

Readings on Prostitution

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In Order to Understand Prostitution

In order to understand prostitution, it is necessary to understand:

1. lethal gender inequality
2. incest and other childhood sexual assault
3. poverty and homelessness
4. the ways in which racism and colonialism are inextricably connected with sexism in prostitution
5. domestic violence, including rape
6. posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, mood and dissociative disorders as consequences of prostitution
7. drug and alcohol addiction
8. the fact that prostitution is a global business which involves interstate and inter-country trafficking as a necessary part of its profitable operation
9. in nondominant states - the ways in which economic development programs erode traditional ways of living
10. the need for culturally-relevant treatment
11. the ways in which diverse cultures normalize and promote prostitution
12. stripping, exotic dancing, nude dancing, table dancing, phone sex, trafficking, child and adult pornography, lap dancing, massage brothels, and peep shows as prostitution

Prostitution: Factsheet on Human Rights Violations

[Edited for Sociology 235.

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by Melissa Farley PhD Prostitution Research & Education Box 16254, San Francisco CA 94116 USA © 4/2/2000 In order to quote from this Factsheet, please credit the author above as well as the specific sources listed below. Thank you. <http://www.prostitutionresearch.com>

Prostitution is:

a) sexual harassment b) rape c) battering d) verbal abuse e) domestic violence f) a racist practice g) a violation of human rights h) childhood sexual abuse i) a consequence of male domination of women j) a means of maintaining male domination of women k) all of the above

The commercial sex industry includes street prostitution, massage brothels, escort services, outcall services, strip clubs, lapdancing, phone sex, adult and child pornography, video and internet pornography, and prostitution tourism. Most women who are in prostitution for longer than a few months drift among these various permutations of the commercial sex industry.

All prostitution causes harm to women. Whether it is being sold by one's family to a brothel, or whether it is being sexually abused in one's family, running away from home, and then being pimped by one's boyfriend, or whether one is in college and needs to pay for next semester's tuition and one works at a strip club behind glass where men never actually touch you, all these forms of prostitution hurt the women in it. (Melissa Farley, paper presented at the 11th International Congress on Women's Health Issues, University of California College of Nursing, San Francisco. 1-28-2000)

The practice of prostitution is a practice of sexual objectification of women. "... every act of sexual objectifying occurs on a continuum of dehumanization that promises male sexual violence at its far end." John Stoltenberg (1990) *Refusing to be a Man*, Fontana, London.

The average age of entry into prostitution is 13 years (M.H. Silbert and A.M. Pines, 1982, "Victimization of street prostitutes, *Victimology: An International Journal*, 7: 122-133) or 14 years (D.Kelly Weisberg, 1985, *Children of the Night: A Study of Adolescent Prostitution*, Lexington, Mass, Toronto). Most of these 13 or 14 year old girls were recruited or coerced into prostitution. Others were "traditional wives" without job skills who escaped from or were abandoned by abusive husbands and went into prostitution to support themselves and their children. (Denise Gamache and Evelina Giobbe, *Prostitution: Oppression Disguised as Liberation*, National Coalition against Domestic Violence, 1990)

The age of entry into prostitution is decreasing. For example, how do we even conceptualize "juvenile" prostitution, when the age of consent for legal sexual activity is constantly lowered, as in Netherlands and Philippines? (Kathleen Mahoney, Professor of Law, Calgary University, Canada, 1995)

"Incest is boot camp [for prostitution.]" (Andrea Dworkin, "Prostitution and Male Supremacy," in *Life and Death*, Free press, 1997)

Estimates of the prevalence of incest among prostitutes range from 65% to 90%. The Council for Prostitution Alternatives, Portland, Oregon Annual Report in 1991 stated that: 85% of prostitute/clients reported history of sexual abuse in childhood; 70% reported incest. The higher percentages (80%-90%) of reports of incest and childhood sexual assaults of prostitutes come from anecdotal reports and from clinicians working with prostitutes (interviews with Nevada psychologists cited by Patricia Murphy, *Making the Connections: women, work, and abuse*, 1993, Paul M. Deutsch Press, Orlando, Florida; see also Rita Belton, "Prostitution as Traumatic Reenactment," 1992, International Society for Traumatic Stress Annual Meeting, Los Angeles, CA M.H. Silbert and A.M. Pines, 1982, "Victimization of street prostitutes," *Victimology: An International Journal*, 7: 122-133; C. Bagley and L Young, 1987, "Juvenile Prostitution and child sexual abuse: a controlled study," *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*, Vol 6: 5-26.

The prostitution market is driven by customer demand for sexual service. During WW II, the Japanese military forced from 100,000 to 200,000 Korean women into prostitution to service their military. (Kathleen Barry, *The Prostitution of Sexuality*, 1995, New York, New York University Press).

In 1974, police estimated that there were 400,000 prostitutes in Thailand, procured primarily for the U.S. military on R & R from the Vietnam War. As of 1993, an unofficial estimate is that there are 2 million prostitutes in Thailand, whose national economy is dependent on tourism. Prostitution is the largest commodity for the 450,000 Thai men who purchase prostitutes daily as well as for a large percentage of the 5.4 million tourists a year who arrive in Thailand for "sex tours." (Kathleen Barry, *The Prostitution of Sexuality*, 1995, New York, New York University Press).

Pimps target girls or women who seem naive, lonely, homeless, and rebellious. At first, the attention and feigned affection from the pimp convinces her to "be his woman." Pimps ultimately keep prostituted women in virtual captivity by verbal abuse - making a woman feel

that she is utterly worthless: a toilet, a piece of trash; and by physical coercion - beatings and the threat of torture. 80% to 95% of all prostitution is pimp-controlled. (Kathleen Barry, *The Prostitution of Sexuality*, 1995, New York, New York University Press).

The answer to the question "why do prostitutes stay with their pimps?" is the same as the answer to the question "why do battered women stay with their batterers?" (Melissa Farley, 1996) Humans bond emotionally to their abusers as a psychological strategy to survive under conditions of captivity. This has been described as the Stockholm syndrome (Dee Graham with Rawlings and Rigsby, *Loving to Survive: Sexual Terror, Men's Violence, and Women's Lives*, 1994, New York University Press, New York.)

85% of prostitutes are raped by pimps. (Council on Prostitution Alternatives, Portland, 1994)

"[In the past, we had a women's] movement which understood that the choice to be beaten by one man for economic survival was not a real choice, despite the appearance of consent a marriage contract might provide. ...Yet now we are supposed to believe, in the name of feminism, that the choice to be fucked by hundreds of men for economic survival must be affirmed as a real choice, and if the woman signs a model release there is no coercion there." (Catharine A. MacKinnon, "Liberalism and the Death of Feminism," in Dorchen Leidholdt and Janice Raymond (eds), *The Sexual Liberals and the Attack on Feminism*, 1990, Teachers College Press, New York.)

If we view prostitution as violence against women, it makes no sense to legalize or decriminalize prostitution. The primary violence in prostitution is not "social stigma" as some maintain. Decriminalizing or legalizing prostitution would normalize and regulate practices which are human rights violations, and which in any other context would be legally actionable (sexual harassment, physical assault, rape, captivity, economic coercion.) or emotionally damaging (verbal abuse). (Melissa Farley)

In 1999, the Swedish Parliament put into effect a law which criminalizes the buying of sexual services but not the selling of sexual services. This is a compassionate, social interventionist legal response to the cruelty of prostitution. (see, Sven-Axel Mansson and Ulla-Carin Hedin, 1999, "Breaking the Matthew Effect - On Women Leaving Prostitution," *International Journal of Social Work*. Also see Prostitution Research & Education web site, <http://www.prostitutionresearch.com> for a copy of the Swedish law)

Help Wanted: Women and Girls Do YOU want this job?

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Prostitution has been euphemized as an occupational alternative for women, as an answer to low-paying, low skilled, boring dead-end jobs, as a solution to the high unemployment rate of poor women, as a form of sexual liberation, and a career women freely choose.

Are you tired of mindless, low skilled, low-paying jobs? Would you like a career with flexible hours? Working with people? Offering a professional service?

- No experience required. No high school diploma needed. No minimum age requirement. On-the-job training provided.
- Special opportunities for poor women -- single mothers -- women of color.

Women and girls applying for this position will provide the following services:

- Being penetrated orally, anally, and vaginally with penises, fingers, fists, and objects, including but not limited to, bottles, brushes, dildoes, guns and/or animals;

- Being bound and gagged, tied with ropes and/or chains, burned with cigarettes, or hung from beams or trees;
- Being photographed or filmed performing these acts.

Workplace:

Job-related activities will be performed in the following locations: in an apartment, a hotel, a "massage parlor," car, doorway, hallway, street, executive suite, fraternity house, convention, bar, public toilet, public park, alleyway, military base, on a stage, in a glass booth.

Wages:

Wages will be negotiated at each and every transaction. Payment will be delivered when client determines when and if services have been rendered to his satisfaction.

Corporate management fees range from 40-60% of wages; private manager reserves the right to impound all monies earned.

Benefits:

NO LEGAL REDRESS FOR THE FOLLOWING ON-THE-JOB HAZARDS:

- Nonpayment for services rendered;
- Sexually transmitted diseases or pregnancy;
- Injuries sustained through performance of services including but not limited to cuts, bruises, lacerations, internal hemorrhaging, broken bones, suffocation, mutilation, disfigurement, dismemberment, and death.

Note: Accusations of rape will be treated as a breach of contract by employee.

A Comparison of Pimps and Batterers

A Comparison of Pimps and Batterers

by Evelina Giobbe

"A Comparison of Pimps and Batterers" is a condensed version of a longer article by Evelina Giobbe, entitled "An Analysis of Individual, Institutional, and Cultural Pimping," which appeared in Michigan Journal of Gender & Law, 1993, 1 (1): 33-57. Copyright © 1994, 1998 Evelina Giobbe. All Rights Reserved.

A woman is being pimped by a man when their relationship is contingent on her engaging in prostitution and relinquishing all or part of her earnings to him. The relationship is defined and controlled by the pimp for his economic gain. Since he typically appropriates all of the woman's money and she receives only "non-negotiable goods" in return, the woman becomes financially

dependent on him and unable to save for an independent future. This is particularly true of a woman who is paid with crack cocaine in lieu of cash, which prevents her from purchasing basic necessities such as food or clothing.

Even when a woman receives costly gifts from her pimp (providing the illusion of prosperity) he will typically retain or destroy her property when she leaves him, impeding her from accumulating any wealth. In a study conducted on recruitment tactics, one pimp explained,

*"They gotta go broke. That's the only rule for them leaving is that they gotta leave broke.
They can't take nothin' with them...If they leave me they gotta pay goin' out the door."*

An examination of the power dynamics between pimp and prostitute clearly illustrates how the tactics of power and control used to recruit and keep a woman trapped in prostitution closely parallels those used by batterers to ensure the compliance of their wives or intimate partners. The batterer uses tactics of power and control to dominate his partner within the context of an intimate relationship. The pimp uses similar strategies to exploit the prostitute economically. These tactics include isolation of the woman; minimization and denial of her abuse; the exertion of male privilege; threats and intimidation; and emotional, sexual, and physical abuse.

The pimp isolates "his woman" by controlling where she goes, whom she sees, and what she does.⁽⁵⁾ In addition, a pimp often moves a woman from different parts of the sex industry: on and off the strip circuit, from an escort service to a sauna or out on the street. He may take her from city to city, often kidnapping her or holding her against her will. A study of nineteen prostituted women revealed that 42% had been kidnapped by a pimp, a customer or both. All of these tactics isolate her from her friends and family, and stop her from making connections with other people who do not share his positive views about prostitution.

Pimps use minimization and denial to mask the impact prostitution has or will have on a prostitute's life. He may tell a woman that she's smarter than others who "give it away for free," or that all women are prostitutes; claiming some do it for dinner and others do it for straight cash. He also insists that prostitution is a job like any other job, that she is not selling herself, that she is just selling a service.

A pimp uses male privilege to control a woman. This can be as simple as his making pronouncements about his manhood, like "I'm a man. Don't question me...You'll do what I say because I am the man around here." He treats "his woman" as his property. He may purchase a woman from another pimp by posting her bond or he may buy her outright. Once ownership is established, he will put his commodity on the market. As one pimp so crudely put it, "I'm the boss, the daddy. She brings the money home." A prostitute without a pimp is considered an "outlaw" and is vulnerable to exploitation by all pimps. Typically, a woman who escapes her pimp must quickly "choose" another. This is essentially a protection racket where she pays a fee, known as "choosing money," to her new "man" to ensure her safety, as her former pimp may use a "tracker," or bounty hunter, to return her.

When more subtle tactics of power and control fail, a pimp will use threats and intimidation. He attempts to put fear into a woman by smashing things, shouting, glaring at her, or behaving in a menacing manner. One pimp boasted,

"I would say, 'bitch, you're holding out on me!' I would say like, 'Take your clothes off! Open your pussy!' And I would put my fingers up there, and you know it's just psych out shit, it was nothing...but it's a thing you gotta use in that game."

A pimp may beat up a disobedient prostitute in the presence of other prostitutes. He may threaten to disclose that she is a prostitute to others in order to insure her obedience. He may also threaten to leave her or to harm her, her children or her other family members.

A pimp will subject a woman to emotional abuse by calling her derogatory names. He dehumanizes her by making her into a commodity. He tells her she's "only good for one thing." One pimp, for example, sent a letter to his woman from prison referring to her as "his little slot-machine." This type of emotional abuse is compounded by the fact that it occurs within an environment of total emotional deprivation. Pimps deprive prostituted women of nurturing, affection, and ordinary developmental support. The restrictions put on a woman by a pimp impedes the normal development of self-expression and the recognition of an autonomous identity.

Pimps typically subject women to sexual abuse as an expression of ownership or as a form of punishment. One woman explained,

"I was his property. Do what he wanted. A lot of times it was just pleasing him...[He'd] tell me I had to continue sucking him...that if I fell asleep, or if I bit him - if my teeth touched him - he'd blow my head off."

Some pimps also sexually abuse women through the use or production of pornography. Thirty percent of the women interviewed by Giobbe reported that their pimps compelled them to emulate scenes from pornography to teach them how to be prostitutes. Some pimps force women into pornography as a form of blackmail or punishment. A woman relayed the following account:

"I always knew there was a punishment coming for taking time off...but he told me he wasn't going to hurt me so I believed him. [Then] he took off this belt and he starts whipping me...and he grabbed the dog and the dog knew just what to do...He took pictures of it, and he told me that if I ever left him again, that these would be mailed to my family."

Finally, pimps use physical abuse for a number of reasons: to demonstrate their dominance privately or in public, as a prelude to, or as a part of sex, or gratuitously, as a means of expressing contempt and hostility. All of the women interviewed by Giobbe had been harassed, assaulted, raped, kidnapped and/or forced to turn tricks by a pimp or a gang of pimps.

The batterer and the pimp not only use similar tactics of power and control over "their women," but share similar motives. According to Ellen Pence, of the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, Minnesota,

The abuser employs tactics not only to gain his partner's submission to a specific demand, but also to establish a relationship that he can rely upon in the future. These tactics appear to be random and inexplicable, but in the context of attempting to establish power in a relationship, random acts of violence are fully explainable.

Pence's theoretical construction of "Why men batter" comes alive in "Henry's" intuitive perception of successful pimping.

I figure if you have it together, you can bluff any woman; you can feel that power. When you feel that power, you know that usually works. You have them under your control.

The name of the game here--for "love" or money—is patriarchal power over women.