Inequality, Trauma, and Prostitution: Developing Trauma-Informed Criminal Justice Responses for Prostitution Survivors

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A Few Quick Notes...

- Please fill out your pre-session and post-session evaluations!
- We could spend DAYS and WEEKS on these topics!
- This session is not a debate about the alleged benefits of prostitution

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Agenda
- Overview of Prostitution
- Language, politics, and rape culture
- Prostitution victims/survivors
- Abuse buyers
- Policy Approaches to Prostitution
- Impact of policies on sex trafficking and safety
- Nordic Model
- 2015 DOJ Guidance
- Applying guidance to prostitution

Objectives
- Explain connections between prostitution and other forms of GBV
- Recognize inherent gender bias of prostitution
- Understand different policy approaches and impacts
- Understand importance of trauma-informed response; identify trauma-informed strategies

Prostitution is an inherently sexist and misogynistic cultural practice: eliminating gender bias in law enforcement includes changing our responses to prostitution.
Listen to Survivors: Language Matters

The term "sex worker" is a political term, not a mere descriptor. It is used to legitimate the sex industry as a morally-neutral business and is akin to referring to those exploited by the sweatshop industry as "textile workers." Added to which, it collapses the differences between different kinds of "sex trading." So, those who run brothels can call themselves "sex workers" and put themselves on the same turf as those who actually have to deal with smelly old men's dicks for a living. — Rae Story, Survivor (2016 Feminist Current interview)

"The women who charge several thousand dollars as 'escorts' or 'courtesans' or have sex with their boyfriends on webcam and repeat the mantra 'sex work is work' are liars and do not represent the majority of us who end up in the flesh trade. They are a sheltered and well-funded minority who are the covers for pimps and men who feel entitled to sexual access to women's bodies and lives." — Survivor, age 19 (NMN website)

Language Matters

**Rape/Battering Culture**

- "Why doesn't she just leave?"
- "Why didn't she just say no?"
- "Some women like sex work."
- "Prostitutes earn a great living."
- "Some women like it rough."
- "If they didn't like it, they wouldn't be doing it."
- "The oldest profession."

**Accountability Culture**

- "Why does he think it's okay to beat her?"
- "Why didn't he make sure he had consent?"
- "Why do men think it's okay to buy sex?"
- "Why do we allow poverty to exist?"
- "Why are men sexually aroused when they see women raped and humiliated?"
- "What are the structural factors and previous traumas influencing their lives?"
- "The oldest oppression."

Language Matters

**Rape/Battering Culture**

- "Child Pornography"  "Child Sexual Abuse Images"
- "Child Prostitute"  "Child Rape Victim"
- "Sex Work"  "Prostitution"  "Sexual Exploitation"  "Non-State Torture"
- "Sex Worker"  "No distinction made between different roles"
- "Sex Buyer"  "Customer"
- "Consumer"
- "Economic Opportunities"
- "Migration"

**Accountability Culture**

- "Child Sexual Abuse Images"
- "Child Rape Victim"
- "Prostitution"  "Sexual Exploitation"  "Non-State Torture"
- "Prostitute"  "Prostituted Person"  "Victim"
- "Trafficker"  "Pimp"  "Batterer"
- "Abuse Buyer"  "Exploitation Buyer"  "Rapist"
- "Perpetrator"
- "Coercion through Poverty"  "Desperation"
- "Sex Trafficking"
Prostitution: A Sex-Based Oppression

- Vast majority of exploited people are women and girls
- #1 risk factor = born female!
- Runaways from abusive or neglectful homes
- High rates of lesbian/bisexual girls
- Women fleeing domestic violence
- Men and boys
  - High rates of gay/bisexual boys
  - Increasing number of boys victimized in child sexual abuse images
  - Transwomen and gender non-conforming people
  - Runaways from abusive homes; kicked out; lost unemployment

Prostitution: A Race-Based and Class-Based Oppression

- Vast majority of exploited people are...
  - Impoverished women
  - Women of color
  - Women from impoverished / developing countries

Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline

"I was locked up ten different times within a two year period. Inside juvenile I met other girls like myself who were there for prostitution, running away, and truancy. All of us were from the same neighborhoods, poor families, and seemed to have the same disposition of trauma, anger mixed with hopelessness. We were not violent girls. We were girls who were hurting..." – Nadiyah Shereff

(Saada Saar et al. 2015)
Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline

- In schools, girls of color often viewed as “disruptive,” etc.
- More likely to be referred for disciplinary procedures
- More likely to be expelled, sent to juvenile detention
- Black girls more likely to be arrested on prostitution charges

Source: Rights4girls 2017

Reframing the Conversation: Trauma-Informed Schools

- Education for teachers, principals, counselors, etc.
  - Impact of trauma on children’s behavior
  - Implicit racism and classism
  - Consistent responses and treatment for all children, regardless of race or class
  - Referrals to counseling and social services instead of juvenile facilities
  - Trauma-informed services in all juvenile facilities
  - Continuing trauma-informed case management
  - Reality of sex trafficking and sexual violence in children’s lives
  - Coordinated and collaborative services (CCRTs or SARTs)
  - School employees
  - Law enforcement
  - Corrections employees
  - Community-based social services / mental health professionals

Reframing the Conversation: Safe Harbor Laws

- Prosecutorial immunity for trafficked youth
  - Children can’t be charged for certain crimes, including prostitution

Source: Rights4girls 2017
What's the Difference…

between a 17 year-old child victim and an 18 year-old adult prostitute?

- Self-esteem
- Self-identity
- Traumatic experiences
- Healthy coping mechanisms
- Poverty and ability to earn money
- Addiction
- Abusive relationships

"That's a hell of a birthday!"
– Marian Hatcher, Survivor and Victim Advocate

Pathways to Prostitution: Impact of Prior Victimization

Child Sexual Abuse → Identity as Sex Object for Men → "Decides" to Become Prostitute

� Andreas Dworkin once said that incest is the boot camp for prostitution. Deep in my bones, I know this to be true. … Turning my first trick was no different from being raped by [my stepfather].” – Jacqueline Lynne

� Traumatic situations can be addictive because they cause a massive release of adrenaline…. I learned from early childhood on: The place where I am afraid, where I am hurt, where I am degraded, is the place where I belong.” – Huschke Mau

Pathways to Prostitution: Normalization and Peer Pressure

I'm not going to say I was beaten up and forced into it. But it was very clever grooming: putting you in the right social circle and making it become like a natural progression. So I felt like I was making my own choices and I couldn't be angry at anybody. A lot of grooming is done that way. It's not a case of I'm going to beat you up unless you go out there and do something, because it doesn't work like that. You make a girl feel loved. You put her in a circle with people she thinks are friends and it just naturally follows from there. – Anne (2019 Nordic Model Now Podcast)
Pathways to Prostitution: Psychological Factors

- Vast majority have histories of sexual victimization (esp. child sexual abuse), domestic violence, physical child abuse, and/or neglect
  - Twice as likely to engage in prostitution when they have histories of abuse
  - Pimps/traffickers very similar to batterers
  - Often recruited/pimped by “boyfriends” or husbands

“It makes sense that being exposed to cold, abusive, or otherwise dysfunctional relationships in your early life might more suitably “prepare” you for prostitution, in the same way that it often prepares people for drug addiction. From what I could tell, all of the women I met in prostitution were from low socioeconomic backgrounds and had some form of abuse, neglect, or dysfunction in their histories.” – Rae Story

Sources: Campbell et al 2003; Cobbina and Oselin 2011; Clarke et al 1998; Farley and Barkan 1998; Potterat et al. 1998; Wilson and Widom 2010; Stark and Hodgson 2004; and so many others!

- Many are addicted to drugs
  - Drug use is entry into prostitution… and prostitution is entry into drug use
  - Drug use is coping mechanism for trauma
  - Previous victimizations
  - Current traumas of prostitution
  - Rehab programs often not trauma-informed

You had to put a mask up, and you had to block everything out and think about money in order to put yourself in such a situation. It was horrible. It was horrible. Something I would never do again….It was directly connected to the drugs. That’s right, because I wanted to get high. I had to get some money. – Beverly

Sources: Clarke et al 2015; Cobbina and Oselin 2004; Irvine 2014; Potterat et al. 1998; and so many others!

Moving Beyond “Force, Fraud, or Coercion”

Palermo Protocol:

Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring 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…. 
Moving Beyond “Force, Fraud, or Coercion”

- Interview with Valiant Richey (former King County Senior Deputy Prosecuting Attorney): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YAaR9rQd_U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YAaR9rQd_U)

“Prostitution… constitutes a violation of the most fundamental of human rights, and embodies harm unimaginable. In practice, prostitution and trafficking are inextricable. There can be no end to trafficking and sexual exploitation without strong abolitionist politics and a firm commitment to dismantling systems of prostitution.” – Autumn Burris, Survivor and Founder, Survivors for Solutions

Types of (Structural) Coercion…

- Poverty
- Addiction
- PATRIARCHY
  - Child sexual abuse and domestic violence
  - Incessant sexual objectification

Pimps are unnecessary when poverty, addiction, and patriarchy exist.

No Clear Line Between Prostitution and Sex Trafficking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prostitution (“Sex Work”)</th>
<th>Sex Trafficking (common definition)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>Sex is exchanged for money, drugs, housing, material items, service, favors, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason for Entry</td>
<td>Poverty or financial need; addiction; homelessness; abusive partner; self-objectify; sex object, prior trauma; belief in normative gender roles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consent</td>
<td>Interactions are consensual?</td>
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<td>• How do we define consent?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Does economic survival, addiction, debt, fear, or trauma-based decisions count as consent?</td>
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<td>Choice</td>
<td>Interactions are chosen?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• How do we define choice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Does desperation due to economic survival, addiction, debt, fear, or low self-worth count as choice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pimps</td>
<td>Pimps provide protection or assistance…?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How do we define protection?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Abuse partners = pimps</td>
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<td>• Pimps = abusive partners</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Impact of Prostitution on Victims

- Prostitution is a response to trauma AND a traumatizing experience
- Causes mental health problems in vast majority of victims
  - PTSD, dissociation, depression, anxiety, hyper-vigilance, suicidal ideation, suicide, etc.
- Causes physical health problems in vast majority of victims
  - STIs, reproductive injuries, loss of reproductive ability, broken bones, strangulation-related injuries, rectal prolapse, traumatic brain injuries, etc.
- Vast majority want to exit prostitution
- Very elevated risk of death
- Murder, drug overdoses, and illnesses

Sources: Burnette et. al. 2008; Cotton et. al. 2002; Farley and Barkan 1998; Farley et. al. 2018; Potterat et. al. 2004; Ross et. al. 2004 and so many others!

"What it felt like to be a 12-year old whore"
by Christine Stark
Survivor, Author, Speaker, Visual Artist
www.christinestark.com

"Joanne every time"
by Catherine Weir
The Politics are Fierce

"Liar! You’re a liar!"
"You don’t listen to sex workers!"
"You’re a prude; you’re suppressing women’s sexuality."
"You’re not a real feminist."
"The johns and pimps aren’t abusive. YOU are abusive because you’re taking away women’s jobs."
"You hate women."
"You’re transphobic."
"You have blood on your hands."
"You’re making all this up."

We are DISTRACTED!

- Arguing among ourselves distracts us from the real problem: men’s demand for women’s subjugation

“This division among women can also be seen as another case of patriarchal divide and conquer... it functions effectively to keep women arguing with each other rather than with those who perpetuate and benefit from the practice” (Overall 1992, 707-708).

“When a woman is poor and hungry, the humane thing to do is put food in her mouth, not your dick.”
– Rachel Moran, Survivor and Author (@RachelRMoran)
Reframing the Conversation: Identifying the Perpetrators

- What happens when we erase the presence of abuse buyers?
  - All our focus is on women/victims
  - Normalization of buyers’ desires and behaviors
  - Erasure of buyers’ reasons for committing violence
  - Normalization of sex industry as “the oldest profession”
  - Normalization of men’s abuse, humiliation, and degradation of women

Pimps and Buyers: Strategically Erased

“No one else is in the frame, handing her the glass of ejaculate or encouraging her to drink it, let alone forcing her to do so. She drinks ejaculate out of her own rectum all on her own, apparently. We are to pay no attention to the man behind the curtain or behind the camera: the central narrative of pornography is that it reveals the inner truth about women, or at least about this particular woman. And indeed, what we see in the picture or film is not that this low and dirty thing was done to her, but that she did it. The pornography thus purports to reveal some essential truth about her, not about someone else’s wrongdoing.” — Rebecca Whisnant (2016, 5)

What do We Know about Traffickers/Pimps?

- Majority are men
- Sometimes part of organized crime
- Very similar to batterers
- Increasing number of “boyfriend” pimps
- Family members and parents
- Increasing number of female traffickers
- Previously trafficked and/or abused
- Current DV victims

Sources: Stark and Hodgson 2004
What do We Know about Abuse Buyers?

- **Vast** majority are men
- All sexual orientations
- All races
- Minority of men (20% in lifetime)
  - 50% of perpetrators buy abuse at least twice
  - 25% of perpetrators = 75% of “the market”
- Wealthy men ($100K+)

Sources: Demand Abolition 2018

Many (at least half) are in intimate relationships (married, steady partners)
- Seek prostitutes to perform sexual acts that partners won’t engage in
- Seek prostitutes to dominate women or children
- More likely to tolerate cheating/adultery

“If my fiancée won’t give me anal, I know someone who will.”

Sources: Demand Abolition 2018; Farley et al. 2015; Janson 2013

Believe in “sexual liberalism”
- Sex is positive part of life
- Society shouldn’t restrict consensual sexual expressions
- Believe “men have needs” — prostitution meet needs

“I punt because I love slim, pretty young girls and at my age there is no chance of meeting those type of girls in my normal life… I punt because I like young, pretty girls who are young enough to be my daughter — or in some cases my granddaughter.” — Buyer on Punternet

Sources: Demand Abolition 2018; Monto 2004
Abuse buyers believe...

- Men are entitled to sex
- Sex is and should be a commodity
- Prostitution is inevitable and natural
- Purchasing of sex = full consent to anything during that time period
- Prostituted people exist to fulfill men's fantasies
- Prostitution is a victimless crime
- Prostituted people enjoy their "work"

"It truly is like living in a fantasy world. Walking through a parlour door and getting to pick from a range of girls to suck my cock and be fucked by me. All my teenage fantasies right there." – Buyer on Punternet

What do We Know about Abuse Buyers?

- More likely to use pornography
- More likely to believe in rape myths
- Discuss prostituted women as "holes" and "it"
- Often abuse, beat, and rape prostitutes
- Murder prostitutes
- More likely to commit violence against women outside of prostitution
- Don't care if women are freely consenting or trafficked
- Don't care if victims are under age; many prefer to buy and assault children

"She obviously doesn't enjoy doing this, and doesn't even make an effort to pretend that she does."

"She was not the least bit interested... cold and monosyllabic... as lively as a corpse."

"My perspective is, if you need to go to the toilet, it is convenient when there is a public toilet around, but certainly by no means do I want to cherish or take this toilet home with me."

"Being with a prostitute is like having a cup of coffee, when you're done, you throw it out."
What Deters Abuse Buyers?

- Not Education!
- Don’t care about trafficking, victimization, trauma, or lack of consent
- Law enforcement raids targeting all sex buyers
- Arrests, Prosecution, Incarceration
- Public shaming
- Billboards, news announcements, etc.
- Massive culture change and education?
  ➢ Must start YOUNG!

Sources: Demand Abolition 2018; Janson 2013; Farley et. al. 2011

Solutions? Interventions? Responses?

1. Criminalization
2. Full Decriminalization
3. Legalization
4. Partial Decriminalization

Criminalization

- All people involved in prostitution can be criminally charged and prosecuted
- Prostituted people
- Pimps, brothel owners, traffickers, and other “business owners” or “entrepreneurs”
- Abuse buyers (“customers”)
- Prostitution is stigmatized
- Sex trafficking is still illegal *

* Belief in clear, obvious line between sex trafficking and prostitution
**Full Decriminalization**
- Sex trafficking is still illegal *
- Criminal laws are repealed
  - Criminal penalties not in effect
  - Other penalties may be in effect
- People involved in prostitution cannot be criminally charged and prosecuted
  - Prostituted people
  - Pimps, brothel owners, traffickers, and other "business owners" or "entrepreneurs"
  - Sex/abuse buyers ("customers")
- Prostitution is normalized

* Belief in clear, obvious line between sex trafficking and "sex work"

**Legalization**
- Prostitution is legally considered legitimate form of business
  - All people involved are treated as legitimate business owners, customers, or employees
  - Sex trafficking is still illegal *

* Belief in clear, obvious line between sex trafficking and "sex work"

**Partial Decriminalization**
(Nordic Model)
- Prostituted people are recognized as trauma victims
  - Trauma-informed approach
  - Law enforcement offers help
  - Connected to social services
  - Not forced into social services
- Abuse buyers and traffickers/pimps are recognized as predators; criminally charged and prosecuted
Partial Decriminalization (Nordic Model)

1. Full decriminalization of prostituted people
2. High quality trauma-informed services for prostituted people
3. Criminal charges for abuse buyers and pimps
4. Stronger legislation for punishing buying, recruitment, pimping, and trafficking
5. Changing structural drivers (poverty, sexism)
6. Holistic education and culture change

End of Poverty + End of Sexism and Misogyny

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Nordic Model</th>
<th>Legalization or Full Decriminalization</th>
<th>Criminalization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Hundreds of countries, including US</td>
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Nordic Model vs. Legalization or Full Decriminalization

What happens when governments legalize/full decriminal prostitution!
Sex trafficking increases!
- Sex/abuse buying is legitimized
- Increased demand
- Two-tier system
- Legitimate “workers”
- Trafficking victims
- Legalization doesn’t address psychological issues
- Victims won’t ask for help
- “Boyfriend” situations not addressed

What happens when governments implement Nordic model!
Sex trafficking decreases!
- Police recognize trauma of prostitution
- Offer services to victims, not arrest
- Threat of prosecution keeps traffickers away
- Look for easier countries
- Sex/abuse buying is stigmatized

Sources: Cho et al. 2013; Sullivan 2005; Raymond 2004
Improving Law Enforcement Responses to GBV

“To ensure that policing is free from bias and to uphold the civil and human rights of the communities (police) serve”

• Providing less protection to victims on the basis of gender
• Failing to respond to crimes that disproportionately harm people of a particular gender
• Offering reduced or less robust services due to reliance on gender stereotypes

Principle 1: Addressing Biases

Principle 1: Recognize and Address Biases, Assumptions and Stereotypes about Victims

Biases, Assumptions, and Stereotypes:
• “Happy Hooker” myth
• “Lonely John” myth
• “Force, Fraud, and Coercion” myth
Principle 2: Trauma-Informed Responses

- Treat All Victims with Respect and Employ Interviewing Tactics that Encourage a Victim to Participate and Provide Facts about the Incident

  Interviewing Strategies:
  - Trauma-informed interactions and interviews
  - Soft interview rooms
  - Offer social services and resources
  - Explain that focus is on buyers and pimps
    - Explain strategies to keep victims safe
  - Understand that victims have experienced significant psychological manipulation (parallels to DV)

Principle 3: Investigations

- Investigate Sexual Assault or Domestic Violence Complaints Thoroughly and Effectively

  Response Strategies:
  - Respond to every prostituted person as a trauma victim
  - Respond to buyers as predators
  - Conduct investigations for consent, coercion, force, weapons, etc.
  - Recognize the complex situations of many female “traffickers”

Principle 4: Classifications

- Appropriately Classify Reports of Sexual Assault or Domestic Violence

  Classifications:
  - If LE agencies used FBI definition of rape, most prostitution cases could be filed as rape cases
    - “Penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, **without the consent** of the victim.”
Principle 5: Referrals

- Principle 5: Refer Victims to Appropriate Services
  - Services:
    - Develop strong relationships between LE agencies and local/national social service providers
    - Many victims will not initially trust LE
    - Some victims need to escape out of state
    - Trauma-informed referrals
    - Safe houses, therapy, etc.
    - Survivor-led or survivor-informed services are essential
    - Never force victims into treatment
    - Just like with DV, not all victims identify as victims

Principle 6: Assailant Identification

- Principle 6: Properly Identify the Assailant in Domestic Violence Incidents
  - Identification of Assailants:
    - Reframing our understanding of prostitution lets us focus on abuse buyers as the driving force of these violent crimes

Principle 7: Holding Officers Accountable

- Principle 7: Hold Officers Who Commit Sexual Assault or Domestic Violence Accountable
  - Hold LE Accountable:
    - LEOs who buy abuse, or assault those they have arrested, send clear message to prostituted people: “You can’t rely on us for help”
Principle 8: Data Collection and Analysis

- Principle 8: Maintain, Review and Act Upon Data Regarding Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence

- Data Collection and Analysis:
  - Sex crime data would dramatically increase if we recognized and categorized prostitution as a violent crime
  - More accurate understanding of rates of SV in our communities
  - More accurate understanding of overlaps between DV and prostitution in our communities
  - More accurate understanding of sex/abuse buyers as serial offenders

Law Enforcement Use of Nordic Model

- National Johns Suppression Initiative
- Stings to arrest abuse buyers, not prostituted people
- Law enforcement educated about focusing on demand and trauma-informed responses
- Prostituted individuals given choice of trauma-informed services or to opt out

http://time.com/4022124/prostitution-nationwide-sting/

Law Enforcement Use of Nordic Model

- Seattle, WA (Valiant Richie, former prosecutor)
- Chicago, IL (Tom Dart, Sheriff)
- Martin County, FL (William Snyder, Sheriff)
- Ipswich, England (Alan Caton, retired detective)
Works Cited

- Department of Justice. 2015. Identifying and Preventing Gender Bias in Law Enforcement Response to Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence. Washington, DC.
Works Cited


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  - www.fsmd.org
  - https://webtextbook.com/AWCSM/
  - +373 78889575

Resources

- Abuse buyers, in their own words: www.invisible-men-canada.tumblr.com
- Nordic Model Information: www.nordicmodelnow.org
- SPACE International: www.spaceintl.org
- Survivors for Solutions: www.survivors4solutions.com
- Prostitution Research and Education: www.prostitutionresearch.com
- Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW): www.catwinternational.org
- Girls Educational and Mentoring Services (GEMS): www.gems-girls.org
- Persons Against Non-State Torture: www.nonstatetorture.org
- National Center on Sexual Exploitation: www.endsexualexploitation.org
- Dignity Journal: https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/dignity/
Resources
A Preface to the “Chart of Preferred Terminology for Sex Trafficking and Prostitution”

Lisa L. Thompson  
Vice President and Director of Education and Outreach  
National Center on Sexual Exploitation

The authors of a curriculum for supporting trauma survivors provide the following insight into the significance of terminology: “Words are powerful. They define the limits or boundaries around ideas, beliefs, and interactions. The way you talk about something becomes the way you think about it, just as the way you identify someone becomes the way you think about that person” (Day, Vermilyea, Wilkerson, & Giller, 2006, p. 17). In the aftermath of the Jerry Sandusky child sexual abuse investigation at Penn State, Salon writer Mary Elizabeth Williams, illustrated this concept in her powerful plea to journalists to learn the difference between the terms abuse and sex. Williams (2012) wrote, “When you’re dealing with a story that involves rape or harassment or abuse or molestation or child porn or anything that falls under the rubric of criminal behavior, you should call those things rape and harassment and abuse and molestation and child pornography. You know what you shouldn’t call them? Sexy sexy sex scandals, that’s what.” As Williams rightly observed, improper use of the term “sex scandal” in media reporting serves to sensationalize violence and rape, and as her remarks alluded, it masks the reality of crime, abuse, and victimization.

Only a quick survey of the social and political landscape makes it abundantly clear that the words we use to discuss issues matter. For instance, in 2010 radio commentator Dr. Laura Schlessinger announced she was leaving talk radio after receiving a barrage of criticism for a conversation with a caller about race relations in which she articulated the N-word 11 times (Standora, 2010). More recently, Rep. Todd Akin of Missouri incensed many and jeopardized his senatorial political aspirations with his use of the phrase “legitimate rape” (Saletan, 2012). While these well-known incidents are somewhat exceptional for their malapropos choice of words, in the public square there is an almost daily battle over terms. Global warming, climate change, creation care, pro-choice, pro-life, reproductive rights, redistribution, homophobia, handicap, and disability are but a few of the terms that carry great political, philosophical, and even theological freight into our public discourse.

The issue of sex trafficking and its cognate prostitution do not stand outside this lexicographical melee. In their case, most of the conflict revolves around the question of whether or not selling sex is a job, or whether there is something innately exploitive about the sale of sex (Miriam, 2005; Jenness, 1990). If one subscribes to the view that selling sex is indeed a legitimate form of work then he or she will likely use a term such as “sex work” (Jenness, 1990). If, however, one believes that the commodification of sex is dehumanizing then he or she will likely utilize phrases such as “prostituted persons.”

My purpose here is not to rehearse the debate between these two perspectives, but to provide context for the “Chart of Preferred Terminology for Sex Trafficking and Prostitution” that follows. As a proponent of the Abolitionist view that prostitution is innately harmful, the chart suggests terms that I believe describe both the harm and dehumanization of commercial sex, but which attempt to preserve the dignity of those caught up in it. I believe that the recommended terms also square completely with an orthodox Christian worldview—repudiating the sale of sex as outside of God’s design for human sexual relations while embracing the Imago Dei in us all.

Additionally, the chart is not exhaustive. Since first developing it in 2006, I have realized there are euphemisms and maxims in common use that also mask the harms of prostitution and/or serve to normalize them, one of which I will address here. All too often articles on the subject of prostitution contain the cringe worthy cliché about prostitution being “the world’s oldest profession.” In response to one such article, I shared the following critique with members of the Initiative against Sexual Trafficking email listserv:

...the phrase about prostitution being “the world’s oldest profession” is more than cliché; it is a slur against women. This tired...
and worn out phrase trivializes the exploitation inherent in prostitution, makes the veiled suggestion that if women have always been prostituting why worry about it, and further insinuates that women have always been “whores.” . . . While millions of women and girls around the world do engage in prostitution for their livelihoods, the majority prostitute out of the will to survive and the lack of viable employment options. To call such desperate attempts at survival a “job” or a “profession” is to call eating out of a garbage dumpster a gourmet meal (Thompson, 2012).

Trauma experts have explained how labeling is hurtful: “Reducing the essence of a person’s identity to a label is dehumanizing and alienating. No one word or role can encompass our true identity, but a word can easily eclipse our true identity” (Day, et al., 2006, p. 19). Thus it is hoped that the “Chart of Preferred Terminology” will aid the anti-trafficking and Christian social work communities by encouraging the use words and phrases that illuminate reality while respecting the individuals we serve.

An important note in closing: the “Chart of Preferred Terminology” frequently utilizes the words women and children and uses pronouns in the feminine form. Use of female-oriented words and pronouns should not be misconstrued to suggest that only females experience commercial sexual exploitation, and use of the term children should be understood to encompass both boys and girls. Tragically boys and men are also ensnared and exploited in the various manifestations of the commercial sex trade; this is a terrible fact that all advocates would do well to acknowledge and address. Even so, the use of feminine terms has been maintained because as Bullough and Bullough (1987) explain:

The most obvious generalization that can be made is that in all societies and periods that have been examined, institutionalized prostitution has been aimed at a male clientele and the overwhelming majority of prostitutes have been women. Though male prostitutes have existed in many societies, they have primarily served other males whose sexual preference was males or who turned to fellow males in special circumstances where there was a lack of contact with women. Only occasionally has the male prostitute who serviced a female clientele been mentioned in literature; to document the existence of such individuals on any scale has been impossible (pp. 291-292).

Therefore, given that the institution of prostitution overwhelmingly exists for men and that females make up the majority of those sold for sex, the use of words connoting the female gender has been maintained so as to not obscure the patriarchal foundation on which the sex trade rests.

REFERENCES


# Chart of Preferred Terminology for Sex Trafficking and Prostitution

*Lisa L. Thompson*

*Vice President and Director of Education and Outreach*

*National Center on Sexual Exploitation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms Not to Use &amp; Why</th>
<th>Terms to Use &amp; Why</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex work, sex workers, commercial sex work, commercial sex workers, adult services provider, adult sex provider, transactional sex, prostitute, child prostitute:</td>
<td>Prostituted persons, prostituted women (or children), women (or children) in prostitution; prostituting; sex industry survivors:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• These terms have been in use for the last thirty-plus years. The term originated in the early 1970’s from a mix of libertarian activists and sex industry profiteers (Leidholdt).</td>
<td>• Those who view prostitution as a form of violence and as inherently exploitative advocate for the adoption of terms such as those above. While accurately conveying the activity that is occurring (i.e. prostitution), the terms neither label the person involved with a pejorative term, nor normalize prostitution as just another form of work. They are indicative of prostitution as an experience, not a state of being. These terms help express the idea that persons in the sex industry are caught up in the exploitive system of the prostitution industry.</td>
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<td>• Carol Leigh (also known as “Scarlet the Harlot”) a prostituting woman and pornographer claims to have coined the term “sex worker” (Leigh).</td>
<td>• “…abolitionists conceptualize prostitution as an institution fundamentally based on men’s sex right, that is, men’s entitlement to demand sexual access to women” (Miriam, 11).</td>
</tr>
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<td>• The term “sex work” and its derivatives have but one purpose – to normalize prostitution, cast it as an occupation like any other, one that any woman can choose as freely as she may choose to become a teacher, lawyer, or doctor. Sadly, the pro-prostitution movement has succeeded in getting this terminology popularized in the vernacular of popular culture, public health, social service, and even anti-trafficking sectors. This change has occurred without difficulty since the one truth in their rationale is that the term “prostitute” contributes to and exacerbates the stigma, discrimination and violence experienced by persons in the prostitution industry.</td>
<td>• “The ‘sex work’ model of agency obstructs the reality that it is men’s demand that makes prostitution intelligible and legitimate as a means of survival for women in the first place” (Miriam, 9).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Given conditions of extreme poverty for women, pro-sex-work advocates claim that women choose prostitution to survive, and that recognition of this choice as a form of labor is essential to the goal of securing health and safety standards for women in an industry that otherwise remains unregulated and</td>
<td>• The “sex work” model obscures and normalizes the physical, psychological, and spiritual harms of prostitution by treating them as “on the job” hazards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Children used in prostitution should never be referred to as “child prostitutes.” Children cannot give</td>
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unprotected, leaving sex workers particularly vulnerable to such ‘work hazards’ as violent assaults, rape, and sexually transmitted diseases” (Miriam, 4).

- “Applied to prostitution, then, the stigmatization of prostitutes – rather than the structure of the practice itself – becomes the basic injustice to be redressed by pro-sex-work advocates who now construe prostitutes as ‘sexual minorities’” (Miriam, 7).

### Sex sector, state sex economy:

“The State facilitates and regulates on behalf of the client and operates as a facilitator/pimp in ensuring the supply is continued under the guise of protecting the rights and health and safety of the victims. The State profits from the industry. Legal and illegal collusion of State and State officials continues. The State cannot be ‘neutral’ in this matter. If it legalizes and regulates prostitution, it promotes prostitution and protects the consumer not the victims” (O’Conner and Healy, 5).

The word “sector” can be used to mean part of or a division of a national economy. When used as “sex sector,” the sexual exploitation inherent in organized sexual exploitation is obscured and absorbed into mainstream economic interests of the state.

### Organized sexual exploitation, prostitution industry, commercial sex industry:

The phrase “organized sexual exploitation” is a good substitute for referencing sex in terms of economy. It more accurately conveys what the “sex sector” is – a massive organized system for the exploitation and commercialization and profiteering from sex.

Additionally, the phrase “prostitution industry” is useful, since it names the sex industry for what it is: prostitution in assorted formats – whether pornographic material (recorded prostitution), virtual prostitution (web-based prostitution), or indoor and outdoor prostitution venues.

### Forced prostitution, voluntary prostitution, forced trafficking, voluntary trafficking, migrant sex workers:

“Pro-sex-work” advocates press for the distinction between “free or voluntary” and “forced” prostitution.” They conflate sexual trafficking and labor trafficking on the premise that sex is a form of work (i.e. “sex work”). From this perspective, only cases of “forced prostitution” are considered sexual trafficking, and women who “choose” to engage in prostitution, it is said, should be allowed to “migrate for purposes of sex work” or to engage in “voluntary prostitution” or “voluntary trafficking.”

### Prostituted Persons, Commercial sexual exploitation:

The result of splitting prostitution into so-called forced and voluntary prostitution is the creation of two classes of prostitution: A) bad prostitution (i.e. forced) and B) good (or less bad) prostitution (i.e. voluntary). Members of Class A are viewed as deserving of aid and assistance since they are considered “innocent” and as having no culpability in their exploitation. Class B persons however, are often viewed as “sex workers” — individuals exercising sexual autonomy.
• These terms overlook the dehumanization of persons inherent to prostitution.

• They shift the burden of proof from the traffickers to their victims. All a trafficker need do is to produce a consent form signed by the victim, and he’s off the hook.

• They contribute to the false and restrictive interpretation of trafficking victims as being only those persons who have suffered such things as kidnapping, brutal beatings, being held at gunpoint, being chained to a bed or locked up in hidden rooms. However, traffickers routinely use subtler forms of coercion. Professionals in the fields of torture, domestic violence, child sexual abuse, and commercial sexual exploitation know that torturers, abusers, pimps and traffickers use these coercive methods to groom and reduce their victims “to the condition of slavery.”

• “One cannot have the right to violation. One only has the right to be free from violation” (O’Conner & Healy, p. 12).

• In their pithy paraphrase of feminist author, Kathleen Berry, O’Connor and Healy (2006, p. 12) explain that, “Consent is not a good divining rod as to the existence of oppression, and consent to violation is a fact of oppression. Oppression cannot effectively be gauged according to the degree of “consent,” since even in slavery there was some consent, if consent is defined as inability to see, or feel entitled to, any alternative. If, for example, consent was the criterion for determining whether or not slavery is a violation of human dignity and rights, slavery would not have been recognized as a violation because an important element of slavery is the acceptance of their condition by many slaves.”

• “There is a virtual dictionary of lies that conceal the harm of prostitution: voluntary prostitution, words that imply that she consented when in fact, almost

These assessments are often made with little to no knowledge about how an individual came into prostitution, with no consideration of prostitution as a system of exploitation, or of prostitution resulting from a lack of choices as opposed to a variety of viable options.

“The argument that women choose to be in prostitution is not an acceptable way to dismiss the harm of prostitution. We do not dismiss rape and battery by saying that women choose to walk down the street alone at night. Or, if a woman chose to get married, we do not dismiss battery that occurs within the marriage by saying she chose to be with him” (Stark and Hodgson, 27).

The “forced-voluntary” split is false dichotomy maintained by:

1) those unaware of harms of prostitution and the techniques used to recruit people for prostitution;

2) proponents of the sex industry, from sex industry moguls, pimps and national governments, motivated by the desire for profit;

3) consumers of commercial sex who must rationalize their behavior;

4) human rights advocates and pseudo-feminists who assert that women have a right to prostitute and that women gain power and agency in doing so; and

5) Persons who are more concerned about the culpability of each woman in prostitution than with the systems of inequality and injustice that thrust the majority of women into this lowest caste of society.

The veneer of choice embedded in term “voluntary prostitution” enables society to blame the women, label them as whores, and look the other way.
always, she had no other survival options than prostitution. The redundancy of the term forced trafficking insinuates its opposite — that somewhere there are women who volunteer to be trafficked into prostitution” (Farley, xvii).

| Client, customer, hobbyist, john, punter, trick, date, curb crawler: |
| These words are frequently used to describe the male buyers of commercial sex acts. However, use of these terms normalize their role in commercial sex — as if buying sex is as normal and legitimate an activity as buying a car or dining at a restaurant — and obfuscate their true identity as abusers and perpetrators. |
| Prostitutor, purchaser, purchaser of commercial sex acts, commercial sex buyer, perpetrator: |
| These terms do not mask or normalize the nature of the male role in the purchase of commercial sex acts. |

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The “Chart of Preferred Terminology for Sex Trafficking and Prostitution” originally appeared in the curriculum *Hands that Heal: International Curriculum to Train Caregivers of Trafficking Survivors* published by the Faith Alliance against Slavery and Trafficking (FAAST) in 2007. A revised version of the chart, including an introductory preface, was published in 2012 in the journal of the North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW), *Social Work & Christianity*. The version of the chart printed here has been modified from its 2012 presentation in *Social Work & Christianity*; the preface was revised in 2013. The documents are reprinted with the permission of FAAST and the NACSW. For those seeking the original sources they are as follows:

Pornography, Humiliation, and Consent

Rebecca Whisnant¹

Abstract
This article considers the role of humiliation in contemporary pornography, arguing that it constitutes a severe form of harm to many female pornography performers. It further contends that the apparently consensual nature of much humiliating pornography exacerbates its harm to the humiliated performers.

Keywords
pornography, trauma, humiliation, consent, torture

On the cover of a pornographic DVD, a young white woman clad only in skimpy underpants kneels and smiles coyly over her shoulder at the camera. Her name is Jamie, we are told. In her hand is a glass containing a milky substance. The tagline reads “Watch hot sluts drink spooge out of their asses!” The copy on the back cover gleefully clarifies the mechanics: “Nut in her butt and watch her push it out and swallow!” The film is entitled Anal Cumsumption 4 (Curtis, 2005).

What is happening to this woman, to Jamie? Many things, no doubt, but prominent among them is that she is being humiliated. But what does that mean?

The Concept of Humiliation

In ordinary conversation, the concept of humiliation is often used interchangeably with that of embarrassment. “I was so humiliated,” one says, “when my child had a tantrum at the grocery store,” or, “when I realized I’d had spinach in my teeth during my presentation.” The notion of unwelcome public exposure is central to both concepts. Torres and Bergner (2012), in fact, make such exposure central to distinguishing the feeling of humiliation from that of shame: “Humiliation, in their view, “happens (and is felt) when something of a private, shameful nature is publicly exposed . . . this added element of public exposure or ‘unmasking’ renders humiliation far more acutely disturbing and destabilizing than shame alone” (p. 494).

The distinctive core of the concept of humiliation, however, is captured in its dictionary definition. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, to humiliate is “to make low or humble in position, condition, or feeling.” The term’s etymological root is the Latin humilis, meaning low. Merriam Webster echoes this emphasis: “to reduce to a lower position in one’s own eyes or others’ eyes: mortify.”

This aspect of being made low not only in others’ eyes, but in one’s own as well, in turn illuminates the Oxford English Dictionary’s (OED) second definition for ‘humiliate’: “to lower or depress the dignity or self-respect of.” Similarly, philosopher Statman (2000), observes that “Humiliation is seen as first and foremost an injury to the dignity of its victims, an injury usually described in figurative language: in humiliation, one ‘is stripped of one’s dignity’, one is ‘robbed of’ dignity, or simply ‘loses’ it” (p. 523). Margalit (1996), who makes nonhumiliation the centerpiece of his concept of a “decent” society, defines humiliation as “any sort of behavior or condition that constitutes a sound reason for a person to consider his or her self-respect injured” (p. 9). The theme of compromised dignity or self-respect, then, looms large in philosophers’ understandings of humiliation.

Humiliation in Pornography

Humiliation, then, includes the elements of unwelcome exposure, of being made or brought low, and of having one’s dignity and/or self-respect compromised. Anal Cumsumption 4 certainly seems to qualify, and this example is far from being an outlier. As feminist critics have emphasized for decades, pornography’s primary ideological message is that however a

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woman is being degraded and humiliated onscreen, she loves it and craves it (Dines, 2010; Dworkin, 1980). In fact, as the most cursory sampling of titles on any online pornography portal will demonstrate, the humiliation of women is a virtual constant in contemporary mainstream pornography (Dines, 2010). Here a woman crawls on hands and knees; there a penis is shoved in her mouth sideways, distending the face, so that she looks ridiculous; and everywhere, she intones, “I’m such a filthy little whore.” Often enough, humiliation is advertised explicitly, as in the various clips offered under the “humiliation” tag on xvideos.com. These include “spiteful food humiliation,” “messy humiliation,” “terrorizing humiliation of [woman’s name],” “extreme humiliation,” “dehumanizing humiliation,” and “facial punishment humiliation” (Xvideos.com, n.d.).

In other cases, particular sexual acts are coded as humiliating. Male ejaculation in a woman’s face, widely read by both consumers and others as a tactic of degradation and ownership, is a common end to pornographic scenes (Dines, 2010). Particular sexual acts are also described in ways that make their humiliating function clear. For example, double penetration (DP)—in which two men penetrate a woman simultaneously, one vaginally and one anally—is advertised as follows in the promotional copy for DP Nation:

DP Nation is in full effect, and we’re going to double-stuff some muffins for the next four hours! So come and have some double penetration fun with Sharka Blue, Michelle B., Maya Gates, Katja Kassin, and more! We’ve got all holes covered in this movie, and these girls will have nowhere to run when we stick it to them in the pink and in the stink! (Cdniverse, n.d.)

The reference to “stink” here, like the numerous references to feces in other descriptions of anal penetration, functions to degrade and humiliate a woman. Relatedly, the prevalence of humiliation in contemporary pornography is perhaps best demonstrated by the fact that, according to a recent content analysis, 41.1% of the scenes in top-selling and top-renting porn films contained “ass to mouth” (Bridges, Wosnitzer, Scharrer, Sun, & Liberman, 2010). These are scenes in which a man removes his penis from a woman’s anus and puts it directly, without cleaning, into her mouth or the mouth of another woman. A more total humiliation is difficult to conceive.

The humiliation theme gets an especially vicious twist in the wildly popular Bangbus series and its many imitators (Conesa, 2004; Swartz, 2004). In these films, several men are shown driving around a city and coaxing young women into their van by offering them money to perform sexual acts. (Though the scenes are clearly staged, the viewer is encouraged to believe that these are “real girls” rather than paid performers.) The woman often shows some reluctance, but relents fairly quickly. Once she has performed the requisite sexual services, she gets out of the van expecting to receive the money she was promised; instead, the men drive off laughing, leaving her alone by the side of the road. In this series, a scenario of terror for women—being harassed and propositioned on the street by a group of men trying to lure you into their van—is turned into a joke. The joke’s punchline is that, although all women are really whores under the surface, we are too contemptible even to merit payment. The particular women featured—and, by extension, women generally—are thus revealed to have a lower status than either they themselves or others might have assumed.

A particular title from the Bangbus series exemplifies a theme common in humiliating pornography: that of a woman who thinks too highly of herself being taken down a notch. A clip on the site entitled “Protestor exercises her right to take cock” is described as follows:

We come across this blonde babe … and she is in full protest mode. Holding up a sign and everything! We offer her a ride, and offer a lending hand … or should we say, offer her a HARD DICK!!! Hahaaaa! It’s cool that this babe wants to fight for her rights and all that, but all we care about here at Bangbros HQ is picking up fresh gullible pussy. She gets the Bangbus treatment just like the other broads. She wants equality? Well, she fucking got it! Hard cock down her throat and up her sweet lil cunt. Her perfect pink snatch got drilled while she thought she was doing it for the right cause. Jokes on her, cause we dropped her off like all the rest. This nympho was no different! (Bangbros.com, n.d.)

Interestingly, the clip itself makes clear that the political issue in question is one of race, not gender: The young (white) woman holds a sign reading “I can’t breathe,” a reference to the 2014 police killing of African American street salesman Eric Garner (Baker, Goodman, & Mueller, 2015). She thus assumes the role of a citizen who has both a political opinion and the right to air that opinion in public space. The perspective of the pornographers on this assumption is clarified at a later point in the clip, when a man is shown holding her nostrils closed while she fellates him. Meanwhile, he chants, “She can’t breathe! She can’t breathe!” (Bangbros.com, n.d.).

It is thus clear that humiliation is a major theme in contemporary mainstream pornography. Why does this matter? It matters, first of all, for the women who perform in pornography, and that is my main focus herein. What is the impact of humiliating performance on those from whom such performance is extracted?

The Harm of Humiliation

In the spring of 2004, during the American invasion and occupation of Iraq, hundreds of photos were leaked to the press and international human rights organizations. The photos depicted the organized and sadistic abuse of Iraqi prisoners by U.S. soldiers at the Abu Ghraib prison. When the Abu Ghraib scandal broke, many noted that, while some of the Iraqi prisoners were physically harmed, the horror of the abuse lay at least equally in their humiliation. Men were made to crawl on the floor wearing leashes, to wear panties on their heads, to masturbate for the camera, to have other men urinate in their...
mounds, to climb naked onto a pyramid, all so that pictures could be taken and passed around and crowed over (Clarke, 2004; Hersh, 2004).

Many survivors of torture, in fact, report that the worst element was not the pain but the humiliation (Baer, 2007; Shapiro, 2003; Sussman, 2005). Physical pain ends, but one remains haunted by the image of oneself exposed, soiled, splayed, begging, in abject passivity and helplessness. Thus, as psychologist Shapiro (2003) observes, “shame is a major psychological issue for survivors of torture” (p. 1131). Indeed, Luban (2009) points out that humiliation is central to the evil of pain itself—in general, and especially when the pain is humanly inflicted and watched by others: “acute pain is itself degrading because it collapses our world and reduces us to mere prisoners of our bodies . . . when it happens in front of spectators, the experience is doubly shameful and humiliating” (pp. 223–224). Thus, as I will emphasize shortly, the documentation and distribution of humiliation in pornography likely exacerbates its harm.

Bufacchi (2004) makes a similar point about violence generally, observing that, “What makes violence bad is not only the experience of injury and suffering per se . . . but also the social meaning of being harmed” (p. 171). That social meaning, he claims, is largely the sense of degradation, of insult, of being conquered or defeated. And again, this suffering lasts far beyond the violence itself: “From the victim’s point of view,” Bufacchi claims, “one of the worst aspects of violence is that he or she has to live with the violence, that is to say with the awareness of their vulnerability and subordination in a power relationship” (p. 177). Similarly, Shapiro (2003) says of torture survivors that it is not only what is done to torture victims, or what they are forced to do, that produces lasting shame, but rather “their very helplessness and inability to resist . . . It is the fact of subjugation itself that is damaging to self-respect” (p. 1132).

Despite the prevalence of humiliation and subjugation in contemporary pornography, the likely effect of such treatment on women performers goes widely unremarked. As I will suggest shortly, this may be partly because the performers are assumed to consent to such treatment, and their consent is in turn assumed to obviate or at least lessen any psychological harm or trauma. I believe this latter assumption is unwarranted, as I will explain; for now, I simply emphasize that the very nonresistance that normally accompanies consent can be part of the distinctive harm of humiliation.

**Exposure and Documentation**

In pornography, women are not only humiliated; their humiliation is documented and that documentation is widely distributed. Here, again, we can look to the Abu Ghraib scandal as an analogue. As was widely recognized at the time, the horror of Abu Ghraib lay not only in the humiliation of the victims, but in its gleeful documentation. Both the process of documentation and its results—the taking of pictures, and the pictures themselves—deepened the humiliation. Thus, Laustsen (2008) observes that, “In Abu Ghraib, the camera literally worked as a weapon of war” (p. 130). The photographs, he contends, “may be seen as part of a particularly cruel form of torture, in which the act of exposure multiplies the feeling of shame” (p. 123).

That picture-taking so often plays a role in humiliation is not surprising, given the dynamics of humiliation itself. Shapiro’s analysis of humiliation emphasizes the central role of exposure therein. According to Shapiro (2004), there are two core factors to the concept of humiliation: nakedness and degradation. The humiliated person is personally exposed, vulnerable, and essentially naked. That nakedness can take a physical form . . . or an emotional form . . . What turns the beauty of physical and psychological nakedness into a gut-wrenching emotional asphyxiation is the experience of degradation. While in a vulnerable posture of nakedness, the victim of humiliation is debased, devalued, and dehumanized. (pp. 1–2)

The role of public exposure in effective humiliation was fully recognized by U.S. forces in Iraq. Laustsen (2008) points out that a pamphlet given to American personnel before their departure for Iraq contained the following passage: “Do not shame or humiliate a man in public. Shaming a man will cause him and his family to be anti-Coalition. The most important qualifier for all shame is for a third party to witness the act. If you must do something likely to cause shame, remove the person from view of others” (p. 127). As Laustsen observes, these guidelines were eventually turned on their heads, treated not as cautionary notes but as “a recipe for how to create as much shame in the prisoners as possible” (p. 127).

The humiliation tactics used against War on Terror detainees, Luban (2009) observes, are “‘Ego Down’ and ‘Futility’ tactics—the Army’s names for tactics designed to break the detainees by making them feel worthless and filling them with despair” (p. 223). It should not surprise us, then, that (again according to Luban), “a recent medical study found absolutely no difference between the traumatic psychological after-effects of physical torture and humiliation” (pp. 222–223). Baer (2007) goes even further, claiming that humiliation tactics “seem to have longer-lasting and more deadly effects on the soul and mind . . . than does physical torture. Humiliation and degradation of the individual may lead to a completely destroyed personality whose recovery is practically impossible” (p. 32).

Torres and Bergner (2012), in their article on the nature and consequences of severe public humiliation, note that such humiliation can result in major depression, suicidal states, extreme rage, severe anxiety, and even psychosis. In their list of conditions that affect how deeply a particular episode of public humiliation is likely to damage its victim, they include how public the humiliation is, and how publicly supported it is. As I have suggested, photographically documenting humiliation makes it highly public, especially when (like pornography or the Abu Ghraib images) the images are then widely disseminated. Unlike the Abu Ghraib images, however—which
were broadly (though not universally) condemned—pornography is widely accepted as part of the cultural mainstream (Dines, 2010) and is used by its consumers as an aid to sexual gratification. Thus, it is fair to say that the degree of public support for its humiliation of women is high, likely exacerbating the trauma to the women humiliated therein.

**Pornography and the Role of Consent**

In some contexts, like that of Abu Ghraib, we recognize easily that being humiliated is terrible and traumatic, indeed a severe violation of human rights. We recognize further that the harm and trauma are exacerbated by the fact that the humiliation is documented—that pictures and films are taken and circulated.

What, then, of humiliation in pornography? In the eyes of many, the case here is quite different—since, unlike the Abu Ghraib prisoners, the women in pornography are *consenting*. Here is the form where she signed on the dotted line, all grown up at 19 or 21. She’s a big girl who knows what she’s doing; next topic.

There are two important issues to raise here; I will mark one and set it aside for present purposes, while focusing primarily on the second. The first issue is whether it is true, as many assume, that most or all women in pornography are freely consenting. Feminist critics have pointed out both the conceptual and practical complexities of consent itself (Whisnant, 2004) and the numerous factors—social, cultural, economic, and personal—mitigating the free consent of many women who perform in pornography (Dines, 2010; Jensen, 2007; Simonton & Smith, 2004). In short, there are many women in pornography who do not meaningfully consent to perform therein (at all, or to perform specific acts in specific films), and there are many more whose consent to do so is substantially compromised. Nonetheless, there are many who do at least formally consent, and who, since pornography is their livelihood, seek out opportunities to perform—including opportunities that involve being humiliated on camera. In the ensuing discussion, I mean to call attention to the likely psychological effects not only of the humiliation itself but of their formal consent to such treatment.

This brings me to the second issue: the psychological impact of having consented to humiliating treatment. The tendency to assume that consent makes an important difference to the harmfulness of humiliation is widespread. Some theorists even seem to assume that nonconsent is part of the core meaning of humiliation itself. Lindner (2001), for instance, writes that, “The common-sense, everyday meaning of humiliation . . . is the experience of a punishing exposure to the negative judgment of other people in circumstances that are forced upon the victims concerned” (p. 51).

As Clarke (2004) has observed, public discourse around the Abu Ghraib photos included frequent observations about their similarity to pornography: ‘‘Pundit after pundit referred to the Abu Ghraib pictures with evocative phrases: ‘like a bad porno flick,’ ‘the S&M war,’ ‘dirty pictures from Iraq,’ etc.’’ (p. 204). Such connections, however, were rarely accompanied by any serious criticism of pornography, either as one of many influences on the Abu Ghrain torturers or as a site, itself, of damaging and humiliating treatment of persons. This ‘‘protective shell built around our multi-billion dollar porn industry,’’ Clarke says, explains what she calls a ‘‘howling silence at the heart of US liberal discourse on ‘the Abu Ghraib thing’’” (p. 203).

While the connections and disconnections between pornography and the U.S. military’s humiliation and torture of Iraqi prisoners are many and complex, it seems likely that the average person, if asked what the key difference is, would say that it lies in the presence or absence of consent. Some scholars make this claim explicitly; for instance, Apel (2005), in her article comparing the Abu Ghraib photos to lynching postcards during the Jim Crow era, takes care to draw a sharp distinction between either one and commercial pornography, observing (among other things) that in both of the former cases, unlike in porn, “the victims are not willing actors” (p. 93).

Thus, the core assumption is as follows: the Abu Ghraib pictures, and the humiliating treatment they depict, are terrible and torturous because those so treated and depicted did not consent (either to the treatment or to the depiction). Women in pornography, by contrast—it is assumed—do consent, and so what is done to them, although no doubt often unpleasant, is not really so bad.

But this gets it exactly wrong, missing just what is so destructive about humiliation in pornography. The presence of consent does not make the humiliation here better, it makes it worse—not worse all things considered, but worse in a particular and important respect. To begin explaining why, let me return to the case of torture.

Sussman (2005) has powerfully argued that what is distinctively awful about torture is the way that it engages the victim’s active participation in that which harms and violates her. Torture, Sussman says, “forces its victim into the position of colluding against himself through his own affects and emotions, so that he experiences himself as simultaneously powerless and yet actively complicit in his own violation. So construed, torture turns out to be not just an extreme form of cruelty, but the pre-eminent instance of a kind of forced self-betrayal” (p. 4).

Following Sussman, Wolfendale (2009) points out that this process need not involve the physical mutilation of a person’s body or even the direct application of physical force; in fact, she observes, many of the techniques of so-called torture lite—including extended sleep deprivation, stress positions, isolation, and humiliation—“are designed to make this process of forced self-betrayal even stronger” (p. 58), in that they rely centrally on the victim’s active participation. Thus, Wolfendale concludes, “Far from always being more moderate and more humane than other torture methods, torture lite not only can cause extreme suffering but aims to make the victim feel responsible for it” (p. 57).

In a chilling echo of the “Anal Cumsumption” series and related themes in pornography, more than one Abu Ghraib survivor has reported being forced to insert a finger in his anus and lick it (Danner, 2004). If Sussman (2005) is correct, then these men suffer vast and encompassing harm from such
humiliation: “In the most intimate aspects of his agency,” Sussman observes, “the sufferer is made to experience himself not just as a passive victim, but as an active accomplice in his own debasement” (p. 23).

If, as Laustsen (2008) says (following Sussman), “it is the active contribution from the victim that provokes the feeling of shame” (p. 129), then how much worse must the shame and humiliation be when force is absent—when, for whatever complex combination of reasons, one consented or chose to be here and to do this dirty and degrading thing?

Now think back to Jamie: No one else is in the frame, handing her the glass of ejaculate or encouraging her to drink it, let alone forcing her to do so. She drinks ejaculate out of her own rectum all on her own, apparently. We are to pay no attention to the man behind the curtain or behind the camera: the central narrative of pornography is that it reveals the inner truth about women, or at least about this particular woman. And indeed, what we see in the picture or film is not that this low and dirty thing was done to her, but that she did it. The pornography thus purports to reveal some essential truth about her, not about someone else’s wrongdoing. And the pornography lasts; it is out there; she lives with it, defined by it, both in her own mind and in the minds of others.

Shapiro (2004) writes movingly and insightfully of the complex structure of constraint and choice in standard cases of humiliation, and of the resulting harm. “No one other than the humiliated party,” he observes,

is forcibly moving his or her body parts to masturbate in front of prison guards, to lick urine off the floor as a fraternity hazing ritual, or to admit defeat and sign a truce... On one level, as the humiliated party... I am choosing to engage in activities that will reduce my sense of self-pride and dignity. Yet at another level, constraints on my situation—whether a gun at my head or a mad desire to join a fraternity no matter the cost—make alternative behaviors extremely risky. Nevertheless, the pain of humiliation comes in part from the fact that I am apparently choosing to degrade myself. I could resist—or I could have. Now, all I have is a terrible feeling of degradation and regret. (p. 2)

The analysis herein calls into question not only the psychological sequelae of public humiliation in particular contexts, but its very definition and structure. In their analysis of public humiliation, Torres and Bergner (2012) contend that it standardly involves what they call a status claim. “By this,” they explain, “we mean simply that [the humiliated persons] are either (a) presenting themselves to others as legitimate occupants of certain social positions in relation to other persons, or (b) that they are soliciting others to grant them... such positions” (p. 493). The status claimed may be as a member of a particular valued group, or of a social or occupational role, or simply the status of a respected human being. In episodes of public humiliation, Torres and Bergner claim, the status claim fails publicly, due to being rejected by one or more persons who have the status necessary to so reject it. Furthermore, and crucially,

Not only is the status claim or bid rejected, but the basic standing of the claimant to even make such a bid or claim is rejected. In these rejections, the individual is branded a pretender; that is, someone who had no business making the initial status bid or claim. With this added element, these messages become humiliating. (p. 494)

Torres and Bergner (2012) offer several vivid examples that illustrate the structure they have in mind: a teenaged boy humiliated by the high school in-crowd, a worker humiliated by a doctor from whom she seeks status as an injured worker entitled to compensation, a previously respected judge humiliated by the exposure of his own use of drugs and prostituted women. In each of these cases, the status claim is clear, and the humiliation lies in its public rejection.

The case of consensual humiliating pornography, however, calls into question whether Torres and Bergner (2012) are correct in making status claims central to the nature and structure of public humiliation. Jamie, for example, makes no status claim; on the contrary, she seems to contract away her entitlement not to be treated in a deeply humiliating manner. It is, if anything, the opposite of a status claim; it is closer to being a denial of one’s own status as a respectable human being. By this, of course, I do not mean that Jamie ceases to be worthy of respect, but simply that—contra Torres and Bergner’s model—her treatment as something subhuman occurs not following a status bid for something better, but rather following what seems to be her volunteering for such treatment.

Because Torres and Bergner (2012) do not recognize this kind of case as a variant of public humiliation, they do not say whether consent is a factor rendering such humiliation more damaging to the psyche of the humiliated. Again, my considered hypothesis here is that it does; this hypothesis merits further research.

The Message of Humiliating Pornography

I have suggested that the distinctive and lasting pain of humiliation—a pain that can be severe enough to constitute torture—is likely to be suffered to an extraordinary degree by many women who perform in pornography, precisely because they have consented to the humiliating acts. In what remains, I briefly point to the broader cultural and ideological impact of humiliating pornography.

I wrote above, in a sarcastic vein, that Jamie drinks ejaculate out of her own rectum voluntarily; apparently that is just the kind of girl she is. The next question is, what kind of girl is that? What are the rest of us left to think of Jamie and all the others like her who populate this multibillion dollar industry of images? Such women’s apparent consent leaves us grasping for explanations. The most readily available such explanations make it seem that the women are not really being degraded after all, but simply treated in ways congruent with their own nature and will.
These women humiliate themselves willingly—perhaps (we might speculate) because they place little value on their own personal dignity, or perhaps because they are too stupid even to realize that they are being insulted and degraded. Almost certainly, they are economically desperate (in a culture that sees such desperation, especially in women, as an occasion for contempt rather than empathy and help). Take your pick, mix and match: at the end of the day, they are just “whores” who have it coming.

We cringe at the Abu Ghraib images because in them we see people who have personal dignity to take away, who are being wrongfully brought low. By contrast, Jamie, for instance, is not being brought low; she just is low. We can tell, because she does it all willingly. She reaches for the glass of ejaculate, she smiles, she guzzles. What would degrade others does not degrade her; rather, it simply reflects and gratifies her nature. She is not a human being; she is only a woman.

In discussions about pornography, well-meaning people often aver that, however distasteful it may be, it must accept pornography so long as it depicts only consenting adults. That is, the absence of consent is assumed to demarcate the boundaries of the harmful and unacceptable. My analysis here, however, points to the damaging poverty of this approach. Images of women accepting and even welcoming their own debasement and humiliation are profoundly destructive, not only for the particular women so depicted, but for women generally. After all, pornography purports to reveal the down-and-dirty truth—not about men, or capitalism, or patriarchy, but about women, who we are and what we are for. And like all propaganda, it uses individuals as stand-ins for entire targeted groups (Jensen, 2011).

Thus, at the level of ideology, Jamie is not just a woman, but Woman. In the world of pornography, and in the world pornography has helped to make, Jamie’s willing humiliation shows that she has no human dignity to lose, that she is only a woman after all.

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Exited Prostitution Survivor Policy Platform

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Exited Prostitution Survivor Policy Platform

Abstract
Survivors of prostitution propose a policy reform platform including three main pillars of priority: criminal justice reforms, fair employment, and standards of care. The sexual exploitation of prostituted individuals has lasting effects which can carry over into many aspects of life. In order to remedy these effects and give survivors the opportunity to live a full and free life, we must use a survivor-centered approach to each of these pillars to create change. First, reform is necessary in the criminal justice system to recognize survivors as victims of crime and not perpetrators, while holding those who exploited them fully responsible. Second, reform is necessary to assist survivors in finding fair employment by offering vocational training, financial counseling, and educational scholarships, as well as offering employment opportunities that utilize survivors' vast array of skills and interests. Finally, standards of care for survivors exiting prostitution should focus on supporting survivors in our journeys and support short- and long-term resources that empower us. These systemic changes are necessary to recognize survivors as the valuable human beings we are and to support survivors in fulfilling our vast potential.

Keywords
prostitution, human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, exit services, criminal justice reform, Nordic model, fair employment, standards of care, trafficking survivors, survivors of prostitution

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EDITORIAL

EXITED PROSTITUTION SURVIVOR POLICY PLATFORM

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ABSTRACT

Survivors of prostitution propose a policy reform platform including three main pillars of priority: criminal justice reforms, fair employment, and standards of care. The sexual exploitation of prostituted individuals has lasting effects which can carry over into many aspects of life. In order to remedy these effects and give survivors the opportunity to live a full and free life, we must use a survivor-centered approach to each of these pillars to create change. First, reform is necessary in the criminal justice system to recognize survivors as victims of crime and not perpetrators, while holding those who exploited them fully responsible. Second, reform is necessary to assist survivors in finding fair employment by offering vocational training, financial counseling, and educational scholarships, as well as offering employment opportunities that utilize survivors’ vast array of skills and interests. Finally, standards of care for survivors exiting prostitution should focus on supporting survivors in our journeys and support short- and long-term resources that empower us. These systemic changes are necessary to recognize survivors as the valuable human beings we are and to support survivors in fulfilling our vast potential.
The sexual exploitation of prostituted individuals has resulted in the inability of those who survive to attain the full potential of life, freedom, and happiness. Remediying the lasting effects of this form of exploitation has yet to be realized fully. We need a survivor-centered movement that focuses on the consequences of experiencing sexual commodification and creates solutions to ending sexual exploitation. A survivor-centered approach will provide concrete solutions to the harm caused by prostitution. The core tenets of the platform we (a collaborative group of survivors spanning races, ages, lived experiences, professional expertise, and political leanings) have identified centers on respect, dignity, and the simple fact that consensual sex is not bought, sold, or traded.

Our intention in issuing this unified declaration is to urge stakeholder groups to endorse comprehensive policies based on three Pillars of Priority: 1) Reforms to our nation’s criminal justice approach to prostitution; 2) Fair employment for survivors; and 3) Essential standards of care for people exiting the sex trade.

Pillar 1: Criminal Justice Reforms

Structural violence, including institutionalized racism and patriarchy, perpetuate the damage done to survivors of prostitution. Most central of these structures is the criminal justice system’s insistence on the arrest and prosecution of prostituted people. Simply put, the criminal status of prostituted people prevents us from meeting our basic needs and keeps us trapped in “the life.” In the United States, people with criminal convictions are barred from jobs ranging from cutting hair to caring for toddlers. A criminal record will prevent you from getting a student loan or qualifying for public housing. Virtually any potential employer can access this information, so prostitution convictions routinely lock us out of decent jobs let alone professional careers.

Laws creating a process for prostituted people to erase these convictions are known as “vacatur” provisions, from the Latin term meaning “to set aside a judgement.” Vacatur laws are essential to undo injustices that many survivors face when they are branded as criminals, rather than as victims of crime. As of March 2018, 39 U.S. states had vacatur laws allowing victims of sex trafficking to erase old prostitution convictions (“Protecting Victims,” 2018). Few states have vacatur provisions allowing a prostituted person to eliminate her criminal record without proving she is also a victim of human trafficking.

As it stands, the language and application of the U.S. legal regime on prostitution becomes a proverbial millstone around our necks. Essential services to help people in prostitution escape “the life” are often tied to a conviction itself. For example, a court can facilitate access to services, such as substance abuse assistance or mental health treatment as part of resolving a charge against a defendant, thereby tacitly acknowledging that the defendant was in a position of vulnerability when arrested. However, treatment programs and other requirements to complete probation or parole, are not always a form of diversion which allows for charges to be dropped upon successful completion. Rather, the prostitution survivor will
typically be convicted, with the successful completion of court ordered require-
ments only reducing jail or prison time, with the survivor still winding up with a
criminal record, despite getting an opportunity to begin recovery via court-ordered
treatment. Without an opportunity for vacatur and the elimination of a criminal
record, the American legal system has labelled the survivor a criminal, a brand that
can last forever.

The impact of the criminalization of women within the sex trade reduces us to
an object in pejorative “humor”; we are the whores, hookers, and sluts at the butt
of jokes; and, the scapegoat for men’s bad behavior. Not coincidentally, we are also
subjected to oppression, hardship, and mistreatment beyond measure. We are ex-
ploited by sex buyers and pimps, harassed by the public, abused by insensitive po-
lice and uninformed judges. The situation we find ourselves in is unjust, and we
are condemned to suffer because we are seen as perpetrators instead of survivors.
Our suffering is not negligible or diminutive in nature; we bear the consequences
of policymakers’ negligence in acknowledging our status as victims. The burdens
we carry due to criminalization include poverty, homelessness, economic inequity,
racial inequity, and myriad additional forms of trauma and oppression. Systemic
violence and institutionalized oppression in our social, legal, and economic insti-
tutions have pushed us to the margins and seared our exploitation into our souls,
branding us just as surely as many of us were branded—through coerced tattoos
declaring ownership—by our exploiters.

Historically, some of the most vulnerable within our society have been crimi-
nalized. Evidence of this can be found in the alarming rates of incarceration of
prostituted women, who are often incarcerated for related offenses like drug off-
fenses and other minor offenses. Even when we are classified as victims of traffick-
ing we are too often charged with non-violent co-occurring crimes, further aggra-
vating our negative circumstances, increasing the barriers to exit, and increasing
the likelihood of re-entering into prostitution. Often it is not until after the explo-
tiation has occurred, and the violence inflicted is finally deemed “bad enough” that
law enforcement will bother to classify the exploited person as a victim. This does
little to prevent us from being forced back into prostitution, and it does nothing to
abate the stigma and associated depression that becomes a very real part of our
day-to-day lives.

While there has been some focus of late on clearing wrongful criminal records,
greater pressure must be applied to the judicial system to recognize that we are the
victims of exploitation in the first place. It should not be as hard as it typically is to
prove that we are victims, as even a dual victim-perpetrator status in the eyes of
the law makes getting on with our lives impossible. Diversion and exit services
mean little to nothing when you are branded a felon.

At the same time, when the crime of exploiting us holds such little significance
that it is categorized as a simple misdemeanor, our perpetrator is a “john,” our
suffering is dismissed as minimal, and the men who bought us are freed of blame
for the many negative consequences we suffered. This is not justice—it is exploita-
tion. When it is a more severe crime to buy a stolen car than it is to buy our bodies
for sex, we assign greater value to a stolen vehicle than to the lives of women and
girls trapped in the sex trade.

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) must do in practice what it was
created to do: protect victims of exploitation (22 U.S.C. § 78). We cannot criminal-
ize the victim. Nor is it enough to combat the trafficker when more traffickers will
rise to power in response to “demand.” The sex trade is incredibly lucrative. Unlike drugs and other illegal goods, which can be sold and abused only once, our bodies can be sold and abused time and time again. The TVPA was designed to help survivors of exploitation, not to be a token law. The TVPA states that victims “should not be inappropriately incarcerated, fined, or otherwise penalized solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked” (22 U.S.C. § 7101(19)). We demand robust examination of existing federal and state laws looking to establish uniformity in the legal responses to victims of this crime. Not merely to clear or expunge our criminal backgrounds but to completely vacate our convictions and arrests in totality. Remedying these legal wrongs is the only fair and just recourse for the wrongs that have been done to us.

The Nordic Model, increasingly known as the Abolitionist or Equality model, is the most effective policy framework for achieving restorative justice when adjudicating prostitution-related offenses. The Nordic Model puts into practice what countries around the world recommended through the Palermo Protocol Article 9. This provision states that”

[p]arties shall adopt or strengthen legislative or other measures, such as educational, social or cultural measures, including through bilateral and multilateral cooperation, to discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation of persons, especially women and children, that leads to trafficking (Palermo Protocol, 2000).

The Nordic Model recognizes that human trafficking is a demand driven industry, and it can only be eradicated by focusing on demand. The Nordic Model decriminalizes all those who are prostituted, provides exit services, and makes buying people for sex a criminal offence (Nordic Model Now, 2018). Buyers are those principally responsible for commercial sexual exploitation—we have a responsibility as a society to acknowledge as much. Thus, perpetrators must bear the burden of making victimized individuals whole, whether through increased fines and fees to pay for victim services or by bearing the shame that is inherently the buyer's. A model by which the perpetrator of the crime is the one paying for the restoration of his victims can be self-sustaining, reduce re-offending, and negate the incentive for traffickers and pimps to continue supplying new victims to this system of violence.

We see this policy approach as the only viable solution to the devastating inequity arising from prostitution, seeing as it has become a normalized societal practice. It upholds the values stated in the Preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which affirms

faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and [is] determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom...

Prostitution in all its forms is an abuse of power and is defined as such in the Palermo Protocol under Article 3 (Dempsey, 2015; Palermo Protocol, 2000). Particularly relevant is Article 3(b), which states that:

[t]he consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where
any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used (emphasis added) (Palermo Protocol, 2000).

The buying of sex embodies the power imbalance inherent to the sex trade, which in itself is a profound violation of human rights. The sex trade, both legal and illegal, is a form of gender-based violence and a violation of our fundamental human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1949, Article 1 states that “all humans are born free and equal in dignity and rights” (United Nations, 1948). Nowhere is this more routinely violated than in the sex trade, whose victims are predominantly women and girls from the most vulnerable populations. UDHR Article 3 declares everyone has “the right to life, liberty and security of person.” There is no liberty or security within the sex trade; though it is euphemistically called “the life,” it is no life at all. UDHR Article 4 says no one “shall be held in slavery or servitude and that slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all forms.” Yet, the sex trade still exists unabated across the U.S. Finally, UDHR Article 5 demands that no one “shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.” If there is any other facet of society where human life is systematically degraded as it is in the sex trade, it would be as socially unacceptable as murder.

What little that has been done by governing bodies to stop this crime is often willfully ignorant at best, and blatantly misogynistic at worst. As survivors, we will not stand by and watch our sisters endure this any longer.

**Pillar 2: Fair Employment**

One of the most persistent barriers to economic independence even after leaving prostitution is lack of gainful employment for survivors. This is not simply a problem of lackluster resumes, and certainly not due to a dearth of jobs. Fair employment opportunities for survivors in public agencies, both governmental and non-profit, are practically nonexistent. The government has a responsibility to survivors, and one way to make good on it is to ensure that its anti-trafficking funding is prioritized for agencies that support survivor employment in all anti-trafficking programs. To aid this process, government and public-private partnerships should increase opportunities for education and professional development for survivors.

There are innumerable organizations worldwide with missions stating an intent to combat human trafficking, prostitution, and/or exploitation of human beings. Yet there must be follow-through on dedicating resources to—and prioritizing—the sustainable employment of survivors. The survivors they passionately fight for must be at the table when discussing policy and strategic planning, not merely at trafficking events to tell their stories. Soliciting funding for survivors and non-survivor employees must be well thought out, respecting the survivors’ contributions, and going beyond titles of “consultant” or “advisor.” We want to be treated as key stakeholders with vested interests in the outcomes of the movement.

While we do not speak for all survivors, we, as seasoned women within the movement to end exploitation, have noticed a trend among survivors new to the movement that they think that speaking engagements are as good as it gets. It is our responsibility as survivors to work with these organizations to create a realistic, thoughtful, and healthy way of moving an audience to donate.

We must work together to support newly-disclosing survivors so they know when it’s safe for them to share their painful and often re-traumatizing
experiences. We, who have shared our stories, know that it must come from a place of confidence and our stories must tell a larger story than just our own. Telling our stories should not feel like self-mutilation. We, as a movement, must move beyond storytelling, honoring survivors for their lived experiences.

The United States Advisory Council on Human Trafficking Annual Report of 2016 was the first ever report of its kind (U.S. Department of State, 2016). Written by 11 survivors of trafficking appointed by President Obama, it described five areas that need to be addressed to combat the crime. The fifth area is “Help Survivors Get On Track For Success In Work And Life.” The Advisory Council suggested offering more economic opportunities for survivors, whether in the form of vocational training, financial counseling, educational scholarships, or employment in federal agencies as staff or consultants. This collaborative group of survivors simply asks that the government takes these recommendations and put them into action.

Pillar 3: Standards of Care

There are many complex and varied issues that affect survivors of trafficking, both medical and otherwise. An article by Lederer and Wetzel (2014) found alarming rates of injury and illness among sex trafficking victims. It does not require a stretch of imagination to infer that these adverse physical and psychological health impacts are the direct result of trauma from victims’ time within the sex trade. For example, a peer-reviewed article on traumatic brain injury (TBI) found that prostituted women suffer rates of TBI at much higher rates than the national average (Farley, Banks, Ackerman, & Golding, 2018).

We have already mentioned that survivors are subjected to sustained torture within the sex trade. Torture is defined as “the action or practice of inflicting severe pain on someone as a punishment or to force them to do or say something, or for the pleasure of the person inflicting the pain,” a phenomenon close to what is regularly described within prostitution experience. Through the lenses of our own experiences, torture and prostitution are synonymous. Those who bought us felt they had purchased our rights away from us. To them, we were no longer human; we were a disposable commodity, an object. Prostitution is torture, as its essence removes that which makes us human.

Each of these complex issues and more that affect survivors become a major challenge to providing comprehensive services (Vatne Bintliff, Stark, Diprete Brown, Alonso, 2018). Exit services must holistically address the devastating consequences surrounding and leading to prostitution—not just the act of being bought or sold. By the same token, our care cannot focus solely on our past, but must extend into our futures.

Services must treat conditions seriously in both a short- and long-term manner, providing resources to replace coping mechanisms in favor of coping skills. Services cannot just be designed to help us survive, but to empower us to control our lives. Short-term treatment should focus on managing and reducing frequency of distressing symptomology. Long-term treatment should allow for empowerment and liberation from continued oppression, neither of which is possible without social support. Much of the time, long-term services infantilize us and further our stigma by promoting our own negative self-image. We must strive for compassionate services that are strengths-based, and which push for more than just survival.
It is evident and disturbing to many of us within this collaboration that the movement to end exploitation has become sterile, clinical, and overly professionalized; as a result, it has forgotten that it began from the rape crisis movement. In a way, we as a community, have forgotten our foremothers who taught that healing goes far beyond a clinical diagnosis of mental health conditions or substance use disorder. Healing is liberation from systems of oppression. Therefore, the movement to end sexual exploitation, sex abuse, and sex trafficking should support survivors in their journeys to become their own leaders, rather than hushing us back to be handmaids of our own movement. This movement was built by us, for us, and on our backs... yet we are not the ones driving it forward.

**Conclusion**

We as survivors of the sex trade have overcome the horrors of serial rape. We have overcome traumas from physical abuse. We have overcome re-victimization through serial arrest. We have overcome loss of self and family. We have overcome police brutality. We are overcomers and as such we are compelled to speak truth and effect change on behalf of our community and those still trapped in the sex trade. We, as a community, must counter the false dichotomy of “free” and “forced.” The intersection of prostitution, pornography, the stripping industry, and illicit massage are inextricably linked with sex trafficking. Without the demand for commercial sex there would be no sex trafficking. This is not “conflation”; it is simply fact. Survivors of exploitation are survivors of exploitation and we do not differentiate between legality and illegality of the vehicle used to commit atrocities against us. Commodification of human beings anywhere—whether on a street, via internet, in a brothel, at a massage parlor, at a strip club or through pornographic media—is the same to us. Humanity sees us as its least common denominator, the non-human disposable sex object.

We deserve more than this. We seek the best humanity has to offer in the realization of life. If we remove sexual commodification from existence, we end other systems of oppression far-reaching beyond prostitution and human trafficking. When we listen to and involve survivors in all policies that affect exploited persons, we find our humanity, manifested in priceless and endless contributions to society. Our empowerment is ours to take. Recognize that our empowerment, our freedom, our own choices belong to us and us alone. Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote, “If you put a chain around the neck of a slave, the other end fastens itself around your own” (1841). We are taking off the chains around our necks, so we can in turn assist you in removing the chains from yours, because your liberation is tied to our liberation.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The authors thank the following people for reviewing and providing critical feedback and funding a thoughtful feminist salon setting for our seedling thoughts to grow as this year-long labor of love—and pain—manifested: Alex Trouteaud, Autumn Burris, Catharine MacKinnon, Eleanor Kennelly Gaetan, Lauren Hersh, Swannee Hunt, Melissa Luna, Rachel Moran, Shea Rhodes, Stephanie Mersch, and Taina Bien Aimé.
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Marian Hatcher has worked for the Cook County, Illinois Sheriff’s Office (CCSO) for 14 years currently serving as human trafficking policy analyst and victim advocate. She coordinates CCSO’s anti-trafficking efforts such as the “National Johns Suppression Initiative,” a nationwide effort with over 100 arresting agencies and more than 200 partners targeting sex buyers as the driving force of sex trafficking and prostitution. She also coordinates and provides direct service for victims of human trafficking, on call 24/7. Hatcher has provided training to local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies including the Federal Bureau of Investigations and U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Senator Richard Durbin honored her as part of Black History Month, 2018, in the Congressional Record. Last year, Hatcher was granted Executive Clemency by Governor Bruce Rauner for drug and prostitution offenses related to her exploitation. Hatcher’s story of survival and policy leadership have been featured in numerous documentaries including Oprah Winfrey Network’s “Prostitution: Leaving the Life”; Sheryl WuDunn and Nicholas Kristof’s “A Path Appears”; Mary Mazzio’s “I am Jane Doe”; The Guardian’s “The Trap: The Deadly Sex Trafficking Cycle in American Prisons” and, most recently, “From Liberty to Captivity.” She received the 2016 Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award for Volunteer Service from President Barack Obama. In 2014, she was awarded Shared Hope International’s Path Breaker Award, presented to dedicated policy makers tackling the demand that drives domestic minor sex trafficking.

Alisa L. Bernard
Alisa Bernard is director of education and partnerships for the Organization for Prostitution Survivors (OPS), Seattle, Washington, managing the organization with two co-directors. For OPS, she focuses on community engagement and education regarding sexual exploitation, as well as partnerships, fund development, and policy advocacy. She developed a unique online skill building and empowerment mentoring series for survivors of commercial sexual exploitation (CSE). Since exiting prostitution, she has advised organizations and agencies across the U.S. including Demand Abolition and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. She is a member of King County’s Ending Exploitation Collaborative team, serves as a member of King County’s CSEC Taskforce, and sits on the SAFE in Washington advisory board. She is an MPA candidate at The University of Washington. Her commentary has been featured in The Seattle Times and other online and print media.

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Allison Franklin offers support and direct mentorship to women, men, and children who are survivors of sexual exploitation and the commercial sex industry. Her involvement began in Texas, but she is now called on across the country, as a speaker and survivor consultant for the National Criminal Justice Training Center. One area of expertise is the co-morbidity of drug abuse and mental health issues with sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. Franklin works with numerous stakeholders to find innovative solutions to abolish modern slavery.

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Audrey Morrissey is associate director of My Life My Choice in Boston, Massachusetts, and director of the National Survivor Leadership Program at My Life My Choice. She also serves as the primary national trainer for the organization. Morrissey created My Life My Choice’s
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**Beth Jacobs**

Beth Jacobs is a survivor of child sex trafficking who earned a degree in social work, leading to over 15 years helping victims of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation become survivors and leaders. She spearheaded the Offenders’ Prostitution Program (John school) in St. Paul Minnesota; started Willow Way in Tucson, Arizona, to help sexually exploited people; and collaborated with county courts and police in Arizona to create Project Raise, as an alternative to jail for prostituted and sex trafficked people. At the national and state levels, she has advocated for more effective legislation, especially to update laws against human trafficking. She is a National Survivor Network policy champion and has worked for the Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking (ATEST). Jacobs is a field trainer for Truckers Against Trafficking as well as a field instructor for social work students at Winona State University and the Alfred Adler Institute. Jacobs was a speaker at the first International Meeting for Human Trafficking Survivors held in Cali, Columbia in 2014.

**Cherie Jimenez**

As an activist and survivor, Cherie Jimenez used her own experiences to develop the EVA Center, Boston, Massachusetts (evacenter.org), a survivor-led exit program for women caught in systems of prostitution and sex trafficking, which she founded in 2006. Today, in partnership with the City of Boston, it provides one of the few survivor-run emergency housing programs in the United States. Jimenez is a member of SPACE, an international group of survivors working toward an end to sexual exploitation by advocating for passage of Nordic Model legislation. She has traveled internationally with other survivors to educate policymakers since SPACE began in 2012. Through the EVA Center, Jimenez is an active member of the Paris-based Coalition to Abolish Prostitution, which brings together 23 organizations from 18 countries to create a world free from commercial sexual exploitation.

**Kathi Hardy**

Kathi Hardy founded Freedom From Exploitation (FFE) in 2002 to create change in San Diego County, California, for people exploited and victimized by the sex industry. It is one of the oldest survivor founded, survivor led organizations in the U.S. The organization grew out of Hardy’s work with the San Diego City Attorney’s Office, where she served as a peer advocate and created a recovery group program. Today, women and girls are referred to FFE by the superior courts of San Diego, juvenile court, probation officers, attorneys, and social workers. Girls from the child protection system have also been served by FFE as well as transgender Latino women who participated in a unique pilot program. For the last two years, FFE has worked closely with women incarcerated and under detention using a 10-lesson curriculum written by human trafficking victims for trafficking victims called “Ending the Game.”
**Marlene Carson**

Dr. Marlene Carson is a victim, survivor, minister, and founder of Rahab’s Hideaway in Columbus, Ohio. At age 15 she became one of the thousands of girls and young women exploited daily. Through faith in Christ and sound biblical teaching, Marlene’s misery became a ministry to hurting teen girls and women who seek to be free. Rehab’s Hideaway, founded in 2008, is a restorative housing program that provides critical solutions and a way out for those who have become victims of human trafficking. Carson’s work has been featured by the CNN Freedom Project as well as on the Oprah Winfrey Show. She has educated audiences around the world about the scope and nature of human trafficking; trafficking routes, trends, and patterns; and rule of law issues such as corruption, money laundering, pimp control, and transnational criminal activity.

**Nikki Bell**

Nicole Bell is the founder and chief executive officer of Living in Freedom Together, Inc. (LIFT), a survivor-led, non-profit organization based in Worcester, Massachusetts, dedicated to helping individuals exit and recover from commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. Her focus began with women who were exploited in street-level prostitution, recognizing the lack of appropriate, compassionate, and individualized services available. Bell provides direct service and advocacy. She is in the process of opening a treatment program for survivors who are suffering with Substance Use Disorder. Bell also serves as co-chair of the Worcester Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (WAASE); sits on the Executive Council for World Without Exploitation; co-facilitates the DAWN (Developing Alternatives for Women Now) program, and the CARD (Community Action to Reduce Demand) program. Bell has received numerous awards for her work including: Worcester Magazine’s Hometown Hero, WAASE Advocate of the Year 2016, and Worcester Woman of Consequence 2016. She is featured in *The Guardian’s* recent documentary “The Trap: The Deadly Sex Trafficking Cycle in American Prisons.”

**Rebecca Bender**

Rebecca Bender is the founder and CEO of the Rebecca Bender Initiative (RBI, [www.rebeccabender.org](http://www.rebeccabender.org)). After escaping nearly six years of human trafficking, she wrote her first book, *Roadmap to Redemption*, followed by her recent curriculum “Elevate.” RBI’s advanced training has equipped the FBI, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Former President Jimmy Carter, local law enforcement, medical professionals, service providers, and faith communities across America. Bender serves as an advisor to both the Oregon Department of Justice Human Trafficking Council and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. She is also the recipient of the Female Overcomer Award, Unlikely Hero Award, Hero to our Generation Award and multiple FBI and Congressional recognitions. Bender has been featured on the Today Show and NBC Deadline Crimes, as well as in Forbes, Huffington Post, and Sports Illustrated. She lives in the Pacific Northwest with her husband and their four daughters, and is currently finishing her Master’s degree.

**Rebekah Charleston**

Rebekah Charleston is executive director of Valiant Hearts, a Texas-based non-profit dedicated to eradicating sexual exploitation. She is also a consultant with the National Criminal Justice Training Center, an honors graduate student, an advocate for victims of human trafficking, and a mother. At the age of 17, she ran away and became a victim of human trafficking for more than ten years. She had multiple traffickers and was not able to escape until federal authorities finally became involved. In 2012, she completed a
program offered by Valiant Hearts. Charleston is the recipient of the Survivor Leader Award in 2016, and has been featured in many media accounts of human trafficking including Deadline Crimes.

**Shamere McKenzie**

Shamere McKenzie is the chief executive officer for Sun Gate Foundation, an anti-trafficking organization that provides educational opportunities for survivors of human trafficking. She is also co-chair of the victim’s services committee of the Maryland State Human Trafficking Task Force. This year, McKenzie responded to a call from the Ministry of Justice in her birthplace, Jamaica, and currently serves as an ambassador for Jamaica in the fight against human trafficking. She has trained a variety of professionals on how to identify and respond to victims of human trafficking, including the FBI, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Diplomatic Security, as well as churches, hotels and airline staff. A documentary featuring her experience in sex trafficking “False Promises” was released in Aruba last September. She serves on the speaker’s bureau for the Fredrick Douglas Family Initiative and Survivors of Slavery organizations. Shamere is member of the National Survivor Network, the GEMS Survivor Leadership Institute, the Survivor Alliance and a mentor to survivors of sex trafficking. McKenzie is a 2015 graduate of Loyola University Chicago with her Bachelor of Science degree in criminology and criminal justice

**Vednita Carter**

Vednita Carter founded Breaking Free in St. Paul, Minnesota, whose mission is to end all forms of prostitution and sex trafficking. She has extensive experience in developing, planning, and implementing programs for sex trafficked women and girls and training law enforcement, including the FBI. She was awarded the prestigious Norma Hotaling Award for her life-long service to victims of sex trafficking. She has traveled to Europe, Southeast Asia, and South America to educate service providers and community members about Breaking Free's pioneering work and to help others create similar programs. In 2016 Carter received “The Life Time Achievement Award” from President Obama for the outstanding work she has done over the 25 years to end the sex trafficking of women and girls. In 2014, Vednita was awarded the Path Breaker Award from Shared Hope International for her tireless efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex and was named a CNN Hero for her work in ending sexual exploitation of women and girls in the US. In 2015 Vednita Carter graduated from the CICA International University and Seminary and received an Honorary Doctorate of Divinity, Ambassador-at-Large and Chaplaincy. The school is the first and only full gospel organization with special status with the United Nations.

**RECOMMENDED CITATION**


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DOMESTIC CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING AND BLACK GIRLS

WHAT IS DOMESTIC CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING?
Domestic Child Sex Trafficking (DCST)—also known as “domestic minor sex trafficking,” “survival sex,” “child prostitution,” and “juvenile prostitution”—is the exchange of anything of value (e.g., food, shelter or money) for sex with a person under 18.¹

RISK FACTORS
Childhood trauma and instability make children more vulnerable to being trafficked. Risk factors for domestic child sex trafficking include, but are not limited to³:

- Being between the ages of 12 and 14
- Having a history of sexual and physical abuse
- Community and family instability and dislocation
- Poverty
- Being female
- Being a runaway or homeless youth
- History of child protective services and/or foster care involvement

BLACK GIRLS ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY AT-RISK
Black girls are more likely to experience the risk factors listed above. Studies report that black girls become trafficked at younger ages than their racial counterparts.³³ They are more likely to experience poverty, and consequently more likely to be disconnected from schools and other community supports.³⁴ Black girls experience physical and sexual abuse at young ages³⁵ and witness and experience multiple forms of violence at higher rates than their white peers.³⁶ In 2012, 26% of children in the foster care system were black.³⁷

THE MAJORITY OF VICTIMS OF DCST ARE BLACK GIRLS
According to the FBI, black children comprise 52% of all juvenile prostitution arrests—more than any other racial group.³⁸ In a two-year review of all suspected human trafficking incidents, 40% of victims of sex trafficking were black.³⁹ In Los Angeles County, 92% of girls in the juvenile justice system identified as trafficking victims were black. Sixty-two percent of those children were from the child-welfare system and 84% were from poor communities in the southeastern part of LA County.⁴⁰ In Alameda County, California, 66% of all youth referred to a community agency exclusively serving CSEC were black.⁴¹

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES CANNOT INTERVENE
Because children are not always trafficked by a family member or legal guardian, child protective services (CPS) cannot always respond to reports of child sex trafficking. Without CPS as a resource, and in the absence of formal protocols mandating a child welfare response to child sex trafficking, law enforcement officers often respond by arresting child victims for prostitution. Black victims of domestic minor sex trafficking are much more likely to be arrested on prostitution charges, leaving them more vulnerable to re-traumatization in the juvenile and criminal justice systems, subject to the consequences of having an arrest and juvenile record, and deprived of appropriate intervention and treatment services.
As defined in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, DCST is the “recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act” where the victim is a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident under the age of 18. 22 U.S.C. §§ 7102(9)-(10). A commercial sex act is defined as “any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person.” § 7102(4).


Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Crime in the United States 2014*, Table 43B.


Who Buys Sex?

Understanding and Disrupting Illicit Market Demand

Research Report

November 2018
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*This report contains sexual terminology and graphic content about sex buying that may not be appropriate for some audiences.*
Executive Summary

Much of the research on prostitution and sex trafficking in the US focuses on the “supply” side of the market: prostituted and trafficked persons, the great majority of whom are women and girls. While it is critically important to understand supply-side realities and effective approaches to victim services, the other half of the market—the “demand” side, defined almost entirely by the actions of men—has been woefully understudied by comparison.

This report fills those gaps in our understanding of demand in the illegal US sex trade, including why some men buy sex and what can be done to reduce this exploitative behavior in the short and long terms. Demand Abolition commissioned a survey completed by 8,201 adult males across the US between December 2016 and January 2017 to address these gaps and more. The study design and questionnaire content were developed by a team of researchers and approved by the University of Portland’s Institutional Review Board.

In our analyses we approach sex buying as a harmful behavior that results from an accumulation of various influences, including: beliefs about sex buying, gendered cultural norms about sexuality, life-course transitions, perceived risk of arrest, and individual attributes such as impulse control. We use a push-pull framework to document the diverse, sometimes competing factors that give rise to sex buying as a cultural phenomenon, and allows us to identify strategies and tactics to confront it.

This report fills those gaps in our understanding of demand in the illegal US sex trade, including why some men buy sex and what can be done to reduce this exploitative behavior in the short and long terms.
Major Findings

WHO ARE THEY?

- Most men have never paid for sex. In fact, our survey finds that only 6.2% of respondents have bought sex within the past 12 months (20.6% do so at least once in their lifetimes). About half of men who have ever purchased sex did so between two and ten times, and less than one-quarter bought only once.

- “High-frequency” buyers purchase so often that their actions account for a disproportionately large share of the illegal sex trade. About 25% of active buyers report purchasing weekly or monthly, and their transactions account for nearly 75% of the market. These buyers are more likely to have started at a young age and with the help or encouragement of others in their social networks.

- Demographic traits are poor predictors of sex buying. Race and sexual orientation have almost no profiling power. Buyers are found across the income distribution with one important exception: currently active high-frequency buyers are much more likely than other men to make $100,000 or more annually.

- Plenty of would-be sex-buyers are not currently active, including about one in five men who have never bought before but who “could envision buying sex in the future if the circumstances were right.”

WHAT DOES THE MARKET LOOK LIKE?

- On average, US sex buyers spend more than $100 per transaction. Based on the recorded spend data and computed annual transactions for different groups of buyers, this survey estimates the annual size of the US commercial sex market at $5.7 billion.

- Buyers visit a range of venues and use a similarly diverse number of information channels to purchase sex. Prominent methods include visiting “massage” brothels—known to law enforcement as Illicit Massage Businesses (IMBs), arranging “dates” online, visiting “adult establishments,” and going to well-known “tracks” for street prostitution. No single location dominates, though high-frequency buyers list IMBs as a frequented venue.

- Buyers most commonly assume that the age of the last person they paid for sex was early-to mid-twenties. The data support the finding that prostituted persons in this country are almost entirely women in that range, and disproportionately Black.

WHY DO THEY BUY SEX?

- Certain ideologies distinguish sex buyers from other men; they share many attitudes and beliefs about sex and relationships. Active ones are more tolerant of cheating on a significant other and differ markedly from non-buyers on measures of impulse control.

- Active buyers are more likely to say that prostitution is a “mostly victimless” crime and are less likely to say that prostitution is a crime “where someone is harmed.” They are also more likely to say that prostituted persons “enjoy the act of prostitution” and “choose it as a profession.”
Buyers and non-buyers hold strikingly different views on masculinity and sex buying. Non-buyers are much more likely than active ones to say that purchasing someone for sex involves treating females as objects, and that those actions exploit others. Active buyers are very likely to say they are “just guys being guys” or “taking care of their needs.”

Many men who have bought sex in the past wish to stop. About one-third of active buyers “strongly agree” that they do not want to do it again, a sentiment shared by most former buyers.

Active buyers value their personal safety, sexual health, and freedom from arrest above most other priorities; they are generally unconcerned about breaking the law but preoccupied by the need to avoid getting caught. Active and former buyers are much more likely than non-buyers to say police “should not arrest anyone” involved in prostitution. The strongest bloc of male support for legalizing the US sex trade comes from buyers themselves.

Only about 6% of men who purchase sex illegally report ever having been arrested for it. When buyers do perceive that risk, it can lead them to alter their activities. High-frequency buyers are more sensitive than low-frequency buyers to police presence and are more likely to react by shifting to a different location and diminishing their behavior. About one-quarter of buyers “strongly agree” that “the risk of arrest is so high I might stop.”

Perceiving a risk of arrest has a diminishing effect on sex buying. Two factors increase this perception: (1) a buyer’s own arrest history, and (2) the extent to which he shifts his purchasing activities in response to police presence.

The main driver of sex buying, “normalized beliefs” about the commercial sex trade, combines interrelated ideas: prostituted women enjoy the act, it is mostly a victimless crime, buyers are merely taking care of their needs, and they are just “guys being guys.”

WHAT CAN POLICYMAKERS DO ABOUT IT?

1. Move law enforcement’s finite resources away from arresting and adjudicating prostituted persons and towards arresting and adjudicating buyers.
2. Make available short-term federal funding programs to support state and local agencies ready to instigate reforms.
3. Use mandatory minimum fines from convicted buyers to offset the costs of survivor exit services and law enforcement operations to stop demand.
4. Create increasingly severe penalty structures for repeat buyers, ensuring that sanctions are fair and consistent with survivor testimony of the nature of victim impact.
5. Counter messages that normalize sex buying through educational and public health interventions.
6. Establish employer policies prohibiting sex buying under any circumstances, including activities on company time or with company resources that are related to sex buying.
7. Implement targeted prevention campaigns and focus deterrence communications on behavioral “nudges.”

See more on page 32 (Part IV, Policy Recommendations).
PART I

Study Background

Much of the research on prostitution and sex trafficking focuses on the “supply” side of the market: prostituted persons, mostly women and girls, many of whom were trafficked. While supply-side realities and effective approaches to victim services require analysis, the other half of the market—the demand side—has been woefully understudied by comparison. This report seeks to fill those gaps in our understanding of demand in the US sex trade, including why some men buy sex and what can be done to reduce sex-buying behavior in the short and long terms.

We deliberately refer to men who buy sex because all available evidence points to this behavior being almost entirely conducted by males (Monto, 2004). We do not dispute evidence that, in rare instances, women have been known to buy sex (Weitzer, 2005). Yet we recognize that the demand side of the commercial sex trade is defined almost entirely by the actions of men.

Few researchers have used data to attempt explanations of why men buy sex (Atchison, 2010; Brewer et al., 2008; Holt et al., 2007; Monto & McRee, 2005). Many more have offered interpretations of sex buying (see Appendix A for a brief literature review). These generally emanate from the lived experiences of prostituted persons and tend to align with one feminist theoretical tradition or another (Monto, 2004; Weitzer, 2005). While important as scholarship, these analyses are not designed to identify the masculine socio-cultural forces that increase, diminish, or maintain demand.

OUR APPROACH

We recognize that multiple individual and social forces cause sex buying, and close study can uncover a range of explanations. Nevertheless, we recognize it as (masculine) gendered deviant behavior that manifests as an economic market. Practically speaking, we view demand as being shaped by a combination of basic economic forces (e.g., cost and preferences), as well as cultural forces (e.g., gender and social norms).

We use a “momentum framework” to understand fluctuations in sex-buying practices among men whose demand drives the US sex trade. It approaches sex buying as a behavior driven by cumulative, positive nudges that accelerate a person’s trajectory towards the activity. The concept of momentum defines sex buying as a life-course trajectory, avoiding emphasizing singular circumstantial, demographic, or correlative factors.

This approach regards sex buying as a harm-causing behavior that results from the acceleration or deceleration of micro- and macro-level factors including: beliefs about sex buying, gendered cultural norms about sexuality, life-course transitions, perceived risk of arrest, and psycho-social factors such as impulse control. This momentum framework helps document the push and pull factors underlying sex buying as a cultural phenomenon, and easily translates into strategies and tactics to confront and reduce it.

1 Deciding on terminology to describe persons in the commercial sex trade is a difficult process. No language is value-free, even for research in this field. We recognize people hold many competing, passionate views on the correct words to describe individuals historically labeled as “prostitutes.” We choose to use the term “prostituted person” throughout this report for a simple reason: it is the term preferred by the survivors of the commercial sex trade with whom Demand Abolition has partnered and from whom we have learned since the program’s inception. Respecting their dignity is our highest priority.
STUDY METHODOLOGY

Research studies that focus on certain types of sex buying, use limited sample sizes, or employ problematic definitions of sex buying leave gaps in our understanding of this activity. Demand Abolition commissioned a survey about sex-buying behavior among 8,201 adult men across the US between December 2016 and January 2017, with the goal of addressing these gaps and more. The study design and questionnaire content were developed by a team of researchers, and approved by the University of Portland’s Institutional Review Board. The team chose to field the survey online through a third-party provider, Qualtrics, an independent research services firm, which provided both survey hosting and data collection.

While it is critically important to understand supply-side market forces and effective approaches to victim services, this leaves the other half of the market—the demand side—woefully understudied by comparison.

Choosing to deploy the survey online reflected a desire to balance multiple tradeoffs. Compared to a phone-based or in-person method, respondents are much more likely to disclose sensitive information, particularly about sexual behavior, confidentially and online (see Tourangeau & Yan, 2007 for a review of relevant research). Web-based surveys are also more cost-efficient for collecting large amounts of data, particularly as fewer people participate in phone surveys. However, a major drawback of online studies is the process of selecting potential participants. Whereas phone or in-person surveys can be directed toward different types of probability-based samples (e.g., a simple random sample) of potential respondents, there is no way to do this through online invitations. Instead, the online survey industry uses various types of quota-based sampling procedures to create representative samples for any given study. Typically, convenience samples are crafted based on the geographic and demographic traits of respondents.

The third-party survey sampling firm that collected data for this study recruited US men aged 18 and over from across the country from multiple “panels,” or groups of known prospective survey-takers. Several metro areas were “oversampled” by the research team for purposes unrelated to this report, using a weighting scheme to adjust these communities back to their proper proportion for all findings reported here. The firm recruited potential participants based on demographic quotas for race/ethnicity and age. As a final step in ensuring the representativeness of the sample, we weighted the dataset according to current demographic distributions of adult men in the US as reported by the Census Bureau.

Despite our best attempts, there is no way to avoid completely the possibility that our sample is skewed in one direction or another. Indeed, this is true in varying degrees for all survey-based studies. One major concern: might a participant be more likely, or perhaps less likely, to participate in a survey about sex buying based on his sexual behavioral history? If so, this would cause either an overestimation or underestimation of sex-buying behavior. One way we addressed this was by explaining to potential participants that the survey would cover a variety of sexual and non-sexual topics, and that all data would be completely confidential and, in fact, presented

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2 The survey methodology and questionnaire content design team included Simon Hedlin, M.A., of Harvard Law School; Martin Monto, Ph.D., of the University of Portland; and Alex Trouteaud, Ph.D., of Demand Abolition. Alex led the Demand Abolition data analysis and reporting team.
anonymously to the analysis team. Respondents were only shown sex-buying questions after they had already
answered a series of innocuous and then mildly sex-related questions. We did not observe a significant drop-
off of participants after asking about sex-buying behavior, suggesting that the addition of these questions was
unlikely to have dramatically altered the participant base.

We compared responses to our survey with another published report, namely the General Social Survey (GSS),
which uses a large, nationwide probability sample—and even asks a couple of questions about sex-buying
behavior. Looking only at variables we did not use to weight the data, we found that our sample closely mirrored
the marital status and sexual orientation distributions in the GSS, as well as frequency of having sex. However,
our sample differed significantly in that it contained: (1) a higher percentage of men who have no children,
(2) a smaller percentage of men with “less than high school” educational attainment, (3) a smaller percentage
of men who said extramarital sex is “always wrong,” and (4) a smaller percentage of men who say they are
“very happy.” These differences could point to a limitation of available participants in online surveys broadly,
or self-selection criteria for our survey particularly. These differences also could have occurred by chance.

These differences have simple implications for our estimation of sex-buying behavior: the data from this study
constitute one source of many, and probably represent the high end of plausible estimates of sex-buying
prevalence. In the GSS sample, 1.2% of men report that they have bought sex within the last year, and 10.1%
say they have done it in their lifetimes. Our self-reported data are much higher, at 6.2% and 20.6%, respectively.
We know that GSS numbers represent a significant undercount of sex-buying prevalence (Brewer et al., 2000),
likely due to administration methods that lead to men feeling less comfortable sharing sexually deviant behavior.
Nevertheless, our estimates are still at the highest end of other reports of lifetime sex-buying incidence in the
US, which tend to range between 10%-20% (Michael et al., 1994; Monto, 2004; Shively et al., 2012; Sullivan and
Simon, 1998). As such, we recommend against treating these estimates as definitive population parameters,
and we encourage other researchers to publish similar data using different methodologies for comparison.
The value of the data in this study is less about individual point estimates (e.g., sex-buying prevalence or market
size), and more about how different men encounter messages and experiences that affect their involvement
in the demand side of the US sex trade.
PART II

Findings on Buyers and Demand

HOW MANY MEN ARE BUYING?

Sex trafficking and prostitution can take place in any section of our country, from small towns to busy truck stops to elite urban neighborhoods. At any time of day, someone can go online and view hundreds of local ads for sex, visit a nearby “massage” brothel, or drive through corridors known for street prostitution. Wherever there is evidence of “supply” in the commercial sex trade, there must also be a pool of demand to necessitate it. Our survey collected data that help us explore the demand side of the market and discern how men who buy sex—currently or in the past—differ from the male population at large.

Most men have never paid for sex. In fact, our survey finds that only 6.2% of respondents have bought it within the past 12 months, and just 20.6% enter the illegal sex-buying market at least once in their lifetimes (Appendix A). Across multiple studies, the percentage of US men actively engaged in sex buying within a 12-month period ranges in the low-to-mid single digits, and the estimates of men who have ever bought in their lifetimes is between 10%-20%. Most men who have ever purchased sex did so 2-5 times, with about 25% having purchased 10 times or more (Appendix B).

FIGURE 1

Not all buyers who are actively involved in the US sex trade participate equally. We refer to men who reported currently buying sex weekly or monthly as “high-frequency buyers” throughout the remainder of the report. Men who buy at least once per year, or quarterly on average, are labeled “low-frequency buyers.” Separately, high-frequency and low-frequency buyers may be “active” or “former” based on their current involvement.

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3 To measure lifetime sex-buying behavior we asked, “Thinking about the time since your 18th birthday, have you ever paid someone in order to have sex with them, including oral sex, hand jobs, vaginal or anal sex, or some other form of person-to-person sexual act?” Later we asked men who responded affirmatively to this question how many times they have done so within the last 12 months.

4 See the methods section of this report for a detailed discussion about the estimates in this study, their limitations, and how and why they might be similar to or different from those in other studies.

5 We define active buyers as those who have paid for sex two or more times this year; or, just once this year but with a history of sex buying and an intent to buy again. Active buyers “strongly agree” they would buy again in the future if the circumstances are right. Former buyers either have not bought sex in the past year and “disagree” when asked if they would buy sex in the future, or merely have not paid for sex within the last six years.
High-frequency buyers are more likely to have started at a young age, and with the help or encouragement of others in their social networks. These people are far more likely than others to have had their first paid sex experience initiated by “a friend, colleague, group of friends, or family member,” typically by the time they turned 21.

**FIGURE 2**

Circumstances of Buyer’s First Paid Sex Experience

![Bar chart showing circumstances of buyer’s first paid sex experience, categorized by frequency and context.](image)

Nearly one in five high-frequency buyers had his first paid-sex experience while he was legally a juvenile (Appendix B, Figure C). Our findings show sex buying not only as an individual behavior, but also as a cultural phenomenon that can be passed down generationally and reinforced by social networks that accept sex buying as normal.

**FIGURE 3**

![Diagram illustrating the pathways to sex buying](image)
POTENTIAL BUYERS

We recognize that, as in any market, illegal sex buying is dynamic—constantly evolving and changing in response to external forces. Our survey asked both buyers and non-buyers whether they could “envision buying sex in the future if the circumstances were right.” Numerous would-be sex-buyers are not currently active, including about one in five men who have never paid for sex (as Figure 4 details, 20.2% of these men “somewhat agree” or “strongly agree” they could envision buying sex in the future). In later sections, we will delve deeper into what these circumstances are, and how they reinforce the experiences and beliefs associated with sex-buying behavior.

FIGURE 4

“I could envision buying sex, in the future, if the circumstances were right.”

INSIDE THE US SEX MARKET, ACCORDING TO BUYERS

Many studies and journalistic accounts attempt to describe aspects of the illicit sex trade in the US, such as the most common venues and the most desired attributes of prostituted persons. Our survey is one of the first to offer a snapshot through data provided directly by the buyers themselves. Our research digs deeply into the views of the 20% of men who have purchased sex to discover how they experience this underground market, including how much they pay to sustain it.

VENUES

Buyers visit a range of venues and use a similarly diverse number of information channels to purchase sex. Prominent methods include visiting illicit “massage” brothels—known to law enforcement as Illicit Massage Businesses (IMBs), arranging “dates” online, visiting strip clubs or adult establishments, and going to well-known “tracks” for street prostitution. No one location dominates, though high-frequency buyers list IMBs as a favorite venue, while street-level sex buying and buying during military service are much more common experiences for former buyers.
FIGURE 5

Circumstances of Buyer’s Most Recent Paid Sex Transaction

Who Buys Sex?
The **Internet and Sex Buying**

It is widely assumed that most sex-trafficking and prostitution activities have moved online. While Figure 5 might suggest that few buyers use online ads to arrange paid sex transactions, Figure 6 brings the role of the internet into sharper focus. Most buyers have recently browsed online ads for paid sex, and nearly the same percentage have taken the next step of contacting a person through an ad.

**FIGURE 6**

**Paid Sex “Shopping Behavior” in Past 12 Months**

These data suggest the internet plays a prominent role in perpetuating the sex trade, at the very least providing buyers with a robust information source for conducting “research” prior to transacting. The numbers also demonstrate that it’s rare for buyers to turn to online ads every time—or even most times—they want to buy. Nevertheless, online advertising is an integral part of marketing the illegal sex trade. Online ads and review boards play an indirect role in promoting transactions, and on occasion directly connect a buyer with his next transaction.

The data reveal that venue can affect the price of purchased sex. Consistent with previous studies, street-level transactions are, on average, significantly lower than all other venues (Figure 7). Surprisingly high average prices are paid at IMBs, even after “extreme” price values reported by buyers were excluded from analysis. This finding requires further study. An interesting way to think about the average price of paid sex transactions is to contrast these amounts to the fines judges typically levy against convicted sex buyers. In many jurisdictions, fines rarely surpass $100, or less than the average price for paid sex.
Many buyers, especially high-frequency ones who purchase weekly or monthly, say their most recent transaction was with the same person they paid the time before, indicating that many transactions are with “known” prostituted persons (Figure 7). Similarly, a significant percentage of transactions were with someone the buyer “…already knew, and it turned into paid sex.” This finding is consistent with the literature suggesting some sex buyers consider paid sex behavior part of “normal,” relational sex (Atchison, 2010; Monto, 2004). What to non-buyers is a clear demarcation of prostitution activity—giving money to another person in exchange for sex—might to a buyer appear to be part of developing a “romantic” relationship with that person. We must consider this when estimating prostitution incidence, since some buyers don’t think of all paid sex activity as prostitution. It also speaks to how sex buying is gendered normative behavior for some men.
Prostituted Persons, According to Buyers

Buyers’ best guesses at the age range of the last person they paid for sex suggest most transactions are with prostituted persons in their early-to-mid-twenties (Appendix B, Figure D). Most said the person was between the ages of 21 and 25, and former buyers were more likely to estimate the person was even younger. Buyers were most likely to report that their most recent paid sex transaction was with a person they describe as White (44.9%), rather than Black (19.1%). Yet non-Hispanic Black persons comprise 13% of the US population, and therefore are significantly overrepresented at a rate of roughly 1.5x in the race data (Appendix B, Figure E).

High-frequency buyers are more likely to have recently paid for sex with a Black prostituted person. While most paid sex transactions involve female prostituted persons, about one in five high-frequency buyers most recently purchased sex from a male (Appendix F). Our buyer data supports the finding that US prostituted persons are almost entirely women in their young-to-mid-twenties, and disproportionately Black.

MARKET SIZE

Economic markets are defined by transactions, not by persons. To better understand what the illegal sex market looks like, and who is disproportionately driving demand in it, we need to examine who is responsible for how many transactions. While this impersonal way of thinking risks downplaying the activity’s very real harms, it represents an honest accounting of how much harm is caused and by whom. From the standpoint of a prostituted person, cumulative trauma is perhaps better measured by survived exploitative transactions, rather than unique individual exploiters.

Our research shows that, while the size of the illegal sex industry in the US is significant, it is fueled by a relatively small number of men. Sex buyers in the US spend more than $100 per transaction on average, and men who purchase sex least often pay the highest prices on average (Figure 8). Based on average spend data and computed annual transactions for different groups of buyers, this survey estimates the US sex market at $5.7 billion each year.6

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6 This figure is consistent with mathematically-robust estimates produced through other methodologies, including a 2014 study by the Urban Institute which measured the size of the sex trade in eight US metro areas. Recently, Polaris estimated the market size of commercial sex in US illicit massage businesses to be $2.5 billion based on recent academic research, suggesting this survey’s estimate of $5.7 billion for the overall market might be low.
Additionally, the more frequently a buyer pays for sex, the less he spends per transaction. When we factor in the percentage of men in each frequency group, and the number of transactions each group makes, it is clear that men who buy most often account for the lion’s share of the overall market. While about 25% of active sex buyers report purchasing weekly or monthly, those transactions account for nearly 75% of the market (Figure 9). About one in four buyers purchase at least every other month. Nearly half of active buyers purchase between two and five times per year.
A FREQUENCY-BASED BUYER TYPOLOGY

How often a buyer transacts can radically affect how much responsibility he bears for the shape of the commercial sex trade. Recognizing this, we use a simple typology, summarized in Figure 10, to compare the experiences of these different groups of buyers. As we will show later, this typology unlocks key findings about why men increase (accelerate) or decrease (decelerate) their sex-buying behavior.

We first divide men into three groups based on whether they have never bought, are former buyers no longer active, or are active buyers whose actions currently define the demand side of the US sex trade. Active buyers are further separated into high-frequency buyers and low-frequency buyers, based on how much market activity is attributable to their actions.

The obvious next question is, “Do these groups of men differ in ways that might explain why they do or do not pay for sex?” For a variety of reasons, previous research has tended to focus on demographic differences among sex buyers. In this study we can look far beyond demographics to help answer this essential research question.

![Sex-Buyer Typology](image)

While about 25% of active sex buyers report purchasing weekly or monthly, those transactions account for nearly 75% of the market.
PART III

Findings on Sex-Buying Reduction and Prevention

DEMOGRAPHIC INFLUENCES ON SEX BUYING

Policymakers, advocates, and practitioners pursuing demand-reduction approaches to ending prostitution (and by extension sex trafficking) often look for common factors that might indicate the likelihood of a person being or becoming a sex buyer. Our research shows that demographic traits tend to be poor predictors. Age, more than other demographic variables, is somewhat associated with sex buying, as former buyers are more likely to be older, and high-frequency buyers are more likely to be younger (Figure 11). However, low-frequency buyers are evenly distributed across age ranges, as are men who have never paid for sex.

Race, sexual orientation, and marital status show modest statistical relationships with sex buying (Appendix B, Figures H-J). Race has almost no relationship with sex buying; however, Black men are disproportionately represented among active high-frequency buyers, though Black men still comprise less than half of this buyer type. Sexual orientation of buyers generally mirrors that of the male population at large, except that active high-frequency buyers are slightly more likely to self-identify as bisexual. This finding is consistent with other data in our study indicating that this group of buyers is more likely to have recently paid for sex with a male prostituted person (Appendix B, Figure I).

Active buyers are less likely to be married than former buyers and non-buyers, as seen in Appendix B, Figure J. Nevertheless, over one-third of active buyers are married. Over half of active buyers have children under age 18 in the home (Appendix B, Figure K).

Active high-frequency buyers are much more likely to report they are in a romantic relationship than are active low-frequency buyers (Figure 12), yet they are less likely to report being married. This curious pattern reinforces literature suggesting buyers consider paid sex behavior part of “normal” relational sex, thus demonstrating how the activity becomes gendered normative behavior for some men.
In general, sex buying is only weakly related to income, education level, or political ideology. Buyers are found across the income distribution with one important exception: **active high-frequency buyers** are much more likely than other men to make $100,000 or more annually (Figure 13).

The data show no meaningful relationship between education levels and sex buying (Appendix B, Figure L). Men with all amounts of educational attainment are equally likely to pay for sex. There is no one political leaning associated with sex buyers, either, though **active buyers** and **former buyers** are more likely to describe their political views as “liberal” or “very liberal.” Additionally, however, a disproportionate number of **active high-frequency buyers** describe their views as “very conservative” (Appendix B, Figure M).

While research reveals plenty of minor demographic differences among groups of sex buyers, these do very little to predict who is a sex buyer and why. We cannot write a set demographic profile for a sex buyer. He could be any age or race, earn at any income level, or be in any type of relationship.
CREASE IN IDEOLOGY

Lacks Self-Restraint

Seeks
Instant
Gratification

Knows Sex Buyers

Factors
Influencing
Choice to Enter

Factors
Influencing
Choice to Leave

Increased Perception
of Risk

Age

Change in
Ideology

OUTSIDE MARKET
80% of All Men

INSIDE MARKET
20% of All Men
Throughout Their Lifetimes

6% of All Men Buy in Any Given Year

IDEOLOGICAL INFLUENCES ON SEX BUYING

Whereas demographic data fall short in developing profiles of sex buyer types, ideological data can be quite effective. Sex buyers share many attitudes and beliefs about sex and relationships. For example, active buyers, and to a lesser extent former buyers, are far more tolerant of cheating on a spouse or significant other, as demonstrated in Figure 15. This probably explains why active buyers are more likely than all other groups to have cheated or had an affair in the last year (Figure 16). Across both measures, active high-frequency buyers register stronger negative views than active low-frequency buyers.
Advocates often connect consumption of pornography with sex-buying behavior. According to our research, **active** and **former buyers** are much more likely than **non-buyers** to have viewed porn in the past year, though it should be noted that over half of non-buyers did so as well (Figure 17). This relationship is addressed in greater detail later, when we discuss “acceleration” forces.
Men who buy sex are about as sexually active as non-buyers, with one important exception: active high-frequency buyers are much more likely than all other groups, including active low-frequency buyers, to report having sex multiple times per week (Appendix B, Figure N). They are also more likely than all other groups to report contracting a sexually transmitted infection in the last year, suggesting they adhere less to safe sex practices (Appendix B, Figure O).

Active buyers might engage in more sexually promiscuous behavior not simply because of a heightened libido, but due to a relative inability to wait for satisfaction. We find that active buyers differ markedly from former buyers and non-buyers on measures of impulse control and delayed gratification. We included a series of such questions, originally developed and validated as part of the Delaying Gratification Inventory (Hoerger, Quirk & Weed, 2011). Figure 18 shows that across each of the five tested statements, active high-frequency buyers and active low-frequency buyers indicate lower levels of impulse control, and former buyers more closely resemble non-buyers.

**FIGURE 18**

Measure of Impulse Control and Delayed Gratification

Sex buyers share many similar attitudes and beliefs about sex and relationships.
While impulse control and delayed gratification are important to understanding sex-buyer behavior, some of the most insightful findings arose from questions probing buyers’ beliefs about prostitution.

**FIGURE 19**

Beliefs and Behaviors Associated with Sex Buying

**Active buyers** are far more likely than **non-buyers** to say that prostitution is a “mostly victimless” crime, and are less likely to say that prostitution is a crime “where someone is harmed” (Figure 20).

**FIGURE 20**

“Do you believe prostitution is a victimless crime, or mostly a crime where someone is harmed?”
Going further, active buyers are more likely than both non-buyers and former buyers to believe that prostituted persons “enjoy the act of prostitution” (Figure 21). Active buyers are less likely to believe that people in prostitution are “forced or lured into the trade,” and more likely to say that prostituted persons “choose it as a profession.”

**FIGURE 21**

“Which of the following statements about ‘prostitution’ do you agree with?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Never Bought</th>
<th>Active Low-Frequency Buyers</th>
<th>Active High-Frequency Buyers</th>
<th>Former Buyers</th>
<th>Men Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They chose as a profession</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They'd choose another job if they could</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They enjoy the act of prostitution</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are forced or lured into it</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above/ I don't know</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Buyers and non-buyers hold strikingly different views on masculinity and sex buying (Figure 22). Non-buyers are much more likely than active buyers and former buyers to say that purchasing someone for sex involves treating women as objects, and that their actions exploit others. Active buyers are especially likely to say they are “just guys being guys” or “taking care of their needs.”

**FIGURE 22**

“Which of the following statements about ‘buyers/johns’ do you agree with?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Never Bought</th>
<th>Active Low-Frequency Buyers</th>
<th>Active High-Frequency Buyers</th>
<th>Former Buyers</th>
<th>Men Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They are just guys being guys</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are treating women as objects</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
<td>47.9%</td>
<td>47.9%</td>
<td>47.9%</td>
<td>47.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are just taking care of their needs</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their actions exploit/abuse others</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above/ I don't know</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Compared to meager demographic differences among categories of sex buyers, we observed clear distinctions across a variety of attitudes and behaviors associated with sexual and relational ideologies, painting a clearer portrait of the different types of sex buyers. In the next section we will consider the logical next step of this analysis: factors that reduce and prevent sex-buying behavior.

RISK AND ACCOUNTABILITY INFLUENCES ON SEX BUYING

As we just observed, men who perpetuate prostitution hold deep beliefs that also justify their behavior. Given this, it is tempting to be cynical about whether demand for paid sex can be reduced. However, the old adage that “prostitution is the oldest profession” ignores how sex buying rates vary dramatically across cultures and over time, and evidence presented in the introduction of this report demonstrates that sex buying is generally on the decline in the US. Findings from this section of the report provide insight into how and why men reduce (decelerate) sex-buying behavior, and sometimes stop altogether.

First we should acknowledge that many men who have bought sex in the past do not intend to repeat the behavior. About one-third of active low-frequency buyers “strongly agree” that they want to stop (Figure 23), a sentiment shared by twice as many former buyers.

FIGURE 23

“I would like to stop buying sex.”

The reasons why any person stops sex buying permanently can be complex and multi-layered. Former buyers give us some insight into this process through the reasons they cite for walking away from previous sex-buying opportunities (Figure 24). The most prevalent logic former buyers offer is, “I realized that paying for sex is inconsistent with my moral beliefs.” This finding once again reinforces the central importance played by belief systems in determining behavior. Far fewer former buyers said they were concerned they might get arrested, a finding which we will interpret with further data below.
Our survey assessed the top barriers to engaging in further sex-buying behavior and found that, for the most part, buyers care most about their own well-being. **Active buyers** value their personal safety, sexual health, and freedom from arrest (Appendix B, Figure P). Respondents were much more concerned about the risk of arrest than they were about finding a place to purchase sex where it is legal to do so. Active buyers today are clearly untroubled by breaking the law but preoccupied by a desire to avoid getting caught by the authorities.

Buyers say other factors need to be in place for them to purchase sex; one is that the prostituted person they buy should “not be forced or trafficked.” This finding can be interpreted several ways. It could indicate a fear of severe criminal penalties associated with getting caught, a desire not to harm a “forced or trafficked” person, or a combination of both impulses.

**Active buyers** and **former buyers** are much more likely than **non-buyers** to say police “should not arrest anyone” involved in prostitution (Figure 25), demonstrating that the greatest source of support among men for legalizing the US sex trade comes from buyers themselves. About one in five **active high-frequency buyers** believe police should arrest “mostly persons in prostitution” compared to “mostly johns” or “both, equally.” **Non-buyers**, on the other hand, overwhelmingly believe police should arrest buyers and prostituted persons “equally.”

Active buyers are less likely to believe that people in prostitution are “forced or lured into the trade,” and say that prostituted persons “choose it as a profession.”
When we look at buyers’ actual experiences with law enforcement, it becomes much easier to understand why few of them perceive a real risk of arrest. Only about 6% of men who purchase sex illegally have ever been arrested for it (Figure 26). **Active high-frequency buyers** are six times as likely to have been arrested for sex buying; two-thirds of them report having been arrested multiple times for the same offense. The survey does not provide insight into whether a subsequent arrest led to heightened penalties or was even recognized as a repeat offense by the law enforcement agency.

Respondents indicated that when they do perceive a risk of arrest, it can lead them to alter their activities (Figure 27). **Active high-frequency buyers** are more sensitive than **active low-frequency buyers** to police presence, and are more likely to shift their buying behavior in response. About one-quarter of these buyers “strongly agree” that “the risk of arrest is so high I might stop” (Figure 28).
These findings demonstrate that mitigating sex buying at the individual and system levels is possible, but complex. Many disparate forces act to increase and decrease sex-buyer behavior, leading us to try and document the interplay among them. In the next section, we summarize the results of an advanced statistical procedure designed to achieve exactly this goal.
A SYSTEM OF ACCELERANT AND DECELERANT INFLUENCES ON SEX BUYING

Practitioners and policymakers who seek to stop sex buying must understand why men increase (accelerate) or decrease (decelerate) this harmful behavior. Our survey contains questions that we've shown track closely to different types of sex-buying patterns. Using an advanced statistical procedure called Structural Equation Modeling (SEM),7 we can test many of these associations simultaneously to explore overarching frameworks that best describe our data.

The full, detailed presentation of this SEM analysis is contained in Appendix Figure Q, including model fit statistics. Below we've summarized two major areas of critically important findings.

The first major conclusion is that the main driver, or accelerant, of sex buying is “normalized beliefs” about the commercial sex trade. This ideology is represented by interrelated beliefs: prostituted people enjoy the act, prostitution is mostly a victimless crime, buyers are merely taking care of their needs, and buyers are just “guys being guys.” In Figure 29 we see that normalized beliefs are associated with an increase in sexual promiscuity—which in this analysis includes greater odds of cheating on a spouse/partner and believing the activity can be okay, as well as an increased likelihood of having contracted a sexually transmitted infection recently. Normalized beliefs reinforce self-preservation motives in sex buying—the extent to which a buyer prioritizes his own physical safety, sexual health, and freedom from arrest.

Figure 29 demonstrates factors that influence normalized beliefs, including lack of impulse control, being networked with other sex buyers, and consuming pornography. While not depicted in this figure, we also find that age is associated with normalized belief systems, suggesting that views about the sex trade become calcified in a buyer’s ideology over time.

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7 SEM is a family of procedures, and many quantitative researchers will be familiar with an early version of SEM known as path analysis. Indeed, the results of most SEM analyses can be displayed in path diagrams, as we have done here. SEM’s limitations are similar to those of any other regression or correlation-based analysis. The underlying data are cross-sectional, and the study design is nonexperimental; thus, causality cannot be proven by any analysis in this report, including through SEM. While exploratory in nature, the SEM results do provide a useful framework for developing further research studies to study some of these complex relationships in closer detail.
One of the major advantages of SEM as an analysis method is not just the ability to order these different forces in an overarching framework, but then to compare the magnitude of these forces, or effects, against each other. Through this process, which is summarized in Figure 30, we find that normalized beliefs have the strongest impact on accelerating sex-buying behavior. These “cumulative impact scores” are, for those familiar with SEM, the total effects (direct plus indirect effects) on the model’s endogenous outcome variable, intent to buy sex. These scores do not have any absolute meaning, but they do have relative meaning; a score of .20 is twice as strong as a score of .10, for instance.

**FIGURE 30**

Accelerants and Decelerants of Sex-Buying Intent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cumulative Impact Score</th>
<th>ACCELERANT</th>
<th>Cumulative Impact Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>Normalization Beliefs</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>Sexual Promiscuity</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>Self-Preservation Motives</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>Pornography Consumption</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>Networked with Other Buyers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Just as we can map out sex-buying accelerant relationships, we can do the same for decelerant relationships, leading to the second major finding. Figure 31 highlights the criminal justice system’s role in reducing sex buying. Perceiving a risk of arrest has a diminishing effect (dotted line) on sex buying. Two factors increase the perception of risk: a buyer’s own arrest history, and the extent to which a buyer shifts his paid sex activity to other communities in response to police presence. This pattern suggests that cracking down on sex buying in one community, while it will certainly push some activity to neighboring areas, will also reinforce in those buyers’ minds that they face a plausible risk of arrest.

**FIGURE 31**

The Deceleration Process of Reducing Sex Buying
Other decelerant factors not shown in this figure include age and marital status. As buyers get older, they are less likely to engage in paid sex activity. This is a strong, direct relationship, but carries a major caveat. Because buyer age increases the calcification of normalized beliefs, this accelerant almost completely offsets the slowing down of sex buying that we would otherwise expect to see as a buyer “ages out” of the market.

Buyers who are married (not just those involved in a romantic relationship) tend to buy sex at reduced rates compared to their unmarried counterparts. Recall that despite this decelerant effect, over one-third of active buyers are married.

Across these decelerant effects, one thing should be obvious for practitioners and policymakers alike: the strongest realistic opportunity to reduce sex-buying behavior in the short-term, and thus shrink the demand-side of the commercial sex market, is to focus on strategies that increase the perception of arrest risk among buyers. This involves much more than just individual arrests.

CONCLUSION

The analyses in this report raise as many questions as they answer, but nonetheless represent a major leap forward in our understanding of how sex buying flourishes, and how it might diminish. Buyers form a diverse group of men, with some far more entrenched in the market than others. They are less united by demographics than by the beliefs they hold. Changing sex-buying behavior in the long term is largely, though not exclusively, about altering these destructive belief systems. The criminal justice system also plays an important role in influencing buyer behavior through the perception of risk, and by helping to counter the injurious false narrative held by many buyers that buying sex is normal, harmless, and acceptable. We summarize the implications of these findings for policymakers in the next and final section of the report.
PART IV
Policy Recommendations

This study illuminates several areas for policy change designed to reduce demand for commercial sex, including sex trafficking, and by extension reduce victimization rates. Not only can federal, state, and local public policy improve, but organizations and institutions of any size can also implement changes.

A SMARTER CRIMINAL JUSTICE APPROACH

The data show that buyers are sensitive to the risk of arrest, cite it as a barrier to sex buying, and stop buying sex in communities where they perceive a higher likelihood of arrest. Obviously not every buyer can be—or even needs to be—arrested for the criminal justice response to have a significant impact on reducing demand.

State and local law enforcement agencies, which are primarily responsible for enforcing laws against sex buying, must be strategic. Arresting prostituted persons does nothing to deter buyers. In fact, the very presence of prostituted persons is a direct response to demand, not the other way around. The data demonstrate that we can deter illicit commercial sex markets by arresting sex buyers as part of a broader strategy to increase perceptions of risk.

1 | RECOMMENDATION

Shift law enforcement’s finite resources from arresting and adjudicating prostituted persons and towards arresting and adjudicating buyers.

When law enforcement agencies engage in demand-reduction operations, they should:

- Publicize the operations widely so that the entire community is aware that demand is a priority for the agency, and that there is an ongoing plausible risk of arrest for men who attempt to buy sex. This study documents the central importance of the perception of risk of arrest in deterring buyers and would-be buyers. The publicity needed to heighten risk perception is not for shaming individual arrestees—a strategy known to be ineffective, as well as detrimental to families and communities (McAlinden, 2005). Publicity can take the form of earned media coverage and social media outreach after successful operations, and even before and while operations take place. This publicity deterrence model is widely used in combating DUI criminality, where it is an evidence-based practice known to reduce intoxicated driving rates.

- Conduct demand operations that mirror the diversity of venues, including buyer stings conducted online; in fake illicit massage brothels, apartment brothels, and high-end “escort” agencies; and on known street corridors (as long as the street operations do not require police to first arrest prostituted persons). Conducting a range of demand operations ensures that criminal accountability applies equally to the diverse spectrum of buyers within a community.

- Use investigative data to identify and build cases against high-frequency buyers, as well as buyers who advertise their exploits to the larger community to bolster the activity. With limited resources,
law enforcement agencies must always focus on the highest-impact offenders. Our study makes clear that a relatively small percentage of buyers account for most market activity.

- Ensure law enforcement has the information and data-sharing protocols in place to identify which arrested buyers are recidivists. Many self-identified buyers in this study report being arrested for sex buying on multiple occasions, yet law enforcement professionals indicate that arrestees commonly say it’s “their first time.”

### 2 | RECOMMENDATION

Make available federal short-term funding programs to support state and local law enforcement agencies ready to make demand-reduction reforms.

A shift in law enforcement practice requires training and other professional resources to support new protocols. Financial support for this does not need to be long term; the costs of demand operations should be offset in part by reduced investment in arrests previously targeted at prostituted persons. Training on cost-efficient demand operation approaches, especially those pioneered by leading law enforcement agencies, will also help drive down operations costs for agencies that are new to the practice. Training and technical assistance for law enforcement demand operations is currently available through the National Johns Suppression Initiative (NJSI). For more information on NJSI: www.cookcountysheriff.org/tag/national-johns-suppression-initiative/

### 3 | RECOMMENDATION

Implement mandatory minimum fines of adjudicated buyers to help offset costs of survivor exit services, effective long-term buyer education programs, and law enforcement demand operations.

While mandatory minimum fines of convicted buyers can fund operations, it is just as important—if not more important—that these fines support victim and “exit” services for prostituted persons, including trafficking victims. Not only does this strategy help ensure sustainable funding for such services, but our data demonstrate how it is needed to reinforce the corrective message that sex-buying harms prostituted persons. This message is best delivered through effective long-term sex buyer education programs, which should be mandated as a condition of adjudication rather than as a diversion alternative.

### 4 | RECOMMENDATION

Create increasingly severe penalty structures for repeat buyers, while ensuring that sanctions are consistent with the nature of the offense and not unfairly punitive.

Lawmakers should ensure that state and local laws against sex buying consider the reality of recidivists by assessing increasingly severe penalties. Such laws should also contemplate the uniquely negative impact of “promoting buyers,” people who introduce others into the sex trade (especially juveniles) or post public content about their exploits to encourage other men to buy sex. Our findings show how “promoting buyers” are central to the generational cascade of sex-buying behavior. State and local sex buying laws, as well as pimping and trafficking laws, generally were not authored with the reality of “promoting buyers” in mind, leaving prosecutors with ill-fitting options for charging such defendants.
ENGAGING ALLIES IN CULTURAL INTERVENTIONS

While the criminal justice system is most readily suited to “decelerate” demand, it is hardly the only sector that can serve an important role. The “normalization culture” underlying sex-buying behavior presents a wide range of opportunities for organizations and institutions to address head-on the driving ideologies behind demand. Education, health, and business sectors can be key allies in strategic cultural interventions to reduce demand, since the data in this study make clear that buyers try to hide their behavior from others.

5 | RECOMMENDATION

Counter messages that normalize sex buying through interventions in education and public health sectors.

Buyers cocoon themselves in networks and subcultures that reinforce the “normalization” of sex buying; other networks and cultural influencers must directly and actively counter this narrative. It is critical to challenge the demonstrably false notions that sex buying is both a victimless crime and normal male sexual behavior. The data here show how this belief system is the root justification for most men who buy sex.

• Bystander intervention strategies should be developed and deployed—especially for young adult audiences—to teach safe and practical ways to challenge these false narratives within peer networks. Training strategies are already being used to great success in sexual assault prevention programs on college campuses and elsewhere. Discussions on the topics of consent, sexual harm, and relationship power differentials should be extended into the issue area of commercial sex.

• Survivor voices are critically important to educate the public, including would-be buyers, on the magnitude and nature of harms caused by sex buying. Survivors’ authentic voices are essential to countering the victimless crime mythology these data show is internalized by many men.

• School-based sexual education is essential in reducing demand over the long term, especially since we have learned through this study that many men start buying sex at a young age. Programs for early adolescents can help young people understand the harms and non-normative nature of sex buying and other forms of gender-based violence as outlined below.

6 | RECOMMENDATION

Create employer policies prohibiting sex buying.

Buyers are represented across all demographic groups of men, and high-frequency buyers are more likely to have higher incomes. Therefore, every business or organization should state explicitly within its code of conduct that buying sex is prohibited, including activities on company time or with company resources that are related to sex buying. Such policies should provide clear and specific consequences for employees caught buying sex, including relaying the incident to local authorities under mandated reporter protocol—acknowledging that the prostituted person is potentially an adult or juvenile trafficking victim.
7 | RECOMMENDATION

Implement targeted prevention campaigns and focus deterrence communications on behavioral “nudges.”

These interventions are designed to encourage small changes in positive behaviors through careful suggestion and strategic presentation of choice sets which are optimized based on how humans process information and make decisions. When implemented at scale, these small changes can accrue major social impact. Behavioral nudge opportunities to reduce demand could include:

- **Targeted deterrence and prevention campaigns that focus on how much “safer” it is for men to engage in consensual relational sex compared to buying sex.** The data in this report show that buyers are primarily motivated by their own concerns for well-being and strategically downplay the possibility that prostituted people are harmed. Therefore, the behavioral nudge calculus must be expressed in terms of payoff to the buyer despite the inclination to focus on the harm caused to others. Nudge campaigns might also focus on how relational sex is normal, easier, and more satisfying than paying for sex.

- **Scalable communications programs, especially those deployed digitally, that focus on nudging men away from exploitative sexual experiences that are highly correlated with sex buying.** Our study finds that such experiences include frequenting strip clubs, consuming pornography, and cheating on a romantic partner. For instance, web search ads could provide plausible, healthy sexual alternatives to boys and men searching for these experiences. Additionally, media partners could encourage portrayals that reflect these experiences more accurately, documenting not just the harm caused to exploited persons, but also the dissatisfaction and regret that many men—as shown in this study—experience after they purchase sex.

- **Contributions from the health sector, which can help reduce demand on multiple fronts.** Violence against women is a public health issue, and sex buying is a form of gender-based violence that registers significant amounts of traumatic harm to an overwhelming majority of prostituted individuals. Preventing this harm altogether is the fundamental aim of demand reduction. As it has done for sexual assault, intoxicated driving, and many other issues, the public health sector can identify and promote evidence-based practices in reducing demand. The data in this study suggest ample opportunity for testing targeted community interventions.

- **Involvement of physicians and mental health counselors.** Related to the need for public health involvement is a practical consideration: sex buying is a risky activity. This study identifies serious risks for experiencing physical violence, contracting sexually transmitted infections, and other health concerns—not counting the health effects caused by buyers to relational partners and prostituted persons. Physicians and mental health counselors should understand sex buying as a behavior that, among other things, threatens the health and well-being of the buyer.
References


Appendix A  |  Previous Approaches to Studying Sex Buyers

Since the 1990s, numerous studies have attempted to correct the imbalanced focus on “supply” over “demand” in prostitution research, and have improved our understanding of sex buyers. Knowledge about these buyers comes primarily from three methodologies: (1) comparing samples of buyers with the general population, (2) comparing buyers who attend educational programs (“john schools”), subsequent to their arrest, with men in the general population, and (3) using surveys to compare buyers who admit engaging in the behavior to those who do not (Brewer, Muth, & Potterat, 2008). While each of these approaches has methodological limitations, they have produced stable findings about buyers and the market. One major conclusion, which runs contrary to sensationalized media reports, is that the prevalence of sex buying is dropping. Analysis of General Social Survey data between 1991-1996 and 2006-2012 indicates the number of men in the US who have ever bought sex has decreased from 17% to 13.2% (Reyes, 2013).

One major theoretical framework for understanding this data derives from social exchange theory, which has been used to explain sexual behavior broadly, especially partner selection. Generally, this theory draws on economic principles by emphasizing the exchange of material or symbolic resources between people, labeling costs (exchanges that result in loss or punishment), rewards (pleasurable exchanges), and reciprocity. There are multiple kinds of exchange theory, but they share three core assumptions: (1) all social interactions are a kind of social exchange, (2) people seek to maximize their rewards and minimize costs, and (3) when individuals receive rewards, they feel compelled to reciprocate (Sprecher, 1998).

Applied to the commercial sex market, exchange theory posits that when relational, non-commercial sex is viewed as more costly than commercial sex, a buyer will deem prostitution more “cost-efficient” and rewarding. As an explanatory model, social exchange theory obviously falls flat. If sex buying were merely an attempt by men to achieve sexual “cost efficiencies,” then a reasonable person would expect all or most men to have paid for sex at least once in their lifetimes, and the prevalence of sex buyers cross-culturally would be nearly identical. According to multiple studies (Ward et al., 2005; Claude, 2010; Axel Månsson, 2004; Shih, 1994; Shively, Wheeler & Hunt, 2012), neither of these findings comes close to holding true.

Another debated framework for understanding buyer behavior is whether these men should fall under a category of “peculiar man” (Farley, 2007; Raymond 2004; Sandell, Pettersson, Larsson, & Kuosmanen, 1996; Vanwesenbeeck, Graaf, Zessen, Straver, & Visser, 1993; Mansson & Linders, 1984) or “every man” (Monto & Milrod, 2013; Pitts, Smith, Grierson, O’Brien, & Misson, 2004). The “every man” narrative is an artifact of Kinsey’s early studies of sexuality (Xantidis & McCabe, 2000). Kinsey’s research claimed that 69% of American men bought sex at least once in their lifetimes, which led to a hypothesis that sex buying is biologically determined. Kinsey relied on deeply flawed samples of men, undermining most of his findings on sex buying. Yet, the notion that sex buying reflects normative male sexuality has remained pervasive. More recent research on its prevalence raised serious challenges to this claim (Monto 2004).

Monto and McRee (2005) found buyers and non-buyers do not differ significantly in demographic variables, such as age, education, marital status, length of time in relationship, presence of a regular partner, number of children, or occupation. They did find sex buyers were less likely to take on a feminine sex-role orientation and lower social-sexual effectiveness, indicating there may be a level of relational difficulty underlying some sex-buying behavior. Analyzing men attending weekend “john schools,” Xantidis and McCabe (2000) found buyers were less likely than non-buyers to be married, be happily married, or be happy in general. They also found buyers were more likely to think about sex and engage in other aspects of the commercial sex industry, plus less likely to think the commercial sex industry is morally wrong.
Weitzer (2009) proposed a “polymorphous paradigm” that would bridge disparate approaches to understanding the commercial sex market as characterized by varied forms of power relationships and experiences. While the polymorphous paradigm captures the diverse experiences of prostituted persons without engaging in reductionism, it highlights an important point: the sex market is always a buyer’s market. That term reflects an organization of power dynamics that shapes prostitution transactions in favor of the purchaser.

The circumstances and situations that bring buyers into the sex market are not mediated by the same troublesome influences such as poverty, housing instability, employment opportunities, and traumatic histories that tend to shape prostituted persons’ circumstances. In other words, buyers and sellers do not generally come from equivalent material conditions. Weitzer’s (2009) polymorphous paradigm helped change the trajectory of prostitution scholarship toward a more balanced, encompassing approach, but it does not offer an explanation of buyer behavior.

Sex buying can also be understood through “deviance” frameworks, in two ways: socially deviant, because it is an illegal activity, and gender deviant, as a demonstrably uncommon masculine behavior. Agnew’s (1992) general strain theory identifies three major types of strain that can help explain how sex buying occurs as a masculine, gender-deviant behavior: 1) strain experienced by individuals due to real or anticipated failures in achieving non-deviant goals, causing the person to perceive his only real choices are deviant ones; 2) strain caused by removing positive forces or elements, and 3) strain caused by the introduction of negative forces or elements. These strains create pressure to choose among deviant forms of coping. Broidy and Agnew (1997) even analyzed strain theory in terms of gender and crime, suggesting this framework can be a helpful way to understand why many crimes manifest differently in men and women.

Indeed, Bucher, Manasse, and Milton (2015) found that sex buying can serve as a behavioral coping mechanism to fulfill basic goals like companionship, excitement, and a sexual outlet for men who feel blocked from achieving sexual satisfaction. The authors note this pattern fits with a highly gendered type of strain, whereby certain notions of masculinity are driven by sexual prowess and gendered power dynamics in which men are expected to exert control over their environment. Failing to achieve these expectations can produce a strain that threatens some men’s identities; they turn to sex buying to correct it.

---

8 Sex buying is illegal in the US, in all but a few counties in Nevada.
Respondents Who Have Ever Paid for Sex

- YES, This Year: 6.2%
- YES, But Not This Year: 14.4%
- NO: 79.4%

Number of Times Buyers Paid for Sex in Their Lifetimes

- 1: 22.4%
- 2-5: 36.6%
- 6-10: 14.6%
- 10+: 26.4%
**Figure C**

Buyer’s Age of First Paid Sex Experience

![Bar chart showing buyer's age of first paid sex experience](image)

**Figure D**

Estimated Age of Prostituted Person Most Recently Bought for Sex, According to Buyer

![Bar chart showing estimated age of prostituted person](image)
**Figure E**

Perceived Race/Ethnicity of Prostituted Person Most Recently Bought for Sex, According to Buyer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Active Low-Frequency Buyers</th>
<th>Active High-Frequency Buyers</th>
<th>Former Buyers</th>
<th>Buyers Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something Else</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure F**

Gender of Prostituted Person Most Recently Bought for Sex, According to Buyer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Active Low-Frequency Buyers</th>
<th>Active High-Frequency Buyers</th>
<th>Former Buyers</th>
<th>Buyers Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>87.9</td>
<td>78.5</td>
<td>88.2</td>
<td>88.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans (Male or Female)</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**FIGURE G**

Number of Times Active Buyers Paid for Sex in the Last 12 Months

- 25-52+: 4.7%
- 6-24: 21.5%
- 1: 30.8%
- 2-5: 43.0%

**FIGURE H**

Race of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Never Bought</th>
<th>Active Low-Frequency Buyers</th>
<th>Active High-Frequency Buyers</th>
<th>Former Buyers</th>
<th>Men Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>65.1</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>46.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Who Buys Sex? | 43
FIGURE I

Sexual Orientation of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never Bought</th>
<th>Active Low-Frequency Buyers</th>
<th>Active High-Frequency Buyers</th>
<th>Former Buyers</th>
<th>Men Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>93.4%</td>
<td>91.2%</td>
<td>91.5%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>89.2%</td>
<td>92.7%</td>
<td>91.5%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>91.5%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE J

Marital Status of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never Bought</th>
<th>Active Low-Frequency Buyers</th>
<th>Active High-Frequency Buyers</th>
<th>Former Buyers</th>
<th>Men Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>53.0%</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>57.0%</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never Married</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**FIGURE K**

Number of Children in the Respondent’s Household

![Bar chart showing the number of children in the respondent's household by frequency of buying and gender.](chart_k)

**FIGURE L**

Education Attained by Respondents

![Bar chart showing the education attainment by frequency of buying and gender.](chart_l)
**FIGURE M**

Political Ideology of Respondents

![Chart showing the political ideology of respondents across different categories.

**FIGURE N**

Respondents’ Frequency of Having Sex in Past 12 Months

![Chart showing the frequency of respondents having sex in the past 12 months across different categories.]
Figure O

Respondents Diagnosed with Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) in Past 12 Months

- Never Bought
- Active Low-Frequency Buyers
- Active High-Frequency Buyers
- Former Buyers
- Men Overall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never Bought</td>
<td>97.6%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Low-Frequency Buyers</td>
<td>94.9%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active High-Frequency Buyers</td>
<td>96.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Buyers</td>
<td>96.6%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men Overall</td>
<td>96.6%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No: 100%
Yes: 0%
What Respondents Say Would Be Very Important Factors in Deciding to Buy Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Never Bought</th>
<th>Active Low-Frequency Buyers</th>
<th>Active High-Frequency Buyers</th>
<th>Former Buyers</th>
<th>Men Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forget my moral beliefs temporarily</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>60.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The person would have to be attractive</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>60.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel there was no risk to my personal safety</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>62.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be certain there was no risk of STI</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>76.0</td>
<td>80.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be confident I would not be arrested</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>76.0</td>
<td>80.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happen where it is legal</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>65.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be sure my friends and family wouldn't find out</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>75.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be sure the person wasn't forced or trafficked</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>75.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be sure I wouldn't risk losing my job</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>66.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be sure I wouldn't hurt my partner</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be single</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Path Diagram and Summary Statistics of Intent to Buy Sex Structural Equation Model

Notes: (R2) for endogenous variables, bold lines are indirect relationships, *p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.001, latent variables in ovals, bootstrapped standard errors, mediation paths in boldface
N=1,778; RMSEA=.032; CFI=.940; TLI=.882; SRMR=.035
The good news...

No buyers, no business.

DEMAND ABOLITION is committed to eradicating the illegal commercial sex industry in the US by combating demand for purchased sex and increasing accountability for buyers. We embrace a multisector approach, working closely with an active network of survivor leaders, criminal justice professionals, practitioners, researchers, policymakers, corporate leaders, philanthropists, media, and others.

For more information contact policy@demandabolition.org
demandabolition.org
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN PROSTITUTION IS LEGALISED / DECRIMINALISED?

IT'S OFFICIAL!

Certificate
NOTHING WRONG WITH BUYING SEX

MORE MEN BUY SEX
MORE MONEY ENTERS THE SYSTEM
MORE PIMP'S WANT TO CASH IN
MORE BROTHELS OPEN
MORE "GIRLS" NEEDED
MORE TRAFFICKERS MOVE IN

Women become commodities for others to get rich on

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