

Deconstructing The Demand for Prostitution: Preliminary Insights From Interviews With Chicago Men Who Purchase Sex

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Executive Summary

In December of 2006 and June of 2007 the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE), Prostitution Research and Education (PRE), and the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (CCH) launched a research initiative in Chicago to investigate the cognitive and behavioral patterns of men who purchase sex. A team of ten individuals, including three survivors of the sex trade, were trained by CAASE and PRE. In total, the team interviewed 113 men who buy sex. Men were recruited through the “Erotic Services” section of [Craigslist](#), the [Chicago Reader](#), and [Chicago After Dark](#). Each interview lasted approximately an hour and a half to two hours and consisted of both quantitative and qualitative questions.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

AGE: The average age of our respondents was 39, with a range of 20 to 71 years.

RACE: Of those we interviewed, 40% were African American, 36% were European American, 14% were Latino, 5% were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 5% identified as multicultural or “other.”

EDUCATION: The majority of interviewees (79%) had attended some college or obtained a college or graduate school degree.

INCOME: 62% of interviewees made more than \$40,000 a year.

REGULAR SEX PARTNER: 62% of interviewees identified as having a regular sex partner (girlfriend or wife).

FREQUENCY OF BUYING SEX: 53% of interviewees purchased sex from women in prostitution as frequently as once a month to several times a week.

HOW MEN FIND WOMEN IN PROSTITUTION: 34% of interviewees said they contact women through the internet. [Craigslist](#) was the most frequently used website to solicit sexual services.

VENUES: 57% of interviewees solicited women in prostitution outdoors and 84% solicited women indoors. The most popular indoor venues were bars, strip clubs, escort agencies, and private parties.

WHERE IN THE CITY: 26 interviewees mentioned specific neighborhoods and/or streets where they purchase sex in Chicago. The most popular location to purchase sex was the West Side followed by the South Side.

AGE WHEN MEN FIRST BOUGHT SEX: The age when men first bought sex ranged from 10 to 52. The average age was 21.

CIRCUMSTANCE WHEN FIRST PURCHASING SEX: 54% of interviewees bought sex for the first time by themselves. For those who bought sex while with other people, 36% did so with a group of friends and 17% with a relative. For 29% of interviewees, the first time they had sex was with an individual in prostitution.

SEX ACTS: 46-48% of interviewees purchased sex in order to obtain sex acts they either felt uncomfortable asking of their partner or which their partner refused to perform.

NO COMMITMENT: 36% of interviewees said that they purchased sex to avoid emotional involvement or commitment.

ADDICTION: 83% considered purchasing sex an addiction for the man buying.

PORNOGRAPHY: 39% of interviewees were regular pornography consumers. Interviewees frequently mentioned reenacting pornography with women in prostitution.

EMOTIONAL STATE: 27% preferred women who looked “lonely” in order to imagine the existence of an emotional bond.

RACE/ETHNICITY: 43% of interviewees selected a woman in prostitution based on her race and/or ethnicity.

MEN’S DOMINATION OVER WOMEN IN PROSTITUTION: 43% of interviewees stated that if the man pays the woman for sex, she should do anything he asks.

INTOXICATION: 42% of interviewees were regularly intoxicated during their encounters with women in prostitution. 19% said they were drunk or high during every encounter.

CONFLICTING FEELINGS: 22% of interviewees felt guilty and/or shameful the majority of the time they purchased sex.

POVERTY: 66% of interviewees told us that women become prostitutes out of economic necessity and 27% thought that the majority of women in the sex trade are homeless.

CHILDHOOD ABUSE: 57% of interviewees believed that the majority of women in prostitution experienced some type of childhood abuse.

YOUTH: 32% of interviewees thought that the majority of women in prostitution entered the sex trade before the age of 18.

TRAFFICKING: 20% of interviewees thought that they had bought sex from women who were trafficked from other countries.

PIMPS: 75% of men had observed a woman in prostitution with a pimp, and 40% had bought a woman in prostitution who they identified as having a pimp or manager. 27% of interviewees described the prostitute-pimp relationship as exploitative and harmful to the woman.

HARM: 42% stated that prostitution causes both psychological and physical damage to women. 13% of interviewees had witnessed an act of extreme violence perpetrated against a woman in prostitution.

MARRIAGE: 75% of interviewees stated that harm is done to a marriage if the man goes to a prostitute, even if the wife does not know about it.

COMMUNITIES: 80% of interviewees thought that prostitution had a negative impact on communities, including increasing crime, being a bad influence on children, and devaluing the neighborhood.

ENDING PROSTITUTION: 21% of interviewees said that in order to end the sex trade we would need to end childhood sexual abuse and create better opportunities for women.

CONSEQUENCES THAT WOULD SERVE AS DETERRENTS: 87% of interviewees said some form of public exposure, such as having their name or photo in a newspaper, would deter them from buying sex. 83% said jail time and 79% said a letter sent to their family would be a deterrent.

PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS:

PREVENTION: Create and implement Prevention Curricula for Youth

Recommendation 1: Young men need to be exposed to the realities of prostitution and trafficking including the reasons women enter prostitution, the extent of violence in prostitution, and the physical and psychological harm suffered by prostituted individuals.

Recommendation 2: Young men should be educated about the conflicted feelings of men who use women in prostitution and the potential adverse consequences that buying women for sex can have on their own sexuality and on their relationships with non-prostituted women.

Recommendation 3: The link between pornography and prostitution should be further examined. Eliminating demand for prostitution and trafficking, and deterring young men from buying sex, includes challenging men's demand and need for pornography.

Recommendation 4: Young men need to explore, early on, their own definitions of what it means to be a man, and address cultural and peer pressures that might influence them, or their friends, to use women in prostitution.

COMMUNITY ACTION AND EDUCATION:

Educate Community Residents On How to Deter Demand in Their Neighborhoods and in Their Social Networks

Recommendation 5: Community groups should design and implement awareness-raising campaigns that debunk prostitution myths by highlighting the realities of why women enter prostitution, the connections between trafficking and pornography, and the violence that women endure in the sex trade.

Recommendation 6: Men should hold each other accountable for their patronage of the sex trade industry and cease perpetuating myths of “masculinity” that include domination and exploitation of women.

Recommendation 7: Community residents should work with Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) officials to raise awareness about the existing criminal penalties for purchasing sex and to ensure that these criminal penalties are enforced.

Recommendation 8: Community residents should work with their local police department to target the indoor venues where men purchase sex.

Recommendation 9: Community residents should work with their legislators to create and implement legislation that increases criminal penalties for those purchasing sex. Any measure taken that publicizes the identities of “johns” should only be implemented after conviction, not arrest.

INTERVENTION:

Create and Implement Effective Intervention Initiatives for Men Already Buying Sex

Recommendation 10: Existing “John Schools” should be expanded to include individual sessions with clinical practitioners who should explore the varied psychological reasons that lead men to originally purchase, and continue to purchase, sex. Counseling should be available on a long-term basis.

Recommendation 11: Service providers who already work with men in the context of ending violence against women, such as batterer intervention programs, should incorporate a discussion of prostitution into the work they do. They should explore to what degree clients’ propensity to tolerate violence against women might play a role in their decision to buy sex, as well as in their sexual and romantic relationships with non-prostituted women.

Recommendation 12: Clinical practitioners working with regular users of the sex trade should assess for history of sexual abuse, development of healthy or unhealthy sexual behaviors, risk of unhealthy sexual behaviors, and history of mental health issues and substance use. Mental health practitioners should also assess if their client’s outlook on prostitution changes as he continues to understand his own sexual needs and behaviors.

Introduction

"If we don't work to stem the demand for young women's bodies in the sex trade industry, that demand will continue to be met by coercion, violence, and exploitation of vulnerable young girls and women in prostitution." - Jody Raphael¹

PROSTITUTION IN CHICAGO

In Chicago, 16,000 - 25,000 women and girls are involved in prostitution over the course of each year.² Varied circumstances lead women to a life in the sex trade including high rates of incest, survival needs, homelessness, and domestic and sexual violence which are exacerbated by sex inequality, racism, and poverty.

Though women end up in the sex trade for a variety of reasons, if there was no demand to purchase sex then prostitution would cease to exist.

Prostitution is almost uniformly violent and harmful to the women in it. Research on prostitution in Chicago found that 100% of survey participants had experienced some type of violence while in the sex trade. This included being raped, kicked, threatened with a weapon, punched, and slapped.³ Another study conducted in San Francisco yielded similar statistics about the incidence of violence: 82% of respondents reported being physically assaulted since entering prostitution, with 55% being assaulted by "johns". 88% had been physically threatened while in prostitution, and 80% reported physical attacks by pimps and "johns" that had resulted in serious injury. 68% of respondents reported having been raped since entering the sex trade.⁴

Physical violence is only one of the multiple harms experienced by those in prostitution. Prostituted individuals also face a variety of health problems including migraines, memory problems, sleeplessness, depression, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and eating disorders.⁵ These problems complicate further the physical health problems associated with prostitution such as sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS.

Research by the Center for Impact Research in Chicago shows that "johns" are the most frequently identified perpetrators of violence towards women in all types of prostitution activity including on the street, in drug houses, in hotels, in escort services, and in exotic dancing venues.⁶ Yet these perpetrators are rarely being held accountable. In Chicago, of the approximately 4,500 individuals arrested annually on prostitution related charges, two-thirds are of women selling sex and less than one-third are of "johns."⁷

1 www.caase.org

2 Claudine O'Leary and Olivia Howard, "The Prostitution of Women and Girls in Metropolitan Chicago: A Preliminary Prevalence Report," (report, Center for Impact Research, Chicago, 2001).

3 Jody Raphael and Deborah L. Shapiro, "Sisters Speak Out: The Lives and Needs of Prostituted Women in Chicago," (report, Center for Impact Research, Chicago, 2002).

4 Melissa Farley and Howard Barkan, "Prostitution, Violence Against Women, and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder," *Women and Health*, 27, no.3 (1998), 37-49.

5 Melissa Farley, "Bad for the Body, Bad for the Heart": Prostitution Harms Women Even if Legalized or Decriminalized, *Violence Against Women*, 10, no.10 (2004), 1087-1125.

6 Jody Raphael and Deborah L. Shapiro, "Sisters Speak Out: The Lives and Needs of Prostituted Women in Chicago," (report, Center for Impact Research, Chicago, 2002).

7 City of Chicago Mayor's Office on Domestic Violence, "The Intersystem Assessment on Prostitution in Chicago," (report, Chicago, 2006).

FOCUSING ON THE DEMAND SIDE

“A man who buys sex is viewed simply as a ‘man’ doing ‘what men do’ and therefore there is nothing unique or interesting enough about his behavior to justify research.”⁸ - Hanny Ben-Israel and Nomi Levenkron

The research on prostitution that has emerged over the last two decades has focused almost exclusively on women who sell sex. The men who pay for sex have remained largely invisible in research, discourse, and public policy.⁹

“If we are to intervene in the business of sex trafficking, we need to know much more about the men who buy the women, their thinking and attitudes toward women in general, as well as how they view women they buy. There is certainly an urgent need to address the mental and physical health needs of women and children during prostitution and after escape. But to address the roots of the problem, it is equally important to address men’s demand for prostitution.”¹⁰ - Melissa Farley

The Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE) and Prostitution Research and Education (PRE) began this research with the goal of learning about men who buy sex and developing prostitution prevention and intervention programs.

THE PROJECT’S BEGINNING

This research project was initiated by Prostitution Research and Education (PRE) in San Francisco. After ten years of studying the effects of prostitution on women in the sex trade, Dr. Melissa Farley, the Executive Director of PRE, realized that any strategy to end the sex trade must include not only supportive services to help women safely exit prostitution *but also* initiatives aimed at demand elimination. However, without comprehensive research on the demand side of the sex trade, creating effective interventions proved challenging. Consequently, Dr. Farley launched a cross-cultural research project examining the demand for prostitution in cities throughout the world.

Chicago already has strong commitments from government agencies, social service agencies, educational groups and health agencies to work towards ending the harms of the sex trade. Multiple coalitions share this mission, and there are several comprehensive research studies on the supply side of prostitution that have been conducted in Chicago and used in advocacy and social service provision throughout the city and country. Consequently, Chicago naturally stood out as a city that would support a research initiative on demand elimination and that would use the findings of the research to improve its efforts toward ending sexual exploitation. This commitment was further validated when, in November of 2006, the Chicago Mayor’s Office on Domestic Violence (MODV) released a report on prostitution that recommended the elimination of demand as one of the city’s strategies for ending the sex trade.

“Why interview customers? Strategies to combat both legal and illegal aspects of the sex trade seldom focus on the demand that fuels this industry. Research in Chicago indicates that many women and girls in the sex trade experience homelessness and are victims of violence, abuse and exploitation, and that some male customers are violent and exploitative. Yet, there is little research on the customers of women in the sex trade industry.”¹¹

- Samir Goswami

8 Hanny Ben-Israel and Nomi Levenkron, “The Missing Factor: Client’s of Trafficked Women in Israel’s Sex Industry,” (report, Heinrich Boll Foundation, Israel)

9 Maddy Coy and Miranda Horvath and Liz Kelly. “It’s just like going to the supermarket’: Men buying sex in East London.” (Report for Safe Exist, London, 2007)

10 Melissa Farley, Personal Communication, April 2006 San Francisco.

11 Chicago Coalition for the Homeless. “Buying Sex: A Survey of Men in Chicago.” (Report, Chicago, 2004).

During the time the MODV research was launched, the city was also exposed to an initiative that strived to comprehensively identify ways to end violence against women and girls. "What Will It Take", a project of the Chicago Foundation for Women, sought to answer the question, "What will it take to end violence against all women and girls in Illinois?" Part of their answer included ending the harms and violence experienced by prostituted women and girls. Through their generous funding, and an initial start-up grant from Michael Reese Health Trust, we were able to conduct in Dr. Farley's research in Chicago. These preliminary findings are part of a comprehensive research study of men who purchase sex in Chicago that will be published at a later date.

CAASE and PRE conducted these interviews in 2006 - 2007. Interviews were held in public locations both to assure interviewees that the interviews were not a police-sting, and to ensure the safety of the interviewers.

Participants for this study were recruited by an advertisement that was published weekly in the Chicago Reader and Chicago After Dark (free news publications). The advertisement was also run daily in the "Erotic Services" section of Craigslist. Craigslist is a community website where people can find jobs, locate roommates, sell furniture, etc. It is also a website where people can advertise "Erotic Services" which is mostly code for prostitution and where many men go to buy sex.¹² We posted our advertisement in the "Erotic Services" section of Craigslist since we knew men who buy sex would likely be using that website.

Our advertisement read as follows:

Chicago based Research Organization is looking to interview men who have paid for commercial sex. Interviews last two hours and are completely confidential.

We pay \$40.00 in cash at the end of each interview.
If interested, please call (phone number).

We interviewed a total of 113 men.

Interviewers administered standardized written questionnaires and semi-structured interviews that were based off of a qualitative and quantitative survey designed by PRE.

The research questionnaires addressed the following: attitudes towards rape and prostitution, types of emotional and physical characteristics men sought out in the women they bought, how they located women in prostitution, what locations they went to, drug and alcohol use, interactions with pimps, emotional feelings about purchasing sex, perceptions about the negative consequences of prostitution, interviewee's general knowledge of life events precipitating entry into prostitution, and the potential effectiveness of a range of legal and social deterrents. CAASE created twenty additional questions specifically relevant for Chicago men who buy sex. These questions asked interviewees about their arrest history and their participation in sex tourism in other countries.

On average, the interviews lasted from one to two hours each, providing interviewers with the opportunity to inquire about the motivation and life histories of interviewees. When literacy was a problem, questionnaires were read aloud.

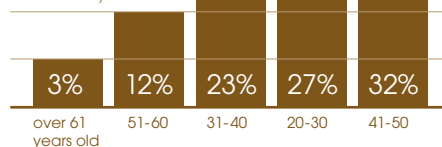
The findings in this report are preliminary. Statistical analysis of this data and qualitative analysis of the interviews are in progress. Analysis and interpretation of these findings will be published at a later date.

12 Diedrich, J. (2008). Craigslist child sex ads lead to arrests: Investigators follow rising use of the Web site in prostitution. Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel, April 8, 2008. Retrieved April 8, 2008 from <http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=737115>

Demographic and Personal Information

Age

The average age of our respondents was 39, with a range of 20 to 71 years.



Age Range of all interviewees

SEXUAL ORIENTATION:

84% of our interviewees identified as heterosexual. 11% identified as bisexual and 5% identified as homosexual. Though bisexual and homosexual interviewees purchased sex from men, we are using the phrase "women in prostitution" for the purposes of this report since the majority of men surveyed sought out women when buying sex.

RACE: We sought to interview men of different races and ethnicities in a way that would closely mirror the racial and ethnic diversity of Chicago as provided by the 2000 Census data¹³.

Of those we interviewed 40% were African American, 36% were European American, 14% were Latino, 5% were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 5% identified as multicultural or "other."

Education Level

32% had earned a college degree

31% had attended some college

21% had completed some high school or obtained a high school diploma

16% had earned a graduate or professional degree

Family Income

- 17% earned less than \$20,000
- 21% earned between \$20,001-\$40,000
- 28% earned between \$40,001-\$60,000
- 17% earned between \$60,001-\$80,000
- 10% earned between \$80,001-\$140,000
- 7% earned more than \$140,001

RELIGION: 44% of interviewees stated that they had no religious affiliation. For those who did identify as having a religious affiliation, 36% were Catholic, 13% were Protestant, 4% were Muslim, and 3% were Jewish.

REGULAR SEX PARTNER: 62% of interviewees identified as having a regular sex partner (girlfriend or wife).

NUMBER OF LIFETIME SEXUAL PARTNERS



TOTAL NUMBER OF WOMEN PURCHASED IN PROSTITUTION: In the course of their lives men had purchased sex between one (4%) and 1,000 (3%) times. The majority of our sample (51%) had purchased sex from less than fifteen individuals in the sex trade.

- 37% had bought between 1-10 women
- 24% had bought between 11-20 women
- 15% had bought between 21-40 women
- 6% had bought between 41-70 women
- 9% had bought between 71-100 women
- 8% had bought more than 100 women

FREQUENCY OF BUYING SEX:

- 7% purchased several times a week
- 5% purchased once a week
- 21% purchased several times a month
- 20% purchased monthly
- 5% purchased every couple of years
- 27% purchased couple of times a year
- 12% purchased once or twice in lifetime

Where Men Buy Sex

HOW MEN FIND WOMEN IN PROSTITUTION: 34% of interviewees said they contact women through the internet. Craigslist was the most frequently used website to buy women in prostitution. Other popular websites included: Eros.com, Chicagoescorts.com, Chicagoreader.com, Adultfriendfinder.com, Google search and MySpace. Other websites mentioned were satansplace.com, bangbrothers.com, collegebookbang.com, and milfhunter.com.

The Chicago Reader was the most frequently cited newspaper that interviewees used to find women in prostitution followed by the Chicago Sun Times.

WHERE IN THE CITY: 57% of interviewees bought women in prostitution outdoors and 84% bought women indoors.

TABLE 1: Indoor Locations in Chicago Where 113 Men Bought Sex

Location	Percentage
Bar	52%
Strip Club	46%
Escort Agency	36%
Private Party	36%
Lap Dance Club	31%
Massage Parlor	27%
Brothel	21%
Drug House	11%
Sauna	10%

Other non-street venues mentioned included churches, dance clubs, casinos, hotels and motels, bachelor parties, country clubs, universities, political gatherings, work, manicurists, coffee shops, motorcycle clubs, and grocery stores.

These indoor and outdoor sites for prostitution are located throughout Chicago. 44% of interviewees mentioned a total of 26 specific neighborhoods and/or streets where they purchase sex in the city. The most popular location to purchase sex was the West Side followed by the South Side. Also popular were Humboldt Park and Cicero. Interviewees offered a number of reasons for choosing particular neighborhoods, including: familiarity with the location, potential for anonymity, racial demographics among women in prostitution in that particular neighborhood, concentration of strip clubs, proximity to one's house, and availability of drugs.

“West Side, because I live on the South Side, I don't want to see anyone I know.”

BUYING SEX OUTSIDE OF ILLINOIS: Men also purchased sex in other cities and foreign countries. Las Vegas and Atlanta were the most popular U.S. cities followed by New York and Los Angeles. Interviewees purchased sex in 32 different international locations, with the top being Canada and Mexico followed by Southeast Asia, Germany, the Netherlands, and Japan.

One man mentioned that when he booked a trip to Cuba through a travel agency part of the vacation “package” included Cuban women in prostitution. This man paid an extra \$100 to the travel agent who arranged for the women to stay in the vacation apartment for three days. The women cleaned the room and performed sex acts requested by the man and his friends.

First Experience Buying Sex

For 29% of interviewees the first time they had sex was with an individual in prostitution.

CIRCUMSTANCE WHEN FIRST PURCHASING SEX:

54% of interviewees bought sex for the first time by themselves. For those who bought sex while with other people, 36% did so with a group of friends and 17% did so with a relative. The most commonly cited relative was the man’s brother followed by uncle, cousin and father.

TABLE 2: Age When 113 Chicago Men First Bought Sex

The age when men first bought sex ranged from 10 to 52. The **average age was 21.**

- 10-15 years – 11%
- 16-20 years – 44%
- 21-25 years – 31%
- 26-30 years – 10%
- 31 years and older – 5%

TABLE 3: Locations Where 113 Chicago Men First Bought Sex

Location	Percentage
On the Street	26%
In A Club	18%
At A Private Party	14%
In A Brothel	10%
In A Crack House	2%
At A Sauna	1%
In A Massage Parlor	1%

18% of these men bought sex for the first time to mark an occasion such as a birthday or bachelor party.

NEGATIVE FIRST EXPERIENCE:

Some men had mixed feelings during their first time buying sex. Experiences tended to be more negative when a young man felt pressured by a relative who was purchasing the sex act for him:

“My uncle... was a pimp at the time. One lady was one of his hos, he told her to give me some head. I started crying, he told her to stop. He didn't want me to be a fruit-you'd be surprised how well it worked.”

A few men believed that if they said “no” to purchasing sex then both their value as a man and their sexual orientation would be challenged:

“I was peer pressured. I didn't want to, I was afraid of catching something. My friend said ‘You a pussy. You a punk.’”

Men's Stated Reasons For Buying Sex

Men told us that they bought sex for a variety of reasons: to obtain sex acts they could not get from a partner; because they consider buying sex an addiction; to avoid emotional involvement and commitment; and to obtain a sense of companionship.

Other important factors that influenced interviewees' decisions to buy sex were cultural, including their own use of pornography, their understanding of the constructs of masculinity, and peer pressures and influences in the workplace. Some men admitted to seeking women in prostitution to act out violent urges and to feel powerful.

SEX ACTS: 46-48% of interviewees purchased sex in order to obtain sex acts they either felt uncomfortable asking of their partner or which their partner refused to perform. The most commonly cited acts were anal sex (27%) followed by oral sex (7%). Other acts mentioned included group sex, using sex toys, sadomasochism, domination, and other fetishes.

"I want to pay someone to do something a normal person wouldn't do. To piss on someone or pay someone to do something degrading who is not my girlfriend."

"Anything you can't get from your girlfriend or wife, you can get from a prostitute."

NO COMMITMENT: 36% of interviewees said that they purchased sex to avoid emotional involvement or commitment.

"You don't care about this person - it's a feeling of no strings. I don't have to see that person anymore if I don't want to."

"No real commitment, you can go whenever you want and you don't have to deal with it."

SEEKING COMPANIONSHIP:

There was a split between men who viewed women in prostitution as a commodity or service provider and those who wanted to purchase an experience of companionship. 19% of men sought women in prostitution because they wanted to pretend that they had a relationship with the woman they bought.

"It's a surprise to see what it's like, it's a beautiful thing. It's like being with a girlfriend, just for a short time."

Other men indicated that they sought out women in prostitution because they feared they would never develop a relationship with someone not in the sex trade. Several interviewees said that their only sexual relationships were with women in prostitution.

“Don’t know if I can find someone else.”

14% of interviewees believed they had an emotional relationship with the women they bought for sex.

“It’s a short term relationship - telling our troubles to each other and feeling secure.”

ADDICTION: 83% of interviewees felt the use of women in prostitution was an addiction.

“I have friends who just live to go to prostitutes. You get variety, there’s something addicting about variety. I have friends doing the ‘90/90’, that’s going to 90 prostitutes in 90 days.”*

“It’s like a drug. You get high thinking about it. Your heart is beating fast, you get aroused, get flushed... It’s like having an orgasm before you get it.”

“Sexual addiction is a real thing and prostitution is one of several outlets for sexual addiction.”

*90/90 is a term used by Alcoholics Anonymous that references attending 90 AA meetings in the same number of days.

PORNOGRAPHY: Interviewees frequently mentioned re-enacting scenes from pornography with women in prostitution. One man described his trip to Las Vegas when he and a friend bought sex:

“It was in Las Vegas - it was a threesome of me and my play bro. . . we came on her face at the same time, like in the porn movies.”

Other interviewees described the role that pornography can play in men’s decision to buy sex:

“Porn makes more men try things. Men who are shown porn at a younger age categorize women more and see it as a harmless crime because they don’t see them as a person.”

“Sometimes when... you see your father’s porno stash you think it’s o.k.”

One interviewee said he would teach younger men what to buy from women in prostitution by showing him pornography.

“I’d prepare him for it by showing him porn. Look at pornography, see what sex acts they do and go from there.”

To some men, pornography and prostitution are the same thing. 49% told us that they thought of women in pornography as prostitutes.

“Pornography is the most glorified type of prostitution there is. It’s a billion dollar legal industry.”

CONSTRUCTS OF MASCULINITY: Some interviewees acknowledged that cultural pressures to “be a man”, as defined by media, friends, and family, influenced their decision to buy sex. This was especially true when purchasing sex for the first time.

“I was scared they wouldn’t think I was cool.”

“Dissension in the ranks. I didn’t want to be the one not fitting in. I needed a war story to tell as well.”

“It’s a coming into manhood thing”

Some men viewed buying sex as a rite of passage, or a validation of their masculinity. When describing buying sex for the first time with his father, an interviewee stated, “Like here is your first sip of beer, here is your first hooker.”

WORKPLACE CULTURE: Some interviewees described situations where buying sex was a part of their work environment. The purchase of prostitution for an employee was sometimes an incentive or bonus.

“One of the companies I used to work for, if sales were up and quotas were met, the boss would bring women to entertain us...”

“I went on an interview and they took out this group of fifteen of us to one of the best strip clubs in the state to get us to work there...”

“I won a blow job in a raffle.”

PROSTITUTION PURCHASE WHILE IN THE MILITARY: 14% of interviewees had been in the armed forces. Half of those men bought sex during military service.

“I was in the military. There was a building with three floors and lots of rooms. You pick a girl and describe what you want. I went with a group of guys.”

“The Army pushed us to use the prostitutes. They gave us a bus to the bar where there was a strip club. They set it up like a field trip.”

VIOLENT OUTLET: Though interviewees were not explicit in that they sought out women in prostitution to commit acts of violence against them, these sentiments were evident in a few answers to other questions.

“She feels a lot of force between her legs, because I’m not going to be lenient. I’m going to give her everything I’ve got. You can pound them, she don’t mind.”

“Something at your job makes you mad, you can’t beat your wife, you can’t beat your kids, and so you go out and have sex to take your frustration out.”

Rationalizations For Buying Sex

Interviewees often justified their decision to purchase sex by convincing themselves that buying women in prostitution was something natural for men or that the women they bought benefited financially or physically.

CONSIDERING PROSTITUTION A LEGITIMATE BUSINESS: To rationalize their continued patronage, interviewees often expressed statements equating prostitution to any other type of business.

“Prostitution has no negative effect because this is your job and you’re trying to get paid and trying to get your hustle on. You respect them for what they do. . . .”

87% of interviewees thought that women should be able to choose prostitution just like any other job. 65% of interviewees stated that prostitution should, in fact, be treated no differently than any other type of work.

THE WOMAN’S PERCEIVED SEXUAL SATISFACTION: Many men described the importance of feeling like they sexually pleased the woman they had bought. When asked what percentage of the time the woman was sexually satisfied with him, 16% said that the woman was always sexually satisfied. 64% expressed that the woman was sexually satisfied more than half of the time.

“I hope she’s satisfied, at least acting like it.”

BUYING SEX AS A MALE PRIVILEGE: Buying sex was often seen as a normative part of male behavior. Many interviewees viewed prostitution as something natural and even beneficial to individuals and society. 95% felt that prostitution would always exist and 63% felt that most men go to prostitutes once in awhile. 52% thought that it would be fine if their son visited a brothel.

BELIEVING WOMEN CHOOSE TO ENTER PROSTITUTION: 87% of interviewees thought that women freely choose to enter prostitution. 62% thought that the majority of women in prostitution are fully informed about the nature of the sex trade before entry. Interviews with women in prostitution suggest the opposite is true.

VIEWING WOMEN AS OBJECTS INSTEAD OF PEOPLE: Interviewees often compared women in prostitution to objects. To these men, women ceased to be individuals and instead became “products” that could be bought and used.

“If they can’t have a conversation, then the product is defective.”

“Prostitutes are like a product, like cereal. You go to the grocery, pick the brand you want, and pay for it. It’s business.”

Some interviewees compared the women they bought to food, reinforcing their notion of prostitutes as commodities. It also suggests that women are something these men felt entitled to, like food, water and shelter.

“Like a grocery store where the food is tested and regulated, they should regulate prostitutes.”

“I usually call for a girl, you know, like a pizza.”

“... it’s on every corner. Good stores have good produce. Bad stores have bad produce, but the prices are cheap.”

If women in prostitution are viewed as objects for purchase, it is not surprising that the price of buying sex seemed to be of great importance to many interviewees. There were reoccurring themes of the desire to seek out what the men viewed as “the best bargain.” Men often expressed anger at feeling that, during a particular encounter, they did not get their “money’s worth”.

“Prostitution is like going to Circuit City or Best Buy, what’s the bigger and better deal?”

VIEWING ALL WOMEN AS PROSTITUTES: Though 40% of interviewees felt that women in prostitution were different from non-prostituted women, others held the view that all women are “prostitutes” or can be bought. Therefore, there is no perceived harm done when purchasing a woman in prostitution since all women are viewed as “for sale”. The only perceived difference is that a man must buy a woman who is not a prostitute dinner and/or gifts in order to obtain sex from her.

“Regardless if you have sex with a woman who is a prostitute; women are all the same, they all make you pay. I see no difference in women as a whole.”

“When you take a woman to dinner or the movies, it’s basically the same thing. There’s the cost of flowers, dinner, a show, dancing – it’s \$150-\$200. By that point you might as well call a prostitute when the girl finally gives in.”

VIEWING WOMEN IN PROSTITUTION AS HAVING A DIFFERENT EMOTIONAL COMPOSITION FROM NON-PROSTITUTED WOMEN:

When describing the difference between women in prostitution and those not in the sex trade, 21% of interviewees referred to women in prostitution as having a different emotional make-up that allows them to prostitute.

“It takes a certain type of woman to put her dignity on the line. They disrespect themselves.”

“They just have to have really low self-esteem and be numb on the inside, and be able to turn their emotions on and off.”

What Men Said They Look For When Buying Sex

EMOTIONAL STATE: For some men the appearance of vulnerability in the woman they bought was important. 27% preferred women who looked “lonely”. Some men stated that seeking lonely women more easily permitted them to imagine the existence of an emotional bond.

“If they are lonely they need someone to talk to and be intimate with. Makes me feel more like it’s an equal transaction if they’re lonely.”

For others, the woman’s perceived loneliness facilitated the interviewee’s conviction that he could dominate her:

“If she’s lonely, she’s going to be more submissive - both emotionally and physically.”

13% of interviewees specifically sought out intoxicated women who they saw as more vulnerable. Some of these men stated that when they were with a woman in prostitution who was intoxicated they might treat her differently:

“I don’t look for it (intoxication), but if she is I might drive on her a little harder...”

RACE/ETHNICITY: 43% of interviewees selected a woman in prostitution based on her race and/or ethnicity. Some interviewees targeted women of specific racial or ethnic backgrounds.

“Asians are different, stronger, they have beautiful skin... Back in their country they know how to take care of men.”

“I want to be with Japanese women – their massage culture seems more erotic.”

“I am Polish, so I like similar Eastern European girls.”

AGE: 76% of interviewees stated that the age of the woman in prostitution was an important factor. 80% stated that they felt most men preferred young prostitutes.

12% of interviewees targeted older women, although not “too old.”

“Like a horse, don’t want someone run-down.”

The Role of Power When Buying Sex

Men who expressed feeling powerless in their own lives described the feelings of power they acquired when they bought sex.

“Girls in the clubs wouldn’t like me in real life, but in (strip) clubs I can get them. They wouldn’t be interested in me at a party, but when I buy sex, they have to be.”

“Maybe it’s a little childish, but since I’ve dealt with a lot of prostitutes, it’s a conquest thing. I get with one and try to find my way in for free. Try to get a piece of the action so to say. You never know the right vulnerability that she has.”

“They will do anything you ask them for with no complaints and nothing said back. ‘Your wish is my command,’ like a genie jumping out of a bottle.”

MALE PRIVILEGE: Some interviewees believed that being born male provided them the right to buy sex. When asked why he purchases sex, one interviewee looked the interviewer in the eye and responded “Because I can.”

“This country gives money and food stamps to people who don’t work, or if they’re disabled, the government provides assistance. But a guy who can’t get his sexual needs met in other ways, the government doesn’t help him meet his needs. Just unfair.”

MEN’S DOMINATION OVER WOMEN IN PROSTITUTION: 43% of interviewees stated that if men pay for sex, the woman should do anything he asks.

“...she gave up her rights when she accepted my money.”

“If we agree on something, half way through she can’t change her mind.”

Men's Emotional Response To Buying Sex

INTOXICATION: 40% of interviewees identified as being drunk or intoxicated the majority of the time they bought sex. 19% said they were drunk or high during every encounter with a women in prostitution.

FEELINGS ABOUT BUYING WOMEN IN PROSTITUTION: Men often felt negatively after they purchased sex. Common words used by interviewees to describe how they felt were "guilty", "regretful", "ashamed", and "lonely."

"...by the next day, after sobering up and calling a friend who talked me down, I felt a void. It surprised me that I had intense feelings over this kind of situation. I was looking for a connection, emotional closeness, and didn't get it."

"For a small second after I buy sex, I feel happy, and then it's over. It's so fleeting. There's frustration beforehand, and depression afterward, 'cause it's so quick. Those feelings are always there. They're associated with buying sex."

CONTRADICTIONARY AND CONFLICTING FEELINGS: 76% of interviewees stated that there is nothing wrong with having sex for money, but 85% said that they would not marry a prostitute, and 94% said they would not want their daughter to grow up to be a prostitute.

"You can't transfer a ho to housewife."

"Should I, or shouldn't I be doing this? My morals tell me it's not right, some people say it's dehumanizing a person. That's the battle that I face, because I have it in my head sometimes: Is this humane or not?"

"I don't want to be part of someone's downfall, their decay - mind decaying, body decaying, whatever."

"Sometimes I feel guilty because I know that's somebody's mother, somebody's sister, somebody's daughter."

Men's Acknowledgment of Why Women Enter Prostitution

"There are three ways to become a prostitute: molested, drugs, or wrong people to hang out with."

POVERTY: 66% of interviewees told us that women become prostitutes out of economic necessity and 27% thought that the majority of women in the sex trade are homeless.

"She didn't choose to become a prostitute, she needs money."

"My best experience was I met her, she just got off the Greyhound... she wanted some money and she didn't have a place to stay. It was her first night in Chicago. I gave her some money and gave her a room and stayed in that room with her, and we had sex... she didn't know much about the city and she was at my whim."

Men exchanged things of value other than money in return for sex. 54% of interviewees had exchanged drugs for sex, and 19% had exchanged for shelter. Other items of value traded for sex included food, clothes, and transportation.

"She didn't ask for much - she just asked for something to eat. McDonald's. It was a cheap experience."

CHILDHOOD ABUSE: 57% of all interviewees believed that the majority of women in prostitution experienced some type of childhood sexual abuse.

"It's such unhealthy behavior - it's probably reliving the past trauma over and over again, and reinforcing it with money. It's gotta be really confusing."

"I would imagine that prostitutes have had some sort of psychological and/or physical trauma as a child. Women who are prone to that sort of lifestyle are trying to repeat the cycles they encounter. Women who have been sexually abused or molested."

YOUTH: 32% of interviewees thought that the majority of women in prostitution entered before the age of 18.

"Some girls from high school, they get addicted to drugs. Sometimes the mom makes the daughter sell sex."

49% of interviewees told us that they thought that there were girls under 18 years of age working at strip clubs.

"A couple of clubs here have girls younger than 18. On the outskirts of Evanston, Joliet, Rockford, and Maywood."

TRAFFICKING: 20% of interviewees stated that they had bought sex from women who were trafficked from other countries. Other interviewees mentioned buying sex from women who had been trafficked domestically.

“I have had some Asian women through a service that were forced here.”

“Possibly from other states, one seemed to be brought here against her will from Mississippi.”

Men’s Awareness of Harms to Women in Prostitution

EXTREME VIOLENCE: 41% of interviewees said that they have tried to help or rescue a woman in prostitution when she was being harmed.

“She was getting raped anally by some group in an alley trash can. I opened my back alley gate and said ‘what are you doing’, then they threw her out of the can...”

13% had seen an act of violence perpetrated against a woman in prostitution.

“I seen her being dragged from her hair by a pick-up truck... She was just hanging out of the passenger side by her hair, trying to get to her feet...”

One man acknowledged committing an act of violence himself.

“I almost killed a hooker because she tried to run off with my money and I wasn’t going to let her. I used the blunt side of the knife. She tried to leave the car. We struggled for awhile. I wanted to scare her, so I put the blunt side of the knife to her throat. Somehow there was blood, and she gave the money back. I left her lying down in the street. I didn’t even want the money no more.”

MEN JUSTIFYING RAPE: 21% of interviewees did not think that it was possible for women in prostitution to be raped. They explained:

“She has no rights because you are paying for a sex act- she gives up the right to say no.”

“She should let you know before what she will and won’t do. And if she doesn’t, she is not being truthful, so she is putting herself in a position for things to be done because she wasn’t clear.”

BELIEVING PROSTITUTION PREVENTS RAPE: 39% percent of interviewees believed that the availability of prostitutes makes the rape of other women much less likely, although there is no research evidence to substantiate this belief.

“Wouldn’t have to rape somebody if there are prostitutes. You don’t have to beat up your wife if prostitutes are available.”

ACCEPTANCE OF RAPE MYTHS: We asked interviewees a series of questions about their acceptance of rape myths. Rape myths are culturally supported attitudes that normalize violence against women¹⁴. The following were some of the highly endorsed myths: 47% of interviewees believed that men rape women when their sex drive gets out of control. 41% thought that if a woman participates in any sexual activity then the man has the right rape her. 32% thought that rape happens because men have strong sex drives. 28% thought that women ask for rape if they look sexy. 27% thought that if women were drunk or high, and they got raped, then it was the woman’s fault.

COMMITTING RAPE: 27% of these men acknowledged that they had committed sexually coercive acts against women.

13% said they would rape a woman if they knew they could get away with it.

19% of interviewees told us that they had raped a woman.

PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL HARM: 49% of interviewees said that prostitution exploits a woman’s sexuality. 42% stated that prostitution causes both psychological and physical damage.

“Getting beat up, robbed. Vaginal, stomach, back problems. Being stretched. It wears them out. Drug problems take a toll on their mind.”

“It’s like they are selling their soul, really.”

“They lose their relationship with themselves.”

PIMPS: 75% of men had observed a woman in prostitution with a pimp, and 40% had bought a woman in prostitution who they identified as having a pimp or manager. Sometimes the pimp was a friend or acquaintance of the interviewee.

“I have friends who get addicted to drugs and pimp their wives. For them it was a joke... I’ve been with wives of friends who are pimping.”

27% of interviewees described the prostitute-pimp relationship as exploitative and harmful.

“Pimps seem to be abusive - the women are very badly treated, and sometimes taken advantage of. They are sometimes beaten, and physically and emotionally abused.”

“The pimp treats the prostitute like trash.”

“I’ve seen situations where you could call it mind control - just verbal. No escalating voice, no physical violence, just mind control.”

“Pimping can be akin to slavery.”

Harms to Marriage & Communities

MARRIAGE: 75% of interviewees agreed that harm is done to a marriage if the man goes to a prostitute, even if the wife does not know about it. 72% agreed that men who go to prostitutes have broken their marriage vows. Only 7% said that the presence of prostitution in a community helps married men stay in marriages.

COMMUNITIES: 80% of interviewees thought that prostitution had an overall negative impact on communities. They specifically mentioned the negative impacts of increasing crime (29%), being a bad influence on children (28%), and devaluing the neighborhood (24%).

“Kids are impressionable. They see (women in prostitution) and it’s how they begin to look at all women.”

“From prostitution comes drug involvement, pimps, and violent crime like battery and assault.”

“What Would It Take to End Prostitution?”

ENDING PROSTITUTION: Some interviewees responded with sarcasm when asked what it would take to end prostitution.

“Cut the men’s penis, tongue, and hands off. Still, a quadriplegic would pay a woman to dance.”

Others offered thoughtful insights on how to end prostitution. 21% said that in order to end prostitution we would need to end childhood sexual abuse and create better opportunities for women.

“Everyone would have to have good jobs and legal jobs, so there’s not a need for it.”



LEGAL CONSEQUENCES FOR CUSTOMERS: 7% of interviewees had been arrested for soliciting a woman in prostitution. Most were only arrested once, though one man stated that he had been arrested 25 times.

CONSEQUENCES THAT WOULD SERVE AS DETERRENTS: Interviewees were provided a list of potential legal consequences that could serve as a deterrent to purchasing sex.

TABLE 4: Responses of 113 Chicago Men To The Question “What Would Deter You From Buying Sex?”

Potential Consequence	Percentage of Interviewees	
Photo And/Or Name In Local Paper	87%	
Jail Time*	83%	
Photo And/Or Name On Billboard	83%	
Photo And/Or Name On Internet**	82%	
A Letter Sent To Family Saying You Were Arrested for Soliciting a Woman in Prostitution	79%	
Having Driver’s License Suspended	76%	
Greater Criminal Penalties in General	75%	
Car Impounded**	70%	
Larger Amount of Money (more than \$1,000) For A Fine	68%	
Having To Do Community Service	58%	
Being Required To Attend Education Classes for “Johns”	41%	

*When responding to how much jail time would serve as a deterrent the most frequent answers were: a day/overnight (24%), any time at all (17%), a couple of weeks (10%), couple of months (9%), and an hour or less (5%).

**These penalties are already consequences for purchasing sex in Chicago.

DISCOURAGING YOUNG MEN FROM PURCHASING SEX: 60% felt that it was unacceptable for men under 18 to buy sex.

We asked these interviewees what they would say to young men to deter them from purchasing sex. The most common response was that he could catch a disease. Other responses included that it is not age appropriate, that there are legal consequences, and there is the potential of physical danger.

“That they can get sick, robbed, or have no sex at all.”

Several interviewees stated they would discourage young men from buying sex because they might then see themselves negatively or that it might adversely affect future relationships.

“I’d tell them not to do it, because once you do it, once the barrier has been broken... you’ll do it again. It’s not fulfilling, they’ll regret it.”

“It demeans how you think, and treat women. It will affect your whole image of women and unfortunately most men can’t get past that.”

“It’s not satisfying emotionally. It’s cold and mechanical.”

“Learn to trust and love a woman first. If you start out thinking of a woman as a sexual tool, you always will think of her as a sexual tool.”

Turning Research Into Action: Preliminary Recommendations

These interviews provided us with valuable and insightful information that can inform our efforts to prevent young men from becoming consumers of the sex trade, educate community residents on how to implement effective strategies to prevent and curb demand in their neighborhoods, and intervene in the lives of men currently buying sex.

PREVENTION:

Create and Implement Prevention Curricula for Youth

“If a prostitute came to my class, or there was a video telling me about the bad side, I wouldn’t do it”.

55% of interviewees first bought sex between the ages of 18 and 23, one quarter were 17 and under. This suggests that prevention efforts will be most timely before and during the high-school years.

The interviews provide information that can be used to create workshops and curricula targeted towards high-school age young men and boys. An example are the findings that indicate men’s motivations for purchasing sex are deeply intertwined with constructs of sexual health, entitlement, commitment and sexual relationships with women in general.

Educating young men can dispel myths about women in prostitution, address conflicting feelings about their own sexual needs, and assist them in critically thinking about the role that buying sex may play in the development of their own sexual health and their relationships with non-prostituted women.

School age boys are often exposed to a culture where women in prostitution are stigmatized and the harm perpetrated against them trivialized. The myths surrounding prostitution and the sex trade hide the abuse experienced by prostituted individuals and enable men to pacify their feelings of guilt when buying sex.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Young men need to be exposed to the realities of prostitution and trafficking including the reasons women enter prostitution, the extent of violence in prostitution, and the physical and psychological harm suffered by prostituted individuals.

The men we interviewed were frequently ambivalent and conflicted about their purchase of women in prostitution.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Young men should be educated about the conflicted feelings of men who use women in prostitution and the potential adverse consequences that buying women for sex can have on their own sexuality and on their relationships with non-prostituted women.

Some interviewees described a connection between prostitution and pornography. They specifically bought women in prostitution to enact pornography scenes on them. Others acknowledged the role pornography played in their objectification of women, their decision to buy sex, and their desire for particular sex acts.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The link between pornography and prostitution should be further examined. Eliminating demand for prostitution and trafficking, and deterring young men from buying sex, includes challenging men’s demand and need for pornography.

For 29% of interviewees, the first time they had sex was with an individual in prostitution. It is important to note that almost half of the interviewees were not alone the first time they purchased sex, which may indicate that peer pressure from friends and relatives may play a role in shaping young men’s decision to buy women in prostitution.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Young men should explore, early on, their own definitions of what it means to be a man, and address cultural and peer pressures that might influence them, or their friends, to use women in prostitution.

COMMUNITY ACTION AND EDUCATION:

Educate Community Residents on How to Deter Demand in their Neighborhoods and in their Social Networks

Communities can play a critical role in eradicating prostitution in their neighborhoods by raising awareness about the sex trade and working with local law enforcement to target demand for prostituted individuals.

The myths and misconceptions about women in prostitution contribute to men’s continued purchase of sex and explain why community based anti-prostitution efforts usually focus on the women’s actions and not the men’s. Just as many of our interviewees rationalized their behavior, community residents also use myths about women’s willingness to sell sex to not hold “johns” accountable.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Community groups should design and implement awareness-raising campaigns that debunk prostitution myths by highlighting the realities of why women enter prostitution, the connections between trafficking and pornography, and the violence that women endure in the sex trade.

Interviewees told us that social pressures from friends, colleagues, and family members contributed to their decisions to buy sex. Some interviewees were pressured into buying sex, since their workplaces and social environments encouraged it as a normal male experience. These interviewees described being afraid that they would not fit in if they did not participate. Social pressures to live up to mainstream constructs of masculinity may strongly influence many men’s decision to buy sex.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Men should hold each other accountable for their patronage of the sex trade industry and cease perpetuating myths of “masculinity” that include domination and exploitation of women.

82% percent of interviewees said that the potential consequence of having their name and/or photo posted on the internet would be an adequate deterrent from purchasing sex, while 70% felt that having their car impounded as a consequence of purchasing would also deter them from patronizing the sex trade. Both of these legal consequences for purchasing sex are in existence in Chicago but it seems that interviewees were unaware of these penalties.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Community residents should work with Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) officials to raise awareness about the existing criminal penalties for purchasing sex and to ensure that these criminal penalties are enforced.

84% of the men we interviewed bought women in prostitution in indoor locations. Despite the fact that, on average, interviewees had purchased sex acts fifteen times prior to being interviewed, only 7% had been arrested. Even though there are indications that the Chicago Police Department and Cook County Sheriff's Office are increasing their focus on indoor sex trade activity, clearly frequent users of prostitution are not feeling much legal recourse.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Community residents should work with their local police department to target the indoor venues where men purchase sex.

Over 80% of interviewees said they would be deterred from purchasing sex if they faced legal consequences that included any of the following: their prostitution activities being publicly exposed, jail time, suspension of their driver's license, having a letter sent to their families about their arrest for purchasing sex, financial penalties and being placed on the sex offender registry.

RECOMMENDATION 9: Community residents should work with their legislators to create and implement legislation that increases criminal penalties for those purchasing sex. Any measure taken that publicizes the identities of "johns" should only be implemented after conviction, not arrest."

INTERVENTION:

Create and Implement Effective Intervention Initiatives for Men Already Buying Sex

"I am emotionally cold and detached and I think this has a lot to do with my issues. It leads to my behavior with prostitutes: I can have complete control, I can take it or leave it."

41% of interviewees admitted that being required to attend an education class, or "John School", would deter them from further patronage. Habitual users of the sex trade may benefit from other types of intervention including counseling and education classes about the realities of the sex trade. Many men expressed power, control and domination issues- indicating that further analysis of the role that power and domination play in men's decision to purchase sex is warranted.

Most men implied using mechanisms to disassociate from both their conflicted feelings about purchasing sex and the potential harm they were causing the woman they had purchased. Men rationalized their use of women in prostitution by convincing themselves that women choose to enter the sex trade, gain sexual satisfaction from the experience, make a lot of money, and have greater sex drives.

Post-sentencing workshops for men that buy sex, known as “Johns Schools”, encourage their learning about the harms suffered by women in prostitution, examine their own attitudes of sexual entitlement, and provide information that humanizes women in the sex trade.

RECOMMENDATION 10: Existing “John Schools” should be expanded to include individual sessions with clinical practitioners who should explore the varied psychological reasons that lead men to originally purchase, and continue to purchase, sex. Counseling should be available on a long-term basis.

Many interviewees did not associate their patronage of the sex trade with the harms experienced by sexually exploited individuals.

RECOMMENDATION 11: Service providers who already work with men in the context of ending violence against women, such as batterer intervention programs, should incorporate a discussion of prostitution into the work they do. They should explore to what degree clients’ propensity to tolerate violence against women might play a role in their decision to buy sex, as well as in their sexual and romantic relationships with non-prostituted women.

Interviewees offered a variety of reasons as to why they buy sex (such as addiction, seeking sex acts not available with a partner, avoiding emotional involvement, and seeking companionship.)

RECOMMENDATION 12: Clinical practitioners working with regular users of the sex trade should assess for history of sexual abuse, development of healthy or unhealthy sexual behaviors, risk of unhealthy sexual behaviors, and history of mental health issues and substance use. Mental health practitioners should also assess if their client’s outlook on prostitution changes as he continues to understand his own sexual needs and behaviors.

Myths vs. Realities

MYTH: Only Certain Types of Men Buy Sex

REALITY: There is no common "profile" of men who purchase sex. They are from every race, age group, sexual orientation, profession, economic class and education level.

MYTH: Most Men Buy Sex on The Street

REALITY: More men purchase sex in off-street venues such as brothels, escort agencies, and massage parlors.

MYTH: Prostitution only Occurs in a Few Neighborhoods

REALITY: Chicago men purchase sex in neighborhoods throughout the city, the suburbs, in other U.S. cities, and other countries.

MYTH: Prostitution is Exclusively the Exchange of Money for Sex

REALITY: The majority of men exchanged something other than money for sex, such as drugs, shelter, food, clothes, or transportation.

MYTH: Men Do Not Feel Guilty About Purchasing Sex

REALITY: A majority of men expressed strongly conflicted feelings about their purchase of the sex. Some men acknowledged the possibility that their purchase of a woman in prostitution might trigger her memories of childhood abuse. Other men dissociated during the sex act in order to avoid their feelings of guilt and shame.

MYTH: Men Who Buy Sex are Unaware of the Harm Experienced By Women in the Sex Trade

REALITY: Most men who buy sex acknowledge that women in prostitution experience high levels of abuse, health issues, homelessness, and rape.

MYTH: Men Purchase Sex Because They Do Not Have Access to a Regular Sex Partner

REALITY: The majority of men who buy sex have a regular sex partner such as a girlfriend or a wife.

MYTH: Prostitution Decreases Rape

REALITY: Men who use women in prostitution frequently justify rape of women both in and out of the sex trade.

MYTH: There Is No Link Between Prostitution and Pornography

REALITY: For many men who buy sex there is no difference between pornography and prostitution. Men purchased women in prostitution as a way to engage in specific sex acts they had seen in pornography. Pornography consumption influences men who buy sex to view women as objects and not individuals.

MYTH: Prostitution Will Never Disappear

REALITY: A significant number of men who buy sex believe that women would not be in the sex trade if they had greater economic opportunities and did not experience childhood sexual abuse.

MYTH: Men Who Buy Sex Think That It Is Appropriate To Purchase Sex At Any Age

REALITY: A majority of men who buy sex think that it is not appropriate for minors to do so. Stated reasons included that it is emotionally unfulfilling and that once someone buys sex they will never view women the same way again.

Deconstructing The Demand for Prostitution: Preliminary Insights From Interviews With Chicago Men Who Purchase Sex

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