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## Social Work Student Perceptions of Labor Trafficking

Margaret Mulhern  
*University of Central Florida*

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**SOCIAL WORK STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF LABOR TRAFFICKING**

by

**MARGARET MULHERN**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in Social Work  
in the College of Health And Public Affairs  
and in The Burnett Honors College  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

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Thesis Chair: Dr. Ana M. Leon

## **Abstract**

Human Trafficking in Florida is a growing issue that affects individuals and communities on a micro, mezzo, and macro level. Although legislative efforts and changes in agency policies have raised awareness about this problem, limited awareness and research examines awareness of labor trafficking as one form of human trafficking. This exploratory-descriptive study used a convenience sampling technique to explore the perceptions of 45 Bachelors (BSW) and Masters (MSW) level social work students on the prevalence and nature of labor trafficking. The findings from the research show students have a general idea of labor trafficking and believe in equal access to human rights for victims. However, majority of students were unaware of current legislation to aid victims in Florida, and the prevalence of men as victims. Implications from this study show a need for further education within social work policies that aid labor trafficking victims, and a need for additional research to identify specific ways students can learn about human trafficking.

*Keywords: labor trafficking, exploitation, Trafficking Victims Protection Act, Human Trafficking*

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to the young girl in Manila, Philippines who lost her innocence far too early to the commercial sex trade. She changed my life that night, and I wish I could have been more knowledgeable and proactive enough to make a positive difference in her life before it was too late. Though she will never get a chance to read this, this thesis and research is my way of attempting to spread the word to put an end to slavery, and I dedicate it to every victim who survives and perseveres in this harsh world, and every victim who unfortunately is not discovered in time.

## Acknowledgements

I first want to thank my thesis chair Dr. Leon for her constant support and guidance throughout this whole process. It has been a long year of struggles and triumphs, and were it not for her assistance, I would have quit semesters ago. She has taught me so much about the research process and her joy of research helped me to see the beauty, individuality and importance of research in social work. I also need to acknowledge my Thesis committee members, Dr. Molina, and Dr. Santana who are making a difference everyday in the work they do in and out of the University of Central Florida. It is truly inspiring. Their schedules are busy, and I am grateful they took the time out to read and critique my thesis providing feedback necessary to enhance my thesis.

I also want to thank my fiancé, Séamus Campion for putting up with my slight insanity and constant chatter about labor trafficking over the last year. He has been there since the beginning of when I first learned about human trafficking and offered all the support I needed to continue through this thesis.

My mother was also a constant support and ear to process my thoughts on the thesis and research, and I could not have overcome my doubts without venting to her. Finally, the leaders in the community such as organizations like Florida Coalition against Human Trafficking, and the School of Social Work at the University of Central Florida need to be recognized as great programs allowing change to flourish, education to take place, and advocacy to take on forms I never knew possible. I am so grateful for all that I have learned from both outlets and am excited to see how this issue changes over the coming years with support and involvement from social workers.

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## **Introduction**

Human trafficking, commonly identified as forced labor or modern day slavery, is the act of exploiting humans for profit through sexual or labor means (Rosales, 2007). Recent figures from the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 2012 estimated there are 21 million people who are victims of forced labor globally, with 14.2 million of those for labor exploitation and 4.5 million for sexual exploitation (International Labor Organization, 2012). The United States of America has not issued an estimate based off government research since 2007, when the Trafficking in Persons Report (T.I.P.) estimated that there were 800,000 victims of trafficking worldwide, while other statistics of 2007 believed it to be between 4 million and 27 million (U.S. Department of State, 2007). Recently, the 2013 T.I.P. report bases its estimate of 40,000 victims identified in the past year, off reports from countries around the world, but state that “social scientists estimate 27 million” are victims of trafficking (U.S. Department of State, 2013, p.7, para. 3) Statistics on the matter are difficult to obtain because trafficking is a serious level of organized crime making it difficult to pinpoint profits, victims, routes, and areas of prevalence, especially in the labor realm (Zalewski, 2006). Additionally, the United States has not conducted thorough research to identify how many victims are trafficked within its borders for labor reasons, and much of the focus is on children rather than adults (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). Human trafficking can be found in a myriad of different settings including sexual trafficking within massage parlors, nail salons, and truck stops, and through forced labor in areas such as construction, agriculture, and any other business where economic growth is enforced by cheap labor (Richards, 2004). The researcher will discuss the latter,

narrowing the human trafficking focus to labor trafficking within the United States; specifically the state of Florida, to study perceptions social work students have about this issue.

Florida is a leading state in terms of agriculture profits each year, with most recent figures published in 2012 on the 2010-2011 production year, exceeding 7.8 billion dollars (Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, 2012). The state was ranked in first place with highest annual profit for crops such as citrus, watermelon, cucumbers, and sugarcane, accounting for 65% of total United States citrus production, and ranks the seventh state in the United States of America for agricultural exports (Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, 2012). According to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (2012), Florida has developed 3,500 farms in the past decade to total 9.2 million acres of land devoted to farming. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, also note that Florida comes second behind California for overall agriculture production within the United States. Coincidentally, a longitudinal study from 2003-2008 by the organization Free The Slaves, found that California, Florida, and New York were top three states where all aspects of human trafficking thrived (Batstone, 2007). Considering these results, profits and expansive farmland within the State of Florida, in conjunction with the ILO figures, there is a great cause of concern surrounding labor trafficked victims in the agriculture sector. However, due to policy, economic reasons, and sheer lack of resources to regulate across the nation, victims may go unnoticed and unidentified.

Although human trafficking in the United States of America began to receive political recognition in 2000 with the enactment of the Trafficking in Victims Protection Act (TVPA) and the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially

Women and Children, it has been difficult in identifying and finding resources for victims because coalitions, government outlets and non-profit agencies perceive trafficking victims differently due to vague definitions provided in policies (Zhang, 2012). For the purpose of this study, and its focus within the United States of America, the researcher will define labor trafficking as identified in the TVPA to encompass the “recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjugation to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery” (Wilson & Dalton, 2008).

Part of the problem in labor trafficking cases is differentiating between smuggling and trafficking. Smuggling is the voluntary act of being taken across international borders to seek work and a better standard of living, where as trafficking must involve being forced, or coerced (Owen, 2011 p. 8). Gozdziaik & Collett (2005) further state that trafficking can exist within domestic borders, and different titles for smuggling and trafficking provide different services for the individuals. Knowing these definitions and being aware of what constitutes each act, can save many labor trafficked victims from being falsely identified as smuggled and prevent deportation (Kawahito, 2009). Similarly, it is important to identify that not all migrant workers who may experience exploitation similar to that of a labor trafficked victim, whether it be poor pay, long hours, or physical abuse, are not classified as a victim of labor trafficking (Brennan, 2008). It is a fine line, which is further identified through investigation and the legal realm that differentiates one from the other, but one that can become extremely convoluted in the identification process. However, there are workers who qualify as a labor trafficked victim (due to force, fraud, coercion, inability to leave trafficker, fear of harm to themselves and family, etc.) that may not

be able to see the difference between their abuse and their peers working next to them because the level of exploitation of migrant workers is allowed to flourish (Brennan, 2008). Whether it be smuggling v. trafficking, or exploitation v. trafficking, fully understanding identification signs and having knowledge between each title allows social service providers and other agencies to properly find and aid victims.

Labor trafficking has been identified as a human rights issue amongst researchers due to the abuses and deprivation of basic necessities victims endure while under the trafficker's control. The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights Article 4 (United Nations, 1948) "No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms", however, labor trafficking is very much succeeding in the United States of America, and stripping workers of their rights. Victims have no labor protections while working, and if undocumented, lack the rights to anything within the United States of America. Even upon identification, victims suffer extreme psychological problems, shame, and continuous socioeconomic problems that take years to recover from (Brennan, 2010). Labor trafficked victims fail to have access to human rights because there is a constant struggle to protect the borders, stop organized crime, and get rid of illegal immigrants (Richards, 2004). It is the duty of social workers to uphold the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, and fight for the safety and protection of these victims, and the victim's families in the United States of America and abroad.

There has been a limited amount of research into labor trafficking due to policy focusing primarily on sexual trafficking and sexually exploited victims. Research on the topic consists mainly of literature that analyzes legislation and economic factors as reasons that labor trafficked victims may not be sought out by law enforcement. There are a handful of researchers who

explore through quantitative and qualitative means perceptions held by police officials and social service providers in an attempt to understand their view of trafficking in their communities. However, there are very little studies that address the general public's perception of labor trafficking, and only a few studies that have used University students to test human trafficking knowledge.

The researcher explores the history and policies in place to serve this population, and seeks to identify social work student perceptions about human trafficking in the United States of America. Since Florida has such a high agriculture economic influence nationally and internationally, the researcher believes it is vital to study perceptions held by social work students on labor trafficking so they are well prepared in the career field to deal with labor trafficking. One cannot examine labor trafficking without also understanding other types of human trafficking that include human trafficking in general and specifically sexual trafficking. The researcher provides an overview of human trafficking as a way of understanding labor trafficking, and the findings of this study are used to discuss implications for practice and social work education.

## **Literature Review**

The researcher utilized the University of Central Florida online database to seek out peer-reviewed articles covering human trafficking. Articles were obtained through databases such as Academic Search Premier, Social Sciences Citation Index, PsycINFO, FRANCIS, Proquest Dissertation and Theses, and Omnifile full text. The researcher used a mix of articles, books, and government sites totaling fifty-one sources. The sources were comprised of articles and books taken from the University of Central Florida Library database, that discussed comprehensive reviews of the literature, which challenged the policies and legislation and identified the major gaps in current research on human trafficking. Sources also consisted of empirical studies focusing on social service providers, university students, and law enforcement. Government sites were also utilized for statistics and legislation.

### **Labor Trafficking: Past and Present**

The International Labor Organization (2012) derived their estimated statistics of 21 million trafficked victims worldwide, by relying on four experts in the field to look at reported cases around the world, as well as using the capture-recapture technique to examine reported cases at one point in time, and then resample the same population to identify any fluctuations, to get an estimate of total trafficked individuals (International Labor Organization, 2012). By looking at the estimated ILO statistics, it is evident that labor trafficking (whether it be through domestic servitude, agriculture, or construction) is more prevalent than sexual exploitation according to government data. The Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP) published by the United States Department of State to investigate and rate countries around the world on their level of action against human trafficking to and from their country, state that in the year 2011, there were



more prosecutions for sexual exploitation in the United States of America than that of labor trafficking. However, non-profit organizations relayed they encountered more labor trafficking cases in their organizations than sexual exploitation cases (U.S. Department of State, 2012 p. 360). The TIP report also states that for 2011, the majority of victims were from Mexico, Philippines, Thailand, Guatemala, Honduras, and India (U.S. Department of State, 2012). Zalewski (2005) discusses that the majority of those trafficked are migrants, and Brennan (2008) argues that without looking beyond sexual trafficking and exploitation, migrant workers suffering exploitation will not be found. In order to understand why labor trafficking is neglected today when it is evidenced to be such a problem in the United States of America, history and policy formation must be addressed.

Beginning in the early 1800's, transporting slaves to perform work and duties to benefit the masses for no pay or access to rights and opportunities was a normal occurrence. With the passing of the Anti Peonage Act of 1867, which enforced the end of slavery or involuntary servitude from a legal standpoint (Shelley, 2010, p. 236), landowners began to use recruiters to lure immigrants to work in mines and on cotton fields well into the 1900's (Shelley, 2010). Policy centered on human trafficking began with White slavery in the early 1900's when women were forced into prostitution (Zalewski, 2005). Beginning in 1904 with the International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Trade, and continuing on to 1933 with the International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women to include a broader range of punishment of international trafficking, women's rights movements fueled policy centered on human trafficking (Zalewski, 2005). With the fourth U.N. Women's Conference in Mexico in 1975, discussions continued surrounding "prevention of the exploitation of women and girls"

(p.79). Subsection 7, number 3 of the U.N. Women Conference in Mexico stated a call of emergency to have governments create avenues in which to investigate areas of prostitution where violence is occurring, making a note of women who are forced into prostitution, and reiterating the common occurrence of exploitation of women and girls (United Nations, 1975). By 1995 at the World Conference on Women in Beijing, human trafficking primarily of women and children was a hot topic of discussion. By 2000, as stated previously, the United Nations passed the Palermo Protocol which got the ball rolling on anti-trafficking programs internationally and within the United States.

The TVPA first passed in 2000, was reauthorized in 2003, 2005, and 2008. The law provides resources for law enforcement to effectively investigate and prosecute cases of human trafficking, and also allows victims to have access to shelter, rehabilitation services, and visas, if they cooperate with law enforcement to prosecute traffickers (Gozdziak & Collett, 2005). The TVPA was not reauthorized after 2008 until February 2013, making the laws stagnate for 6 years. In February 2013, the TVPA was not reauthorized on its own, but as an amendment of the Violence Against Women Act (Not For Sale Campaign, 2013). Alvarez & Alessi (2012), in their literature review on current discourse of human trafficking and its influence for social workers, further explain that the Violence Against Women Acts role during President Bush's reign was to have human trafficking equal sexual exploitation, and because of this, policy has closely dictated those who have strongly lobbied for women's rights. History of human trafficking policy shows that women's rights and the effort to combat prostitution and exploitation of women and children dictates the focus of human trafficking globally from the early 1900's to the present day. Despite claims and statistics of higher prevalence of labor trafficking, until laws and policies focus

around labor trafficking as well, sexual trafficking will remain the target, and labor trafficking victims will continue to go unidentified.

### **Challenges in Defining Human Trafficking**

As stated earlier, the difficulty in defining labor trafficking is a major challenge, which hinders the ability to effectively identify and aid victims. Varying interpretations and chaotically applied definitions affect the outcome of data collection and statistics used by researchers and governments who study labor trafficking (Balderas, 2006). Gozdzia and Collett (2005) through their thorough literature analysis of North American human trafficking policy and procedures, note that with global legal definitions differing from country to country, it is hard to keep track and validate data collected, and also note the term “trafficking in persons” is interpreted differently by different organizations. Most often, it is used to encompass women in sex trafficking, neglecting men in forced labor all together (Gozdzia & Collett, 2005). The United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking states that trafficked men are considered the “underserved victims”, and limiting policy to women and girls is detrimental to helping labor trafficking victims (Huijsmans & Baker, 2012).

Vague definitions and the lack of uniformed inter agency policies bring organizational problems in properly identifying what qualifies as trafficking; leaving it up to individual perceptions and interpretations (Huijsmans & Baker, 2012). This lack of uniformed guidelines to identify individuals may result in the under identifying of many victims (Shirk & Webber, 2004). Given these identification inconsistencies, it is that much more important for social workers serving this population to be aware of what is and what is not human trafficking.

## **Human Trafficking as a Policy Concern**

It is impossible to address and solve problems with labor trafficking without looking at the United States of America and international policies, and how they impact and influence immigration and migrant labor trafficking. Policies created in government dictate how local organizations and nonprofit agencies handle and find services for their victims, and any gaps that may occur in the implementation of policies greatly effects these organizations (Balderas, 2006). Sexual trafficking has taken precedence over labor trafficking in the legal realm, resulting in the development of new, inexperienced organizations to fight sexual trafficking. These new organizations, task forces, and coalitions are in the focus, having more lobbying power in Washington D.C., and push aside the more developed anti labor trafficking organizations (Brennan, 2008). Because there is more focus from a legal standpoint on sexual trafficking than that of labor trafficking, and an ultimate stretch of resources to aid all victims, to fully comprehend the issue labor trafficking victims face, policies must be fully understood by social service providers.

### **The Role of the United Nations in Human Trafficking**

The United Nations Protocol to Prevent Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, also known as the Palermo Protocol, was enacted in 2000 and was the tipping point for countries to begin organizing their own anti-trafficking policies. The Palermo Protocol's attempt was to distinguish between trafficking and smuggling, creating a new legal route for victims. The Palermo Protocol strictly states:

Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of

abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs (United Nations Criminal Justice Information Network, 2000, p. 2, Article 3(a))

The Palermo Protocol breaks human trafficking down further into three sections: Activities (recruitment, transportation, transfer), Means (force, deception, abduction, coercion, fraud, threats), and Purpose (exploitation, forced labor, or removal of organs) (United Nations Criminal Justice Information Network, 2000). Shirk & Webber (2004) note that the Palermo Protocol took on an approach to combat trafficking through criminalizing it, create law enforcement cooperation locally and across borders, and protect rights of victims. The creation of the Palermo Protocol allowed for countries such as the United States to use this policy as a foundation to create their own means of combatting human trafficking.

### **Human Trafficking Legislation**

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA) ratified in 2003, 2005, 2008, and 2013 was created to put an end to human trafficking by allocating resources and access to legal status for foreign victims in return for cooperation with law enforcement to track down and prosecute the trafficker. The TVPA clearly differentiates sexual trafficking and labor trafficking by stating that labor trafficking is “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor services, through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the

purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery” The law has always been closely tied with the Violence Against Women act since first being past in 2000, which gives reason for Hager (2010) to argue that the TVPA does not meet the need of labor rights that can prevent labor trafficking. The TVPA protects rights of those who are foreign born victims within U.S. borders, which creates a resource and assistance problem for victims of trafficking who are U.S. nationals (Brennan, 2008). Researchers such as Conahan and Kyere (2010) state that the TVPA inhibits domestic victims from receiving services, creating an illusion that trafficking is not prevalent in the United States. This problem occurs for both sexual trafficking and labor trafficking victims who are domestically trafficked and fail to meet the rules of the TVPA. For example, in the case U.S. v. Lee in 2001, Lee trafficked homeless American men in Fort Pierce, FL., to harvest citrus on farms growers contracted to Lee. By using substances and force, he enslaved U.S. citizens, and under the stipulations of the TVPA those victims would not technically be covered to receive resources (Coalition of Immokalee Workers, n.d.).

The TVPA can issue 5,000 T-Visas each fiscal year, to allow continued presence for victims and to allow their family members to come from the country of origin. For the year 2011, United States Trafficking in Persons Report (2012), reported the country issued T-Visas to 557 victims and 722 family members (U.S. Department of State, 2012 p. 362, para. 8). Although not stated how many were for labor trafficked victims or sexual trafficked victims, agencies criticize the program due to low issuance of visas to victims given the high numbers of victims estimated each year (U.S. Department of State, 2012).

Although the TVPA grants T-Visas to victims of trafficking allowing them to stay in the country legally, and allows access to immediate services, the prospects for exploited migrants post recovery is slim because of language barriers, lack of skills needed to advance in the workforce, low economic status and community support, and often find themselves accepting low wage, hard work in the future (Brennan, 2010).

Though there is great criticism of the TVPA, there are human rights activists and researchers who believe the act is groundbreaking in terms of legal prosecution and services. The TVPA has enhanced law enforcement response, put more traffickers in jail for longer sentences, and provided assistance to victims that otherwise was unavailable (Slaves, 2005).

#### **Florida legislation- H.B. 7049 and H.B. 1325**

Florida has been extremely proactive in the fight against human trafficking. In the past year, there have been two landmark bills that have been passed to help victims of human trafficking. The first, passed in 2012, known as House Bill (H.B.) 7049 Human Trafficking, sought to define human trafficking, both sexual and labor, and to criminalize the acts so legally there is a base line for prosecution of the trafficker and resources for the victims, similar to that of the TVPA. Under section 787.06 (1)(a) it stipulates: “Thousands of victims are trafficked annually across international borders worldwide. Many of these victims are trafficking into this state.” It goes on to say “This Legislature finds that victims of human trafficking are subjected to force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of sexual exploitation or forced labor” (Florida Senate, 2012) Of utmost importance pertaining to this study, H.B. 7049 section 787.06 (1)(b) clearly states:

The Legislature finds that while many victims of human trafficking are forced to work in

prostitution or the sexual entertainment industry, trafficking also occurs in forms of labor exploitation, such as domestic servitude, restaurant work, janitorial work, sweatshop factory work, and migrant agricultural work (Florida Senate, 2012).

This sheds light on the dynamics of all forms of human trafficking to include many scenarios where trafficking is found, eliminating any general perceptions there may be within communities that it is only sexual trafficking that occurs.

The second important bill passed in 2013, known as CS/CS/H.B. 1325 Victims of Human Trafficking, seeks to expunge any criminal record obtained by the individual during time of being a victim of human trafficking (Florida Senate, 2013). This bill gives victims a fresh start at jobs, schools, banking systems, and other aspects of life they may need in order to recover, that they may not have had access to with a criminal record. This also seeks to decriminalize victims and start focusing on the perpetrators. Since law enforcement are first to contact victims, and have the power to decide who is a victim and who is not (Hager, 2010), should they misidentify or falsely accuse a victim and charge them with a crime, this bill will be a check and balances to ensure the victims record will be erased and they will have access to resources they will need to start over.

### **Mexico and Human Trafficking**

The United States of America receive many migrants from Mexico, and although labor trafficked victims are not included within statistics of migrants in the United States of America (Gozdziaik & Collett, 2005), due to close proximity to America and ILO reports of Latin America having a trafficking in persons ratio of 3:1 (ILO, 2012), it is important to have a general



understanding of Mexican policy and how it can create difficulties within the parameters of the United States of America when trying to prosecute a case. Shirk and Webber (2004) identify that Mexico policy focuses primarily on sexual exploitation of minors, and laws are typically unenforced due to corrupt law enforcement. Although the Mexican government does not have a legal definition or laws for labor trafficking, they have attended conferences and trainings per the North American Agreement of Labor Cooperation between U.S.A, Canada and Mexico (Gozdziak & Collett, 2005). However, evidence of implementation or statistics on victims within Mexico is scarce (Gozdziak & Collett, 2005).

In a qualitative exploratory study done by Rosales (2007) eight social service providers (Directors, case managers, and social workers) were interviewed, seven from the United States of America, and one from Mexico. Her findings showed that the perceived relationship between Mexico and the United States when dealing with victim's families is mixed. Half stated great cooperation and strong relationship with organizations there, while the other half stated immense difficulty and severed gaps between navigating between the two countries. The researcher herself, also had great difficulty in cooperation with Mexican organizations when seeking interviews on the issue. This is evidenced to show that lack of agreement between the two countries within the entire social service sector can have an impact on aiding the victim within United States borders, and also creates problems in creating prevention strategies and collecting data.

The United Nations International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, or simply put, the Migrant Workers Convention, was ratified and enforced beginning in 2003. The purpose of the convention was to

extend basic human rights and protections to the individuals and families of migrants who work in other countries (United Nations, 2003). This includes all migrants regardless of their legal status, and provides migrant workers with the ability to assemble, and the right to unionize. Zalewski (2005), in her conceptual article studying the relationship between migrant protection policies developed internationally and the lack of use in the United States, believes the Migrant Workers Convention would prevent the prevalence of labor trafficking because standards and expectations would be engrained in the work environment, preventing traffickers from profiting due to the migrant workers knowledge of their rights. There is not one western industrialized country that has signed or ratified the convention, and Zalewski (2005) argues it is because the undocumented workers would have the same rights as nation born citizens, creating an interference with countries immigration and economic policy. The majority of countries who have signed it are countries where many of the migrants have originated, for example Mexico, who have a reason to want to protect their citizens while they live abroad. Unfortunately, a stipulation within the Convention is that the migrant workers must adhere to the receiving countries rules and laws, in which case, although ratified by Mexico, workers sent to the United States of America, do not have the protections under the convention because it is not upheld within the United States of America (Zalewski, 2005).

Labor trafficking cases are not cut and dry, but are often enhanced due to push factors; the reasons why an individual gets to the point of seeking to immigrate, or vulnerability consumes an individual to be persuaded to leave their country, or engage in risky behavior. Push factors in many human trafficking cases include unemployment, poverty, and war torn home countries (Hager, 2010).

Perhaps, in dealing with Mexico workers specifically, a major push factor was when the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) allowed open trading between Canada, United States and Mexico. The United States soon started exporting large amounts of corn, (a major contributor to the Mexican diet), to Mexico offered at cheaper prices than Mexico was internally selling it for. This ruined agricultural business in Mexico resulting in many of the farm owners and employees in the agricultural sector to be unemployed and seeking similar work in the United States of America (Owen, 2011). Many of the remaining farms in Mexico turned corporate, so soon smaller farms were not an adequate way to make a living, which opened up vulnerability for traffickers, and Farm Labor Contractors from corporate and private farms in the United States of America to create a good business of their own (Owen, 2011).

It is not only push factors that fuel trafficking, but also the consideration of economic factors that benefit the United States. There is good incentive to maintain cheap prices within the United States of America, especially during hard economic times. By having forced labor in place in agriculture and other manufacturing, the employer lives a great life off the profits, enables the employer to have competitive prices internationally, and allows the consumer to enjoy low costs of goods to spend money elsewhere in life (Shelley, 2009).

### **Debate between Labor Trafficking v. Sexual Trafficking victims**

There is great debate within research on human trafficking related to the problem of identifying, which victims there are more of; sexual trafficked or labor trafficked. As noted prior, there is statistical evidence by the United States government and the International Labor Organization, that labor trafficking occurs more frequently, despite what many would believe. With so much focus on sexual trafficking in media portrayals and news outlets researchers in the

field believe it is the most prevalent trafficking method (Zhang, 2012). By overlooking other exploitation means to focus solely on sexual trafficking and exploitation of minors impairs the ability to identify men (Alvarez & Alessi, 2012).

Within the debate on labor trafficking victims v. sexual trafficking victims, there has been a paradigm shift due to policy and public awareness attached with sexual trafficking that altered the perception of sexual exploitation of girls who were once seen as prostitutes to now understand they may be in a forced, coerced, and dangerous situation against their will (Brennan, 2008). However, with labor trafficked victims, that paradigm shift has yet to be reached. When comparing who takes precedence in the legal realm, the stigma attached with migrants and migration patterns are negatively attached to labor trafficked victims. Brennan (2010) criticizes that when the United States chooses to fight labor trafficking, it is through deportation of undocumented workers, despite conditions they may be in that allude to being trafficked.

To date, Florida has prosecuted only 10 cases on labor trafficking, 7 of which were in the agricultural sector, and 3 in domestic servitude (victims found in hotels). Florida also prosecuted 31 cases of sex trafficking (Coalition of Immokalee Workers, 2012). This is a clear representation of which cases are sought after and the divide in time dedicated to one type of victim over another

### **H-2A visas for migrant workers**

Not all migrant workers and labor trafficked victims are undocumented. There are many migrant workers who come into the country on an H-2A Seasonal Agriculture Workers Visa that face trafficked situations upon arrival or after visa is expired. The philosophy behind the H-2A visa is to allow migrant workers to come to the United States of America legally depending on

what conditions and positions the employer needs to fulfill. The H-2A visa followed what was known as the Bracero Program at the end of World War II, which sought to fill labor positions while American's were at war (Hager, 2010). The Bracero program failed due to severe abuse towards the workers, and the H-2A visa was created with new rules and regulations. In order for an H-2A visa to be granted, the employer looking for workers must first seek national born workers to fill the position, before seeking workers from other countries. When there is no response, they file for a request for an H-2A visa, which states the hourly wage, free housing, and a reimbursement of travel funds upon the arrival of the worker from another country (Hager, 2010). As Hager (2010) notes travel costs are very rarely reimbursed, and of 30,000 workers brought in annually, they have no protection of human rights, no ability to assemble or retaliate, and are unaware of their employment contract, which opens up abuse and violations which often times goes unpunished by any legal authority (p.174). Slaves (2005) reinstates that although the legal framework is in place to employ migrant workers legally, resources are unavailable to enforce and investigate any cases which may seem unethical or show signs of a labor trafficked scenario. With regards to Florida's 9.2 million acres of farmland, it is seemingly impossible to regulate and check on each H-2A visa in existence for compliance between worker and employer.

Owen (2011) explains that with the H-2A visa program, it is easy to understand why employers/growers would want to hire illegally or through a middleman such as a farm labor contractor. Since the H-2A visa requires a contract showing duration of job, wages, etc., it is more flexible for an employer to seek other means to give the lowest wage, and a flexible time frame that works for the employer to use the ever-replaceable migrant worker. It is also easier for

the employer to go through the farm labor contractor so responsibility can be out of their hands and they can focus on producing the most goods possible with very little risk attached.

### **Farm labor contractor's and labor trafficking**

Labor trafficking greatly relies on the use and presence of farm labor contractors (FLC's) to receive suitable workers without having to register with the government or put time into recruitment. The use of middlemen for slave labor is nothing new for economic growth of the United States of America. Dating back to 1800's with the Alien Contract Labor Act of 1885 (Foran Act), was the beginning of trying to end contracted labor by threatening fees for each laborer discovered to be here for labor purposes illegally (Peck, 2000). As years passed, this law received great scrutiny as individuals coming into the United States of America went through loopholes to bring laborers into the United States. Congress was called upon to stop the trafficking of humans from "Italy, Japan, Syria, Arabia, and other countries" in order to protect the American citizens job market (Peck, 2000, p. 88). As is evidenced, in 2013, the same struggles are occurring, but today the workers are filling jobs that are otherwise considered undesirable by national citizens, and are easy to exploit.

The main concern with FLC's according to researcher Hager (2010) is that the grower or agricultural field owner, almost always escapes prosecution, because they are able to claim they did not know of the exploitation, debt servitude, or abuses received by the victim from the FLC/trafficker. Despite the fact there are many links between migrant's undocumented status and exploitation through subcontracting (Brennan, 2010), it is difficult to pinpoint and track the

farm labor contractors because often times they are unlicensed, which means they are not registered with the Department of Labor (Owen, 2011).

### **Role of Law Enforcement**

Since the passing of the TVPA, there has been a rush and a necessity to train law enforcement personnel, and based on recent research it does not appear to have been used as best it could. A quantitative study done in 2012 surveyed law enforcement in Georgia, and showed the majority of officers did not perceive, or were unaware if trafficking was a problem within the community (Grubb & Bennett, 2012). The same study showed there was also no training given to the majority of respondents, and no formal policies in place to deal with cases of trafficking. As with any agency, matters are handled based on priority, and trafficking cases are no different. Law enforcement agencies are only going to devote time to trafficking if it is notably a problem and hurting the community. However, as research has showed, if officers are unaware of if it is a problem or if it exists within the community, then there is an evident gap within laws and policies being in place within an agency to train and acknowledge trafficking (Balderas, 2006). In a qualitative study done by Wilson & Dalton (2008), comparing Ohio agencies in the capital of Columbus, and Ohio's second largest city, Toledo, on their level of training, differed dramatically. Toledo has interagency task forces, and a staff dedicated to trafficking cases whereas interestingly, Columbus, even though greater population, lacked training and handled cases through various different divisions of the agency. One of the most thorough analyses of law enforcement training on trafficking was done by Farrell, McDevitt, and Fahy (2010) which took a national approach towards comprehending how often and how well law enforcement

responded to trafficking cases, identified that the larger the agency and city, the more likely to have a dedicated trained team for trafficking cases. However, on average only about 20% of the 1,515 respondents reported they received training and knew of the issue (Farrell, et. al., 2010).

With training being a major factor in the identification process, it is evident that across the United States of America, there is a big divide in overall understanding of the issue within law enforcement. However, local law enforcement are not the only players to consider when identifying victims and prosecuting the trafficker. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (F.B.I.), and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) are typically called upon to investigate, especially in labor trafficked cases. It is particularly difficult for labor trafficking victims to seek help from agencies, especially if they lack documentation. There are however agencies within Florida that are proactive and always have open arms for victims whether illegal or legal. For instance, the Farmworker Association of Florida with offices in Apopka, Fellsmere, Homestead, Pierson and Immokalee Florida, work to create community organizing and initiatives with farmworkers and other individuals to assess their needs and advocate for their rights, and are able to potentially identify individuals being victimized (Farmworkers Association of Florida). Unfortunately, as a nation, the United States of America's efforts to enforce immigration policy and resulted in a roundup of migrant workers in the past few years ending in detaining and deporting of those here illegally. Some of those who may be in trafficked scenarios where deportation can equal dangerous home situations due to unpaid debts heighten the suspicion and fear of law enforcement (Brennan, 2010). I.C.E. is typically the organization that carries out such raids. The victims trafficker often threatens them with scenarios such as that, so trusting I.C.E. or local law enforcement enough to speak up about their abuse is already severed for these victims,



making a trial and prosecution of the trafficker that much more difficult (Wilson & Dalton, 2008).

With so many different players involved in the legal aspect of a case it is not stated enough that the government, local law enforcement, I.C.E., and the FBI must all be equally trained and on the same page to see a case through. The prosecution of a trafficker is extremely demanding and expensive, especially if the victims are from foreign countries, where the investigators must travel to understand recruitment and migration patterns to create a case (Batstone, 2007).

## **Micro**

Micro level social work is aimed at individuals to identify problem areas through a person-in-environment approach, to strengthen the client system and gain access to resources (National Association of Social Work, 2013). In this case, a victim of labor trafficking can be classified under Micro level social work to address some presenting problems they endure on a daily basis.

There is no understating the role of the trafficker, and the power they hold over an individual or groups of people, in labor trafficking cases. Traffickers feed off the vulnerability and desperation of victims and use each stage of trafficking as control over the individual such as the secrecy and illegality of the act (Conahan & Kyere, 2010). The trafficker uses mental abuse tactics as well as severe physical abuse while also removing any documentation to invoke fear and mistrust in the victims view of law enforcement (Richards, 2004). Traffickers, who must cross borders into the United States frequently, use that risk factor to demand a higher sum of money from the individual, typically with interest, ensuring their debts will never be paid off.

Traffickers also manipulate victims by threatening to fire an entire crew of people if one person steps out of line or try to leave the presence of the trafficker, ensuring that one man will not want to be responsible for losing jobs for other people, often their friends (Brennan, 2008). Traffickers also utilize power of co-ethnic communities to threaten the abuse of family members back home by stating that they are known individuals and have power within communities everywhere and can control what happens to family members should an individual want to speak out or leave (Brennan, 2008). With all of these manipulative tactics, it is clear the traffickers power not only psychologically and physically damages a victim while under the watch of the trafficker, but once rescued and identified as a victim, the power of the trafficker lingers over them for years once resettled in a community.

### **Health concerns**

Labor trafficked victims are often from areas where poor health care is the norm, and embark on their journey already with illnesses (Bales, 2005). Agriculture is considered one of the most dangerous jobs to be in because of the long hours, minimal pay, and tough conditions of working on a farm, including exposure to pesticides creating skin reactions, and other health risks when inhaled routinely by victims (Hager, 2010). Due to the close quarters trafficked victims must live in, the contraction of colds and disease is high; especially when there is a lack of nutritional food they receive, lowering the victims immunity to disease (Free The Slaves, 2005). These extreme working conditions allow for additional health concerns victims are susceptible too with very little remediation available, such as dehydration, immense exhaustion, and most detrimental, psychological problems (Alvarez & Alessi, 2012). Psychologically, victims have a difficult time recovering due to posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, and

terrible substance abuse addictions that often begin through the trafficking experience (Hager, 2010). Post rescue, these mental health problems persist, often times due to being a member of a community that is not 100% accepted within society, such as migrant workers or those working on their immigration status, creating difficulties in accessing health care and proper wages after being trafficked (Zimmerman, Hossain, & Watts, 2011). Zimmerman et. al (2011), argue from a medical standpoint that the health problems victims experience, and the health system that is there to aid them, is extremely under represented and under researched by human trafficking advocates and organizations. Current research tends not to go further then stating psychological problems such as PTSD, depression etc., creating a gap in the assistance of rehabilitation for victims and shortcomings in the health sector providing adequate help. Through their conceptual model identifying different stages of trafficking, Zimmerman et. al (2011) identify an overlap in trafficking victims health problems with similar existing issues and traumas experienced by refugee groups, violence/physical abuse groups and immigration and migrant groups who have effectively built programs to aid individuals. Zimmerman et. al. (2011) stress the issue of no health sector programs in place to help victims once they are resettling into the community, and the lack of evaluation of mental health approaches that do and do not work with this population. It is important for health officials to look towards refugee and migrant groups to model human trafficking health assistance programs off those that have been proven reliable and efficient with other similar groups.

### **Mezzo**

Social work at the Mezzo level is considered to be work with families to aid in community building, family resources, and looking at a client within their environment to

understand how environment can precipitate problems and access to resources (National Association of Social Work, 2013). Labor trafficked victims' family in the United States of America and abroad are affected financially, and emotionally.

Labor trafficking can have an immense impact for both the sending and receiving communities and the families left behind. When an individual is trafficked and leaves the family, for example a migrant worker who is expecting wages to send back to the family upon arrival at the destination, the family will be hit with an even greater increase in poverty with the loss of that individual, further weakening the community they live in. Once in the United States of America, the same migrant worker, due to harsh working and living conditions imposed by the trafficker can fall extremely ill and need medical treatment. Shelley (2009) who writes extensively on the criminal element of human trafficking, discusses the impact of unpaid health care costs by victims of human trafficking that visit the emergency rooms with injuries. When the victims and their traffickers do not pay, the community must recover those costs. This compromises taxpayer's health benefits in those communities and creates an unstable community on United States soil (Balderas, 2010).

Family members are trapped in a dangerous situation when their family member is rescued from trafficking. As mentioned, traffickers have power and control across a broad spectrum of communities in the United States of America and in the origin country, because they are typically a known figure within those communities. When a victim is rescued, they fear for their family member's lives post capture, especially if the family cannot be reunited right away. Under the TVPA, there is a provision that allows for family members to be granted T-visas in order to emigrate to the United States of America to live with the survivor, however that process

is long and grueling, and in the years it takes to receive the visa, the fear and vulnerability weighs heavily on the family (Bales, 2005). Brennan (2010) dedicates her research to identifying life after trafficking for victims of forced labor. She argues that the T-visa can only go so far with aiding individuals and families, and the co-ethnic communities they potentially resettle in could be troublesome for families if the trafficker, or farm labor contractor has power and hold over a particular group. If this is the case and the victim and victims' family has to relocate to an unfamiliar area, assimilating and feeling comfortable to begin a new life can be extremely difficult.

### **Macro**

Social work at the Macro level challenges policies and advocates for victims on a larger scale to create policies which will aid in treatment and overall well being of a client system, educating communities and corporations alike (National Association of Social Work, 2013, p.39). Labor trafficking has a broad range of effects on a macro scale including crime rate, and there is no contesting that labor trafficking is a societal problem that extends further than the victim and their family and the communities they interact with. Labor trafficking occurs due to socioeconomic problems experienced by the victim but also encompasses a larger issue of organized crime and general public view of the issue that results in a systemic problem that is difficult to pinpoint and prevent.

### **Crime**

There is increasing concern amongst researchers and governmental agencies such as the United Nations Population Fund that studies migration trends, that human trafficking is

increasingly becoming a bigger problem across all nations, next to drug and gun trafficking, in terms of larger profit base and organization of transport (Zalewski, 2005). The ILO released a report on forced labor, publishing calculations of profit from each region of the world per laborer or per sexual exploited individual. For instance, in industrialized countries, for one labor trafficked victim, it was estimated to profit the trafficker \$30,154. The final number estimated in 2005, for profits gained collectively by traffickers, be it for labor or sexual trafficking, was 32 billion dollars each year, with 15.5 billion earned in industrialized countries such as the United States and Europe (International Labor Organization, 2005). It is very debatable whether or not those figures are true though, because there is such a vast difference in how each trafficker operates. The research did not find a current report or statistics on profits obtained within the United States with a narrow focus on labor traffickers, partly because it is so hard to trace where the money is when and if a trafficker is caught. Further, statistics may be higher because of unregulated workplaces, where victims work around the clock, creating higher profit margin for the trafficker/owner that is virtually untouchable by federal standards. Shelley (2011) notes that police officers have had less luck getting ahold of traffickers profits than say gun or drug trafficking, and even when traffickers are caught, the likeliness of tracing the profits earned is slim to none. Thus, receiving restitution for the victims is challenging and slim. Because traffickers can operate singularly, in small groups of people or large rings (Balderas, 2006), there is a general consensus in the field that it is growing exponentially each year, and often can be intertwined with other elements of organized crime such as those stated, as well as money laundering, and document fraud (Wilson & Dalton, 2008).

Richards (2004) wrote a conceptual article about the links between corruption and trafficking for labor purposes, noting that without payment and bribes with corrupt law enforcement, immigration employees, border patrollers, and receiving growers, the traffickers would not be able to transport the victims. In order to intercept and decrease migrant workers trafficked, areas of corruption must be identified to understand the players involved (Richards, 2004). Otherwise, policies internationally and nationally will have no significance, especially for victims, when overpowered by bribery and funds found in organized crime and corruption.

### **Lack of public awareness**

The general knowledge level and awareness of everyday citizens on the problem of labor trafficking are relatively low and under researched. There is a belief, perhaps through being inundated by media, that abuses in agriculture are just part of being a migrant worker, and that they are all undocumented and here by their free will (Owen, 2009). Conahan & Kyere (2010) believe that victims are unidentified due to a lack of public awareness on warning signs, or areas where it may be most concentrated. The areas labor trafficking thrives are housecleaning, landscaping, agriculture, construction, hotels, and predominately migrant populated communities, so awareness should be focused in those areas (Batstone, 2007, p.265). It is argued that awareness can be a major role player in whether a victim is uncovered (Grubb & Bennett, 2007), and knowledge of the problem should be heightened by the general public in states like Florida, where it is known to be a problem.

Though the researcher found no studies done on the general public to test their level of awareness surrounding human trafficking, there are numerous campaigns to build awareness in the community by utilizing street outreach, webinars, free resource kits found online, and videos

and public service announcements. The Department of Homeland Security created the Blue Campaign in 2010 to fight human trafficking, and through their interactive website, present education tools, resources such as posters and cards containing trafficking warning signs and how to report a tip, and other ways to get involved in the community (Department of Homeland Security, n.d.)

Polaris Project is also a leading website for access to not only free training and outreach materials, but also annual data and statistics of the calls received by the National Human Trafficking Hotline. Statistics published include a break down into each state and the counties/towns in which the calls came from. The demographics of the caller such as law enforcement, citizen, victim, family member of victim, etc., are also noted in an effort to find where outreach is most needed (Polaris Project, 2011). Since the researcher was unable to find a study done on general public awareness level, the researcher looked to these statistics published by the National Human Trafficking Hotline to see over the past four years, how many of the calls in Florida were from community members, (calls to report a tip, ask for information, find resources, etc.) and how that number has increased. In 2012, of the 1,050 calls, 419 of those were from community members, in 2011, of the 865 calls, 371 were community members, 2010, with 620 calls 284 were community members, and 2009 had 296 calls, with 117 by community members (Polaris Project, 2011). As evidenced, the number of overall calls has increased dramatically over the past four years, with a steady incline in community members calls to the hotline. This shows that there is a portion of individuals within Florida seeking knowledge on the issue, and though these are small numbers, the awareness base surrounding human trafficking is growing, but additional research is recommended to understand what is being done with the



resources obtained and how those individuals are spreading the knowledge and awareness of human trafficking. Labor trafficking can be so hidden from view that the public must be aware of the issue enough to be able to identify a potential victim, so all the responsibility does not rest solely with first responders (Logan, Walker & Hunt, 2009).

Florida State University Center for the Advancement of Human Rights (2010) produced a list of five goals the state of Florida should strive for to combat trafficking. One of the goals was a public awareness strategy that creates cultural competent public service announcements and effective outreach techniques for ethnic communities vulnerable to trafficking to prevent trafficking through awareness building. Labor trafficking is so widespread that by Florida tackling awareness and education as a state, to all citizens from varying backgrounds, the problem of trafficking can be decreased dramatically.

## **University Students Awareness**

Anna Rodriguez, founder of Florida Coalition Against Human Trafficking, an organization that seeks to find, and aid victims of human trafficking, believes the more people who know indicators of what to look for, the more victims can be saved (Batstone, 2007). To create this awareness, university students are a good launching point for educating a large group on the topic. Balderas (2006) utilized a cross-sectional survey using a five point Likert scale (example, “strongly agree, strongly disagree”) to do a comparative study between 38 police officers and 54 college students in Texas to test their perceptions and knowledge of human trafficking in Arlington, Texas. Although in agreement trafficking was a major issue for the United States of America and around the world, both groups thought smuggling and trafficking were the same thing, and an overwhelming majority of enforcement had no training nor had contact with victims of trafficking. Arguably, without the training base it would be difficult to find or know if one had contact with victims (Balderas, 2013).

Conahan and Kyere (2010) performed a similar study. Through their quantitative exploratory descriptive study, they studied 112 Bachelor Social Work (BSW) and 24 Masters Social Work (MSW) students in Pennsylvania to test their knowledge on human trafficking. Though both the majority of BSW and MSW students have a similar knowledge of human trafficking in the United States of America and globally, they too lacked the ability to differentiate between smuggling and trafficking. Both studies reported an agreement and high need for social service roles with this population, but their knowledge base on trafficking outside of women and children was very low in both studies.

A study by Letourneau (2007) studied 398 university students from Nevada on their general knowledge of human trafficking as it occurs in Nevada and within the United States. Students were from varying majors including majority from Criminal Justice, Psychology, and Counseling and responded to a 44-question survey on a Likert scale as well as open-ended and questions (p.24). Letourneau's study supported her hypotheses that the sample is unaware of trafficking in Nevada based off their responses that trafficking was more for prostitution than it is for labor, and that they underestimated the ages of victims and the profit figures obtained by traffickers. The study also noted the sample did not believe trafficking in the United States of America was a problem compared with other countries, but did believe the government is not meeting standards for dealing with the issue of trafficking (Letourneau, 2007).

In all three of these studies in university settings, trafficking was addressed very broadly. There are clear indications that definitions between smuggling and trafficking are not decipherable easily by either group studied, and that women and children are the focal point for suffering the most through human trafficking. Whereas Balderas (2006) and Letourneau (2007) studied university students collectively, for social work implications Conahan and Kyere's (2010) study is a good launching point for further exploration to specifically look at labor trafficking knowledge with BSW and MSW students. By surveying students within social work programs and other fields of concentration on their understanding of labor trafficking, curriculum can be enhanced to teach the next generation of social service providers, criminal justice professionals, nurses and health care providers what to be aware of in their future career.

## **Discussion of Relevant Theory**

Perhaps the most referred too and tested theory by researchers of human trafficking is Bales Theory of modern day slavery developed in 1999 and expanded upon in 2006, by Dr. Kevin Bales of the organization Free The Slaves. Conflict Theory and Post Modern Theory have also been utilized to understand social and political factors influencing human trafficking on a micro and macro level to understand how resources are distributed (Kawahito, 2009).

Bales Theory explores the push factors that allow human trafficking to prosper around the globe. The theory, through identifying variables such as government corruption, populations of an area with high levels of youth, food production, and social and political strife, he explores the detriment to human development and economic future countries can have by the presence of slave labor, and the export of slave labor to other countries (Bales, 2006). Bales Theory discusses the evolution of slavery, as it exists today compared to slavery as it is discussed and evidenced through history lessons. He argues since 1950, slavery has altered dramatically specifically due to economic purposes, i.e. the cost of a slave (Bales, 2006). Due to the illegality of the profits obtained by traffickers, the money received by them does not stimulate the economy as it once did when slaveholders were profiting legally from the slaves they held on their land. He also argues the amount of young populations globally opens demand and an easy pool to choose from, for cheap, replaceable slave labor. The findings and arguments from the variables studied and used by researchers state that poverty, corruption, economic misfortune, and low costs of slaves creates poor development in a country and hinders economic growth within communities.

Though many researchers in the human trafficking field reference Bales Theory, his theory is relatively new and open for criticism. It was intended to be developed further, to act as groundwork for researchers to quantitatively and qualitatively study factors identified by him as they would relate to the researchers own country (Gould, 2010). Gould (2010) created a study based on Bales Theory, in an attempt to expand and make up for some of the downfalls/under-represented aspects of the original study. Gould argues that Bales' theory falls short of representing all countries that have problems with trafficking, and though creating scientific research on human trafficking, vaguely describes the experts he consulted with, and methods of his testing and data collection to come to conclusions. Thus, rendering it somewhat unreliable (Gould, 2010). Gould reproduced the Bales Theory creating a variable for region to see how applicable the factors of slavery defined by Bales were in each region of the world. Her findings indicated, for example, where gender equality may be a factor for increased slavery in Europe and Eurasia, it may not be a factor in South East Asia (2010, p. 75). It is for reasons such as Gould's study, why Bales Theory has become a referenced and looked to theory within human trafficking scientific research, to be built upon and used to question and identify which factors are creating a surge in trafficking.

Human trafficking policy is also created around social conflict theory. Conflict theory originates with Marxism, viewing the world as a battle between those with power and those without (Schaefer, 2003). Conflict theory has developed over time to include the scramble between citizens for resources (wealth, status, and power) creating conflict that must be resolved through the creation of dominant ideology, cultural beliefs that maintain powerful social, political and economic norms (Schaefer, 2003, p. 220). With human trafficking scenarios, there

is an inherent enemy creating fear amongst the people, and a way for mass numbers to coexist is to experience conflict in order to reach common ground (Kawahito, 2009). By engaging in conflict theory, the United States of America and countries around the world create policies which engage citizens in the fight against those perceived as criminal and protect those perceived as victims, in an attempt to protect ones own country from crime and disarray. However, though conflict theory creates a general consensus to shape policy, it can be extremely damaging to those who are vulnerable to labor trafficking (men, typically undocumented migrants unwanted in the United States). Kawahito (2009) in her qualitative interviews with six service providers on their perceptions of human trafficking used conflict theory as a basis to state that through dominant ideology and conflict theory, male victims of trafficking tend to internalize their exploitation due to gender roles laid out in society's dominant ideologies, and create more of a reason for them to fail to come forward for help (p. 22). It is through conflict theory that policies can be tailored to victims of trafficking based off a collective agreement amongst the citizens, but by creating cultural, economic, and power roles, victimization occurs within those being exploited creating another hurdle for them to overcome and seek assistance.

Human trafficking can be identified collectively through using conflict theory but of comparable importance is Postmodern Theory. Postmodern Theory seeks to reach victims on a micro level identifying cultural norms and understanding even modernized societies still have attributes of third world countries overcome with poverty and unrest, like that of human trafficking (Schaefer, 2003).

Bales, Conflict, and Postmodern theories are all grounded in current human trafficking

legislation, social service funds, and shape research to identify problems and concerns to better aid victims. Using and understanding these theories shaped this study in terms of a quantitative survey to identify perceptions students have around trafficking. Social workers will need to identify internal beliefs and discourse they hold as individuals to find victims and protect them.

## **Importance/Rationale for Study**

Social workers exist to not only aid the well-being and empowerment of the client, but to fight for human rights and injustices of those who are oppressed. With labor trafficking victims, there is a great mistrust and fear of law enforcement especially migrant workers who lack proper documentation and are constantly threatened with deportation from their traffickers (Brennan, 2010). With this mistrust of law enforcement brings a great opportunity for social workers to fill that void needed to build rapport with the victim, and get them the services and rehabilitation they deserve. Social workers can attempt this through a psychosocial assessment, using a trauma-informal approach to create a safe and hopeful environment for the victim to open up (Alvarez & Alessi, 2012). By studying social work students' perceptions surrounding labor trafficking, education can be tailored to enhance the cultural competency of the next generation of social workers, as well as rid of any stereotypes they may have. Because labor trafficking is a growing human rights issue, social workers can advocate for the victims on many different levels: micro, mezzo, and macro, to begin talking of the issue within agencies, and begin producing research that will focus around practice to better understand victim situations and resources available (Alvarez & Alessi, 2012).

### **Micro**

Social workers have the opportunity, and duty to work with and advocate for victims of labor trafficking. Due to the fact labor trafficking includes agriculture, construction, and domestic servitude, the opportunity to run into these victims is endless, including hospitals, shelters, and immigration sectors (Conahan & Kyere, 2010). Victims who are identified and in the process of prosecuting their trafficker need immense attention from social workers in order to



piece their life together and overcome health issues such as skin infections, psychological trauma, injuries, respiratory, and drug and alcohol addiction (Alvarez & Alessi, 2012). Alvarez & Alessi (2012) note that social workers should be aware of the psychological issues the victim may be facing with the trafficker, and the fear of leaving their current situation. It is an important factor to encourage victims to take on leadership roles within their communities once they have recovered. By attending workshops to come in contact with other surviving victims, the individual can create a social support system they otherwise may not have, and aid other victims and create prevention strategies (Brennan, 2008). That being said, social workers must proceed with caution in order to empower the client and accept their situation on its own rather than in comparison to others.

### **Mezzo**

Implications for social workers to play a role with family systems of victims of labor trafficking are endless. Conahan and Kyere's (2010) notes in their study, the important role parents and family members of human trafficked victims play in all stages of trafficking. Social workers need to be aware of fear attached with prosecuting traffickers and the impact it will have on family members in their home country, as well as in the United States (Richards, 2004). Given the opportunity under the TVPA to bring victims family members to the United States of America, a social worker can be utilized to assist in the transition of the victim to seeing their family and explaining the event, and build communication skills with the victims families. Though it is an important factor to consider, there can also be shame that is attached with being trafficked. Sometimes victims will not reveal any information to their loved ones, and unfortunately, remain individually in silence about the experience which further perpetuates the

act of labor trafficking (Brennan, 2008 p. 56). In order for social workers to effectively address these communication concerns, the social worker can work to empower or connect them with other survivors to create a community support system.

## **Macro**

Social workers and social work students can be extremely utilized in the macro department. Labor trafficked victims from all areas of concern need better policies and laws to protect them. With migrant workers in agriculture, the need for protection, identification, and assistance from all service providers needs to be revamped and acted on to help these victims equally as much as sexual exploited victims. Social workers can use research studies and information gathered through training sessions to share with other organizations, in an attempt to work collaboratively to create change and give these victims access to human rights. Social workers should also advocate for stricter surveillance in victim dense areas and harsher consequences of owners or businesses (Wilson & Dalton, 2008).

Labor trafficking has been an unfortunately ongoing and increasing occurrence throughout the United States of America and the world. As policy looks primarily towards sexual trafficking and exploitation, labor trafficking is all too frequently pushed into the shadows and not addressed.

Social work has the ability to reach so many oppressed populations in the world, and can have an impact on micro, mezzo, and macro levels to advocate and identify victims. The social work profession is obliged to have the knowledge and understanding of how prevalent labor trafficking is in the United States of America, and because of that, this study identifies the need

for further research to identify how common labor trafficking is thought to be in the states where it is most concentrated, particularly Florida. The perceptions held by social work students will impact professions where future intervention and policy surrounding labor trafficking can take effect.

## **Focused Research Questions**

Over Arching Research Question: What are the general perceptions social work students have of labor trafficking in Florida?

Research Question 1: Is there is a relationship between social work student program status and the perception of high prevalence of labor trafficking in Florida?

Research Question 2: Is there a relationship between student race/ethnicity and the perception that labor trafficking victims should have equal access to basic human rights in the United States?

Research Question 3: Is there a relationship between student gender and perception that media (television, radio, print, social media) has influenced knowledge of labor trafficking?

Research Question 4: Is there a relationship between student gender and the perception that most victims of labor trafficking are male?

Research Question 5: Is there a relationship between social work student program status and perception that social work policy course provided adequate information on labor trafficking?

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The research design is an exploratory descriptive study, using a 28 item online survey through Qualtrics.com. The survey (Appendix C) sought to identify relationships between independent variables such as race/ethnicity, gender, and student program status, social work student perceptions on labor trafficking. This study tested five research questions that examined the relationship between 1) social work program status and perception of labor trafficking prevalence, 2) race/ ethnicity and the perception that labor trafficking victims should have equal access to basic human rights in the United States, 3) student gender and perception that media influenced perception of labor trafficking, 4) student gender and perceptions that labor trafficking victims are male, and 5) social work student program status and perception that social work policy course provided adequate information on labor trafficking. This study sought to contribute knowledge to an underrepresented area of research on labor trafficking, and gains insight on social work students' perceptions on the topic.

**Table 1- Variable/Operationalization**

Variable	Operationalization	Measurement	Type
Gender (independent variable)	Male or Female	Survey Question # 21 “What is your biological sex? (this is sex assigned at birth)” Select One: Male or Female	Nominal
Program Status (independent variable)	Student in the Undergraduate (BSW) or Graduate (MSW) social work program	Survey Question # 23 “What social work program are you enrolled in?” Select one: Undergraduate BSW Junior, BSW Senior, MSW 1 <sup>st</sup> year, MSW 2 <sup>nd</sup> year, (including Advanced Standing)	Nominal
Perceptions of labor trafficking in Florida (dependent variable)	Perception of labor trafficking prevalence in Florida	Survey Question # 14 “There is a high prevalence of labor trafficking in Florida” Select One: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Not sure, Agree, Strongly Agree	Ordinal
Perception that media (television, radio, print, social media) has influenced knowledge of labor trafficking (dependent variable)	Perceived individual knowledge of media influenced their knowledge	Survey Question #1: “The media (television, radio, print, social media) has influenced my knowledge of labor trafficking” Select One: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Not sure, Agree, Strongly Agree	Ordinal
Perception of most labor trafficking victims being male (dependent variable)	Perceived individual knowledge of male victims of human trafficking	Survey Question # 9- “Most victims of labor trafficking are male” Select One: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Not sure, Agree, Strongly Agree	Ordinal
Perception of social work policy course influencing knowledge of labor trafficking (dependent variable)	Perceived individual knowledge of social work course influencing knowledge of labor trafficking	Survey Question # 11- “My social work policy course provided adequate information on labor trafficking.” Select One: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Not sure, Agree, Strongly Agree	Ordinal
Race/ Ethnicity (independent variable)	Self-identified Race/ethnicity of participant	Survey Question # 20 “What is your race/ethnicity?” Select One: White/Caucasian (not of Hispanic of Latino origin), African American or Black, Caribbean Black (not including Puerto Rico), American Indian, Alaskan Native, of Native Hawaiian Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander Mexican American/Chicano, Puerto Rican, Dominican (Dominican Republic), Cuban, Other Latino, Other, Mixed Decent (indicate in textbox)	Nominal
Age of student (Demographic variable)	Chronological age (measured in years) that an individual has been alive	Survey question # 24 “Please select your current age: Please select your current age: 18-21, 22-25, 26-29, 30-33, 34-37, 38-41, 42-45, 46-49, 50-53, 54-57, 58-61, 62-65, Other age: _____	Interval

## Measurement/Instrumentation

The researcher and the researcher's advisor, taking themes from the literature review and the Awareness of Human Trafficking survey created by Conahan & Kyere (2010), created this 28-point survey. The original survey by Conahan & Kyere (2010) addressed human trafficking in a broad sense and the researcher for this current study used elements of that survey to develop questions relevant to labor trafficking. The researcher altered the survey by adding additional questions that specifically address labor trafficking and additional demographic and independent variables. This survey, like the exploratory survey created by Conahan & Kyere (2010), has no reliability or validity, and is a modified extended version of the Awareness of Human Trafficking survey. The survey was pilot tested with three individuals not enrolled in the School of Social Work, to test clarity of the questions and time that it took to complete.

The first part of the questionnaire consists of *General Questions about Labor Trafficking* and includes 12 questions in a five point Likert scale format, with responses Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Not Sure, Agree, or Strongly Agree. Examples of questions in this section are:

**Q-5. Labor trafficking only involves victims from other countries, primarily Latin America, and not U.S. citizens.**

**Q-6. Labor trafficking individuals are always illegal immigrants.**

The second part of the questionnaire, titled *Questions about Labor Trafficking in Florida*, includes seven questions regarding perceptions social work students have about labor trafficking in Florida, and uses the same five point Likert scale. Two sample questions from this section are:

**Q- 14. In Florida, there is legislation to protect victims of labor trafficking.**

**Q-19 As a future social worker, I feel knowledgeable to aid labor trafficking victims in Florida.**

The last section of the questionnaire includes seven questions that request demographic variables such as age, gender, program status, income, and political affiliation. For example:

**Q-22 I would consider my income level growing up to be**

- At or Below Poverty Level**
- Middle Class**
- Upper Class**

**Q-25 What is your political affiliation?**

- Democrat Party**
- Republican Party**
- Independent Party**
- Green Party**
- Tea Party**
- Other**

There is also an open-ended question at the end that asks the participant:

**Q- 27 Have you taken any course in your social work UCF courses that have included content or major discussions devoted to the topic of labor trafficking for at least 1 class session (2 and ½ hours).**

If the participant responded yes, they were to fill in the textbox to state which class it was. This sought to identify if labor trafficking content is included in social work curriculum, and in which area of the program.



## **IRB & Protection of Study Participants**

Participation in this study occurred through an anonymous online 28-item survey that students accessed through Qualtrics.com. An accompanying informed consent form was provided online prior to the survey to help students determine their participation interest. Since the informed consent served as an invitational letter and the survey was administered anonymously online there was no need for a participant's signature. As a result, there was no data collected that identified or linked survey responses to any individual participant and all data was reported in aggregate format.

The researchers began the study upon approval from the University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board which was granted on November 22, 2013. Upon beginning the survey, all participants were given an electronic informed consent (see Appendix B) that will not have any form of identification of the participant, and all findings were reported in statistical format.

## **Sampling Plan/Recruitment of Participants**

The researcher utilized a convenience sampling approach for this project. Currently, there are 650 students enrolled in the School of Social Work; 344 students in the BSW program, and 306 in the MSW program. To recruit these participants, the researcher sought assistance from the social work program office to distribute the invitation to participate (see Appendix A), to all 650 enrolled BSW and MSW students, containing details of the study and questionnaire, and a link to the survey on Qualtrics.com. In order to protect the subject's anonymity, the researcher had no access to the distribution/email lists, and all information participants needed, regarding the survey will be found within the invitation to participate email, and students will be directed to Qualtrics.com via the link if they decide to participate.

The survey took 20 minutes, and potential participants were given an informed consent explaining the study and emphasized voluntary participation of students and their ability to leave questions blank if they did not wish to respond. The informed consent also explained confidentiality, and included contact information for the International Review Board at the University of Central Florida, the researchers contact information, and the researchers thesis chair's contact information in the instance questions arose. Although there were no risks anticipated, if the survey elicited uncomfortable feelings, contact information for the University of Central Florida Counseling Center, and the National Human Trafficking Hotline were included in the informed consent as additional resources.

## **Ethical Considerations**

There were no ethical considerations expected with this study because the questionnaire was seeking to identify perceptions held by each participant, and no harm was expected to arise from the study. Although this was an exploratory topic seldom discussed and researched, it was possible the survey could have touch upon feelings or identification with family members, individuals, or perhaps past experiences with labor trafficking or human trafficking in a broader sense. To account for these instances, the researcher included two avenues for counseling, the participant may have accessed: The National Human Trafficking Hotline, and the University of Central Florida Counseling Center. Included with each counseling resource were phone numbers, a website, and a number to text in case of emergency.

## **Data Collection Plan**

### **Sampling Technique**

This survey utilized a convenience sampling approach and began after the University of Central Florida International Review Board granted approval. Upon the School of Social Work advisors at the BSW and MSW distributing the emails to students, participants were able to click the link to Qualtrics.com and voluntarily participate in the study. Participants were able to access the link at their leisure from December 4, 2013 through January 27, 2014, and all information gathered was anonymous with no identifying abilities.

Once the researcher closed the survey on January 27, 2014, data was exported to Excel, and further cleaned and coded.

### **Data Collection Process**

The School of Social Work advisor distributed an invitational email to all BSW and MSW students on December 4, 2014, containing details on the study and a link to an online survey located on Qualtrics.com. The initial email was sent out with an inactive link inhibiting participation. A new email was sent out within two hours with an active link. The survey was active from December 4, 2013 through January 27, 2014. Due to low participation rate, a second invitational email was sent on January 22, 2014 a week prior to deactivating the survey.

### **Data Management Strategy**

Only the researcher and the Thesis Committee Chair could access the anonymous data collected, and analyzed data on password protected University computers and the researchers own individual laptop. Once the data collection phase was completed, the researcher downloaded

the data onto an Excel spreadsheet for purposes of 'cleaning' the data. Then all data was imported into SPSS for analysis, and saved on the researchers own laptop.

## **Data Analysis**

The data was exported from Qualtrics.com onto an Excel spreadsheet and cleaned prior to importing it into SPSS. The researcher cleaned the data by extracting text answers from the spreadsheet so only numerical values remained. Open ended or qualitative question text responses for the demographic questions and for survey question #28 were extracted from the excel data sheet. The researcher created a Microsoft Word document containing the text response answers from participants for further analysis to be given once frequencies were run. Descriptive analyses included frequencies and accompanying pie charts on all the survey questions and those variables included in the research questions. The descriptive analyses were also used to describe the sample in the study. The researcher used crosstabs, a .05 level of significance and chi-square analysis of independence to test the proposed relationships between the independent and dependent categorical variables of the research questions.

The researcher chose to use chi-square tests because of the measurement of variables being studied. For instance, all five-research questions had a nominal level independent variable, and an ordinal level dependent variable. However, due to a small sample size of 45, frequencies were wide spread and were found not statistically significant. In this case, the researcher chose to use cross tabulation charts to draw conclusions, as well as pie charts and frequencies between independent and dependent variables and survey questions.

### **Collapsing the Data**

The researcher first reviewed the frequencies via SPSS to identify which groups of data could be collapsed. The first one to recode was Race/Ethnicity due to having a wide range of distribution in responses. Originally, the question allowed for 12 possible responses

“White/Caucasian (not of Hispanic or Latino Origin)”, “African American or Black”, “Caribbean Black (Not including Puerto Rico)”, “American Indian”, “Alaskan Native, or Native Hawaiian”, “Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander”, “Mexican American/ Chicano”, “Puerto Rican”, “Dominican (Dominican Republic)”, “Cuban”, “Other Latino”, “Mixed Descent (indicate in text box below)”. Each response was originally given a 1-12 code number, with 99 being inputted for any missing. Upon analysis, the researcher decided to collapse the choices into 4 categories: “White/Caucasian (not of Hispanic or Latino Origin)” remained a 1. The researcher combined “African American or Black”, “Caribbean Black (Not including Puerto Rico)” to now be coded as a 2. “American Indian”, “Alaskan Native, or Native Hawaiian”, “Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander” were collapsed and now recoded as a 3, and “Mexican American/ Chicano”, “Puerto Rican”, “Dominican (Dominican Republic)”, “Cuban”, “Other Latino”, “Mixed Descent (indicate in text box below)” were collapsed to be coded as a 4.

The researcher then collapsed Social Work Program Status that originally had four choices: “BSW Junior Year” originally coded as 1, “BSW Senior Year” originally coded as 2, “MSW First Year” originally coded as 3, “MSW Second Year (Including Advanced Standing)” originally coded as 4. The researcher combined “BSW Junior Year” and “BSW Senior Year” to be recoded as 1, and “MSW First Year” and “MSW Second Year (Including Advanced Standing)” was recoded as 2.

The next demographic variable that was recoded was Current Age, which originally had 13 options: “18-22”, “23-25”, “26-29”, “30-33”, “34-37”, “38-41”, “42-45”, “46-49”, “50-53”, “54-57”, “58-61”, “62-65”, “Other” and a 99 awarded to Unknowns/No response. The researcher noticed the majority of the participants fell in the twenties or forties range, so decided to collapse

the 13 categories into four. They are as listed: “18-29” recoded as a 1, “30-41” recoded as 2, “42-45” recoded as 3, “50-61” recoded as 4, and 62-65 and Other was eliminated because no participants were in that range or inputted Other.

The next demographic variable to collapse was Religious Affiliation. Originally, the question offered 12 categories including: “No Religion”, “Christian”, “Catholic”, “Protestant”, “Jewish”, “Lutheran”, “Baptist”, “Islamic”, “Buddhist”, “Agnostic”, “Atheist”, and “Other”. The majority of participants were part of a Christian faith background, so the researcher collapsed the categories that had similar belief systems. They are as follows: “No Religion” remained a 1, “Christian”, “Catholic”, “Protestant”, “Lutheran”, “Baptist”, were combined to recode as a 2, Jewish became a 3, Buddhist became a 4, Agnostic became a 5, and Other became a 6. Atheist and Islamic were thrown out due to no participants choosing that option.

Lastly, because the sample size was so small and the frequencies were distributed in low numbers and widely across responses, the researcher also collapsed all survey questions that were originally coded given a five point Likert scale (1-Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Neutral/Not Sure, 4-Agree, 5- Strongly Agree, 99-Unknown). The 20 survey questions (not including demographics as stated above) were collapsed to a 3-point Likert Scale and recoded to be 1-Disagree, 2-Neutral/Not Sure, and 3-Agree.



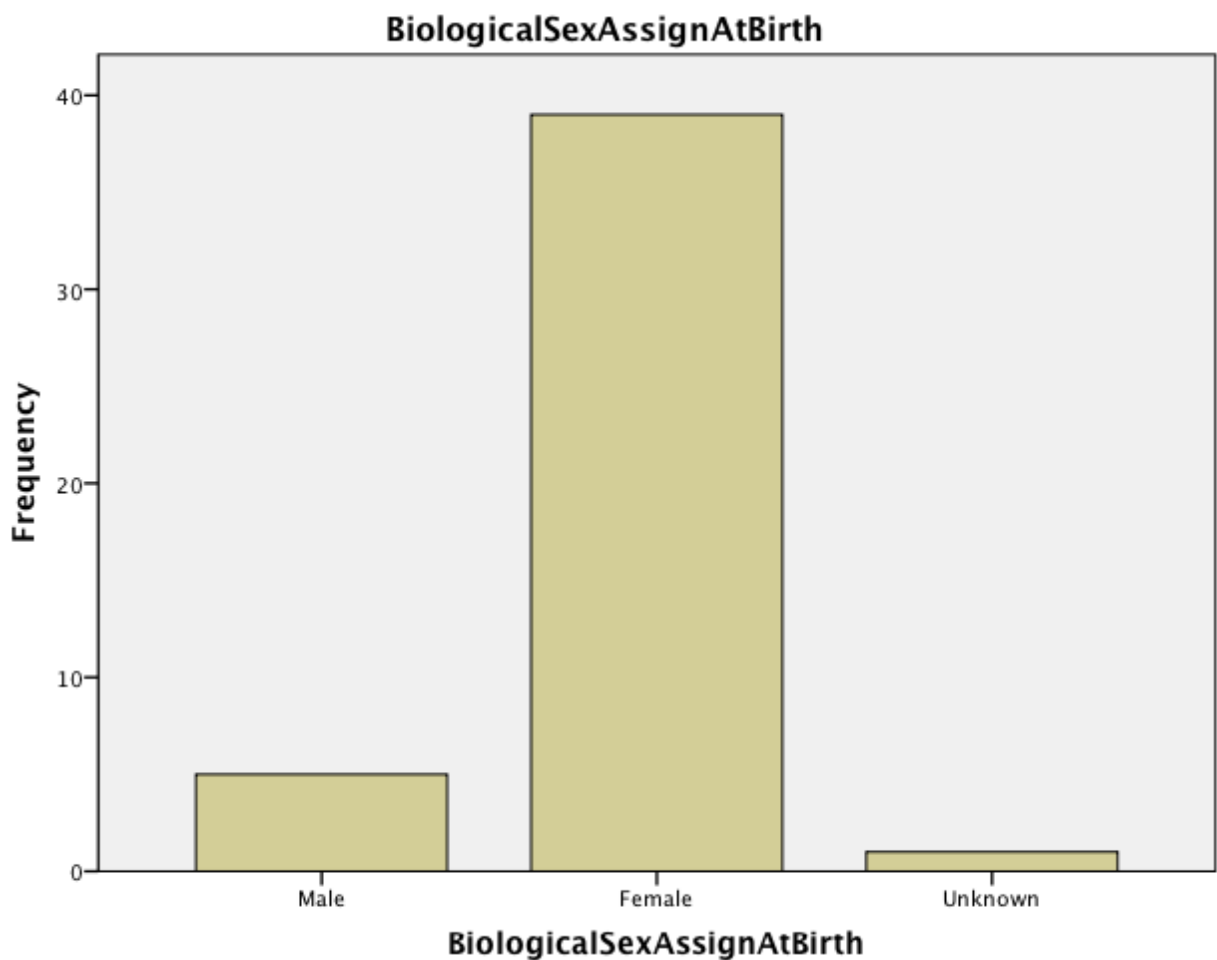
## Findings

### Description of Sample

Although 50 surveys were started by the participants, only 45 were completed.

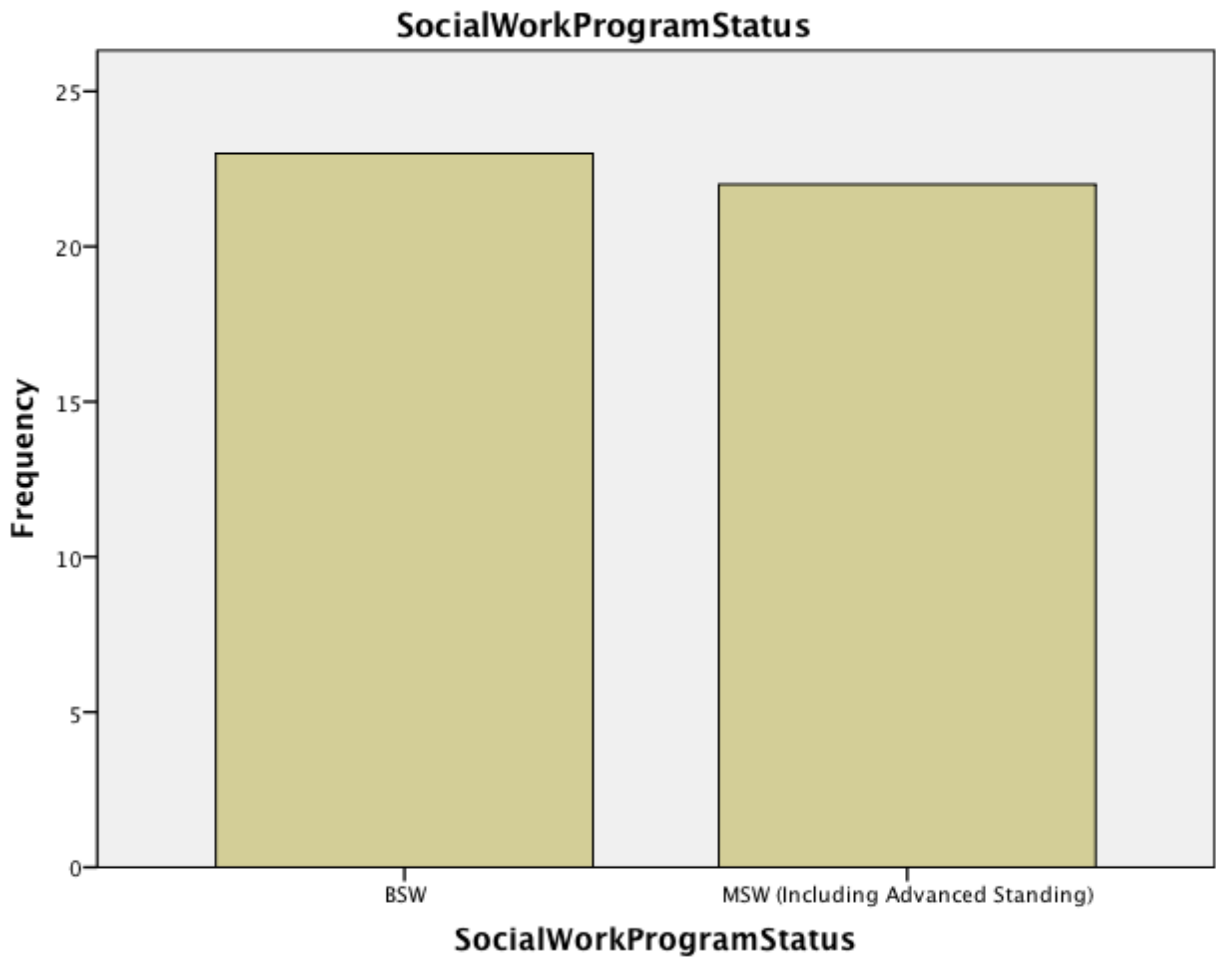
Frequencies were generated through SPSS to relay information on the demographic variables of the 45 participants. Of the participants, 86.7% (n=39) identified as Female, 11.1% as Male (n=5) and one participant chose not to respond.

Figure 1- Biological Sex Assigned at Birth



In regards to program status, 51.1% (n=23) identified as BSW students, and 48.9% (n= 22) reported being at the MSW level of the program.

**Figure 2- Social Work Program Status**



Participants were predominantly White/Caucasian at 60% (n=27), with the second highest group falling under Mexican/American Chicano, Puerto Rican, Dominican (Dominican Republic), Cuban, Other Latino with 22.2% (n=10). 11.1% (n=5) identified as African

American/Caribbean Black, and 6.7% (n=3) identified as Asian American, Alaskan Native, or Hawaiian.

**Table 2- Student Race/Ethnicity**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid White/Caucasian (not of Hispanic or Latino Origin)	27	60.0	60.0	60.0
African American or Black, Caribbean Black (not including Puerto Rico)	5	11.1	11.1	71.1
American Indian, Alaskan Native, or Native Hawaiian, Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander	3	6.7	6.7	77.8
Mexican American/Chicano, Puerto Rican, Dominican (Dominican Republic), Cuban, Other Latino	10	22.2	22.2	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Over forty percent (42.2%, n=19) identified as being between the ages of 18-29, followed by 20% (n=9) being within 30-41, and 22.2% within 42-49 age range, and 15.6% (n=7) within 50-61 category.

Religiously speaking, a disproportionate amount of participants identified as a Christian denomination (Christian, Catholic, Protestant, Lutheran or Baptist) at 55.6% (n = 25). Seven or 15.6% of participants identified as Agnostic, followed by six participants (13.3%) identifying as Jewish. In the ‘Other’ category 8.9 % (n=4) listed their beliefs in a text box to include 2 Pagans, 1 Unitarian, and 1 “Spiritual/Non Religious”.

**Table 3- Religious Affiliation**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid No Religion	2	4.4	4.4	4.4
Christian, Catholic, Protestant, Lutheran, Baptist	25	55.6	55.6	60.0
Jewish	6	13.3	13.3	73.3
Buddhist	1	2.2	2.2	75.6
Agnostic	7	15.6	15.6	91.1
Other	4	8.9	8.9	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Politically, participants identified with the Democratic Party 33.3% (n = 15), followed by 31.1% (n = 14) for the Independent Party, 17.8% (n = 8), Republican Party, 11.1% (n = 5) Other, and 4.4% (n= 2) identifying as the Green Party. The five participants who identified as ‘Other’ provided qualitative text responses for additional insight. Two of those five participants were convicted felons and did not have the right to vote, and the other three did not specify an alternative or preference.

**Table 4- Political Affiliation**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Democrat Party	15	33.3	33.3	33.3
Republican Party	8	17.8	17.8	51.1
Independent Party	14	31.1	31.1	82.2
Green Party	2	4.4	4.4	86.7
Other	5	11.1	11.1	97.8
Unknown	1	2.2	2.2	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

The majority or 48.9% (n = 22) reported coming from Middle Class backgrounds but comparatively, 22.2% (n= 10) reported they grew up at or below the poverty level, and 24.4% (n=11) in working class families. Only 4.4% (n=2) stated they came from upper class backgrounds.

**Table 5- Income Level Growing Up**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid At or Below Poverty Level	10	22.2	22.2	22.2
Working Class	11	24.4	24.4	46.7
Middle Class	22	48.9	48.9	95.6
Upper Class	2	4.4	4.4	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

## Research Question Findings

Research Question #1: Is there is a relationship between social work student program status and the perception of high prevalence of labor trafficking in Florida? The chi square results ( $p=.203$ ) for this question proved to not be statistically significant. Upon review of the cross tabulation, there was similar consensus between both MSW ( $n = 17$ ) and BSW ( $n= 14$ ) students a majority of students, that there is a high prevalence of labor trafficking in Florida. This may suggest that students, regardless of program status may have some awareness of the issue. Nine BSW (20%) students and 4 MSW (8.8%) students were ‘Neutral/Not Sure’, and there was 1 ‘Unknown’.

**Table 6- Is there a relationship between social work student program status and the perception of high prevalence of labor trafficking in Florida**

		There Is High Prevalence Of Labor Trafficking In Florida			Total
		Disagree	Neutral/Not Sure	Agree	
Social Work Program Status	BSW	0	9	14	23
	MSW (Including Advanced Standing)	1	4	17	22
Total		1	13	31	45

Research Question #2: Is there a relationship between student race/ethnicity and the perception that labor trafficking victims should have equal access to basic human rights in the United States? A chi square test result ( $p=.769$ ) indicated no statistical significant relationship between the variables in this research question. The crosstab the researcher ran showed an

overwhelming 95.6% agreement from all race/ethnicities, that victims of labor trafficking should have access to basic human rights. Only two individuals, one from ‘White/Caucasian’ background and 1 ‘Mexican American/Chicano, Puerto Rican, Dominican, Cuban or Other Latino’ responded with Neutral/Not Sure, displaying that students of all race/ethnicities are cognizant of the need for resources for victims of labor trafficking whether illegally or legally here.

**Table 7- Is there a relationship between student race/ethnicity and the perception that labor trafficking victims should have equal access to basic human rights in the United States?**

		Labor Trafficking Victims Whether Illegally Or Legally here Should Have Access to Basic Human Rights In the United States		
		Neutral/Not Sure	Agree	Total
StudRaceEthnicity	White/Caucasian (not of Hispanic or Latino Origin)	1	26	27
	African American or Black, Caribbean Black (not including Puerto Rico)	0	5	5
	American Indian, Alaskan Native, or Native Hawaiian, Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander	0	3	3
	Mexican American/Chicano, Puerto Rican, Dominican (Dominican Republic), Cuban, Other Latino	1	9	10
Total		2	43	45

Research Question #3: Is there a relationship between student gender and perception that media (television, radio, print, social media) has influenced knowledge of labor trafficking? The chi square test displayed a p-value of .271, making it not statistically significant because it is greater than .05. However the cross tabulation table displayed interesting results. Twenty-one female students agreed that the media influenced their knowledge and 10 disagreed, where only 2 Males agreed media influenced their knowledge, and 3 disagreed it had an impact on their knowledge level. There was also one 'Unknown' participant that disagreed media played a role in their knowledge base. Due to the small sample size of males, these findings can not be applied widely to other studies.

**Table 8- Is there a relationship between student gender and perception that media (television, radio, print, social media) has influenced knowledge of labor trafficking?**

		Media (TV Radio Print Social Media Influenced Knowledge of Labor Trafficking			Total
		Disagree	Neutral/Not Sure	Agree	
Biological Sex	Male	3	0	2	5
Assign At Birth	Female	10	8	21	39
	Unknown	1	0	0	1
Total		14	8	23	45

Research Question # 4: Is there a relationship between student gender and the perception that most victims of labor trafficking are male? The chi-square test, with p-value of .929 indicated that there was no statistically significant relationship between the variables. However, the responses within the cross tabulation may suggest that the majority (88.9%, n= 40) of social work students do not think that most victims of labor trafficking are male. Interestingly enough



all of the male students perceived that victims of labor trafficking are male. Again, given the low numbers of male students, this suggested finding should be taken with great caution. Only 8.9% (n= 4) of respondents were ‘Neutral/Not Sure’, and 2.2%, (n =1) were Unknown.

**Table 9- Is there a relationship between student gender and the perception that most victims of labor trafficking are male?**

		Most Victims Of Labor Trafficking Are Male			Total
		Disagree	Neutral/Not Sure	Unknown	
Biological Sex	Male	5	0	0	5
Assigned At Birth	Female	34	4	1	39
	Unknown	1	0	0	1
Total		40	4	1	45

Research Question#5: Is there a relationship between social work student program status and perception that social work policy course provided adequate information on labor trafficking? A Chi Square test displayed a p-value of .704 indicating no statistically significant relationships between these variables. However, the cross tabulation provided great insight into potential education flaws which are discussed in the following discussion section, because the majority of students, BSW and MSW, reported they did not receive adequate training about labor trafficking within their Policy courses at the University of Central Florida. A total of 28 respondents did not feel that there was adequate information on labor trafficking in their Social Work Policy course. 14 students were on the fence whether they learned enough information surrounding the topic within their Policy course, and only two of the 45 students (4.4%) say they agree that they received the appropriate information about Labor trafficking.

**Table 10- Is there a relationship between social work student program status and perception that social work policy course provided adequate information on labor trafficking?**

		Social Work Policy Course Provided Adequate Information On Labor Trafficking				Total
		Disagree	Neutral/Not Sure	Agree	Unknown	
Social Work Student Program Status	BSW	13	8	1	1	23
	MSW (Including Advanced Standing)	15	6	1	0	22
Total		28	14	2	1	45

### Survey Question Findings

In addition to the demographic questions, and questions measured within the variable research questions, fifteen additional questions were on the survey to identify different perceptions social work students have.

Question #2- Victims of labor trafficking are always Hispanic showed that 97.8% (n=44) disagreed, and 2.2.% (n=1) were Neutral/Not Sure.

Question #3- Victims of labor trafficking are always women serving as domestics showed that 91.1% (n=41) disagreed, 6.7% (n=3) agreed that labor trafficking is always women serving as domestics, and 2.2% (n=1) were Neutral/Not Sure.

Question #4- People are victims of labor trafficking because they lack financial resources showed interesting results. 37.8% (n=17) disagreed that financial resources were a contributing factor to labor trafficking, while 37.8% (n=17) agreed that financial resources were a contributing factor and the remaining 20% (n=9) were Neutral/Not Sure.

**Table 11- People are victims of labor trafficking because they lack financial resources**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	17	37.8	37.8	37.8
	Neutral/Not Sure	9	20.0	20.0	57.8
	Agree	19	42.2	42.2	100.0
	Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Question #5- Labor trafficking only involves victims from other countries, primarily Latin America, and not U.S. citizens had an overwhelming majority (80%, n=36) disagree, and had 8.9% (n=4) Neutral/Not Sure, and Agree with 1 Unknown (2.2%).

**Table 12- Labor Trafficking only involves victims from other countries, primarily Latin America, and not U.S. citizens**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	36	80.0	80.0	80.0
	Neutral/Not Sure	4	8.9	8.9	88.9
	Agree	4	8.9	8.9	97.8
	Unknown	1	2.2	2.2	100.0
	Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Question #6- Labor trafficking individuals are always illegal immigrants showed the majority, 84.4% (n=38) disagreed that victims are always illegal immigrants, 11.1% (n=5) were Neutral/Not Sure, and 4.4% (n=2) agreed that victims of labor trafficking are always illegal immigrants.

Question #7- Labor trafficking individuals come to the United States of America on their own free will had an interesting outcome as well with 77.8% (n=35) disagreeing that victims

come to the United States of American on their own free will, but 20% (n=9) were Neutral/Not Sure in the matter. Only 2.2% (n=1) agreed.

**Table 13- Labor trafficking individuals come to the United States of America on their own free will**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	35	77.8	77.8	77.8
Neutral/Not Sure	9	20.0	20.0	97.8
Agree	1	2.2	2.2	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Question #8- Sex trafficking is more prevalent than labor trafficking yielded interesting results as well. 37.8% (n=17) of participants were Neutral/Not Sure, 33.3% (n=15) agreed, and 28.9% (n=13) disagreed that sex trafficking is more prevalent than labor trafficking.

**Table 14- Sex trafficking is more prevalent than labor trafficking**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	13	28.9	28.9	28.9
Neutral/Not Sure	17	37.8	37.8	66.7
Agree	15	33.3	33.3	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Question # 10- Victims of labor trafficking experience physical abuse demonstrated a majority of students (80%, n=36) agreeing, 17.8% (n=8) Neutral/Not Sure, and 2.2% (n=1) disagreeing demonstrating an understanding of potential harm victims are subjected to.

**Table 15- Victims of labor trafficking experience physical abuse**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	1	2.2	2.2	2.2
Neutral/Not Sure	8	17.8	17.8	20.0
Agree	36	80.0	80.0	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Question #13- People are victims of labor trafficking in Florida because they can not speak English demonstrated that 66.7% (n=30) of social students disagreed, 24.4% (n=11) were Neutral/Not Sure, and 8.9% (n=4) agreed that inability to speak English contributes to victimization.

**Table 16- People are victims of labor trafficking in Florida because they can not speak English**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	30	66.7	66.7	66.7
Neutral/Not Sure	11	24.4	24.4	91.1
Agree	4	8.9	8.9	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Question #14- In Florida there is legislation to protect victims of labor trafficking showed interesting results. 51.1% (n=23) stated they were Neutral/Not Sure, followed by 33.3% (n=15) agreeing there was legislation in Florida to assist labor trafficking victims, and 15.6% (n=7) disagreed.

**Table 17- In Florida there is legislation to protect victims of labor trafficking**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	7	15.6	15.6	15.6
Neutral/Not Sure	23	51.1	51.1	66.7
Agree	15	33.3	33.3	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Question 16- There are organizations to assist labor trafficking victims in Florida showed a majority of 64.4% (n=29) agreed, 28.9% (n=13) were Neutral/Not Sure, and 6.7% (n=3) disagreed that there are organizations to assist victims of labor trafficking in Florida.

**Table 18- There are organizations to assist labor trafficking victims in Florida**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	3	6.7	6.7	6.7
Neutral/Not Sure	13	28.9	28.9	35.6
Agree	29	64.4	64.4	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

Question #17- Labor trafficking has no direct effect on crime in Florida communities showed social work students have a general understanding on the impact of labor trafficking, with the majority (80% , n=36) disagreeing, 17.8% (n=8) responding with Neutral/Not Sure, and 2.2% (n=1) agreeing.

Question #18- Labor trafficking is a growing human rights problem in Florida yielded 13.3% (n=6) disagreeing, and 86.7% (n=39) agreeing that labor trafficking is indeed a growing human rights problem in Florida.

Question #19- As a future social worker, I feel knowledgeable to aid labor trafficking victims in Florida presented interesting results. 30 participants (66.7%) disagreed with this statement, 6 participants (13.3%) were Neutral/Not Sure, and 9 participants (20%) agreed that they felt knowledgeable to aid victims of labor trafficking.

**Table 19- As a future social worker, I feel knowledgeable to aid labor trafficking victims in Florida**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	30	66.7	66.7	66.7
Neutral/Not Sure	6	13.3	13.3	80.0
Agree	9	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	45	100.0	100.0	

The final question (#27) on the survey was “have you taken any course in your social work UCF courses that has included content or major discussions devoted to the topic of labor trafficking for at least 1 class session (equivalent of at least 2 and ½ hours)”. This question was a yes/no response with an additional question for respondents who stated yes to input the class that was devoted to the topic. 77.8% of participants (n=35) stated No, they had not taken a course in the social work program devoted to the topic of labor trafficking. 22.2% (n=10) stated they did have a class devoted to the topic. Participants specified classes were extracted in the coding process exactly how they were inputted on the survey to be placed in the table below.

**Table 20- Have you taken any course in you social work UCF courses that has included content of major discussions devoted to the topic of labor trafficking for at least 1 class session (equivalent of at least 2 and 1/2 hours)**

Respondent # 1	“Women's studies classes. I can't remember which one specifically.”
Respondent # 2	“policy- about labor mostly agriculture and nail saloons”
Respondent # 7	“Child Abuse”
Respondent # 9	“Social Work with Immigrants and Refugees”
Respondent # 13	“Social Work with Immigrants and Refugees”
Respondent # 22	“SOW 3203 Social Work and Community Resources”
Respondent # 26	“Macro”
Respondent # 31	“Special Topics: Social Work with Immigrants and Refugees”
Respondent # 41	“Practice II”
Respondent # 44	“Social Justice”



## Discussion

Due to the small sample size and using a sample of convenience, there was no statistical significance for any of the five research questions. The researcher believes that had the sample size have been bigger, at least 100, the outcomes would have been more statistically significant and provided a p-value of less than .05 to draw substantial conclusions. Question one suggests that there is general agreement among social work students perception that there is high prevalence of labor trafficking in Florida. Along similar lines, although not a tested variable of Research Question one, three questions within the survey provide additional insight to social work students' knowledge of labor trafficking in Florida. In addition to an overwhelming majority agreeing there is high prevalence in Florida, students agreed that there are organizations to assist labor trafficking victims in Florida, and that labor trafficking effects crime rate in Florida communities. However, students were unsure of legislation in Florida that protected or aided labor trafficking victims. These survey questions, along with the variables studied in Research Question one, demonstrate that students may be aware of consequential factors for victims and communities, legislation and policy needs to be covered more in depth.

Question two although not statistically significant, provided good insight towards demographics and equality within the program. Though more than half the students who participated were White/Caucasian, and 18 students from different racial and ethnic background, 95% agreed victims should have access to basic human rights, showing that social work students have equality for everyone despite a victims 'legal' status within the United States of America. Also, survey question number 18, "labor trafficking is a growing human rights problem in

Florida”, yielded high frequency agreement with 86.7% of participants, providing additional insight to the perceptions and awareness of social workers to this human rights problem.

Question three had some limitations with it due to a small sample size of males who participated, but still provided good insight to the role media plays into their knowledge base. Further research or specific questions of how students’ get their information (i.e. specifically social media via friends sharing articles, which type of radio or TV shows etc.) would be helpful to pinpoint further how the word on labor trafficking is spreading.

Question four was the real interesting results identified due to sheer numbers that students did not perceive that most victims of labor trafficking are male. The researcher notes throughout this thesis the importance of identifying the gender misconceptions carried in the topic of human trafficking because men are very rarely mentioned in articles, television shows, or other outlets with sexual trafficking being at the forefront. In addition to this research question and the variable studied, the survey question “sex trafficking is more prevalent than labor trafficking” further contributes to the uncertainty of where labor trafficking fits in, with 17 students unsure and 15 in agreement that sexual trafficking is more prevalent. In comparison to other studies mentioned in this thesis, this survey question and Research Questions variable outcome further depict that sexual trafficking and exploitation are believed to be more prevalent. This provides good insight for further education surrounding the issue, especially given the International Labor Organizations recent statistics surrounding male presence in forced labor.

Question fives cross tabulation chart showed 15 Masters level students disagreed with the independent variable that Social Work policy course provided adequate information on the issue, whereas only 13 Bachelors level students disagreed, which could provide insight that over the

past year the Policy course curriculum may be beginning to cover the topic. Also the researcher feels it is important to note the 'Neutral/Not Sure' numbers, with 8 BSW students and 6 MSW students responding within this category. At the Bachelors level, the course is not offered until senior year, so if a respondent was in their junior year of the program, they may not have taken the course yet, yielding either a Neutral response or a Disagree. Also, if any MSW students who responded were older and/or did not go through the University of Social Work BSW program, they may not have taken a Policy Course, or took a different class when policies were not inclusive of trafficking discourse. The researcher feels these are important considerations to take into account with this research question, and further research could address these elements. However, question 27 of the survey was along similar lines as this research question, and the researcher believes it is important to dictate where students have learned of the topic within their studies at UCF. Of the 10 respondents who answered 'yes' to number 27, their input for classes that covered labor trafficking varied from Women's Studies classes to Social Work with Immigrants and Refugees (see Table #20, p. 69), which are elective courses within the program. The researcher believes if the survey is to be done again, questions should allude to what types of content were covered in these courses. Also, perhaps a longitudinal study could be implemented to test knowledge base of Junior BSW students prior to the offering and enrollment of these courses and then again at the Senior BSW level to study how their knowledge and/or perceptions have expanded or changed, to gain further education and curriculum insight.

For further discussion on the survey questions outside of the Research Question variables, some interesting aspects arose surrounding recognition of the varying degrees of labor trafficking and push factors. Survey question number 2 "Victims of labor trafficking are always

Hispanic” showed 97.8% disagreed with that statement; identifying students are knowledgeable about the multi-cultural makeup of labor trafficking. Survey question number 3 “Victims of Labor Trafficking are always women serving as domestics” resulted in 91.1% disagreeing, representing the students’ may be aware of alternate forms of labor trafficking (i.e. labor, construction) and that anyone is susceptible to being forced or coerced into trafficking.

On that note, additional aspects of the survey show insight to more research needed in the realm of push factors. As noted in this thesis, push factors are circumstances, which bring an individual, or “push” an individual to seek outside alternatives than their current situation, or create a vulnerable environment where coercion can occur. Survey question number 7 “labor trafficking individuals come to the United States of America on their own free will” yielded 77.8% in disagreement. It can be speculated that students’ are unaware that often individuals may seek a life in the United States of America willingly, and end up in a forced or coerced situation against their free will as soon as they depart, or upon their arrival. In comparison to Balderas (2004) and Conahan & Kyere (2010), they too found discrepancies in participants’ ability to differentiate elements of trafficking and the varying methods of how trafficking can occur. Further, question number four, “people are victims of labor trafficking because they lack financial resources” displayed serious split in responses. 37.8% disagreed, 37.8% agreed, and 20.0% were ‘Neutral/Not sure’. This is a major push factor and environmental factor that makes up all forms of human trafficking. The divide in numbers was unexpected and further education and advocacy should be utilized for students. Lastly, survey question number 13 “People are victims of labor trafficking in Florida because they cannot speak English” showed 66.7% of respondents disagreed. Although there are many English speaking victims or labor trafficking,

not speaking a native language is a definite element of susceptibility to labor trafficking or sexual trafficking, because it brings about numerous problems as mentioned earlier in this thesis. By reviewing these particular frequencies for survey questions, the researcher speculates that students' are uncertain or lack knowledge in the elements that make up labor trafficking in terms of push factors and further discussion surrounding labor trafficking needs to be addressed and then resurveyed.

## **Limitations**

A potential challenge the researcher anticipated and ran into was reaching the full 100 participants. A larger sample size is preferred in order to be statistically significant, and also to be reliable and applicable to other areas of research. Because this sample was so small, analyzing the data was confined to cross tabulations, and the findings cannot be applied or generalized for other social work programs and students in another area. Also, this study was a convenience sample, meaning that the survey was distributed and filled out by social work students who availed themselves to the study. With no set date, time, or outside incentive to take the survey, the study relied on individuals within the program to participate when and if they got around to it. This type of sampling method created difficulties with this research study because it limited the amount of participants and the representativeness across a program.

Although the survey was relatively short at 28 questions, reaching participants through email proved challenging. Due to the survey link being inactive in the first invitational email sent out, the researcher believes potential students were deterred from taking the study even when a new email was shortly distributed with an active link. The researcher believes the topic at hand is not one many students would be, or are interested in to participate, especially if they do not know much, or anything at all about labor trafficking. The researcher theorizes that the topic gave way to limitations by sheer exploratory nature of the study, that provided little incentives for participants to want to actively join given complexity of students' lives.

Where data collection spanned over finals, holiday season and beginning of Spring semester, a time when students' attentions are diverted towards other activities, the researcher believes this inhibited participation rate. Another limitation was the lack of validity and

reliability of the survey since the original survey used by Conahan & Kyere did not have any reliability and validity and additionally, this researcher made changes to the survey creating new questions. However, despite the lack of reliability and validity in the instrument used, the exploratory-descriptive nature of this study highlighted additional information that may be useful in future research. Additionally, The Social Work program at The University of Central Florida has a higher ratio of females than males, and the analysis of participants identified difficulty in definitively showing relationships between gender and the medias role of labor trafficking knowledge as well as belief that most labor trafficking victims are male. With an already small sample, limitations increased with only 5 male participants. Furthermore, the University of Central Florida School of Social Work program is comprised predominately of Caucasian students, so there was an uneven representation of perceptions based upon race and ethnicity.

## **Implications**

### **Practice**

As research has pointed out, there is very minimal discussion outside of policy and stating that there is a lack of knowledge of labor trafficking, to identify what individuals, such as social workers, who will come in contact with the victims believe to be true. As social workers, the possibilities and opportunities to come into contact with trafficking victims is high, especially in Florida where many students who participated in this study will end up practicing. As this study has represented, practice may be inhibited with a lack of true understanding of how labor trafficking occurs, and the role men play in victimization. One of the survey questions “As a future Social Worker I feel knowledgeable to aid labor trafficking victims in Florida” resulted in 66.7% (30 of the 45 participants), disagreeing. This is worrisome due to the impact agriculture in Florida has, as well as potential domestic servitude and construction workers who may be victims and may come in contact with social workers that need assistance in Florida. From a practice standpoint, this research can conclude that yes, social work students are knowledgeable that labor trafficking exists, it’s a growing human rights problem, many different forms of labor trafficking exist, not only domestic servitude, and victims are made up of many ethnicities, not just Hispanic, but there needs to be a best approach towards dealing with victims. To further identify best practices, studies should go beyond perceptions to perhaps do case studies or hypothetical scenarios to study how social work students’ would deal with victims in the work force.



## **Education**

Cultural competency is one of the main concepts that are ingrained into social work students at the University of Central Florida, in many different courses throughout the program. The findings in this study identified that Policy course did not cover labor trafficking adequately. However, it is great that participants noted the classes in which they did learn about labor trafficking in which it was covered in depth, because this gives great insight into the curriculum within the program. It is evident that the topic is being discussed across many different mediums especially elective courses, and this is a good launching point for incorporation into required courses. Due to the vast numbers of trafficking, and the sheer prevalence, the researcher believes that labor trafficking should be addressed among social workers in order to effectively aid the victims. As students advance to become clinicians, approaching a trafficking victim is difficult given the psychological and physical abuse, along with substance abuse problems, poor health, and lack of community support and fear of speaking out, so students should be prepared and cognizant of these elements. Victims of labor trafficking are multifaceted, and it takes education around the issue to understand how to approach victims, and help them get access to resources and protections that they need to recover.

Unfortunately, this study showed that the majority of students were unaware of legislation in Florida to aid victims of labor trafficking, which moving forward, can add a component of policy and the macro end of social work that is important to learn in order to become great lobbyists and advocates for the problem. Policy is an important aspect to decrease the prevalence of this problem and would be a great topic for students to advocate at Legislation Education and Advocacy Day in Tallahassee to work toward better policies specifically for labor

trafficking. Social work students' showed a relatively good base of knowledge surrounding the issue, so the researcher recommends that education be put in place to fine tune aspects of labor trafficking such as push factors, and the prevalence of male victims, to provide future clinicians with the knowledge base necessary to work with this client population.

## **Research**

Although human trafficking is gaining more recognition, research is very minimal on human trafficking with social work students and social work professionals, and even more minute on labor trafficking as its own entity. This research and study added to a small base of knowledge, and gained insights to what the next generation of social workers and clinicians are viewing labor trafficking as. As an increasing concern and identifiable human rights problem, this research is vital to working towards moving past documenting biases and perceptions, to create research based on interventions that work, role of traffickers, and victims views to get a well rounded understanding of the problem. By utilizing social work students for this research study, a broad understanding and addition to current research was identified. However, the researcher believes a study should be utilized again to test not just perceptions but actual concrete questions surrounding push factors, environmental and socio-economical roles, and knowledge of how labor trafficking occurs. Further, the researcher believes it is necessary to maybe implement a focus group to identify what future social workers would think in terms of best practices with potential clients of labor trafficking, and reiterate the need to begin identifying male victims and not just women and girls used for sexual trafficking (although men are also included within sexual trafficking as well). Further research should also expand to working with victims who have survived labor trafficking, to understand further the complexities

of physical and mental abuse, living, and working conditions to continue to educate and expand on research surrounding this topic.

## **Conclusion**

The results from this study, although limited by a small sample size, give a snapshot view of areas where social work students' are knowledgeable and understanding of labor trafficking, and areas that need further education and research. This study sought to identify those perceptions and knowledge level students had, but also to identify where their knowledge level was lacking. This study can work as a base for further studies to use specifically catered to labor trafficking, and can be further fine-tuned to study knowledge of presence of male labor trafficking victims, to create more research and understanding. These 45 students displayed a great acceptance for victims of labor trafficking and awareness of the important element of human rights regardless of citizenship should it apply to a labor trafficking victim. It is hoped that social work education incorporates the problems and potential solutions to labor trafficking throughout the coming years. Education on the problem is the first step to identifying areas and trends that occur within Florida on the issue of labor trafficking, and it is recommended that social work courses begin to address it. This study sought to identify perceptions students have, and if, as years pass and research and curriculum covers the topic more frequently, future generations of social workers will be well equipped to deal with this population in an empathic and empowering manner to advocate and create change within this population.

## **Appendix A: Invitational Email to Students**

To whom it may concern:

My name is Margaret Mulhern, and I am completing my Honors in the Major Undergraduate Thesis under the supervision of Dr. Ana Leon. My research topic is social work students' perceptions of labor trafficking in Florida. I am emailing you today to ask for your assistance in the data collection process of my research. Through Qualtrics.com a 28 item questionnaire has been created to collect information on student perceptions from undergraduate and graduate level social work students. All social work students are invited to participate in this study. In compliance with FERPA legislation and to protect the identity of those students that may participate, I will not have any access to your email address or any other personal information that can be linked to your identity. Instead, the BSW and MSW Program Advisors will have sent out this email to all social work students. The Program Advisors will not reveal to me any information on who was invited to participate. This study is anonymous which means that once you complete the survey no one including the researcher will know your identity or be able to track your survey responses to you. Although participation in this study is voluntary and you will not receive any compensation for participating in the study, your participation will help to further explore an important topic. It is anticipated that the survey should take no more than 20 minutes to complete.

Should you wish to participate please go to the link below. The link will bring you to an informed consent that further explains the study and if you are interested in participating, the link will direct you to the actual survey on Qualtrics.com

This invitational email was not dispersed until approved by the University of Central Florida International Review Board.

Thank you for considering this study. Please feel free to contact me at  
margaretmulhern@knights.ucf.edu or my Thesis Advisor Dr. Leon at ana.leon@ucf.edu

- Margaret Mulhern

## **Appendix B: Informed Consent**



Researchers at the University of Central Florida (UCF) study many topics. To do this we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. You are being invited to take part in a research study, which will include about 100 people. You can ask questions about the research. You have been asked to take part in this research study because you are a social work student at the University of Central Florida. You must be 18 years of age or older to be included in the research study. This research is being conducted by Margaret Mulhern, a BSW social work student conducting the study for the Honors in the Major Undergraduate Thesis Program. I will be primarily responsible for collecting the data, but since I am an undergraduate student, my Thesis Chair and mentor, Dr. Ana M. Leon, will closely supervise me.

**Study Title:** Social Work Student Perceptions of Labor Trafficking in Florida

**Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this study is to explore social work student perceptions of labor trafficking. Although there is a fair amount of research on sexual trafficking and human trafficking in a broad sense, there is limited research that has been done on the specific perceptions towards labor trafficking. University students represent a portion of the general public and the newest generation of policy advocates.

**What you will be asked to do in the study:** You will be asked to complete a **28-question** survey that will ask you questions about your perceptions of labor trafficking in Florida, and will also ask you general demographic questions. The survey will take about **20** minutes to complete, and since it is an anonymous survey, you are asked to **NOT** include your name or any other information that will personally identify you.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this study is voluntary. There is no penalty if you choose not to participate, and you have the right to terminate your participation at any point during the study without penalty. You can terminate your participation by not completing the survey. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions in the survey, you may leave them blank. You can begin the survey and then decide that you do not wish to complete it. Participation in this survey does not affect any grades or course grades.

**Location:** You will be directed to a Qualtrics.com link to complete the survey.

**Risks:** The questions in the survey are asking about your perceptions. There is no anticipated risk to you by answering the survey questions. However, should you feel uncomfortable after completing the survey you may seek assistance at the UCF Counseling Center. The Counseling Center is located on the UCF main campus in Building 27, the phone number is (407) 823-2811 and the link is <http://counseling.sdes.ucf.edu/>. The Human Trafficking Hotline is also a point of contact with twenty-four hour anonymous assistance, and can be reached toll free at 1-888-373-7888, or via text at BEFREE to 233733.

**Benefits:** As a research participant you will not benefit directly from this research, except to maybe acquire additional knowledge about the research process. Your participation will help us

further understand perceptions individuals hold about labor trafficking. You will not be compensated for your time in completing this survey or for participating in the study.

**Confidentiality/Anonymity:** This study will be completely anonymous. You are reminded not to include any information that may identify you on the survey. There will be no identifying information collected in the survey that can link your survey responses to your identity. Only Margaret and Dr. Leon will have access to the data. Margaret will keep the data from completed surveys in a locked file cabinet at home for the IRB required 3-year period. All findings from the study reported by the researchers in any papers, or publications will be reported in aggregate/group form and individual responses will not be identified.

Who should you contact if you have any questions about this study?

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem: **Margaret Mulhern**, BSW Student, UCF School of Social Work [margaretmulhern@knights.ucf.edu](mailto:margaretmulhern@knights.ucf.edu) or **Dr. Ana M. Leon**, LCSW, Professor, Thesis Chair and mentor, School of Social Work, P O Box 163358, University of Central Florida, Orlando FL, 32816-3358.

**IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint:** Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

By submitting a completed survey you are agreeing to participate in this study and verifying that you are at least 18 years of age. By completing this survey, you also give the researcher permission to report your responses anonymously in the final manuscript of her Honors in the Major thesis paper to be submitted to the Honors College as part of her course work.

Please retain this form for your records. Thank you for your participation.

## **Appendix C: Labor Trafficking Questionnaire**

**Instructions:** The following questions are about your perceptions related to labor trafficking. Labor trafficking is considered by the United States Trafficking Victims Protection Act (2000) to be the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor services, through force, fraud or coercion. Please use the scale provided below each statement (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Not sure, Agree, Strongly Agree) to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

### **General Questions about Labor Trafficking**

1. The media (television, radio, print, social media) has influenced my knowledge of labor trafficking.

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Not sure, Agree, Strongly Agree

2. Victims of labor trafficking are always Hispanic.

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Not sure, Agree, Strongly Agree

3. Victims of labor trafficking are always women serving as domestics.

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Not sure, Agree, Strongly Agree

4. People are victims of labor trafficking because they lack financial resources.

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Not sure, Agree, Strongly Agree

5. Labor trafficking only involves victims from other countries, primarily Latin America, and not U.S. citizens.

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Not sure, Agree, Strongly Agree

6. Labor trafficking individuals are always illegal immigrants.

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Not sure, Agree, Strongly Agree

7. Labor trafficking individuals come to the United States of their own free will.

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Not sure, Agree, Strongly Agree

8. Sex trafficking is more prevalent than labor trafficking.

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Not sure, Agree, Strongly Agree

9. Most victims of labor trafficking are male.

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Not sure, Agree, Strongly Agree

10. Victims of labor trafficking experience physical abuse.

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Not sure, Agree, Strongly Agree

11. My social work policy course provided adequate information on labor trafficking

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Not sure, Agree, Strongly Agree

12. Labor trafficking victims whether illegally or legally here, should have equal access to basic human rights in the United States.

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Not sure, Agree, Strongly Agree

### **Questions about Labor Trafficking in Florida**

13. People are victims of labor trafficking in Florida because they cannot speak English.

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Not sure, Agree, Strongly Agree

14. In Florida, there is legislation to protect victims of labor trafficking.

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Not sure, Agree, Strongly Agree

15. There is a high prevalence of labor trafficking in Florida.

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Not sure, Agree, Strongly Agree

16. There are organizations that assist labor trafficking victims in Florida.

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Not sure, Agree, Strongly Agree

17. Labor trafficking has no direct effect on crime in Florida communities.

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Not sure, Agree, Strongly Agree

18. Labor Trafficking is a growing human rights problem in Florida.

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Not sure, Agree, Strongly Agree

19. As a future social worker, I feel knowledgeable to aid labor trafficking victims in Florida.

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/Not sure, Agree, Strongly Agree

20. What is your race/ethnicity?

- White/Caucasian (not of Hispanic or Latino origin)
- African American or Black
- Caribbean Black (not including Puerto Rico)
- American Indian, Alaskan Native, or Native Hawaiian
- Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander
- Mexican American/Chicano
- Puerto Rican
- Dominican (Dominican Republic)
- Cuban
- Other Latino
- Other
- Mixed Decent (indicate in textbox below)

21. What is your biological sex? (this is sex assigned at birth)

- Male
- Female

22. I would consider my income level growing up to be

- At or Below Poverty Level
- Middle Class
- Upper Class
- Do Not Know/Unsure

23. What social work program are you enrolled in?

- BSW Junior Year
- BSW Senior Year
- MSW First Year
- MSW Second Year (including Advanced Standing)

24. Please select your current age

- 18-21
- 22-25
- 26-29
- 30-33
- 34-37
- 38-41
- 42-45
- 46-49
- 50-53
- 54-57
- 58-61
- 62-65
- Other age \_\_\_\_\_

25. What is your political affiliation?

- Democrat Party
- Republican Party
- Independent Party
- Green Party
- Tea Party
- Other

26. What is your religious affiliation?

- No Religion
- Christian
- Catholic
- Protestant
- Jewish
- Lutheran
- Baptist
- Islamic
- Buddhist
- Agnostic
- Atheist
- Other (indicate in text box below)

27. Have you taken any course in your social work UCF courses that has included content or major discussions devoted to the topic of labor trafficking for at least 1 class session (equivalent of at least 2 and ½ hours).

- Yes
- No

28. If you answered yes to question #27, indicate which class? (Indicate in text box below)

Thank you for participating in this survey



## **Appendix D: Research Codebook**

Label	Variable	Code	Level
The media (television, radio, print, social media) has influenced my knowledge of labor trafficking.	Question 1	1= Disagree 2= Neutral/Not Sure 3= Agree 99= Unknown	Ordinal
Victims of labor trafficking are always Hispanic	Question 2	1= Disagree 2= Neutral/Not Sure 3= Agree 99= Unknown	Ordinal
Victims of labor trafficking are always women serving as domestics.	Question 3	1= Disagree 2= Neutral/Not Sure 3= Agree 99= Unknown	Ordinal
People are victims of labor trafficking because they lack financial resources	Question 4	1= Disagree 2= Neutral/Not Sure 3= Agree 99= Unknown	Ordinal
Labor trafficking only involves victims from other countries, primarily Latin America, and not U.S. citizens.	Question 5	1= Disagree 2= Neutral/Not Sure 3= Agree 99= Unknown	Ordinal
Labor trafficking individuals are always illegal immigrants.	Question 6	1= Disagree 2= Neutral/Not Sure 3= Agree 99= Unknown	Ordinal
Labor trafficking individuals comes to the United States of their own free will.	Question 7	1= Disagree 2= Neutral/Not Sure 3= Agree 99= Unknown	Ordinal
Sex trafficking is more prevalent than labor trafficking.	Question 8	1= Disagree 2= Neutral/Not Sure 3= Agree 99= Unknown	Ordinal
Most victims of labor trafficking are male.	Question 9	1= Disagree 2= Neutral/Not Sure 3= Agree 99= Unknown	Ordinal

Victims of labor trafficking experience physical abuse.	Question 10	1= Disagree 2= Neutral/Not Sure 3= Agree 99= Unknown	Ordinal
My Social Work policy course provided adequate information on labor trafficking.	Question 11	1= Disagree 2= Neutral/Not Sure 3= Agree 99= Unknown	Ordinal
Labor trafficking victims whether illegally or legally here, should have equal access to basic human rights in the United States	Question 12	1= Disagree 2= Neutral/Not Sure 3= Agree 99= Unknown	Ordinal
People are victims of human trafficking in Florida because they cannot speak English.	Question 13	1= Disagree 2= Neutral/Not Sure 3= Agree 99= Unknown	Ordinal
In Florida, there is legislation to protect victims of labor trafficking	Question 14	1= Disagree 2= Neutral/Not Sure 3= Agree 99= Unknown	Ordinal
There is a high prevalence of labor trafficking in Florida	Question 15	1= Disagree 2= Neutral/Not Sure 3= Agree 99= Unknown	Ordinal
There are organizations that assist labor trafficking victims in Florida	Question 16	1= Disagree 2= Neutral/Not Sure 3= Agree 99= Unknown	Ordinal
Labor trafficking is a growing human rights problem in Florida	Question 17	1= Disagree 2= Neutral/Not Sure 3= Agree 99= Unknown	Ordinal
Labor trafficking has no direct effect on crime in Florida communities	Question 18	1= Disagree 2= Neutral/Not Sure 3= Agree 99= Unknown	Ordinal

As a future social worker, I feel knowledgeable to aid labor trafficking victims in Florida.	Question 19	1= Disagree 2= Neutral/Not Sure 3= Agree 99= Unknown	Ordinal
What is your race/ethnicity?	Race/ Ethnicity	1= White/Caucasian (not of Hispanic of Latino origin) 2= African American of Black, Caribbean Black (not including Puerto Rico) 3= American Indian, Alaskan Native, of Native Hawaiian 4= Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander 5= Mexican American/Chicano, Puerto Rican, Dominican (Dominican Republic), Cuban, Other Latino 11= Other 12= Mixed Descent (indicate in textbox below) 99= Unknown	Nominal
What is your biological sex?	Gender	1= Female 2= Male 99= Unknown	Nominal
I would consider my income level growing up to be	Income Level	1= At or Below Poverty Level 2= Working Class 3= Middle Class 4= Upper Class 5= Do Not Know/Unsure 99= Unknown	Nominal
What social work program are you enrolled in?	Program	1= Bachelors Social Work 2= Masters of Social Work (including Advanced standing) 99= Unknown	Nominal
Please select your current age	Age	1= 18-29 2= 30-41 3= 42-49 4= 50-61 5= 62-65 7= Other Age 99= Unknown	Interval

What is your political affiliation?	Political Affiliation	1= Democrat Party 2= Republican Party 3=Independent Party 4=Green Party 5=Tea Party 6= Other Party 99=Unknown	Nominal
What is your religious affiliation?	Religion	1= No Religious Affiliation 2= Christian, Catholic Protestant, Lutheran, Baptist 3= Jewish 4= Islamic 5= Buddhist 6= Agnostic 7= Atheist 8= Other (Indicate in textbox below) 99= Unknown	Nominal
Have you taken any course in your social work UCF courses that has included content or major discussions devoted to the topic of labor trafficking for at least 1 class session (equivalent of at least 2 and ½ hours)?	Course Material	1= Yes 2= No 99= Unknown	Nominal
If you answered yes to question #27, indicate which class? (Indicate in text box below)	Course	1= indicate in text box 99= Unknown	Nominal

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