Review Board for the protection of human participants in research (208-426-5401).

**H. CONSENT**

By completing the survey and pressing submit at the conclusion of the survey, you give your consent to participate in this study and for your answers to be used in a graduate thesis concerning college student's perceptions of sexual violence and sex work. If you do not wish to participate, you may exit the survey.

## **Section 1: Version A**

*Instructions: Please read the following vignette about human trafficking. After you have read the vignette, respond to the following statements by clicking on the appropriate circle next to your answer that indicates that you believe the statement is definitely false, mostly false, probably false, probably true, mostly true, or definitely true. Please choose only one answer for each statement and be completely honest in your responses.*

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

**1. Human trafficking is another term for human smuggling.**

- Definitely False  
  Mostly False  
  Probably False  
  Probably True  
  Mostly True  
  Definitely True

**2. Human trafficking must include elements of physical force, restraint, bondage, and/or violence.**

- Definitely False  
  Mostly False  
  Probably False  
  Probably True  
  Mostly True  
  Definitely True

**3. Human trafficking does not happen in the United States.**

- Definitely False  
  Mostly False  
  Probably False  
  Probably True  
  Mostly True  
  Definitely True

**4. If someone did not want to be trafficked, he or she would leave the situation.**

- Definitely False  
  Mostly False  
  Probably False  
  Probably True  
  Mostly True  
  Definitely True

**5. U.S. citizens are trafficked in their own country.**

- Definitely False  
  Mostly False  
  Probably False  
  Probably True  
  Mostly True  
  Definitely True

**6. Human trafficking victims will seek help as soon as they have the opportunity.**

- Definitely False  
  Mostly False  
  Probably False  
  Probably True  
  Mostly True  
  Definitely True

**7. People from other countries who are trafficked in the United States are always illegal immigrants.**

- Definitely False  
  Mostly False  
  Probably False  
  Probably True  
  Mostly True  
  Definitely True

**8. Normal-appearing, well-educated, middle-class people are not trafficked.**

- Definitely False  
  Mostly False  
  Probably False  
  Probably True  
  Mostly True  
  Definitely True

**9. Human trafficking victims will tell authorities they are being trafficked as soon as they have the opportunity.**

- Definitely False  
  Mostly False  
  Probably False  
  Probably True  
  Mostly True  
  Definitely True

**10. Human trafficking must involve some form of travel, transportation, or movement across state or national borders.**

- Definitely False  
  Mostly False  
  Probably False  
  Probably True  
  Mostly True  
  Definitely True

**11. If persons are trafficked in the United States, they are always from poor, uneducated communities.**

- Definitely False  
  Mostly False  
  Probably False  
  Probably True  
  Mostly True  
  Definitely True

**12. If a child solicits sex from an adult in exchange for money, food, or shelter, he or she is not a victim.**

- Definitely False  
  Mostly False  
  Probably False  
  Probably True  
  Mostly True  
  Definitely True

**13. Only foreigners and illegal immigrants are trafficked.**

- Definitely False  
  Mostly False  
  Probably False  
  Probably True  
  Mostly True  
  Definitely True

**14. Human trafficking is always controlled by organized crime.**

- Definitely False  
  Mostly False  
  Probably False  
  Probably True  
  Mostly True  
  Definitely True

**15. A person who is trafficked will always feel negatively toward the person(s) trafficking him or her.**

- Definitely False    Mostly False    Probably False    Probably True    Mostly True    Definitely True

**16. If a person receives any kind of payment for sex, he or she is not being trafficked.**

- Definitely False    Mostly False    Probably False    Probably True    Mostly True    Definitely True

**17. Human trafficking only occurs in undeveloped countries.**

- Definitely False    Mostly False    Probably False    Probably True    Mostly True    Definitely True

## Section 1: Version B

*Instructions: Please respond to the following statements about human trafficking by clicking on the appropriate circle next to your answer that indicates that you believe the statement is definitely false, mostly false, probably false, probably true, mostly true, or definitely true. Please choose only one answer for each statement and be completely honest in your responses.*

**1. Human trafficking is another term for human smuggling.**

- Definitely False   
  Mostly False   
  Probably False   
  Probably True   
  Mostly True   
  Definitely True

**2. Human trafficking must include elements of physical force, restraint, bondage, and/or violence.**

- Definitely False   
  Mostly False   
  Probably False   
  Probably True   
  Mostly True   
  Definitely True

**3. Human trafficking does not happen in the United States.**

- Definitely False   
  Mostly False   
  Probably False   
  Probably True   
  Mostly True   
  Definitely True

**4. If someone did not want to be trafficked, he or she would leave the situation.**

- Definitely False   
  Mostly False   
  Probably False   
  Probably True   
  Mostly True   
  Definitely True

**5. U.S. citizens are trafficked in their own country.**

- Definitely False   
  Mostly False   
  Probably False   
  Probably True   
  Mostly True   
  Definitely True

**6. Human trafficking victims will seek help as soon as they have the opportunity.**

- Definitely False   
  Mostly False   
  Probably False   
  Probably True   
  Mostly True   
  Definitely True

**7. People from other countries who are trafficked in the United States are always illegal immigrants.**

- Definitely False   
  Mostly False   
  Probably False   
  Probably True   
  Mostly True   
  Definitely True

**8. Normal-appearing, well-educated, middle-class people are not trafficked.**

- Definitely False  
  Mostly False  
  Probably False  
  Probably True  
  Mostly True  
  Definitely True

**9. Human trafficking victims will tell authorities they are being trafficked as soon as they have the opportunity.**

- Definitely False  
  Mostly False  
  Probably False  
  Probably True  
  Mostly True  
  Definitely True

**10. Human trafficking must involve some form of travel, transportation, or movement across state or national borders.**

- Definitely False  
  Mostly False  
  Probably False  
  Probably True  
  Mostly True  
  Definitely True

**11. If persons are trafficked in the United States, they are always from poor, uneducated communities.**

- Definitely False  
  Mostly False  
  Probably False  
  Probably True  
  Mostly True  
  Definitely True

**12. If a child solicits sex from an adult in exchange for money, food, or shelter, he or she is not a victim.**

- Definitely False  
  Mostly False  
  Probably False  
  Probably True  
  Mostly True  
  Definitely True

**13. Only foreigners and illegal immigrants are trafficked.**

- Definitely False  
  Mostly False  
  Probably False  
  Probably True  
  Mostly True  
  Definitely True

**14. Human trafficking is always controlled by organized crime.**

- Definitely False  
  Mostly False  
  Probably False  
  Probably True  
  Mostly True  
  Definitely True



**15. A person who is trafficked will always feel negatively toward the person(s) trafficking him or her.**

- Definitely False    Mostly False    Probably False    Probably True    Mostly True    Definitely True

**16. If a person receives any kind of payment for sex, he or she is not being trafficked.**

- Definitely False    Mostly False    Probably False    Probably True    Mostly True    Definitely True

**17. Human trafficking only occurs in undeveloped countries.**

- Definitely False    Mostly False    Probably False    Probably True    Mostly True    Definitely True

## Section 2

*Instructions: Please read the following statements about prostitutes and prostitution. Mark if you fully disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, or fully agree with each statement by clicking on the circle next to your answer. Please choose only one answer for each and be completely honest in your responses.*

**1. Prostitution is trafficking of women.**

- Fully Disagree   
  Somewhat Disagree   
  Neither Agree nor Disagree   
  Somewhat Agree   
  Fully Agree

**2. Prostitution is forcing undesired sexual behavior.**

- Fully Disagree   
  Somewhat Disagree   
  Neither Agree nor Disagree   
  Somewhat Agree   
  Fully Agree

**3. Most prostitutes are morally corrupt.**

- Fully Disagree   
  Somewhat Disagree   
  Neither Agree nor Disagree   
  Somewhat Agree   
  Fully Agree

**4. Without prostitution, more women would get raped.**

- Fully Disagree   
  Somewhat Disagree   
  Neither Agree nor Disagree   
  Somewhat Agree   
  Fully Agree

**5. Prostitution damages society's morals.**

- Fully Disagree   
  Somewhat Disagree   
  Neither Agree nor Disagree   
  Somewhat Agree   
  Fully Agree

**6. Prostitutes spread AIDS.**

- Fully Disagree   
  Somewhat Disagree   
  Neither Agree nor Disagree   
  Somewhat Agree   
  Fully Agree

**7. Prostitution is a violation of women's human dignity.**

- Fully Disagree   
  Somewhat Disagree   
  Neither Agree nor Disagree   
  Somewhat Agree   
  Fully Agree

**8. Women become prostitutes because they were not properly educated.**

- Fully Disagree   
  Somewhat Disagree   
  Neither Agree nor Disagree   
  Somewhat Agree   
  Fully Agree

**9. Prostitution is a form of violence against women.**

- Fully Disagree   
  Somewhat Disagree   
  Neither Agree nor Disagree   
  Somewhat Agree   
  Fully Agree

**10. Prostitutes like sex.**

- Fully Disagree   
  Somewhat Disagree   
  Neither Agree nor Disagree   
  Somewhat Agree   
  Fully Agree

**11. Many prostitutes are students who prefer a convenient, profitable job.**

- Fully Disagree   
  Somewhat Disagree   
  Neither Agree nor Disagree   
  Somewhat Agree   
  Fully Agree

**12. Prostitutes are victims of drug abuse.**

- Fully Disagree   
  Somewhat Disagree   
  Neither Agree nor Disagree   
  Somewhat Agree   
  Fully Agree

**13. Prostitution is a way for some women to gain power and control.**

- Fully Disagree   
  Somewhat Disagree   
  Neither Agree nor Disagree   
  Somewhat Agree   
  Fully Agree

**14. Women choose to be prostitutes.**

- Fully Disagree   
  Somewhat Disagree   
  Neither Agree nor Disagree   
  Somewhat Agree   
  Fully Agree

**15. Prostitution increases the rate of sexually transmitted diseases.**

- Fully Disagree   
  Somewhat Disagree   
  Neither Agree nor Disagree   
  Somewhat Agree   
  Fully Agree

**16. Prostitution is a form of rape in which the victim gets paid.**

- Fully Disagree     Somewhat Disagree     Neither Agree nor Disagree     Somewhat Agree     Fully Agree

**17. Prostitution harms the institution of marriage.**

- Fully Disagree     Somewhat Disagree     Neither Agree nor Disagree     Somewhat Agree     Fully Agree

**18. Prostitutes are unable to get out of the situation they are in.**

- Fully Disagree     Somewhat Disagree     Neither Agree nor Disagree     Somewhat Agree     Fully Agree

### Section 3

*Instructions: Please read the following statements about sexual violence. Mark if you strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, or strongly agree with each statement by clicking on the circle next to your answer. Please choose only one answer for each and be completely honest in your responses.*

**1. If a girl is raped while she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for letting things get out of control.**

- Strongly Disagree    
  Somewhat Disagree    
  Neither Agree nor Disagree    
  Somewhat Agree    
  Strongly Agree

**2. When girls go to parties wearing slutty clothes, they are asking for trouble.**

- Strongly Disagree    
  Somewhat Disagree    
  Neither Agree nor Disagree    
  Somewhat Agree    
  Strongly Agree

**3. If a girl goes to a room alone with a guy at a party, it is her own fault if she is raped.**

- Strongly Disagree    
  Somewhat Disagree    
  Neither Agree nor Disagree    
  Somewhat Agree    
  Strongly Agree

**4. If a girl initiates kissing or hooking up, she should not be surprised if a guy assumes she wants to have sex.**

- Strongly Disagree    
  Somewhat Disagree    
  Neither Agree nor Disagree    
  Somewhat Agree    
  Strongly Agree

**5. When guys rape, it is usually because of their strong desire for sex.**

- Strongly Disagree    
  Somewhat Disagree    
  Neither Agree nor Disagree    
  Somewhat Agree    
  Strongly Agree

**6. Guys don't usually intend to force sex on a girl, but sometimes they get too sexually carried away.**

- Strongly Disagree    
  Somewhat Disagree    
  Neither Agree nor Disagree    
  Somewhat Agree    
  Strongly Agree

**7. Rape happens when a guy's sex drive gets out of control.**

- Strongly Disagree    
  Somewhat Disagree    
  Neither Agree nor Disagree    
  Somewhat Agree    
  Strongly Agree

**8. It shouldn't be considered rape if a guy is drunk and didn't realize what he was doing.**

- Strongly Disagree   
 Somewhat Disagree   
 Neither Agree nor Disagree   
 Somewhat Agree   
 Strongly Agree

**9. If both people are drunk, it can't be rape.**

- Strongly Disagree   
 Somewhat Disagree   
 Neither Agree nor Disagree   
 Somewhat Agree   
 Strongly Agree

**10. If a girl doesn't physically resist sex—even if protesting verbally—it can't be considered rape.**

- Strongly Disagree   
 Somewhat Disagree   
 Neither Agree nor Disagree   
 Somewhat Agree   
 Strongly Agree

**11. If a girl doesn't physically fight back, you can't really say it was rape.**

- Strongly Disagree   
 Somewhat Disagree   
 Neither Agree nor Disagree   
 Somewhat Agree   
 Strongly Agree

**12. A rape probably didn't happen if the girl has no bruises or marks.**

- Strongly Disagree   
 Somewhat Disagree   
 Neither Agree nor Disagree   
 Somewhat Agree   
 Strongly Agree

**13. If the accused "rapist" doesn't have a weapon, you really can't call it a rape.**

- Strongly Disagree   
 Somewhat Disagree   
 Neither Agree nor Disagree   
 Somewhat Agree   
 Strongly Agree

**14. If a girl doesn't say "no" she can't claim rape.**

- Strongly Disagree   
 Somewhat Disagree   
 Neither Agree nor Disagree   
 Somewhat Agree   
 Strongly Agree

**15. A lot of times, girls who say they were raped agreed to have sex and then regret it.**

- Strongly Disagree   
 Somewhat Disagree   
 Neither Agree nor Disagree   
 Somewhat Agree   
 Strongly Agree

**16. Rape accusations are often used as a way of getting back at guys.**

- Strongly Disagree   
 Somewhat Disagree   
 Neither Agree nor Disagree   
 Somewhat Agree   
 Strongly Agree

**17. A lot of times, girls who say they were raped often led the guy on and then had regrets.**

- Strongly Disagree     Somewhat Disagree     Neither Agree nor Disagree     Somewhat Agree     Strongly Agree

**18. Girls who are caught cheating on their boyfriends sometimes claim that it was a rape.**

- Strongly Disagree     Somewhat Disagree     Neither Agree nor Disagree     Somewhat Agree     Strongly Agree

## **Section 4**

*Instructions: Please answer the following questions about yourself and your experiences by clicking on the circle next to your answer or typing your answer in the space provided. Please indicate only one answer for each.*

### **1. What is your sex?**

- Male
- Female
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

### **2.) Which racial or ethnic group do you most identify with?**

- African American
- Asian
- Caucasian/white
- Hispanic
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

### **3. What is your age?**

\_\_\_\_\_ (please write your age in years)

### **4. What is your class standing?**

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Fifth year or above undergraduate
- Graduate
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

### **5. What is/are your major course(s) of study?**

\_\_\_\_\_ (please type the title of your major course(s) of study)



**6. What is your minor course of study?**

\_\_\_\_\_ (please write the title of your minor course of study)

- Not Applicable

**7. Have you ever taken a victimology course?**

- Yes
- No

**8. Do you consider yourself to be religious?**

- Yes
- No

**9. How important is religion in your life?**

- Not At All Important
- Low Importance
- Slightly Important
- Neutral
- Moderately Important
- Very Important
- Extremely Important

**10. How many hours per day do you watch a news source?**

- 0 hours
- 1-2 hours
- 3-4 hours
- 5-6 hours
- 7-8 hours
- 9-10 hours
- 11+ hours

**11. How many hours per day do you listen to a news source?**

- 0 hours
- 1-2 hours
- 3-4 hours

- 5-6 hours
- 7-8 hours
- 9-10 hours
- 11+ hours

**12. How many hours per day do you read a news source?**

- 0 hours
- 1-2 hours
- 3-4 hours
- 5-6 hours
- 7-8 hours
- 9-10 hours
- 11+ hours

**13. What do you consider your primary news source to be?**

- Paper Newspaper
  - Electronic Newspaper
  - Local Broadcast News Station
  - National Broadcast News Station
  - Social Media
  - Other (please specify):
- 

**14. Do you personally know anyone who has been the victim of a rape or sexual assault?**

- Yes
- No

**15. Have you ever been the victim of a rape or sexual assault?**

- Yes
- No

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY!**

*If you have any additional comments, please type them in the space below.*

APPENDIX D

**Tables**

**Table D-1(a). Demographic Survey Items**

Variable	Responses
Sex (N=124)	0 = Male 1 = Female
Race/Ethnicity (N=124)	0 = Caucasian/White 1 = Hispanic 2 = Asian 3 = Pacific Islander 4 = African American & Arab 5 = African American & White 6 = Doesn't Claim an Ethnicity
Age (N=118)	Open-ended
Class Standing (N=123)	0 = Freshman 1 = Sophomore 2 = Junior 3 = Senior 4 = Fifth Year or Above Undergraduate
Taken A Victimology Course (N=124)	0 = No 1 = Yes
Consider Self to be Religious (N=124)	0 = No 1 = Yes
Importance of Religion (N=124)	0 = Not At All Important 1 = Low Importance 2 = Slightly Important 3 = Neutral 4 = Moderately Important 5 = Very Important 6 = Extremely Important
Hours Per Day Watching TV News (N=119)	0 = 0 Hours 1 = 1-2 Hours 2 = 3-4 Hours
Hours Per Day Listening to the News (N=118)	0 = 0 Hours 1 = 1-2 Hours 2 = 3-4 Hours 3 = 5-6 Hours
Hours Per Day Reading the News (N=114)	0 = 0 Hours 1 = 1-2 Hours 2 = 3-4 Hours 3 = 5-6 Hours 4 = 7-8 Hours

Primary News Source (N=123)	0 = Electronic Newspaper 1 = Local Broadcast News Station 2 = National Broadcast News Station 3 = Social Media 4 = Other
Personally Knows A Rape Victim (N=124)	0 = No 1 = Yes
Has Been A Rape Victim (N=123)	0 = No 1 = Yes

**Table D-1(b). Demographic and Control Variables**

Variable and Attributes	Valid N	Mean	SD	Valid Percent
Sex (N=124)				
Male	55			44.4
Female	69			55.6
Race/Ethnicity (N=124)				
Caucasian/White	104			83.9
Hispanic	11			8.9
Asian	4			3.2
Pacific Islander	2			1.6
African American & Arab	1			0.8
African American & White	1			0.8
Doesn't Claim an Ethnicity	1			0.8
Age (N=118)*		21.83	4.929	
Class Standing (N=123)*				
Freshman	39			31.7
Sophomore	7			5.7
Junior	30			24.4
Senior	40			32.5
Fifth Year or Above Undergraduate	7			5.7
Taken A Victimology Course (N=124)				
No	109			87.9
Yes	15			12.1
Consider Self to be Religious (N=124)				
No	68			54.8
Yes	56			45.2
Importance of Religion (N=124)				
Not At All Important	23			18.5
Low Importance	22			17.7
Slightly Important	12			9.7
Neutral	17			13.7
Moderately Important	18			14.5
Very Important	21			16.9
Extremely Important	11			8.9
Hours Per Day Watching TV News (N=119)*				
0 Hours	61			51.3
1-2 Hours	45			37.8
3-4 Hours	13			10.9
Hours Per Day Listening to the News (N=118)*				
0 Hours	52			44.1
1-2 Hours	55			46.6
3-4 Hours	10			8.5
5-6 Hours	1			0.8
*Missing data				

**Table D-1(b). Demographic and Control Variables (Cont.)**

Hours Per Day Reading the News (N=114)*		
0 Hours	21	18.4
1-2 Hours	65	57.0
3-4 Hours	24	21.1
5-6 Hours	2	1.8
7-8 Hours	2	1.8
Primary News Source (N=123)*		
Electronic Newspaper	34	27.6
Local Broadcast News Station	14	11.4
National Broadcast News Station	9	7.3
Social Media	59	48.0
Other	7	5.7
Personally Knows A Rape Victim (N=124)		
No	29	23.4
Yes	95	76.6
Has Been A Rape Victim (N=123)*		
No	93	75.6
Yes	30	24.4

\*Missing data

**Table D-1(c). Course of Study Among Participants**

Variable	# of Students	Valid Percent
College of Major (N=121)*		
Arts and Sciences	28	23.1
Business and Economics	5	4.1
Education	3	2.8
Engineering	1	0.8
Health Sciences	4	3.3
Public Service	78	64.5
Undeclared	2	1.7
Major Course of Study (N=121)*		
Criminal Justice	76	62.8
Psychology	9	7.4
Nursing	3	2.5
Sociology	3	2.5
Theater Arts	3	2.5
Anthropology	2	1.7
Chemistry	2	1.7
Communications	2	1.7
Elementary Education	2	1.7
Media Arts/Journalism	2	1.7
Political Science	2	1.7
Undeclared	2	1.7
Business	1	0.8
Accounting	1	0.8
Biology	1	0.8
Business Economics	1	0.8
Chemistry Emphasis in Forensics	1	0.8
Entrepreneurial Business	1	0.8
Finance	1	0.8
German Language	1	0.8
Mechanical Engineering	1	0.8
Social Sciences	1	0.8
Social Work	1	0.8
Special Education/Early Childhood Intervention	1	0.8
Zoology	1	0.8

\*Missing data



College of Minor (N=37)*		
Arts and Sciences	28	75.7
Business and Economics	1	2.7
Engineering	3	8.1
Public Service	5	13.5
Minor Course of Study (N=37)*		
Psychology	8	21.6
History	4	10.8
Sociology	3	8.1
Spanish	3	8.1
American Sign Language	2	5.4
Anthropology	2	5.4
Chemistry	2	5.4
Criminal Justice	2	5.4
Cybersecurity	2	5.4
Family Studies	2	5.4
Gender Studies	2	5.4
Political Science	2	5.4
Business Bridge to Career	1	2.7
Computer Science	1	2.7
Military Science	1	2.7

\*Missing data

**Table D-2. Scale Variable Descriptive Statistics and Reliability**

Scale Variable Descriptive Statistics and Reliability						
	Mean	Median	SD	Low	High	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Human Trafficking Myths Scale Score	35.98	35.50	9.462	16	61	.812
Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale Score	55.23	56.00	9.037	33	75	.795
Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale Score	33.70	33.00	10.204	17	55	.882
Sex Workers as Victims Scale	27.68	28.00	6.423	12	42	.805

**Table D-3. Scale Correlation Matrix**

Scale Correlation Matrix				
	Human Trafficking Myths Scale	Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale	Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale	Sex Workers as Victims Scale
Human Trafficking Myths Scale	1	-.151	.402**	-.165
Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale		1	-.247**	.945**
Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale		.	1	-.249**
Sex Workers as Victims Scale				1
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)				

**Table D-4. Independent Samples T-Tests**

Scale	Male		Female		T
	M	SD	M	SD	
Human Trafficking Myths Scale Score	37.89	9.568	34.46	9.163	2.029***
Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale Score	54.58	9.605	55.74	8.595	-.707
Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale Score	36.85	10.391	31.19	9.388	3.184**

\*p < .001; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .05

**Table D-5. Bivariate OLS Regression**

Variable	b	SE	$\beta$	t	p	Lower CI	Upper CI
Constant	32.970	1.943		16.970	.000	29.124	36.816
Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale Score	-.157	.055	-.249	-2.845	.005*	-.266	-.048
Dependent Variable: Sex Workers as Victims Scale							
$R^2 = .062$							
* $p < .01$							

**Table D-6(a). Multiple OLS Regression Model of Demographic and Experiential Variables (DV = Human Trafficking Myths Scale scores)**

Variable	b	SE	$\beta$	t	P
Constant	30.122	5.723		5.263	.000
Sex	-1.954	2.010	-.101	-.972	.333
Race	5.422	2.340	.209	2.317	.023***
Age	-.076	.194	-.039	-.391	.697
Class Standing	-3.625	2.556	-.181	-1.418	.159
Major	-1.788	2.359	-.090	-.758	.450
Victimology	1.494	2.749	.051	.544	.588
Religiosity	-.095	1.722	-.005	-.055	.956
Primary News Source	2.133	3.411	.056	.625	.533
Knows A Rape Victim	-2.631	2.087	-.117	-1.261	.210
Personal Rape Victim	-.119	2.301	-.005	-.052	.959
Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale score	.367	.090	.391	4.095	.000*

Note:  $R^2 = .231$ ; Model  $p = .003$ ;  $F = 2.807$

\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .05$

**Table D-6(b). Multiple OLS Regression Model of Demographic and Experiential Variables (DV = Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale scores)**

Variable	b	SE	$\beta$	t	P
Constant	57.096	5.095		11.206	.000
Sex	.045	1.789	.003	.025	.980
Race	-2.993	2.084	-.125	-1.436	.154
Age	.207	.173	.115	1.196	.234
Class Standing	1.724	2.276	.093	.758	.450
Major	3.788	2.101	.206	1.803	.074
Victimology	-9.630	2.447	-.354	-3.935	.000*
Religiosity	-1.293	1.533	-.072	-.844	.401
Primary News Source	-.234	3.037	-.007	-.077	.939
Knows A Rape Victim	3.285	1.858	.159	1.768	.080
Personal Rape Victim	-2.049	2.049	-.099	-1.000	.320
Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale score	-.258	.080	-.299	-3.241	.002*

Note:  $R^2 = .284$ ; Model  $p = .000$ ;  $F = 3.705$

\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .05$

**Table D-6(c). Multiple OLS Regression Model of Demographic and Experiential Variables (DV = Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale scores)**

Variable	b	SE	$\beta$	t	P
Constant	32.707	8.805		3.714	.000
Sex	-1.196	1.989	-.058	-.601	.549
Race	-3.349	2.421	-.121	-1.384	.170
Age	.114	.193	.055	.592	.555
Class Standing	2.367	2.547	.111	.929	.355
Major	-2.142	2.422	-.101	-.885	.378
Victimology	-7.099	2.916	-.226	-2.434	.017***
Religiosity	1.081	1.709	.052	.633	.528
Primary News Source	-1.837	3.401	-.046	-.540	.590
Knows A Rape Victim	1.965	2.112	.082	.930	.355
Personal Rape Victim	-4.767	2.229	-.199	-2.139	.035***
Human Trafficking Myths Scale score	.338	.091	.317	3.696	.000*
Attitudes toward Prostitutes and Prostitution Scale score	-.030	.311	-.026	-.096	.924
Sex Workers as Victims Scale score	-.414	.433	-.259	-.955	.342

Note:  $R^2 = .357$ ; Model  $p = .000$ ;  $F = 4.311$

\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .05$



**Table D-6(d). Multiple OLS Regression Model of Demographic and Experiential Variables (DV = Sex Workers as Victims Scale scores)**

Variable	b	SE	$\beta$	t	P
Constant	30.744	3.639		8.449	.000
Sex	-.246	1.278	-.019	-.192	.848
Race	-.886	1.488	-.051	-.596	.553
Age	.092	.123	.071	.744	.458
Class Standing	1.750	1.625	.131	1.077	.284
Major	1.278	1.500	.096	.852	.396
Victimology	-8.185	1.748	-.417	-4.683	.000*
Religiosity	-1.314	1.095	-.102	-1.200	.233
Primary News Source	1.015	2.169	.040	.468	.641
Knows A Rape Victim	2.931	1.327	.196	2.209	.029***
Personal Rape Victim	-1.595	1.463	-.107	-1.090	.278
Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale score	-.202	.057	-.323	-3.540	.001*

Note:  $R^2 = .299$ ; Model  $p = .000$ ;  $F = 3.995$

\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .05$