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Prostitutes: Victims of Men's Exploitation and Abuse

Nancy Erbe*

I. Introduction

Some girls will die for money.
Some will die as they're born.
Some will swear they'd die for love.
Some die every morn.¹

Most analyses of prostitution² focus on whether prostitution should be decriminalized or legalized.³ These analyses frequently conclude that prostitution is a victimless crime,⁴ and that the state should not intervene in prostitution.⁵ Prostitution is not a victimless crime. Essentially, prostitution is the economic exploitation and sexual abuse of prostitutes by men. Customers, pimps, police, and many other men exploit and abuse prostitutes.⁶ Prostitutes are the victims of prostitution.

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1. Peter, Paul, and Mary, *No Other Name*, Album 1700 (record album).

2. Prostitutes are almost exclusively women. Karen Rosenblum, *Female Deviance and the Female Sex Role: A Preliminary Investigation*, 26 *British J. of Soc.* 169 (1975). For this paper's purposes, prostitution is a male customer buying sex from a female prostitute. All data used in this paper is from studies of female prostitutes and male customers.

3. See, e.g., Mary Farmer, Donn Kessler, Lawrence Rosenfeld, *A Proposal for the Legalization of Prostitution in Connecticut*, 49 *Conn. B.J.* 163 (1975). Marilyn Haft, *Hustling for Rights*, 1974 *Civ. Lib. Rev.* 8-26. Therese Wandling, *Decriminalization of Prostitution: The Limits of the Criminal Law*, 55 *Or. L. Rev.* 553-66 (1976). Decriminalization means the repeal of all laws which make prostitutes' behavior illegal. Legalization means substitution of another set of state regulations. State-regulated prostitution would be legal.

4. Farmer, *supra* note 3, at 163. Haft, *supra* note 3, at 8-26. Wandling, *supra* note 3, at 533-66.

5. Farmer, *supra* note 3, at 163. Haft, *supra* note 3, at 8-26. Wandling, *supra* note 3, at 533-66.

6. Mimi Silbert & Ayala Pines, *Occupational Hazards of Street Prostitutes*, 8 *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 397 (1981). Freda Adler & Rita James Simon,

Analyses ignoring these wrongs strengthen society's support of men who exploit and abuse prostitutes.⁷ These analyses reinforce men's dehumanizing objectification of women which underlies all abuse and exploitation of women by men. This analysis recognizes the injuries perpetrated upon prostitutes by the men who create and support the institution of prostitution. These wrongs are identified by examining many studies of prostitution and prostitutes, and examining the similarities between prostitute customers and incest offenders.

To eliminate the abuse of women, those with power, mostly men, must no longer tolerate abuse and exploitation in any form, including abuse of prostitute women. The state must intervene in prostitution. It must hold the customers, police, and pimps, who emotionally and physically assault prostitutes, accountable for their crimes. In addition, prostitute women must be assisted with outreach and support to create viable options for their survival and existence other than prostitution.

II. Men's Exploitation and Abuse of Prostitutes

Prostitution is ugly. Customers treat prostitutes like insensate sex toys. Certain customers commit some of society's most vile crimes through their abuse of prostitutes. Pimps dominate prostitutes by means of psychological and physical assault.⁸ Police also physically and sexually attack prostitutes. Many other men exploit prostitutes economically.

A. Pimp Exploitation and Abuse

Pimps procure prostitutes through a variety of strategies.

The *Criminology of Deviant Women* 206, 208 (1979). In this article I attempt to portray the oppressive realities in a significant number of prostitutes' lives. Generalizations are necessary in such a portrayal, even though these generalizations may fail to apply to all prostitutes—roughly estimated to number between one quarter and one half million in the United States. Erich Goode, *Deviant Behavior: An Interactionist Approach* 346 (1978). Likewise, the individual stories that differ from the accounts in this article should not be used to detract from the oppression in prostitutes' lives.

7. Kirsten Grimstad & Susan Rennie, *The New Woman's Survival Sourcebook* 20 (1975). Adler & Simon, *supra* note 6, at 202.

8. Some prostitutes dispute the common assumption that all prostitutes' husbands and male friends are abusive, exploitative pimps. Claude Jaget, *Prostitutes: Our Life* 179-81 (1975). This article's description of pimp exploitation and abuse is not meant to imply that all prostitutes' husbands and male friends are abusive or exploitative. Documentation of pimp exploitation and abuse, like documentation of nonprostitute spouse abuse, incest, and rape, perhaps necessarily precedes elimination of sexual violence against women.

Some pimps purchase or kidnap women for prostitution.⁹ Other procurement begins without force, often masking subsequent force. Procurers seduce many young women with promises of friendship, love and romance, possibly marriage, and glamour.¹⁰ Particularly vulnerable to procurer promises are runaway teenage girls.¹¹

Procurers also deceive women and girls through fraudulent job recruitment.¹² Fraudulent job recruitment most commonly occurs under the guise of job offers in theatrical or dance companies. Women accept these fraudulent job offers as actresses and dancers with no hint as to the employers' "hidden agenda." Women only learn of their employers' actual expectations when they are subsequently forced to prostitute themselves.¹³

Regardless of how women are procured for prostitution,

9. Pimps purchase and kidnap women and girls through slave auctions, through government abduction and purchase of women and girls, and through individual sales of women and girls. Kathleen Barry, *Female Sexual Slavery* 3-4, 46-49, 57-58, 65-70, 77-81 (1979). One report documents the purchase of young Paraguayan girls, 8 to 14 years old, from poverty-stricken parents for sexual abuse by military government VIPs. *Id.* at 58-59.

Barry is a sociologist at Brandeis University. Her study emerged out of several years of investigation and research, primarily interviews with victims who had either escaped or left prostitution and with people close to prostitution—lawyers, reporters, police, and staff of anti-slavery organizations. *Id.* at 5-7. Her documentation includes a 1975 report of prostitute testimony submitted to UNESCO by a French doctor treating prostitutes. This report became the basis of testimony at the International Women's Year Conference in Mexico City. *Id.* at 4. The documentation also includes reports of the United Nations, Amnesty International, several other international organizations, and a French policeman working in the Central Office for the Repression of the Traffic in Persons. *Id.* at 47-49, 65-67.

10. *Id.* at 4, 74-79.

11. *Id.* at 74. Alone in a new city, frequently lost, and afraid of trying to survive on their own, runaway girls are easy targets for pimps offering food, companionship, and a place to stay. Most prostitutes enter prostitution as teenage runaways. Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood* 174 (1981). Robert Rich, *Crimes Without Victims* 65 (1978). In one study of teenage prostitutes, approximately 60% started prostitution by age 14. Two other studies report mean ages of 15 and 17 years for the ages prostitutes entered prostitution. Enablers, Inc., *Juvenile Prostitution in Minnesota* 52 (1978). Runaways create a large pool of potential prostitutes. One recent estimate is that 500,000 teenagers run away annually: approximately 50,000 runaway girls annually arrive in New York City. Rosen, *supra* at 173.

The increased number of younger prostitutes represents the greatest change in prostitution since the 1950s. From 1960 to 1970, New York arrests of prostitutes under 25 increased from 24% to 74% of all prostitute arrests. Other major cities showed similar increases in the arrests of young prostitutes. Diana Gray, *Turning-Out: A Study of Teenage Prostitution*, 1 *Urb. Life and Culture* 402 (1973) (17 open-ended interviews of juvenile prostitutes).

12. Barry, *supra* note 9, at 4, 73, 250.

13. *Id.*

pimps control prostitutes after they enter prostitution. Some pimps demand total subservience from their prostitutes. The subservient prostitute never talks back to her pimp¹⁴ and gives her pimp all or most of her money.¹⁵ The pimp's control over her must be made obvious to others by the prostitute's behavior to him in public. She must treat him with *absolute* respect and deference. This includes lighting his cigarette, responding immediately to his every whim, and not speaking unless spoken to.¹⁶

Pimps describe their role as super-psychological brainwashing to ensure pimp domination.¹⁷ Two anthropologists, after doing extensive research on pimp-prostitute relationships, expressed this pimp attitude in the form of the following commandment. "Man is the Lord God. He shall have dominion over women and control them; also he shall stand with his fellow men against any bitch who puts herself before men."¹⁸ Pimp brainwashing includes sweet talk and promises,¹⁹ verbal abuse,²⁰ and creating paranoia of the outside world while simultaneously cutting off outside ties.²¹

If psychological brainwashing techniques are unsuccessful, pimps control prostitutes through (1) physical abuse; (2) physical control of prostitutes' children, with threats to keep the children as hostages if prostitutes leave; (3) serious threats of physical harm, including murder; (4) keeping prostitutes in continuous states of poverty and indebtedness; and

14. Dave Moore, WCCO TV, *Legal Lady Legislation* (1977).

15. *Id.* Robert Prus & Stylianoss Irini, Hookers, Rounders and Desk Clerks 34, 62 (1980). Susan Hall, *Silky: A Gentleman of Leisure*, in *Human Sexuality in Today's World* 262 (John Gagnon ed. 1977).

16. Adler & Simon, *supra* note 6, at 204.

17. For one pimp's description of super-psychological brainwashing, see Hall, *supra* note 15, at 257-65.

18. Alex Thio, *Deviant Behavior* 183-84 (1978) (citing Christina and Richard Milner, *Black Players* 11-12 (1972)).

19. Bernard Cohen, *Deviant Street Networks* 167-68 (1980). Goode, *supra* note 6, at 353-54. Prus & Irini, *supra* note 15, at 224-25.

20. Linda "Lovelace" writes, "Strangely enough, what bothered me the most was the endless verbal abuse. He never let up: I was so dumb; I was so ugly; I was so fat; I was so thin; I was so flat-chested; and I was so lucky to have him taking care of me. The constant yelling took everything out of me." Linda Lovelace, *Ordeal* 43 (1980).

21. Dave Moore, WCCO TV, *Have Girl, Will Travel* (1975). Gilbert Geis, *One Eyed Justice* 215-16 (1974). Cutting off ties with the outside world is easy to do given the public contempt of prostitutes which, "despite bravado [often] becomes self-contempt." Kate Millett, *The Prostitution Papers*, 70-72 (1971). Legalization of prostitution also does not change prostitutes' low self-esteem and alienation. People Reaching Out in Determined Effort to Effect Change (PRIDE), *PRIDE MANUAL* 7 (1984) (unpublished manuscript).

(5) ensuring that prostitutes have no freedom to move outside unaccompanied.²² Many pimps beat their prostitutes.²³ One study of streetwalker²⁴ victimization revealed that two-thirds of the pimps physically assaulted their prostitutes.²⁵ Eighteen percent of the assaulted prostitutes were beaten constantly.²⁶ Thirty-six percent were beaten regularly.²⁷ In a study of juvenile prostitutes, pimps beat over one half of the prostitutes.²⁸ Twenty percent of the juvenile prostitutes were beaten regularly.²⁹ Police also report widespread physical assault by pimps against prostitutes. Pimps brutally beat, slash, and brand prostitutes. Pimps burn prostitutes' vaginas with hot coat hangers, and burn prostitutes' breasts with cigarette butts.³⁰ Prostitutes also report pimps hitting them with six-foot bullwhips.³¹

Prostitutes who stay with abusive pimps may do so for several reasons. Prostitutes know only a world where men and their violence dominate women. Prostitutes often share a history of family abuse. In the early twentieth century, women who became prostitutes reported doing so after leaving bad

22. Barry, *supra* note 9, at 3, 4, 79-81. One Dakar prostitute was forced, through beatings and through the kidnapping of her children, to service 100 men a day. Retarded and emotionally disturbed Mexican and American women were forced, with beatings and through poverty, to serve as migrant labor camp prostitutes. A New York City pimp terrorized a 14 year old runaway with his big "007" gravity-blade knife. *Id.* at 65-66, 69, 78. For other recent accounts of pimps controlling prostitutes in the United States, see Lovelace, *supra* note 20, *passim*; Rosen, *supra* note 11, at 172-73; and Prus & Irini, *supra* note 15, at 39.

23. Prus & Irini, *supra* note 15, at 36, 37. In *Ordeal*, Linda "Lovelace" writes of daily kickings, rapes, beatings, and/or chokings from her pimp/husband. Lovelace, *supra* note 20, at 27, 29, 46, 67, 87. After one such beating, she could not walk for a day. *Id.* at 67.

24. Prostitutes generally divide themselves into three different groups: streetwalkers, prostitutes who work in massage parlors or hotels, and call girls. Adler & Simon, *supra* note 6, at 197. Thio, *supra* note 18, at 172-77. Some prostitutes work in all three roles. Prus & Irini, *supra* note 15, at 72-73. Prostitutes at all levels have pimps. Adler & Simon, *supra* note 6, at 205, 208. In one study, approximately 80% of hotel prostitutes had pimps. Prus & Irini, *supra* note 15, at 11.

25. Silbert & Pines, *supra* note 6, at 397. The National Center for Prevention of Rape and the National Institute of Mental Health sponsored this study. Specially trained ex-prostitute members of Delancey House, a treatment center for prostitutes and other offenders, extensively interviewed 200 street prostitutes. *Id.* at 395. Interviewer reliability was 90%. *Id.* at 396.

26. *Id.* at 397.

27. *Id.*

28. Enablers, Inc., *supra* note 11, at 70.

29. *Id.*

30. Rosen, *supra* note 11, at 172. Thio, *supra* note 18, at 184. Dave Moore, WCCO TV, *Have Girl, Will Travel* (1975).

31. Gray, *supra* note 11, at 416.

home conditions, with actual or perceived lack of family love.³² Many women fled home lives characterized by emotional deprivation, physical battering, and incest.³³

Circumstances have not changed. Sociologists still report prostitute histories of parental abuse and neglect.³⁴ Prostitutes are often incest victims. In two studies approximately forty percent of the prostitutes interviewed reported that they were victims of incest.³⁵ Two social service agencies, after several years of working with prostitutes, report that the dominant men in prostitutes' families sexually abused eighty to eighty-five percent of all prostitutes seen by the agencies.³⁶

Prostitutes share abusive histories with other women. Many men abuse female family members. Though measuring the extent of wife abuse in our society is difficult because most women do not report their abuse, social researchers are certain that wife abuse occurs in many homes. Husbands abuse their wives in at least ten to fifty percent of all families.³⁷ In the first book written on marital rape, fourteen percent of the women surveyed reported that their husbands had sexually assaulted them.³⁸ Fathers have sexually assaulted at least ten percent of

32. Rosen, *supra* note 11, at 161-62. Sue Davidson & Ruth Rosen, *The Maimie Papers* xxii-xxiv (1977).

33. Rosen, *supra* note 11, at 161-62. Davidson & Rosen, *supra* note 32, at xxii-xxiv.

34. Jennifer James, *Prostitutes and Prostitution*, in *Deviants: Voluntary Actors in a Hostile World* 398 (Edward Sagarin & Fred Montanino eds. 1977). See Gray, *supra* note 11, at 405.

35. James, *supra* note 34, at 398.

36. Operation De Novo, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Dave Moore, WCCO TV, *Have Girl, Will Travel* (1975). Phone conversation with Cindy Barnett, group facilitator of PRIDE, a self-help program for prostitutes and former prostitutes, Minneapolis, Minnesota (March, 1984). Moreover, experts agree that incest is grossly underreported. Florence Rush, *The Best Kept Secret* 2, 4 (1980). Overt incest—sexual assault with physical contact, is only the most extreme form of incest. For every victim of overt incest, there are many more victims of covert incest. Covert incest occurs when fathers sexually assault their daughters without touching them. Fathers may exhibit their genitals to their daughters, watch their daughters undress, or discuss sex with their daughters in great detail. Judith Herman, *Father-Daughter Incest* 109-10 (1981). For accounts of some teenage runaways' abusive family histories, see Trudee Able-Peterson, *Children of the Evening passim* (1981). Able-Peterson is a former call girl currently counseling sexually exploited children in New York Times Square.

In studies of prostitutes' childhood abuse, inside and outside of prostitutes' families, 72.2% of the prostitutes interviewed reported having bad sexual experiences forced upon them; 84.7% of these experiences occurred when the women were aged 15 or younger; 49.5% reported that men had raped them; and 16.7% were raped more than once. James, *supra* note 34, at 397.

37. Joseph Costa, *Abuse of Women: Legislation, Reporting and Prevention*, 12 (1983).

38. Diana Russell, *Rape in Marriage* 57 (1982).

all daughters.³⁹

Many men outside of women's families also sexually abuse and exploit women. Stated bluntly by a bar musician,

I have travelled all around the country, and one thing I have noticed is that bars are pretty much the same. The one big thing about bars is that guys follow pussy. And the guys are going to go there and buy them drinks, trying to impress them. . . . You'll spend as much as you can to get her drunk so she doesn't know what she's doing. . . . She's maybe not the best looking dame in the world, but he figures, 'Well, it's better than going home to a pillow.'⁴⁰

This statement, published in 1980, describes how some men plan and perpetrate rape. Between 1967 and 1977, reports of rape in the United States more than doubled.⁴¹

The legal system gives few victims of sexual abuse adequate legal recourse. Domestic abuse is difficult to prosecute.⁴² Wife rape is excluded from rape statutes in most states,⁴³ legalizing the husband's "right to his wife's sexual services." The legal system frequently fails to enforce incest laws.⁴⁴ Furthermore, existing incest laws ineffectively protect victims because legal definitions of consent and coercion are inadequate.⁴⁵ The legal system's criminal procedures,⁴⁶ sentencing⁴⁷ and evidentiary requirements⁴⁸ for sex offenses too strongly favor protection of the offender instead of the victim. Though many more women now report rape, few cases of rape are successfully

39. Herman, *supra* note 36, at 12-14 (1981). This research is the result of a five-year collaboration between two clinical psychiatrists. It includes: 1) a literature survey; 2) interviews of 40 victims of overt incest and 20 victims of covert incest; 3) interviews with professionals in mental health, child protection, and law enforcement; and 4) site visits to innovative incest programs.

40. Prus & Irini, *supra* note 15, at 202.

41. Jeanne Marsh, *Rape and the Limits of Law Reform* 3 (1982).

42. U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Under the Rule of Thumb: Battered Women and the Administration of Justice* 33 (1982).

43. Wife rape is illegal in only six states. Seven others have partially stricken the marital rape exemption so that it is a crime in most circumstances. National Center on Women and Family Law, *The Marital Rape Exemption Chart* (1981 & September 1982 update).

44. Herman, *supra* note 36, at 130, 166-68.

45. *Id.* at 175 (discussion of and recommendations for incest laws). See also, Sandra Grove, *Constitutionality of Minnesota's Sodomy Law*, 2 *Law & Inequality* 521 (1984).

46. Herman, *supra* note 36, at 165-66, 172-74 (description of current procedures and recommendations for changes).

47. *Id.* at 174-76.

48. Specifically, requirements for corroborated testimony in cases of incest and other forms of child sexual abuse should be abolished. Since child abuse almost always occurs in secrecy, this requirement makes conviction of the father virtually impossible. *Id.* at 165. Furthermore, false denials of incest are much more common than false complaints. *Id.* at 166.

prosecuted.⁴⁹

Whether or not a woman is abused by a man, all women know that men as a group have more power than women. The majority of women work in an oppressive sex-segregated labor force. Most women are economically dependent on work advancing the economic interests of men—employers, stockholders, and boards of directors.⁵⁰ Women's economic oppression is evident when average wages are compared. In 1982, women earned sixty cents for every dollar men earned.⁵¹

In this world dominated by men and by violence against women, some prostitutes see men's abuse as a given part of a male-female relationship.⁵² Some prostitutes feel they need a man, no matter how abusive, to protect them from other men.⁵³ Some prostitutes also believe that staying with violent men results in less harm to themselves than the probable harms caused by attempting to leave.⁵⁴ Other prostitutes perceive abuse as evidence of men's concern for them.⁵⁵ Some prostitutes, after years of abuse, feel they deserve beatings.⁵⁶

Abused prostitutes develop psychological paralysis. Cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment understandably results in depression and fear.⁵⁷ Isolated from positive relationships,⁵⁸ the prostitute typically blames herself for her pimp's abuse⁵⁹

49. Marsh, *supra* note 41, at 1-3.

50. Rosen, *supra* note 11, at 169, 175.

51. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Dept. of Lab., Bull. 2168, Women at Work: A Chartbook 26, 29 (April 1983). Women maintained one of every six families in March 1982. Chartbook at 24. Of the 3.4 million families maintained by women, one of every three lived in poverty, compared with one of every sixteen married couple families. Chartbook at 26.

52. Gray, *supra* note 11, at 418.

53. Prus & Irini, *supra* note 15, at 36.

54. "Generation after generation, women have learned that you don't say things like that . . . because 'they,' the men you need now and those you will need in order to survive later, will turn against you." Louise Armstrong, Kiss Daddy Goodnight 238 (1978). Prosecuting an abuser is especially difficult for a woman labeled a prostitute. Adler & Simon, *supra* note 6, at 202.

55. Thio, *supra* note 18, at 184. Silbert & Pines, *supra* note 6, at 398. Dave Moore, WCCO TV, *Legal Lady Legislation* (1977). Cf. Herman, *supra* note 36, at 92.

56. Many incest victims comment that at times they feel good for little else besides sex. Herman, *supra* note 36, at 100. Incest victims who repeatedly endure beatings as adults frequently seem to feel that they deserve to be beaten. Having seen their mothers beaten, many incest victims also seem to take men's mistreatment as a given in women's lives. *Id.* at 101. Similar reactions are expressed by incest victims who have been raped. *Id.* at 102. James, *supra* note 34, at 396-97.

57. Lovelace, *supra* note 20, at 60, 62-63.

58. PRIDE, *supra* note 21, at 4-5.

59. Silbert & Pines, *supra* note 6, at 398.

and has no one to tell her she is not to blame. She perceives no options, feels trapped in a hopeless situation, and becomes psychologically paralyzed.⁶⁰ Thus, the abused prostitute is unable to break away from men's victimization.⁶¹

B. Landlords', Corporate Bosses', Policemen's and Other Professional Men's Exploitation

The popular image of the wealthy prostitute masks extensive economic exploitation.⁶² Madams, commonly with men in the background, and male landlords economically exploit prostitutes working in houses, hotels, and massage parlors.⁶³ Employers control call girls who work for businesses.⁶⁴ Business call girls must do what their bosses demand to get customers and salaries.⁶⁵ The doctors and lawyers who provide essential services to prostitutes for exorbitant fees; the taxi drivers and bellhops who deliver call girl business and thus have the power to blackmail call girls; and the police on prostitution squads all exploit prostitutes.⁶⁶

Police exploit prostitutes through their arrest patterns. Though at first glance police seem to be simply enforcing prostitution laws, police arrest prostitutes in a very limited, discriminatory manner.⁶⁷ Police overwhelmingly arrest only

60. For prostitutes who are incest victims, the low self-esteem and depression that results from men's abuse in prostitution joins deeply internalized feelings of shame, guilt, depression, and low self-esteem from incest. Herman, *supra* note 36, at 29-32, 93, 100-01.

61. Similar paralysis develops in abused wives. See Lenora Walker, *The Battered Woman* 42-54 (1979).

62. Prostitution is big business. Though profits are unknown even within the business, one estimate is that American men spend between seven and nine billion dollars a year for the sexual favors of prostitutes. This is ten times the annual budget of the U.S. Department of Justice. Thio, *supra* note 18, at 169. This estimate excludes the profits of the pornography industry which also employs prostitutes. The movie "Deep Throat" alone grossed nearly a million and a half dollars in one New York theater before being closed down by authorities. Lovelace, *supra* note 20, at 180.

The popular picture of the wealthy prostitute lies about prostitutes' economic situations. Some prostitutes may make quite a bit, but with their pimps, drug and alcohol use, and the clothes they need to buy, prostitutes manage to keep very little, if any, of their earnings. PRIDE, *supra* note 21, at 2.

63. Adler & Simon, *supra* note 6, at 206. In one study, some parlors paid the prostitutes only 20% to 50% of the customer fee. Other parlors paid prostitutes none of the fee. Prus & Irini, *supra* note 15, at 66.

64. Adler & Simon, *supra* note 6, at 208.

65. *Id.*

66. *Id.*

67. *Id.* at 201. Cohen, *supra* note 19, at 173. Discriminatory police arrests of prostitutes mean that the women most penalized by the law are poor and Black, even though the majority of prostitutes do not come from poor or Black

streetwalkers.⁶⁸ The majority of streetwalkers are arrested over and over again.⁶⁹ Other prostitutes, mostly working in massage parlors or as call girls, can sometimes make arrangements with the police so that they are rarely, if ever, arrested.⁷⁰

Policemen also sexually abuse and assault prostitutes. In a study of streetwalker victimization, approximately forty-one percent of the prostitutes questioned reported assaults by police officers.⁷¹ Some policemen beat prostitutes.⁷² Some policemen rape prostitutes.⁷³

C. Customer Exploitation and Abuse

Prostitutes are the victims of some of society's most horrendous physical abuse. Two hundred prostitutes were murdered in New York City in 1978.⁷⁴ One seventeen-year-old prostitute was found without clothing in a New York City parking lot; her legs had been cut off.⁷⁵ In France, in 1970, a number of prostitutes were murdered in a particularly atrocious manner.⁷⁶ Before death, each victim was tortured in the cruelest manner for many hours.⁷⁷ Each body was hideously mutilated after death.⁷⁸ One woman's knees were tied over her head and slowly broken.⁷⁹ Another woman was slowly strangled while being held under water.⁸⁰ Several women were

families. Cohen, *supra* note 19, at 175. "It is 7 times more likely that prostitution arrests will involve [B]lack women than women of other races. As might be expected, the largest proportion of [these arrests] takes place in the inner cities where living standards are low, the level of desperation high, and police prejudice endemic." Haft, *supra* note 3, at 14.

68. Adler & Simon, *supra* note 6, at 201. Millett, *supra* note 21, at 138. Goode, *supra* note 6, at 337. This vulnerability to arrest increases streetwalkers' dependence on pimps, who can provide the fine or bail money needed to get out of jail. Adler & Simon, *supra* note 6, at 202.

69. Thio, *supra* note 18, at 182. Dave Moore, WCCO TV, *Have Girl, Will Travel* (1975). Goode, *supra* note 6, at 25, 337. Cohen, *supra* note 19, at 173. Haft, *supra* note 3, at 14.

70. Some prostitutes provide services to help vice officers satisfy vice squad supervisors—providing information concerning the drug scene and gambling operations, and talking to troublesome sister prostitutes who are creating public disturbances. Cohen, *supra* note 19, at 173. Some prostitutes provide sexual favors to police officers. *Id.* at 174.

71. Silbert & Pines, *supra* note 6, at 397.

72. *Id.*

73. *Id.*

74. Rosen, *supra* note 11, at 174.

75. Able-Peterson, *supra* note 36, at 14.

76. Millett, *supra* note 21, at 15-16.

77. *Id.*

78. *Id.*

79. *Id.*

80. *Id.*

slashed and stoned.⁸¹ A former call girl, currently counseling sexually exploited children in New York's Times Square, strongly suspects that customers commit most prostitutes' murders.⁸² She herself was almost murdered by a few of her Minneapolis customers.⁸³

Customers abuse prostitutes. In one study of street prostitute victimization, seventy-eight percent of the prostitutes reported customer-forced perversion; an average of seventeen times per woman.⁸⁴ Seventy percent of the prostitutes reported customer rape or similar customer behavior; an average of thirty-one times per woman.⁸⁵ Sixty-five percent of the prostitutes were physically abused and beaten by customers; an average of four times per woman.⁸⁶

81. *Id.*

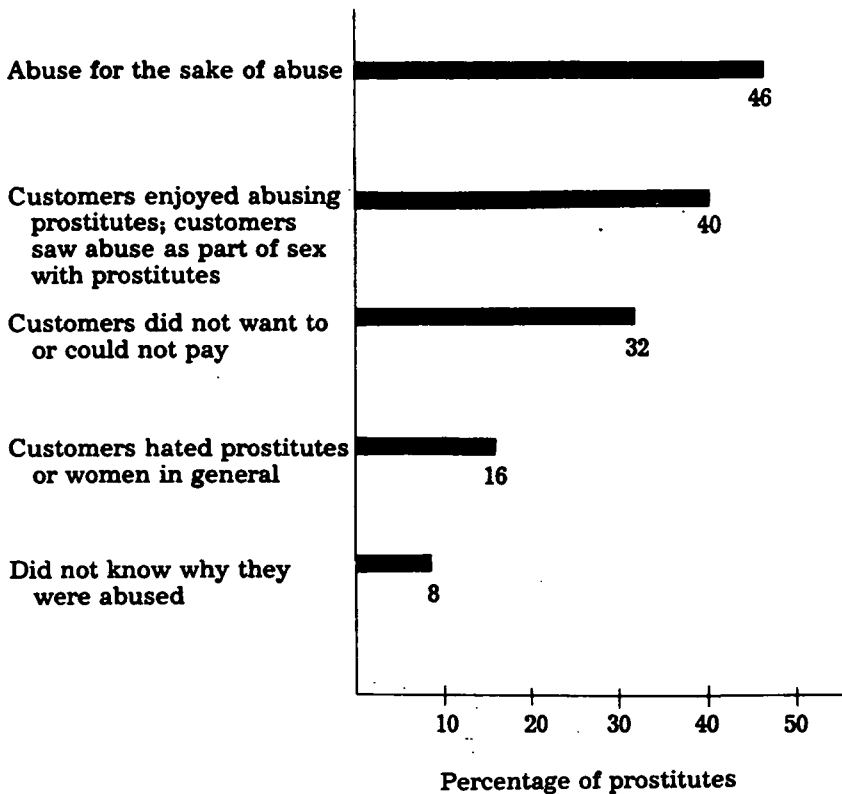
82. Able-Peterson, *supra* note 36, at 16.

83. *Id.* at 12.

84. Silbert & Pines, *supra* note 6, at 397.

85. *Id.*

86. *Id.* See also Gray, *supra* note 11, at 421.

Prostitutes' Perceptions—Reasons Customers Abused Them⁸⁷

Even when prostitutes do not report customer abuse, customer use of prostitutes is bought, impersonal, quick, easy sex. There is no need for seduction, cultivation of friendship or love, or responsibility for the consequences of the customers' sexual demands.⁸⁸ In other words, men who buy women's bodies and sexual services do not need to relate to women as human beings. They do not need to take responsibility for their sexual behavior or consider women's feelings. Instead, customers treat prostitute women as bought servants—objects for men's use.⁸⁹

87. Silbert & Anes, *supra* note 6, at 397.

88. Thio, *supra* note 18, at 185. Cohen, *supra* note 19, at 170. Rich, *supra* note 11, at 65.

89. Goode, *supra* note 6, at 329, 344.

Since men's promiscuity is widely tolerated, some people excuse men's use of paid prostitutes. But comparing the attitudes and behavior of prostitute customers with those of other male sex offenders clarifies the abusive nature of prostitute customer attitudes and behavior. Prostitute customers' lack of responsibility for the consequences of their sexual behavior and consideration for their sex partner's feelings is frighteningly analogous to the exploitative attitudes of incest offenders. Incest offenders rationalize their exploitation of their daughters by believing that men have the right to be nurtured and serviced by women, if not by their wives, then by their daughters.⁹⁰ Exploitative fathers frequently consider themselves deprived of the womanly care to which they feel men are entitled.⁹¹ In the fathers' estimation, their wives are not giving enough; their wives refuse sex and withhold love.⁹² Prostitute customers voice similar complaints.⁹³

Pornographic and some psychiatric literature supports men's expectation of sexual service from women by blaming the wife for any sexual problems, and assuming that a wife is required to service her husband on demand.⁹⁴ If the wife fails to provide complete satisfaction, the husband is entitled to whatever replacement he chooses.⁹⁵

To accept the assumption that men are entitled to sexual service from women and girls⁹⁶ is to accept incest offenders' and prostitute customers' assertions that sexual deprivation justifies their behavior—sex without responsibility for the consequences. In other words, sexual deprivation justifies sexual abuse. Men cannot justify sexual abuse on the basis of their own sexual deprivation. Men cannot blame the victims of men's actions for the evil men perpetrate upon them. Men are responsible for their sexual behavior. No amount of wife neglect, daughter affection, or prostitute enticement erases the fact that a man determines his participation in exploitative sex with women and children.⁹⁷ Furthermore, research contradicts

90. Herman, *supra* note 36, at 79-80. Armstrong, *supra* note 54, at 219.

91. Herman, *supra* note 36, at 43.

92. *Id.*

93. Charles Winick & Paul Kinsie, *The Lively Commerce* 193, 195-97 (1971).

94. Herman, *supra* note 36, at 42-43. Armstrong, *supra* note 54, at 53.

95. Herman, *supra* note 36, at 42-43. Armstrong, *supra* note 54, at 53.

96. Herman, *supra*, note 36 at 46, 49. Armstrong, *supra* note 54, at 146, 201, 234-35.

97. Enforcement among all classes and races of men of the statutes prohibiting acts of male sex offenders could prompt men to begin to take responsibility for their sexual abuse of women. See Armstrong, *supra* note 54, at 56.

incestuous fathers' claims of sexual deprivation.⁹⁸ In most cases the incest offender's behavior is the most disruptive factor in the spousal relationship.⁹⁹ Even in a very disturbed marriage, the incest offender usually commands sex from his wife.¹⁰⁰ To end men's sexual exploitation of women, all men's sexual responsibility must be acknowledged. All men must be accountable for their sexual behavior.

Even without physical abuse, customers' use of prostitutes hurts prostitutes. To perform sexually,¹⁰¹ most prostitutes use drugs¹⁰² or try to train themselves to go numb and fake their responses to their customers.¹⁰³

I was no longer experiencing things that made me feel good or bad. I felt as though my self has been taken away from me. I was not a person anymore. I was a robot, a vegetable, a wind-up toy, a fucking-and-sucking doll. I had become someone else's thing.¹⁰⁴

Another prostitute of only four months echoes these words.

I'm getting a calloused heart. . . . I feel like a machine. It's gonna be rough to fall in love and have a family. . . . I want to get out while I still have emotions and feelings and I'm not just hard and cold.¹⁰⁵

Prostitutes' distancing from customer sex is their attempt to avoid the emotional pain that results from exploitative sex.

Total detachment from feelings is difficult, if not impossible, and requires a long learning process. Some prostitutes describe their initial customer encounters as horrible, painful experiences; some prostitutes cried for entire days afterward.¹⁰⁶ Even after several encounters with customers, some

98. Herman, *supra* note 36, at 143.

99. *Id.*

100. *Id.*

101. Contrary to popular belief, most prostitutes interviewed get no sexual enjoyment from their work. Millett, *supra* note 21, at 50-51. Thio, *supra* note 18, at 171. Goode, *supra* note 6, at 325, 342-44. In fact, they usually do not like their customers. Prus & Irini, *supra* note 15, at 9, 21, 47.

102. Many prostitutes become heavy drug users. Chemicals provide an easy, readily available escape from feelings of pain. Many prostitutes say they could not work unless high. PRIDE, *supra* note 21, at 4.

103. Lovelace, *supra* note 20, at 50, 87, 124. Millett, *supra* note 21, at 65. Rosen, *supra* note 11, at 98, 173. Prus & Irini, *supra* note 15, at 17-18, 20, 64-65. Goode, *supra* note 6, at 339, 345. Incest victims begin this numbing process as they try to cope with their fathers' sexual assault by mentally disassociating themselves from the frightening and unpleasant experience. Herman, *supra* note 36, at 86.

104. Lovelace, *supra* note 20, at 87.

105. *Movie on Brothel Life Shows a Litany of Losers*, Minneapolis Star & Tribune, Oct. 7, 1983, at § C at 13, col. 1.

106. Jaget, *supra* note 8, at 59, 121, 143.

prostitutes cannot detach themselves from feelings of pain—the prostitutes' pain from hundreds of different men taking their bodies.¹⁰⁷ Their pain is a combination of guilt, self-disgust, and a learned sense of worthlessness.¹⁰⁸

Prostitutes' suicide rate confirms prostitutes' high degree of unhappiness and desperation. Seventy-five percent of a sampling of call girls reported suicide attempts.¹⁰⁹ Public hospitals report that fifteen percent of all suicide victims are prostitutes.¹¹⁰

A life of prostitution scars.

Things won't ever be the same for me. My sex life has never been normal. I can't equate sex with affection. I have these images that never stop running in my head. They're fantasies of women as passive victims. All the scenes disgust me, but I can't stop them. I want to be able to be in a loving situation without having these scenarios going through my head.¹¹¹

The "glamour" of prostitution entails physical and emotional assault by customers, pimps and policemen, and economic exploitation by landlords and employers. Some prostitutes die as a result of men's victimization. Prostitution is not a victimless crime.

III. Societal Support of Prostitution

Statistically, most people involved in prostitution are men. The majority of prostitutes are women. The majority of customers are men. Usually several men customers patronize each individual woman prostitute. Thus, customers outnumber prostitutes. Most people involved in prostitution are men.

The popular picture of prostitution as the economically rewarding life of immoral women totally ignores prostitutes' oppression.¹¹² This picture also excludes both the men who create and profit from the prostitution market and the societal assumptions about men's sexuality which support men's use of prostitutes. The legal system, for example, tolerates men's exploitation and abuse of prostitutes by its infrequent arrest and

107. Able-Peterson, *supra* note 36, at 28-29, 58-59, 69, 75, 119, 158.

108. *Id.* at 18, 24, 34. See also Enablers, Inc., *supra* note 11, at 125.

109. Geis, *supra* note 21, at 174.

110. *Id.*

111. Take Back The Night: Women on Pornography 67-68 (Laura Lederer ed. 1980).

112. Without a feminist analysis, one is at a loss to explain why supposedly responsible professional investigators have suppressed the oppressive realities of prostitution for so long. Cf. Herman, *supra* note 36, at 3.

prosecution of customers, pimps, abusive policemen, and the landlords and corporate employers of prostitutes.

Forty-two states explicitly or implicitly make patronizing a prostitute a crime.¹¹³ In the remaining eight states, patronizing a prostitute is legal.¹¹⁴ Even in states where laws criminalize men's use of prostitutes, however, policemen rarely arrest customers.¹¹⁵ As a Minneapolis policeman explained, arrest would ruin the customers' family lives and business reputations.¹¹⁶ This concern is "understandable." Customers include judges, prosecutors, jailers, and legislators.¹¹⁷

The legal system also tolerates and thus supports abusive pimps, abusive police, and all other persons, mostly men, who

113. Ariz. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 13-3214 (1956). Ark. Stat. Ann. § 41-3002 (1947). Cal. Penal Code § 647(b) (West 1981). Conn. Gen. Stat. § 53a-82 (1958). D.C. Code Ann. § 22-2701 (1981). Fla. Stat. Ann. § 796.07 (West 1964). Ga. Code Ann. § 16-6-12 (1982). Hawaii Rev. Stat. § 712-1200-1204 (1976). Ind. Code Ann. § 35-45-4-3 (Burns 1979). Iowa Code Ann. § 725.1 (West 1979). Me. Rev. Stat. Ann. tit. 17-A § 853-B (1964). Mass. Ann. Laws ch. 272 § 53 (Michie/Law Co-op. 1975). Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. §§ 750.448, 750.450 (West 1967). Miss. Code Ann. § 97-29-49, § 97-29-53 (1972). Mo. Ann. Stat. § 567.020 (Vernon 1979). Mont. Code Ann. § 45-5-601 (1983). Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 28-801, 28-802 (1943). N.H. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 645.2 (1974). N.J. Stat. Ann. § 2C:34-1(e) (West 1984). N.M. Stat. Ann. §§ 30-9-2, 30-9-3 (1978). N.Y. Penal Law §§ 230.00, 230.02 (McKinney 1980). N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-204 (1981). Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 2923.03 (Page 1981). Okla. Stat. Ann. tit. 21 § 1029 (West 1983). Or. Rev. Stat. § 167.007 (1971). R.I. Gen. Laws § 11-34-1 (1981). S.C. Code Ann. §§ 16-15-90, 16-15-110 (Law. Coop 1976). Tenn. Code Ann. §§ 39-2-632, 39-2-634, 39-2-635 (1982). Tex. Penal Code Ann. § 43.02 (Vernon Supp. 1984). Wash. Rev. Code Ann. § 9A.88.030 (1977). W. Va. Code § 61-8-5(b) (1977). Wis. Stat. Ann. § 944.30 (West 1982). Colorado, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Utah, Vermont, and Virginia punish customers less severely than they punish prostitutes. Colo. Rev. Stat. §§ 18-7-201, 18-7-205 (1973). Del. Code Ann. tit. 11 §§ 1342-1343 (1977). Idaho Code §§ 18-5613, 18-5614 (1977). Ill. Ann. Stat. ch. 38 §§ 11-14, 11-18 (Smith-Hurd Supp. 1984-1985). Kan. Stat. Ann. §§ 21-3512, 21-3515 (1981). Minn. Stat. Ann. § 609.324 (West 1964). 18 Pa. Cons. Stat. Ann. § 5902 (Purdon's 1983). Utah Code Ann. §§ 76-10-1302 to 76-10-1303 (1978). Vt. Stat. Ann. tit. 76 § 10-1303 (1978).

114. Ala. Code §§ 13-12-110 to 13A-12-113 (1977). Alaska Stat. §§ 11.66.100 to .150 (1962). Ky. Rev. Stat. §§ 529.020 to .070 (1975). La. Rev. Stat. Ann. §§ 14.82-.86 (West 1965). Md. Crim. Law Code Ann. § 27.15 (1975). Nev. Rev. Stat. § 201.295 (1979). N.D. Cent. Code §§ 12/29-03 (1973). S.D. Codified Laws Ann. § 22-23-1 (1979).

115. Grimstad & Rennie, *supra* note 7, at 20. Marilyn Haft, *Recommendation and Report to the House of Delegates by the Section of Individual Rights and Responsibilities Concerning Prostitution and Solicitation*, 4 Human Rights 77 (1974). For example, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, during 1974, policemen arrested 23 customers compared to 263 prostitutes. Dave Moore, WCCO TV, *Have Girl, Will Travel* (1975). Nationally, in 1977, 71% of arrests were of women. P. Alexander, *Working On The Issue* 23 (1982).

116. Dave Moore, WCCO TV, *Have Girl, Will Travel* (1975).

117. Haft, *supra* note 3, at 23. Sam Janus, *A Sexual Profile of Men in Power* (1978). One estimate is that 60% of the adult male population patronize prostitutes. James, *supra* note 34, at 402.

benefit from prostitution and create its existence. Policemen arrest pimps even less than they arrest customers.¹¹⁸ One rarely, if ever, hears of police arresting vice squad officers who have abused prostitutes, call girls' corporate bosses, massage parlor and pornography store landlords, hotel owners, or the other men who control and profit from prostitution. These men are virtually free to abuse¹¹⁹ and economically exploit prostitute women.

Societal assumptions about men's sexuality also support men's use of prostitutes. Many people accept men's use of prostitutes as normal sexual behavior. The studies claiming that the prostitute is mentally "sick" outnumber the works claiming that her customer is "sick" by several hundred to one.¹²⁰ Customers are not studied because customers are viewed as normal, promiscuous men. Normal men need sexual service.¹²¹

Not only is customer behavior accepted, but prostitution advocates frequently suggest that men's use of prostitutes should be encouraged as a social means of controlling destructive sexual acts.¹²² In other words, prostitutes protect other women and children from incest, rape, and other sexual abuse by men. Acceptance of customer exploitation of prostitutes, however, not only supports men's exploitation of prostitutes, but reinforces all exploitation of women by men. In particular, acceptance of prostitution reinforces the belief that men have a right to use women's bodies. Prostitution does not protect women and children from incest, rape, and other forms of sexual abuse. To the contrary, prostitution encourages men's exploita-

118. Adler & Simon, *supra* note 6, at 202.

119. Even when Linda "Lovelace" told the police that her pimp-husband was coming after her with a gun, the police replied that they could not "get involved in domestic affairs." Lovelace, *supra* note 20, at 234. Solving a series of atrocious prostitute murders in France never seemed to matter much to authorities even after a group of prostitutes brought the murders to the authorities' attention. Millett, *supra* note 21, at 16.

Authorities often accept men's exploitation and abuse of prostitutes as normal. Barry, *supra* note 9, at 7. Louise Armstrong, through her research on sexual abuse, learned that most people readily believe that prostitutes and other societal "losers" are abused. In fact, because "a woman is a prostitute explains the sexual abuse, rather than the other way around." Armstrong, *supra* note 54, at 233.

120. Goode, *supra* note 6, at 346. Cohen, *supra* note 19, at 171.

121. Dave Moore, WCCO TV, *Legal Lady Legislation* (1977).

122. Thio, *supra* note 18, at 178-79. Dave Moore, WCCO TV, *Legal Lady Legislation* (1977). There is no data that adequately proves the truth or falsity of this contention. Geis, *supra* note 21, at 212.

tion and abuse of all women and girls.¹²³

IV. What Must Be Done

For the good of all women and girls, society's support of prostitutes' victimization must end. Educators, scholars, therapists, lawyers, judges, police, and legislators—groups with power, mostly men—must be educated and pressured so that their power and influence will be used to stop men's wrongs against prostitutes. First, the psychological and physical damage that the customers, pimps, and abusive policemen inflict on prostitutes must be acknowledged. Then these men must be arrested, prosecuted, and sentenced appropriately for their crimes.

While continuing the work of fighting all women's oppression, feminists can directly assist potential and current prostitutes. Teenage runaways, women wanting to leave prostitution, and prostitutes wanting to prosecute physical abusers need outreach and support.¹²⁴ Teenage runaways can be most effectively supported by lobbying for attractive alternatives to being returned to undesirable family situations.¹²⁵ Also necessary are outreach workers to locate runaways at bus depots and train stations before they are located by procurers.¹²⁶

Leaving prostitution seems contingent on having support.¹²⁷ Specially adapted programs, inside or outside of shelters, would support a prostitute's transition to a different life. Women leaving prostitution need food, shelter, emotional support, employment training, employment, medical care, drug treatment, intensive personal counseling, and relationships not based on exploitation and abuse.¹²⁸

To prosecute more abusers, outreach workers first need to conduct investigations to identify abuse. Then outreach work-

123. Geis, *supra* note 21, at 210-11. People seriously concerned about incest, rape, and other abuse of women by men should redirect their advocacy energies to secure the appropriate arrest, prosecution, and sentencing of men who abuse women.

124. Jaget, *supra* note 8, at 200. Barry, *supra* note 9, at 230-33.

125. Barry, *supra* note 9, at 232.

126. *Id.* at 233.

127. Prus & Irini, *supra* note 15, at 49, 65.

128. Barry, *supra* note 9, at 231, 233. For a description of the most comprehensive self-help program for prostitutes in the United States, contact Family and Children Service, 414 South 8th Street, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 55404. PRIDE provides its members with extensive support, including assistance with employment, welfare, the court system, health care, child care, protection from abuse, and emotional support.

ers could collect evidence and provide the support needed for the women to prosecute their abusers. Even with outside support, however, current prostitutes are unlikely to prosecute their abusive customers or pimps because they will also be incriminating themselves. Thus, concerned feminists must work for prostitute immunity from arrest when prostitutes are prosecuting their abusers.¹²⁹

Prostitution is not a victimless crime. Prostitutes are the victims of many men's abuse. The state must intervene in prostitution to assist prostitute women. Most of all, prostitutes need the arrest, prosecution, and punishment of their abusers.

V. Conclusion

He's afraid and confused.
And his brain has been mismanaged with great
skill.
Now all he believes are his eyes,
and his eyes—they just tell him lies.
But there's a woman on my block,
sitting there in a cold chill.
She says who's going to take away his license to
kill.¹³⁰

Destruction—men's destruction of women, women's destruction of women, self-destruction. Compassion—women's compassion for women, men's compassion for men, self-compassion. Compassion for others with compassion for self means certain behaviors are not tolerated. Equality means no exploitation and abuse of another, no more exploitation and abuse of women by men.

Creating a societal scapegoat—saying go ahead, "screw" these women but no others—does not work. These women are "bad." Men's exploitation and abuse of "bad" women is OK. Life does not work this way. Destruction flows out to the rest of life. How do we look our scapegoat in the eye?

Men abuse wives, daughters, strangers, prostitutes. Powerful men exploit most women, leaving women stranded with little means to protect themselves. The truths are ugly. The truths are true.

Destruction—men's destruction of women, women's destruction of women, self-destruction. Compassion—women's compassion for women, women's compassion for men, men's compassion for women, self-compassion. Compassion for

129. Cohen, *supra* note 19, at 157-58.

130. Bob Dylan, *License to Kill, Infidels* (1983) (record album).

others and compassion for self existing together means certain behaviors are not tolerated. Equality means no exploitation and abuse of another, no more exploitation and abuse of women by men.