

5. “Renting an Organ for Ten Minutes:” What Tricks Tell Us about Prostitution, Pornography, and Trafficking

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The perspective of a trick:

“I was like a kid in a candy store. I mean, it was nothing for me to knock off four broads in an afternoon. We’d go by the numbers. ‘Twenty-three A for Mr. Lewis, Please! No, Twenty-four A is the blonde; twenty three A is the brunette.’ Jesus Christ....It was just wonderful! The thing that was not wonderful about it was that there was no morality. I had no morality. I had no guilt. I thought: *This is what men do.*” [author’s italics]¹

The perspective of a woman in prostitution:

“Every day I was witness to the worst of men. Their carelessness and grand entitlement. The way they can so profoundly disconnect from what it is they’re having sex with, the way they think they own the world, watch them purchase a female. I was witness to their deep delusions. Spoiled babies all of them, and so many of them called prostitutes. I thought, maybe all men called prostitutes. It was a terrible thought, but really, what did I care. There was a system in place that was older and stronger than I could begin to imagine. Who was I? I was just a girl. What was I going to do about it. If I had any power I would make it so that nobody was ever bought or sold or rented...”²

Before I describe some preliminary results of research interviews with men who buy women for sex, I’d like to tell you what we found out about the effects of

¹ J. KAPLAN, *The Laughing Game: Profile of Jerry Lewis*, THE NEW YORKER, Feb. 7, 2000, at 61-62.

² M.Tea & L. McCubbin, RENT GIRL 29 (Last Gasp 2004).

pornography on women in prostitution. When men use pornography, in that process they are trained as tricks. Pornography is men's rehearsal for prostitution. Pornography is cultural propaganda which drives home the notion that women are prostitutes. One man who used pornography said "I am a firm believer that all women... are prostitutes at one time or another."³

New research on the effect of pornography on women in prostitution

Interviews with 854 women in prostitution in 9 countries⁴ women and men in prostitution made it clear that pornography is integral to prostitution. In 9 countries, almost half (49 percent) told us that pornography was made of them while they were in prostitution. Forty-seven percent of our respondents were upset by tricks' attempts to make them do what the tricks had previously seen in pornography.⁵ These numbers are similar to those reported by the WHISPER Oral History Project in 1990.⁶ Fifty-three percent of the WHISPER interviewees reported that tricks made pornography of them. Fifty-two percent of the WHISPER women reported that pornography played a significant role in teaching them what was expected of them as prostitutes. Eighty percent said that tricks showed them pornography in order to illustrate the specific sex acts that wanted performed.

Andrea Dworkin wrote about prostitution in 1983:

"Her mind is hurt by rape and other physical assault on her body, it

³ S.~~here~~ HITE, *THE HITE REPORT ON MALE SEXUALITY* (New York, Knopf, 1981) p. 760.

⁴ Canada, Colombia, Germany, Mexico, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, United States, and Zambia.

⁵ M. FARLEY, A. COTTON, J. LYNNE, S. ZUMBECK, F. SPIWAK, M.E. REYES, D. ALVAREZ, U. SEZGIN, *Prostitution and Trafficking in 9 Countries: Update on Violence and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder*, in *PROSTITUTION, TRAFFICKING, AND TRAUMATIC STRESS*, 44 (M. Farley ed., Haworth 2003).

⁶ E. GIOBBE, *Confronting the Liberal Lies about Prostitution*, in *THE SEXUAL LIBERALS AND THE ATTACK ON FEMINISM* 67-81 (D. Leidholdt & J.G. Raymond eds., Teachers College Press 1990).

fades and shrinks and seeks silence as refuge; it becomes the prison cell inside her....Every invasion of the body is marked in the brain: contusions, abrasions, cuts, swellings, bleeding, mutilation, breaking, burning. Each capacity of the brain – memory, imagination, intellect, creation, consciousness itself – is distressed and deformed, distorted by the sexualized physical injuries that girls and women sustain.”⁷

Psychologists are usually not that specific, and certainly not that eloquent, regarding the harms of prostitution and pornography. Post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, is a crude measure of the overall level of emotional harm against women in prostitution. The psychiatric diagnosis of PTSD describes mental and physical avoidance behaviors, psychological numbing, social distancing, flashbacks, and anxious physiologic hyper-arousal. Some of the PTSD suffered by women in prostitution results from the ways that men use pornography on them and against them.

Of 854 women, men and children in prostitution, across 9 countries, we found that 68 percent had PTSD.⁸ This is an extremely high prevalence of PTSD, and it tells us, like Andrea Dworkin did, that prostitution causes great psychological harm to those in it. As we analyzed our data, we investigated factors that might indicate what exactly it was about prostitution that was causing such high rates of PTSD. We wondered: did childhood sexual abuse, childhood physical abuse, or rape or other physical assault in prostitution cause particularly high levels of PTSD in the people we interviewed? We found that so many of our respondents had *all* of those types of violence in their lives that we couldn’t differentiate how much each type of violence contributed to their overall distress. This is called a statistical ceiling effect. Others have found ceiling effects for certain phenomena. For example, two studies failed to find race differences in PTSD symptoms among combat veterans.⁹ In these studies, combat, like prostitution, was the

⁷ A. DWORKIN, *Suffering and Speech*, IN HARM’S WAY: THE PORNOGRAPHY CIVIL RIGHTS HEARINGS 31 (C. MacKinnon & A. Dworkin eds., Harvard University Press 1997).

⁸ M. FARLEY ET AL., *supra* note 5 at 44.

⁹ J. BEALS, S.M. MANSON, J.H. SHORE, M.J. FRIEDMAN, M. ASHCRAFT, J.A. FAIRBANK ET AL., *The Prevalence of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Among American Indian Vietnam Veterans: Disparities and Context*, 15 JOURNAL OF TRAUMATIC STRESS 89, 89-

overwhelmingly traumatic event that mitigated differences in PTSD based on race. Their PTSD was already so high from the trauma of combat that the traumatic effects of racism could not be statistically demonstrated.

I mention these statistical effects because, frankly, we thought that prostituted women's PTSD was so high that it could not go up any higher. We did not expect to show that the making of pornography or the coercion to imitate it had a statistically significant effect on the PTSD suffered by the women we interviewed in prostitution. But in fact our results showed that when women had pornography made of them, it hurt them even more. It is data that causes you to weep.

Women in prostitution whose tricks or pimps made pornography of them in prostitution had significantly more severe symptoms of PTSD than did women who did not have pornography was made of them.¹⁰

Where the tricks/customers/buyers/predators are despite their attempts to remain invisible and anonymous

It is impossible to accurately estimate how many men in the world have bought women for sex: they hide. Representative samples of customers of prostitutes do not exist. Even where prostitution is legal, most of tricks' behaviors are carefully concealed from public view. Tricks are average citizens rather than abnormally sadistic psychopaths. They are all ages and from all social classes. Most are married or partnered. The following chart combines prevalence data from a chart by Mansson,¹¹ and from my

97 (2002); J. MONNIER, D. ELHAI, B.C. FRUEH, J.A. SAUVAGEOT, & K.M. MAGRUDER, *Replication and Expansion of Findings Related to Racial Differences in Veterans with Combat-Related PTS*, 16(2) DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY 64-70 (2002).

¹⁰ Pearson $r = .126$, $p = .001$, $N = 749$.

¹¹ S.A. MANSSON. *Men's Practices in Prostitution and Their Implications for Social Work*, in SOCIAL WORK IN CUBA AND SWEDEN: ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROSPECTS (S.A. Mansson & C. Proveyer eds., 2004).

remarks at last year's conference.¹² The following percentages are estimates of the numbers of men who have ever bought or rented a woman in prostitution in different countries.

| | | |
|--|-----|-------------|
| Benjamin & Masters (1964) | 80% | USA |
| Thai Public Health Ministry (1990) ¹³ | 75% | Thailand |
| Kinsey (1948) | 69% | USA |
| Ann Dahl (1999) | 60% | Netherlands |
| Monto (1998) | 45% | USA |
| Leridon et al (1998) | 39% | Spain |
| Leridon et al (1998) | 19% | Switzerland |
| Michael, Gagnon, Laumann & Kolata (1994) | 16% | USA |
| Lewin et al (1998) | 13% | Sweden |
| Haavio-Mannila & Rotkirch (2000) | 13% | Finland |
| Prieur & Taksdal (1989) Cited by Anne Dahl | 13% | Norway |
| Haavio-Mannila & Rotkirch (2000) | 10% | Russia |

Today tricks are everywhere and they are almost everyman. What word should we use in English to describe men who buy or rent women in prostitution? I use the word trick because that is what women in prostitution call the men who buy them. The word trick refers to the multitude of ways that men trick women into performing more or different acts of sexual exploitation than the men pay for, or the way that men sexually exploit women in prostitution and then refuse to pay, cheating or tricking the women. Other words for them might be sex predators.

Tricks travel everywhere, and they are all over the Internet. Pornography's champions separate pornography from other sectors of the sex industry. Yet feminist survivors of prostitution who have analyzed it, Evelina Giobbe, for example, tell us that pornography simply means that pictures were taken of their prostitution. Men who buy women in prostitution confirm Giobbe's analysis. One trick we interviewed in 2004 explained that he made no distinction between prostitution with or without a camera. He clarified exactly who was pimping her: *"Yes, the woman in pornography is a prostitute. They're prostituting before the cameras. They're getting money from a film company*

¹² M. FARLEY, *Who are Johns?* CONFERENCE REPORT: DEMAND DYNAMICS, THE —FORCES OF DEMAND IN GLOBAL SEX TRAFFICKING, OCTOBER 18, 2003 (Captive Daughters and International Human Rights Law Institute of DePaul University College of Law 2004).

rather than individuals.”

The arbitrary separation between pornography and prostitution makes as little sense as the separation of domestic prostitution from its international counterpart sex trafficking. The same factors that compel women into prostitution/trafficking – poverty, racism, childhood physical and sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and abandonment – also compel women into pornography. The sex industry, like any other industry, has domestic and international sectors, marketing sectors, a range of physical locations out of which it operates in each community, is controlled by many different owners and managers, and is constantly expanding as technology, law, and public opinion permit.

The Internet has created and expanded opportunities for men to sexually exploit women. The Internet has amplified the psychological humiliation and the physical violence of prostitution, and it has expanded the reach of sex trafficking.¹⁴ Prostitution is advertised online, where it is indistinguishable from pornography. Pornography advertises women for rent and sale, and they are moved across town, across the country, and from one country to another. Pornography is one specific means of trafficking women for the purpose of prostitution. Pictures of prostitution are used to advertise internet websites, which are then used by tricks in their masturbation activities. Internet prostitution and pornography offer the trick anonymity. Mansson described increasing numbers of online trick communities who support each others’ predatory behaviors and who exchange information regarding where and how women can be bought in prostitution.¹⁵ As one young woman said, “They can do more extreme things and keep a double life. They can have a life with the wife and kids and have a fetish, porn thing where they are beating chicks on the side.”¹⁶

Internet advertising for prostitution appeals to young women who are sexually and economically vulnerable. For example, Craigslist is a website where people can post at no cost what they want to buy and what they want to sell. In March 2005, Craigslist

¹⁴ See Kenneth Franzblau, this volume.

¹⁵ S.A. MANSSON, *supra* note 11

¹⁶ Anonymous, personal communication, 2005.

averaged 25,000 new ads every 10 days for “erotic services,” which are most likely prostitution. A cell phone and an ad on Craigslist set a teenager up in the business of being sexually exploited in exchange for housing, drugs, or cash. A Boston youth shelter worker confirmed that Craig’s List was used by most of the homeless and prostituting adolescent girls at her agency.

Today, many tricks buy and sexually exploit women in indoor prostitution such as massage parlors, brothels, saunas, nail parlors, and strip clubs. Escort prostitution might be more accurately described as *prostitution via cell phone*, in which a trick calls a phone number that he obtains online or via a free magazine. He then orders the woman to be delivered to his hotel room, home, or a meeting place. Indoor prostitution is strongly promoted wherever there is a political movement promoting decriminalized or legalized prostitution. Indoor prostitution, as opposed to street solicitation, is a way of protecting the trick’s anonymity. One proponent described indoor prostitution as discrete, with the implication that indoor prostitution not only protects the trick’s privacy, it also is out of the sight and often out of the minds of the community.¹⁷ In indoor prostitution, the trick is much less likely to be arrested even where prostitution is illegal. He can hide indoors, and they sure do just that.

What effect does the trick’s anonymity have on prostituted women? The social invisibility of indoor prostitution may actually increase its danger for women. When women prostitute indoors, the community is less likely to see them. Sometimes, when prostitution is indoors, neighbors do not even know that prostitution is occurring next door. Although the need for services remains the same regardless of the location where prostitution takes place, the invisibility of indoor prostitution makes it less likely that services for escape will be funded and more difficult for women to access services for escape.

In their own words: new research on men who are customers of prostitutes.

Last year at this conference, I spoke about the invisibility of customers of

¹⁷J. ADAMS & J. RILEY, *After Spas’ Boom, Enforcement Affects Illicit Sex Business*, COURIER-JOURNAL, July 11, 2004, at 1-2.

prostitutes, and the necessity of exposing their behaviors as the driving force that keeps the institution of prostitution alive and expanding. Since then, Prostitution Research & Education, a San Francisco nonprofit organization, has begun an international study of customers of prostitutes. Today, I'll present some preliminary findings from that ongoing research.

Although some research on customers of prostitutes interviewed men in diversion programs who had been arrested for soliciting a police decoy,¹⁸ we interviewed men who had not been arrested in part because we wanted to interview men who bought women in indoor prostitution. We ran advertisements in local newspapers seeking interviews with customers of prostitutes. Tricks who are not in a police-sponsored program tend to exhibit more “trick-like” behaviors. All four of us encountered verbal and sometimes physical sexual harassment from the non-arrested johns while conducting the research.

We interviewed men who used women in indoor prostitution a majority of the time, but they also located women outdoors. They hunted women via cell phone prostitution also called escort prostitution—the internet, massage parlors, phone sex, strip clubs, street, and bars. The 142 tricks we interviewed were men from rural Kentucky, Phoenix, Arizona, and Madrid, Spain. We conducted a semi-structured interview with the tricks. Co-researchers in this ongoing research are Adam Ruiz, Odette Levy, Ann Cotton, Roop Sen, and Barb Strachan. We are currently analyzing data that investigates how men's use of women in pornography and their use of women in prostitution may be factors that increase men's sexual aggression.

Some analysts have observed that men who buy women in prostitution objectify the women. “I use them like I might use any other amenity, a restaurant, or a public convenience.”¹⁹ Paying for a woman in prostitution provides the trick with the power to turn women into what Davidson termed “the living embodiment of a masturbation

¹⁸ M. MONTO & N. HOTALING, “Predictors of rape myth acceptance among the male clients of female street prostitutes.” Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Pacific Sociological Association. San Francisco, CA (1998, April).

¹⁹ J. ~~EREMY~~ SEABROOK, TRAVELS IN THE SKIN TRADE: TOURISM AND THE SEX INDUSTRY 193 (Pluto Press 1996).

fantasy.”²⁰ One trick told us, “*[In prostitution] you can pick who you like, it’s like going to a vending machine.*” The tricks confirmed what survivors of prostitution have told us about prostitution and pornography. Feminists have spoken about prostitution as the buying and selling of women’s bodies. One trick graphically explained what he did in prostitution as “*renting an organ for ten minutes.*” In his definition of prostitution, the trick removed her humanity, depersonalizing her, disappearing her name and identity. Women in prostitution become “something for him to empty himself into, acting as a kind of human toilet.”²¹ Her self and those qualities that define her as an individual are systematically attacked and destroyed in prostitution. He reduces her to vagina, anus, breasts, and mouth, and she then acts the part of the thing he wants her to be.²²

There is a massive power imbalance in prostitution, where johns have the social and economic power to hire women, adolescents, girls or boys to act out their masturbation fantasies.²³ The tricks we interviewed confirmed that the relationship in prostitution is one of dominance and subordination. One man told us, “*Prostitution says that women have less value than men.*” In prostitution, another trick explained, “She gives up the right to say no” during the time that he has paid for. Another man told us that he clarifies the nature of his relationship to the women he buys, “*I paid for this. You have no rights. You’re with me now.*” Another trick explained to us:

Guys get off on controlling women, they use physical power to control women, really. If you look at it, it’s paid rape. You’re making them subservient during that time, so you’re the dominant person. She has to do what you want.

Many of the tricks expressed unveiled hostility toward women. “*I think about getting even [during prostitution] – it’s like a kid’s game, you’re scoring points,*” one

²⁰ ~~JULIA O’CONNELL~~ DAVIDSON, PROSTITUTION, POWER, AND FREEDOM 209 (The University of Michigan Press 1998).

²¹ C. HOIGARD & L. FINSTAD, BACKSTREETS: PROSTITUTION, MONEY AND LOVE. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press (1986).

²² A. DWORKIN, *Prostitution and Male Supremacy*, in LIFE AND DEATH (Free Press 1997).

²³ DAVIDSON, *supra* note 20 at 209.

man told us. Another trick said, *“Prostitution is an act of force, not of love. She gives up the right to say no.”*

Mansson noted that the Swedish tricks he interviewed had greater problems than other men in maintaining relationships with women.²⁴ We also found this to be true. As one trick told us, *“If you can’t communicate with your partner, you can go to a prostitute.”* Unable to meet or communicate with women who were his equals, another man we interviewed went to homeless shelters to pick women up, asking them whether they wanted a place to live in exchange for tolerating his sexual assaults. Stein explained that prostitution sex is “undiluted by intrusion of an unpaid partner’s own desires and personality.”²⁵ One interviewee explained that men buy *“sexual acts without compromise”* in prostitution.

Many, although not all, tricks seemed to have a nuanced awareness of exactly what being prostituted is like for the women. One trick explained that *“[Prostitution] takes away a part of themselves that they can’t get back. They can’t look at themselves in the mirror.”* Another understood that *“Prostitutes [get into it] because they got beat, molested, or something by their families.”* This knowledge did not however affect tricks’ behavior. Distancing themselves from these negative aspects of prostitution, the tricks saw themselves as nicer and more considerate than average: *“There are weirdoes out there, [but] I’m not one of those who go out to hurt or rape, I’m just into sex.”*

Sometimes the tricks’ rationalizations for what they did to women defied any logic. One man stated that he knew that women felt cheap, degraded and used-up in prostitution. But, he went on to say, *“They should feel happy. Hey, she’s doing a job, and when I do my job I get job satisfaction and so should she.”*

Other rationalizations included, *“By giving her money, I’m helping feed her child.”* Another, *“I know porn stars. They enjoy sex on film more than other prostitutes.”*

²⁴ S.A. MANSSON, *Men’s Practices in Prostitution: The Case of Sweden*, in *A MAN’S WORLD? CHANGING MEN’S PRACTICES IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD* 135-149 (B. Pease & K. Pringle eds., Zed Books 2001).

²⁵ M_{ARTHA} L. STEIN, *LOVERS, FRIENDS, SLAVES: THE NINE MALE SEXUAL TYPES, THEIR PSYCHO-SEXUAL TRANSACTIONS WITH CALL GIRLS* 19 (Putnam’s, Berkeley Publishing Corporation 1974).

The tricks we interviewed were observant about the brutality of pimp-prostitute relationships:

“The pimp controls her and forces her to do things she’s not ready or wanting to do.”

“She is definitely afraid of him. She’ll get slapped around if she don’t do what she’s told.”

“He controls her by hitting her. And by playing mind games with her.”

“It’s sad and obviously exploitive. One person is compromising themselves in manner that they’d rather not for the benefit of another.”

“The pimp is the owner and the prostitute is the slave to make money for the pimp.”

“Death is the end result of her relationship with a pimp.”

Many of the tricks expressed ambivalence or guilt about prostitution.

“Sometimes I feel it’s wrong. You just have to block that out.”

“High class prostitutes have no problems, emotionally.” Yet he also stated in the interview that *“[prostitution] is a lie for both people, I wouldn’t recommend it to anyone.”*

“I know what they go through as prostitutes. I know what they do – it bothers me but I still have sex with them”.

Stating that prostitution had no negative effect on prostitutes because they had no feelings, one man at the same time said he had never tried to rescue a prostitute because *“you can get killed doing that.”*

This preliminary look at interview data with tricks indicates that prostitution is a brutal institution that causes immense harm, confirming what survivors have told us. We need laws that protect women from the sexual predation of men who buy, rent, or sell women. We need prostitution prevention programs for young men - really young men - probably when they have not yet reached adolescence. We must be able to speak to young men about non-exploitive sexuality and about prostitution. If we do not speak of these things, men will continue to have their first lessons in sexuality from prostitution and trafficking in pornography, and from renting women in prostitution with friends and relatives.