

# Challenging Men's Demand for Prostitution in Scotland



“Husk” © by Christine Stark

## A Research Report Based on Interviews with 110 Men Who Bought Women in Prostitution

Jan Macleod, Melissa Farley, Lynn Anderson, and Jacqueline Golding

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## Acknowledgments

Thanks to Christine Stark for permission to use her artwork on the front cover. 'Husk' is a man's face over a prostituted woman, from her perspective. Christine Stark is a feminist writer, artist, speaker and activist of American Indian and European ancestry, who has spoken out on issues of rape, race, poverty, homelessness, prostitution and pornography. She is a survivor of incest and of a racist prostitution and pornography ring.

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**Table 1. Punters’\* Comments on Prostitution, Glasgow and Edinburgh, 2006/07**

*“It’s like if you’re very hungry you’re not bothered with where you buy food. So if you want sex are you that bothered with where you get it?”*

*“Prostitution is there because men are looking for it.”*

*“There will never be an end to it because if men are looking for sex then someone is going to provide it.”*

*“Nothing is going to deter me from masturbation and prostitution is an extension of that.”*

*“If a guy wants his hole, go and get it done with, get it out your system.”*

*“Prostitution is just like emptying yer baws”.*

*“They know what they’re there for. You get what you pay for without the ‘no.’”*

*“It depends on if the woman has track marks on her vagina. That’s a real turn off.”*

*“Part of my regret is my lack of certainty that the woman wants to do it.”*

*“I wouldn’t encourage prostitution – it’s someone’s mother or daughter. It’s an empty experience. It sounds enjoyable at the beginning but it’s just horrible, degrading.”*

\* Punter is a word commonly used in Scotland to refer to men who buy women in prostitution.

### **The alternative 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 [telephoned] 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 ... Michelle Tea, 2004

## Background

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Public awareness of prostitution as a human rights issue has grown in recent years, along with an understanding of the harm resulting from sexual exploitation as commercial enterprise. There is also recognition of the need to understand prostitution in its cultural contexts, and the need to understand the social structures and the psychological articulation of misogyny that stimulates and sustains prostitution as a social institution.

The authors of this research report realise that although it is essential to address the urgent mental and physical needs of women and children during prostitution and after their escape, it is also imperative to address men's demand for prostitution which is at the root of the problem. Acceptance of prostitution is one of a cluster of harmful attitudes that encourage and justify violence against women. Violent behaviours against women have been associated with attitudes that promote men's belief that they are entitled to sexual access to women, that they are superior to women, and that they are licensed as sexual aggressors. Men who use women in prostitution strongly endorse such attitudes toward women (Cotton et al., 2002, Farley et al., 1998).

There has been considerable debate in Scotland on how best to address prostitution and other commercial sexual exploitation, including what is euphemistically termed adult entertainment. The Routes Out of Prostitution Partnership and other projects that have challenged prostitution in Glasgow in the past decade have been informed by an understanding of prostitution as commercial sexual exploitation and as a form of violence against women. Prevention of prostitution is a key aim of this work. The findings of this research will contribute to an understanding of and strategies for challenging men's demand for prostitution.

The Women's Support Project (WSP) is a Scottish non-governmental organisation working against male violence. The work of WSP is informed by a feminist analysis of male violence and an understanding of the links and overlaps between different forms of violence, discrimination and oppression. The Women's Support Project aims to raise awareness of the extent and effects of violence against women and children, and to support those affected by violence. The goals of WSP have been educating the community about the links between different forms of male violence and promoting an interagency response to the abuse of women and children.

Prostitution Research & Education (PRE) is a U.S. non-governmental organisation which has researched and documented the harms resulting from prostitution. In 2005 PRE embarked on an international study of men who use women in prostitution aimed at developing culturally relevant programmes to prevent prostitution. This research report on men's demand for prostitution in Scotland is the first of a number of reports that will be produced from other locations where PRE has conducted similar interviews with partner organisations, including India, England, U.S., Spain, and Cambodia.

Funding for this Scottish study was secured from Greater Glasgow & Clyde NHS Health Board, Scottish Government Equality Unit, Community Regeneration Fund (via Routes Out of Prostitution Partnership), and Glasgow City Council. The Women's Support Project contributed resources and staff time, and Prostitution Research & Education contributed funding and staff time.

Melissa Farley of PRE and Jan Macleod of WSP together initiated this research project. The study was managed by WSP, and Lynn Anderson from the Scottish Coalition Against Sexual Exploitation coordinated advertising and interviewing. Melissa Farley provided the

questionnaires, trained interviewers, reviewed the social science literature, and consulted with Lynn Anderson and Jan Macleod throughout the data collection and analysis. Jacqueline Golding oversaw the database and conducted statistical analyses. Interviewers were Lynn Anderson, Janette de Haan, Rachel Durchslag, Melissa Farley, Catherine Harper, Jan Macleod, Georgie McConnell, and Stuart Minnis.

### **Questionnaires, Methods of Recruiting Punters, and Interviewer Challenges during this Research**

The questionnaires used in this research were gradually developed over five years. Experts in sexual violence, including survivors of prostitution, reviewed and contributed to the semi-structured interview questions used here. The questionnaires were designed to advance our knowledge of buyers' perceptions of women generally, and their attitudes toward prostituted women in particular. Standardised and validated questionnaires yielded both quantitative and qualitative data from the interviews. Questionnaires included a 100-item questionnaire that asked about buyers' attitudes toward prostitution, acceptance of rape myths, sexual behaviours and condom use, pornography use, commission of sexually coercive behaviour toward prostitute and non-prostitute partners, likelihood-to-rape, and demographics. A second questionnaire asked 34 questions about hostile masculinity. Permission to use this questionnaire was generously granted to this research project by Dr. Neil Malamuth. Interviewers also used a 64-item structured interview to obtain quantitative and qualitative data which included the men's history of using women in prostitution, what they looked for when they bought sex, their evaluations and perceptions of women in prostitution, pimp-prostitute relationships, first use of women in prostitution, and how they discussed prostitution with their friends, among others.

We used a range of approaches to recruit interviewees. We distributed flyers among taxi drivers and at sauna establishments where prostitution is common. We distributed cards describing the research in Glasgow city centre. We used a snowball recruitment technique, asking employees who might encounter punters at health clinics or university networks to tell other men about the research. These methods resulted in only a few interviews.

The majority of our interviewees responded to newspaper advertising. We received a total of 376 phone calls from men interested in the research, many of whom assumed that we were offering to sell sex. 173 men scheduled interviews and 110 interviews were completed.

Some newspapers were apprehensive about whether or not they were advertising prostitution by publishing the advertisement for this research. For example the Scottish Sun refused to publish our advertisement, stating that the word 'prostitute' might offend their readers.

The interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes. We paid a £20 honorarium to each interviewee in appreciation of his time and transportation costs. While interviews were conducted in Edinburgh and Glasgow, the men did not necessarily live or buy sex in the city where they were interviewed.

The ethical and methodological challenges of studying men who commit violence against women are daunting (Miller, 1997). Those of us who research sexual violence also confront it in

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the course of studying it (Stanko, 1997). The interviewers in this project were women and men who are dedicated to ending violence against women, yet in order to conduct the qualitative portion of this research, it was necessary for interviewers to establish a nonjudgmental and friendly rapport with men who were often deeply misogynist and sometimes overtly violent. Many interviewers felt the cruelty of the men's sexism not only against the women bought by the men but against ourselves as well. The men's sexism ranged from their stated assumptions that all interviewees were prostitutes to solicitation to the sadistic detailing of brutal racist and misogynist violence. This was occasionally the stuff of nightmares, as in the case of the man who described his experience of "knocking back" children in Cambodian prostitution. Other researchers have described sexual harassment during the process of researching men's attitudes toward sexual violence (Mattley, 1997, Huff, 1997).

No interviewer was untouched by the men's attitudes toward women. The interviewers reported feeling skeptical about the men's professed ignorance about prostituted women's feelings and sexuality, angry at the men's cruelty to women, fearful about the possibility of being stalked by interviewees, physically revolted, had flashbacks to their own previous experiences of sexual violence, questioned some aspects of their own relationships with the men in their lives, and at times felt the inclination to dissociate or to drink alcohol in order to numb painful emotional reactions to the interviews.

Reflecting the feelings of several other interviewers, one researcher described some of her emotions during and after the research interviews:

Several people have said to me that they don't know how I could have managed to interview these men; how I could stand it and that they don't think they could have done that. People say this to me with respect, like they admire me for being able to have done this work. I don't feel it is something to admire and it sometimes concerns me that I could do it. What does that say about me? How did I manage to interview so many men and not lose my temper, not react angrily or indignantly with them? It is a comfort to me that I do feel anger now, and did after the interviews. It is a comfort to me that some of the things they said, hurt me. This reassures me that I'm not some sort of hard-hearted individual who is at ease with hearing about the abuse of women.

## Demographic Findings

### Age

The average age of the 110 men we interviewed was 37, ranging from age 18 to 77 years of age.

47% of our interviewees were between the ages of 18 and 35 years. A third were between 26 and 35 years. 41% were aged 36 to 49 years. Only 13% were older than 50 years of age.

**Table 2. Ages of 110 Men Who Bought Sex in Scotland**

18–25 years	15%
26–35 years	32%
36–49 years	41%
Over 50 years	13%

These age ranges are consistent with three other studies of punters. McKeganey (1994) interviewed 70 men in Glasgow, whose average age was also 37 years, ranging from age 23 to 61. Simpson and Schill (1977) interviewed 183 U.S. men who used women in massage brothels and found a mean age of 35, ranging from 18 to 67 years. Busch, Bell and colleagues (2002) interviewed 1342 punters arrested for solicitation of prostitution in the Western United States whose average age was 39, ranging from 18 to 84 years.

### Ethnic Identity

77% of the men we interviewed described themselves as White Scottish; 4% were African; 2% were Asian Scottish; 1% Caribbean; 1% mixed ethnic background, and 16% were members of other ethnic groups including Australian, Burmese, English, Irish, New Zealander, and South African.

### Sexual Orientation

89% of our 110 interviewees identified themselves as heterosexual and 11% identified as bisexual.

### Family Income

52% reported a family income of £20,000 or less.  
 19% reported a family income of £20,000–£30,000  
 17% reported a family income of £30,000–£40,000  
 9% reported a family income of £40,000–70,000  
 3% reported a family income of more than £70,000

### Father's Educational Level

35% no qualifications  
 25% completed Ordinary Grade or equivalent  
 12% completed Higher Grade or equivalent  
 10% attained HNC/HND or equivalent  
 19% college or university degree or postgraduate qualifications

### Mother's Educational Level

41% no qualifications  
 22% completed Ordinary Grade or equivalent  
 14% completed Higher Grade or equivalent  
 8% attained HNC/HND of equivalent  
 15% college or university degree or postgraduate qualifications

**Political Orientation (self-described)**

4% Far Right

13% Right

51% Middle of the Road

32% Left

**Total Number of Sex Partners**

48% of the men told us that they were currently in a relationship with a wife or girlfriend or other partner. Two-thirds (66%) of the men we interviewed told us that they had more than 16 sex partners in their lifetimes.

Similarly, McKeganey (1994) found that 66% of his Glasgow punters were married or living with a partner; Chetwynd (1994) found that 50% were married or partnered, and Simpson and Schill (1977) found that 50% of punters were married.

Based on our and others' findings it is noteworthy that men's decision to buy women for sex is not because of their lack of a sex partner. In fact, in one study the opposite was the case. Johnson, Wadsworth, Wellings et al. (1994) reported that the more sex partners a man has ever had, the more likely he is to have paid for sex. Ward, Mercer, Wellings and colleagues (2005) in UK found that men who paid for sex were significantly likely to report 10 or more sex partners in the past 5 years. Only a minority of these men's lifetime sex partners (19%) were women in prostitution.

## Punters' Prostitution History

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### Age when first bought sex

The age range for these men's first use of women in prostitution was 14 to 49 years of age, with 37% of the men first buying sex between ages 18 and 20.

52% of the men bought women in prostitution before they were 21 years of age, and 74% bought sex by the time they were 25 years of age.

Along these lines, research data from Glasgow's Sandyford Clinic indicated that if a man had not paid for sex by the age of 25 he was less likely to do so in the future (Groom and Nandwani, 2006).

### Circumstances of first buying sex

We asked the men about the social circumstances of their use of women in prostitution.

55% of the men were alone when they first bought sex, 41% were with a friend or friends, and 3% were accompanied by a family member.

17% of the punters we interviewed told us that prostitution was their first sexual experience. Explaining this, one man said

*"It's uncomplicated, it's a good way to have your first sex."*

Unfortunately, the sex that men learn in prostitution – disconnected and unemotional – is the opposite of the sex that most women are interested in when they are in relationships with men.

Interviewees spoke about intense pressure from other men to use prostitutes.

*"There was pressure to go along with the guys. It was a common experience for young guys, for their 16th or 18th birthday."*

One of our interviewees said that he visited the Amsterdam legal prostitution zone with his friends as a "rite of passage". One of this young man's friends chose not to buy sex and as a result was harassed and teased by the rest of the group.

*"There was an atmosphere of all the lads egging each other on,"* another man told us. *"One in particular was a virgin and seemed like he didn't want to do it but all the guys pushed him into it and he did it."*

Another man described how a group of his friends took him on a London pub-crawl to celebrate his eighteenth birthday. When they arrived at a club that functioned as a brothel, his friends "shoved" him in the door where he discovered that they had paid in advance for him to use a prostitute. Unable to publicly – or privately – refuse prostitution, he proceeded to sexually exploit the young woman via prostitution, but told the interviewer

*"I've always wished I hadn't and just pretended to my friends that I'd done it."*

These examples suggest that young men would benefit from education and support for resisting peer pressure to use women in prostitution. Educational programs about the harms of drug use similarly teach youth how to reject offers of drugs. Prostitution prevention programmes aimed at counteracting the intense peer pressure to buy women in prostitution will be a critical component of future curricula. The goal of prostitution prevention programmes is to shift cultural attitudes about prostitution so that there is a cultural taboo against men who buy sex, and cultural respect for men who make the choice not to buy sex.

Prostitution is widely advertised and mainstreamed on the Internet, in newspapers, and street advertising. The hypocrisy of advertising any form of sexual exploitation must be addressed. To date most educational programs have focused exclusively on street prostitution. In order to effectively prevent prostitution, the prevention efforts must focus on the young man's harm-generating behaviour in prostitution itself rather than the location where he performs prostitution, which is often indoors. 80% of these punters had purchased sex in indoor locations. See below.

McKeganey (1994) noted that Glasgow men's prostitution use was largely secretive and solitary. Monto (2000) found that friends or family had arranged the first purchase of a prostitute for 27% of men in the U.S., whereas 31% of the men engaged in prostitution for the first time without the knowledge of their family or friends. At this time, it is not clear whether there are differences between men who first purchase sex as a social activity with a group of friends and those who first use a prostitute by themselves.

### Recent experiences of buying sex

74% of our interviewees bought women in prostitution in the year before we interviewed them.

### Awareness of Pimping

28% of our interviewees in Scotland reported that they had used a woman in prostitution whom they knew was under control of a pimp. 42% said that they had observed a prostituted woman who had a pimp and 20% had talked to a pimp or had friends who had done so. In general the buyers we interviewed had a difficult time acknowledging the extent of the violence that exists in prostitution. 50% of them stated that prostitutes are victimised by pimps, whereas the other half disagreed with that statement.

### Locations Where Men Purchased Sex in Scotland

Most of the men we interviewed bought sex in more than one location. 56% bought sex outdoors and 80% bought sex indoors

The Scottish interviewees bought sex indoors in a brothel or a private flat that functioned as a brothel (61%), a massage parlour (52%), a sauna (44%), or a lap dance club (31%). Other locations where men bought sex were bars (28%), escort agencies (16%), and private clubs/hotels (9%).

**Table 3. Indoor Locations Where 110 Punters in Scotland Purchased Sex**

<i>Type of Indoor Location</i>	<i>Percentage (number) of men</i>
Massage	52% (58)
Sauna	44% (49)
Brothel	42% (47)
Lap dance Club	31% (35)
Bar	28% (31)
Private flat belonging to prostitute or pimp	19% (21)
Escort Agency	16% (18)
Private parties, hotels, nightclubs	9% (10)

93% of the men interviewed in Edinburgh bought sex indoors compared to 74% of the men interviewed in Glasgow, a statistically significant difference (chi square (1, 109) = 5.62,  $p = 0.02$ ). 67% of the Glasgow men bought sex outdoors compared to 38% of the Edinburgh men. These differences between men in the two cities were statistically significant (chi square (1, 110) = 9.09,  $p = 0.003$ ).

Punters' choices to use women in indoor as opposed to outdoor prostitution may reflect the two cities' differing approaches to prostitution. Indoor prostitution has been tolerated in Edinburgh, whereas Glasgow City has employed a strong anti-prostitution approach since 1998.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, several of our interviewees assumed that indoor prostitution was licensed in Edinburgh, which may be a reflection of Edinburgh's policy of managing rather than challenging prostitution.

34% of the Edinburgh men who bought sex indoors reported that they located prostitutes in a lap-dancing club. Significantly fewer (13%) of the Glasgow men located prostitutes in lap dancing clubs (chi square (1, N=88) = 5.53, p = 0.02). Edinburgh currently has seven lap dance clubs whereas Glasgow has four (Scottish Executive, 2006). Although Glasgow City Council considers lap dancing to be a form of sexual exploitation, current licensing legislation does not prohibit it.

### **Buying Sex in the Armed Forces**

20% of the men we interviewed had been in the Armed Forces and half of those bought a woman in prostitution during their time in military service.

Respondents told us that their superior officers were aware of the use of prostitutes by men under their command. In some instances, prostituted women were bought and offered to soldiers as a reward by commanding officers.

*"The girl was a present from the Sergeant, a thank you: 'I've brought you some girls.' In Belfast it was organised through the Sergeant. We'd ask him and he would set it up. It was nothing, a necessary part of working life. In Edinburgh – I've seen squaddies sneaking prostitutes out in the morning."*

Another man said, *"Superiors in the Navy were aware of this and they do it as well. It's just a known thing, it's just a recognised thing in the Navy, everyone on the ship does it."*

*"In Germany we went to the Reiperbahn in Hamburg. When we were on leave we used the girls there. We went out as a group and had beers ... It was the norm among the guys. About 90% of the guys would go ... We were advised in the military to avoid the street prostitutes, to use the indoors prostitutes. We were advised that cheaper prostitutes would be less careful and quite often had unprotected sex."*

A man talked about information sharing in the Merchant Navy.

*"In Singapore there's a four-story building where it's just all women. I found out about this from another boy on the ship. I never went alone, was always with a group of boys. In each country, you're only there for a short time so you go and have a couple of drinks and use a prostitute."*

Another man who had been in the Territorial Army described how he took a friend to buy sex in Glasgow because the friend was *"getting slagged for being a virgin, slagged by others in the TA."*

### **Buying Sex Outside of Scotland**

The men we interviewed described their purchase of sex in legal and illegal locations, both in the UK and in other countries. 56% of the 110 men we interviewed had bought sex outside of the UK, having traveled to 40 different countries on 6 continents.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 4. Countries Outside Scotland Where 110 Punters Purchased Sex**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Number of times noted</i>	<i>Cities/regions specified</i>
Netherlands	35	Amsterdam
Germany	18	Hamburg, Berlin, Frankfurt
Spain	11	Barcelona, Canaries, Ibiza, Tenerife
France	9	Paris
USA	8	Atlantic City, Daytona Beach, New York, Orlando
Thailand	7	
Belgium	6	
Ireland	3	Dublin, Belfast
Brazil	3	Rio de Janeiro
Czech Republic	3	Prague
Australia	2	
China	2	Hong Kong
Cuba	2	Havana
Mexico	2	
New Zealand	2	
Russia	2	St Petersburg

The punters we interviewed also bought women for sex in Austria, Cambodia, Canada, Croatia (Dubrovnik), Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia (Tallinn), Georgia (Tbilisi), Gibraltar, Greece (Crete), Italy, Kenya, Laos, Latvia, Morocco, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Singapore, Slovakia, Sweden, and Turkey (Marmaris).

A number of these men were employed outside of Scotland at the time they bought women for sex in other countries. A punter disclosed, *“I was just working there and took advantage of the situation.”*

Interviewees spoke about how the ‘group mentality’ influenced their decision to buy sex in other countries. Men used women in prostitution when they were traveling with their mates on holiday or when they were going to a sports event in another country. One man who traveled to Amsterdam with friends said,

*“I had been to Amsterdam before and walked around but didn’t do anything but this time I was confident that the others I was with wouldn’t hold it against me, there was no stigma”.*

*“I was with a group of pals. We’d been talking about it for years, I think all blokes do. 8 of us specifically went to get the puff and prostitutes... It was a rite of passage. We went to prostitutes three times a day. We were like pigs in shit...”*

One punter mentioned that he had taken Viagra before visiting a brothel, because *“I wanted to do (my football team) proud.”*

Another said, *“It was a celebration – our team won – and we thought let’s go and get laid.”*

Another man described his purchase of Internet holiday packages which included prostitution. These excursions, he told us,

*“give you a choice of women when you go there. I paid by credit card, it was all organised. There were other men there. Group sex was available and I took part in this.”*

A UK study compared punters in 1990 to a second sample in 2000. The latter group of men was significantly more likely to use women in prostitution in other countries. They were also more likely to report having contracted sexually transmitted infections (Ward, Mercer, & Wellings,

2005). Certain cities such as Amsterdam and Prague are specifically marketed as destinations for ‘stag nights’ and other prostitution tourism. In New Zealand, Chetwynd (1994) reported that 40% of a group of 30 men had traveled to another country to buy sex.

One man we interviewed remarked that in some countries the nationality of the women was “varied,” observing that “*some women were desperate for money,*” especially Eastern European and Russian women. He observed that when he was in Cyprus all of the prostituted women appeared to be Russian.

Another man was filmed while in a Czech Republic brothel. The film was broadcast on the Internet. He naively assured the interviewer that none of his acquaintances – especially his mother – would ever see it.

Another punter was a frequent prostitution tourist in Asia. He detailed the harsh conditions women were subject to in Thai and Cambodian prostitution. Exposing his narcissism and his sadism, he rationalised the commission of sexual violence against women and children.

*“I don’t get pleasure from other people’s suffering. I struggle with it but I can’t deny my own pleasures. In Cambodia I knocked back a lot of children; it makes it hard to sleep at night. But I don’t see the point in making a moral stance.”*

We conducted statistical analyses of the psychological measures that had been administered to these 110 punters in Scotland. Next we describe the results of these analyses which suggest that punters hold attitudes on a continuum from mildly to strongly misogynist. These negative attitudes toward women are associated with sexually coercive behaviours against not only prostituted women but against other women in punters’ lives.

### **Rape Myth Acceptance, Frequency of Use of Women in Prostitution and Use of Sexually Coercive Behaviours Against Non-prostituting Women**

Rape myths are a part of culturally supported attitudes that normalise rape (Lonsway and Fitzgerald, 1994). Rape myths include “women say no but they mean yes,” and “rape accusations are women’s way of getting even with men.” Rape myths have been theoretically and empirically linked to other attitudes regarding sex roles and also to coercive interpersonal behaviour (Burt, 1980; Field, 1978; Malamuth, Sockloskie, Koss, & Tanaka, 1991).

One-fourth to one-third of the men we interviewed endorsed rape-tolerant attitudes. A third of the punters stated that rape happens because men get sexually carried away (32%) or their sex drive gets “out of control” (34%). 12% told us that the rape of a prostitute or call girl was not possible. 10% asserted that the concept of rape simply does not apply to women in prostitution.

22% of our interviewees explained that once he pays for it, the customer is entitled to do whatever he wants to the woman he buys. These attitudes are what make prostitution so dangerous for the women. One of the men we interviewed stated, “*They’ll basically do anything for money.*” The belief that the money they paid cancelled out the harm or exonerated the punter was a recurring theme in our interviews.

### **Hostile Masculinity**

We asked interviewees about the extent to which their identity as men was based on valuing psychological and sexual dominance and about their suspiciousness and resentment toward women. Taken together, these constructs constitute what Malamuth described as hostile masculinity. We also asked respondents 46 questions about acceptance of and justification for prostitution (Farley, Becker, Cotton, Sawyer, Fitzgerald, & Jensen, 1998). We found that the



men who were most accepting of prostitution were those who most strongly identified with hostile masculinity. The association between acceptance of prostitution and hostile masculinity was statistically significant ( $r = .205$ ,  $p = .037$ ).

The punters with the highest scores on the hostile masculinity scale also tended to be those who most strongly endorsed rape myths ( $r = .668$ ,  $p = .0001$ ).<sup>3</sup>

## Effects of Prostitution on Punters' Relationships with Non-prostituting Women

Prostitution affects not only how men think about women, it also influences their actual behaviour toward women, including sexual aggression against non-prostituting women.

We used a scale developed by Koss and Oros (1982) that assessed sexually coercive behaviours such as verbally or physically threatening a partner or using physical force in order to obtain sexual intercourse. 54% of the men who frequently used women in prostitution had committed sexually aggressive acts against non-prostitute partners compared to 30% of the less frequent users. The more frequently a punter used women in prostitution, the more likely he was to have committed sexually coercive acts against non-prostituting women (chi-square 1, 109) = 4.701,  $p = .030$ ).

10% of the men we interviewed stated that they would rape a woman if they could be assured that they would not be caught. Acknowledging their sexually coercive behaviours with non-prostitute women, 12% told us that they had had sex with a woman partner after they had continually verbally pressured her into sex. 43% had pressured women into having sex by lying to them.

In similar findings, Monto and McRee (2005) compared 1672 U.S. men who had been arrested for using women in prostitution with U.S. men who had not used women in prostitution. In the national samples, men who were either first time or repeat users of women in prostitution were significantly more likely to have raped a woman than non-punters.

Busch, Bell and colleagues (2002) found that among punters who had been arrested for soliciting prostitution in the U.S., a subgroup of these men told the researchers that they had previously committed violence in order to obtain sex from a non-prostituting woman. These particular punters were the same men who had many sex partners (both prostituting and non-prostituting women) in the previous year. They also tended to have used a large number of women in prostitution in the past year, to regularly watch video pornography, to have served in the military, and to have themselves been physically or sexually abused as children.

Other effects of frequent use of women in prostitution on men's relationships with their non-prostitute partners have been noted. An Israeli advocate on behalf of women escaping prostitution said, "Israeli men have simply grown used to the idea that women can be bought. Both married and single men no longer want to work at relationships. For them it is easier to purchase sex when they want it" (Malarek, 2003).

Some of the men we interviewed acknowledged that prostitution could have an adverse effect on their relationships with non-prostituting women.

*"Prostitution could have a bad effect if men treat others like they treat prostitutes. It could break up marriages."*

*"Most of the men who go, see it as a business transaction and don't see the girl as a woman. This could impact on how a man sees women in general."*

*“Men think if they can buy a prostitute and treat her as an object, they can do the same with other women.”*

*“Some men in general look down on women. This is a byproduct of prostitution. I’m generalising but I think it’s the cause.”*

*“Some people think all women are prostitutes. It keeps women in a subservient role and keeps them as victims to male sexuality. It shouldn’t be like this.”*

*“Having a hidden life interferes with relationships, it’s disloyalty for a start.”*

Nonetheless some men rationalised their use of women in prostitution by stating that prostitution could save marriages or improve relationships. For example,

*“I think it would help a couple if they weren’t happy and the husband was going with a prostitute now and then – may help cement the relationship. If the wife doesn’t know, it might make him happy.”*

With a convoluted logic, one of our interviewees argued, *“Husbands may feel that they are in a dead end marriage, with the wife not giving them what they want. Maybe the wife is at home with the kids, working all day and she doesn’t feel up to being affectionate toward her husband. Men can go to a prostitute then still go home to their wife and family.”*

Some men justified prostitution as a means of improving their sexual performance.

46% told us that going to a prostitute made a man a better lover. The opposite is likely the case. Women in prostitution train men to ejaculate quickly in order to decrease the men’s traumatic intrusion into their bodies.

### **Pornography Use Associated with Use of Women in Prostitution**

We found a statistically significant association between these punters’ pornography use and the frequency of their use of women in prostitution. We compared men who were high frequency users of prostitutes (once a month or more) to those who were low frequency users (once or twice, ever) with respect to their use of print, video, and Internet pornography. Those who were most frequent users of pornography were also the most frequent users of women in prostitution ( $r = .26, p = .006$ ). One interpretation of this finding is that more frequent use of pornography supports and stimulates men in their use of women in prostitution. It is also possible that men who are infrequent pornography users may be less likely to use women in prostitution.

Monto and McRee (2005) compared the pornography use of 1672 U.S. men who had been arrested for soliciting women in prostitution with samples of U.S. men who had not used women in prostitution. Men who had used women in prostitution were far more likely than non-punters to use pornography on a regular basis. In a statistically significant linear relationship, Monto and McRee found that men who were repeat users of women in prostitution were more likely than first time users of prostituted women to use pornography, and that first time users of women in prostitution were more likely than non-punters to have used pornography.

### **Lack of Emotional Connection and Lack of Empathy for Women in Prostitution**

Punters search for the *appearance* of a relationship but one with no obligation or commitment. While punters interviewed in New Zealand described their contact with prostitutes as a relationship, they also explained that “the payment of money for sex entitled them to freedom from the requirements normally associated with relationships” (Plumridge et al, 1997b).

Punters felt that the women had no right to make any demands on them. “Money displaces the emotions. It frees you from that bond, that responsibility,” explained a man who was interviewed after buying sex in the UK. “The distance you get from exchanging cash for sex means that afterwards you don’t contemplate the impact on the prostitute” (Spurrell, 2006).

Only 16% of the men we interviewed in Glasgow and Edinburgh told us that they had any kind of an emotional relationship with the women they bought in prostitution. Ronald Levant (1997) has discussed men’s frequent preference for what he calls non-relational sexuality – the paradigmatic sex of prostitution. Using women in prostitution reinforces men’s tendency to relate to women in a detached and unemotional way. Sven-Axel Mansson (2001) described the ways in which mass-media representations of commodified sexual relationships affect young men’s thinking about women in prostitution and women, generally.

The punter’s fantasy is the hassle-free girlfriend who makes no demands on him but is prepared to satisfy his sexual needs. He may pretend emotional intimacy but the relationship with a prostitute always stops short of emotional mutuality or commitment. One punter described prostitution as

*“being able to go and have a temporary relationship and just leave after it with no other repercussions. Sometimes feel like I’m not paying for the sex but for not having to do the other stuff e.g. buy presents, go out on dates, go on holidays, or to go out to work. I’m paying for anonymity.”*

If the men construct an imaginary pleasant emotional relationship with the woman they are buying they can then retain their opinion of themselves as nice guys rather than having to redefine themselves as punters. “I wanted to be different from all the scum suckers,” said one man interviewed by Blanchard (1994). It was important to these men to see themselves as a “nice punter” rather than an unpleasant or violent one. Some men declared that they themselves were “nice” punters, but that others were not,

*“I’m respectable but you get seedy bastards that aren’t safe.”*

An Edinburgh punter we interviewed described prostitution itself as simply an extension of his masturbation. McKeganey (1994) noted that the men seemed to appreciate the ability to “do anything” with a prostitute. By paying for sex, the Glasgow men interviewed by McKeganey seemed to “place their own desires at centre stage and to largely disregard the sexual preferences of their female partner.” One man interviewed by McKeganey said, “... it’s like going in to have your car done you tell them what you want done – they don’t ask, you tell them I want so and so done ...” As one of the punters we interviewed explained,

*“You are the boss and get what you want.”*

Based on interviews with New Zealand men who buy women in prostitution, Plumridge (1997), like Jeffreys in Australia (1997), understood that men *manufacture the idea of what a prostitute thinks and feels*, ascribing reactions and desires to her in a way that is sexually arousing to the punter, but which may have little basis in reality. In fact, Plumridge’s interviewees were observed to “cheerfully reject information that contradicted” their idea of what prostitution was like for the prostitute (Plumridge, 1997).

We obtained evidence regarding these punters’ construction of the prostitute’s emotional reality. We asked them to tell us how they felt during a session with a prostitute. We also asked them to report to us what they assumed the prostitute herself felt. The punters declared that the prostitute was having positive feelings during their sessions 45% of the time. In a separate study of women in prostitution Kramer (2003) asked the same question. Only 9% of the women in

Kramer's study indicated that they had any positive feelings at all during prostitution. Our punters opined that the woman was having negative feelings during prostitution 44% of the time while according to Kramer's interviews of the women themselves, 77% of the time they experienced a negative emotional state. See Table 5. These findings suggest a lack of accurate empathy on the part of the punter, an emotional callousness toward the women they buy, or indifference with respect to her feelings.

**Table 5. Punters' Attribution of Feelings to Women During Prostitution Compared to Women's Description of Their Actual Feelings (from Kramer, 2003)**

	<i>Positive Feeling Words</i>	<i>Negative Feeling Words</i>	<i>Neutral Words</i>
Scottish Punters (Current study)	45% (132)	44% (127)	11% (33)
Women in Prostitution (Kramer, 2003)	9% (41)	77% (127)	14% (64)

We also compared the men's reports of their own feelings before and after prostitution. They reported equal numbers of negative and positive feelings before and after buying sex. Slightly more than half (57–58%) of the men described positive emotions before and after purchased sex, while 40–41% listed distinctly negative emotions before and after.

Many of our interviewees' positive feelings were sexual in nature: aroused, excited, or horny. These sexually positive words comprised 51% of all positive words the men used to describe their feelings before the purchase of sex and 25% of all positive words after the purchase of sex.

Before purchasing sex, other positive words (in addition to the 51% sexually positive words) used by the men included happy, interested, anticipation, adventurous, and relaxed. Frequently used negative words the men used to describe their feelings before purchasing sex were nervous, apprehensive, lonely, guilty, and frustrated.

After the purchase of sex, the men we interviewed reported that they experienced positive emotions 57% of the time and that they experienced negative emotions 41% of the time. 25% of the positive words referred to sexual relief or satiation. Other positive words included happy, at-ease, and comfortable. 41% of the words used by these men to describe how they felt after purchasing sex were negative emotional descriptors, such as regretful, disappointed, dirty, or guilty. See Table 6.

**Table 6. Punters' Descriptions of Their Own Feelings Before and After Purchasing Sex**

	<i>Positive Words</i>	<i>Negative Words</i>	<i>Neutral Words</i>	<i>Total Words</i>
Before Buying Sex	58% (232)	40% (159)	3% (12)	100% (403)
After Buying Sex	57% (229)	41% (165)	2% (9)	100% (403)

Several men commented on their ambivalence about purchased sex, saying that while they forged ahead and bought women in prostitution, they put it out of their minds afterwards. Many described their own feelings of emptiness after prostitution. 41% of the men we interviewed told us that they felt no guilt or shame about using prostitutes, but 59% of the punters reported feeling some degree of guilt or shame, with 25% of our interviewees expressing significant guilt and shame about their prostitute use.

## Punters' Justifications and Rationalisations for Prostitution

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Public misconceptions about prostitution originate in punters' rationalisations for the objectification, degradation, and violence that they perpetrate against women in prostitution. Just as pedophiles justify sexual assaults of children and batterers justify beatings of women, men who use prostitutes develop elaborate cognitive schemes to justify their purchase and use of women.

Men's justifications for physical violence against women are remarkably similar to their justifications for prostitution. Batterers justify beating women by telling us that she asked for it. Punters justify prostitution by telling us that she's getting rich or that she's simply doing an unpleasant but necessary job like a factory worker. Batterers justify the battering of women simply on the basis that they are men (Mullaney, 2007). Similarly invoking male supremacy, punters also justify prostitution simply on the basis that they are men. Prostitution like battering is embraced by punters as an institution that functions to restore their domination of women.

Like women who are blamed for provoking men into beating them, women who fail to provide the sex acts demanded by their partners are blamed for their partners' turning to prostitution. In the following section, we describe in detail some of the justifications for prostitution offered by Scottish punters. Unfortunately many of these men's justifications for the purchase and use of human beings for sex have until now been unquestioningly accepted by the public.

### Justification for Prostitution on the Basis of Men's Asserted Need for Constant Access to Sex and the Assumption of the Inevitability of Prostitution

Approximately a third of the punters justified prostitution simply as a way for men to satisfy their sexual desires. This is the most commonly offered justification for prostitution. For them, prostitution is a place where men have

*"freedom to do anything they want in a consequence-free environment."*

The men we interviewed did not question the notion that men have the absolute right to have their sexual needs met whenever and wherever they want. For example,

*"Prostitution is there to sate men's lust."*

Men's sex drive itself was considered inevitable and undeterrable by the punters we interviewed.

*"We would need to become like sea horses, hermaphrodites, become one sex, that's the only way to stop prostitution."*

Many of our interviewees considered men's demand for prostitution as inevitable and unchangeable and as having a rightful place in society.

*"There will always be supply and demand. If everyone was rich how would you get a cleaner for the hotel toilet?"*

*"There's a market. Women will always be drawn into prostitution if there's a demand."*

*"It's human nature."*

*"It's part of society."*

*“It’s there since beginning of time.”*

This view of prostitution as inevitable permitted some interviewees to justify men’s abuse of women by reasoning it was due to prostitution’s existence as opposed to taking responsibility for its continuation.

*“I think there will always be guys that go to prostitutes ... something in the paper about guys that have steak at home, still go out for burgers – because they can, it was there.”*

*“If it’s going to be there people are still going to use it.”*

The Scottish men’s views regarding the primacy of men’s sexual urges were consistent with other research. For example, 79% of a sample of 60 Australian men who bought sex explained that they had a “strong sex drive” (Xantidis et al, 2000). Swedish researcher Mansson (2001) suggested that as a result of the so-called sexual revolution, men’s sexual ‘needs’ have become even more taken for granted, and men have been strengthened in their conviction that they are entitled to unlimited sexual access to women.

### **Justification for Prostitution as Opportunity to Dominate Women**

The structured interviews were a rich source of information about men’s understanding of prostitution. Several men emphasised the pleasure of establishing dominance over women in prostitution.

*“In order to really enjoy prostitution you need to know how to control them.”*

*“Prostitution’s exciting to the extent you know you’ve got control.”*

*“You need to know how to manipulate and control them – which is easy with street prostitutes – you dangle drink and drugs in front of them.”*

A number of our interviewees chatted candidly about how prostitution enabled them to control women.

*“It’s a power thing really – being able to get a woman to give you sexual services by handing over money”*

*“Everyone recognises the objectification as part of the business exchange of prostitution.”*

*“There is a section of male society that view women in prostitution as property or view women as cheap.”*

*“Women are becoming more domineering in the workplace and I think a lot of guys like to have power over women. They use prostitutes and talk bad about them, exercising their power.”*

### **Prostitution as Choice versus Prostitution as Coerced**

Almost all (96%) of the punters interviewed in this research stated that to a significant extent (50% or more of the time) prostitution was a consenting act between two adults. 93% agreed with the rationalisation for prostitution that women have the “right” to sell sex, transforming the intrinsically harmful institution of prostitution into a positive human right for prostitutes. In real life however, prostituting women are clear that they prefer the “right” to escape prostitution (Farley et al., 2003).

While on the one hand asserting that prostitution was a choice for the women in it, the punters simultaneously held diametrically opposing attitudes about prostitution; 73% observed that

women prostitute strictly out of economic necessity and 85% acknowledged that women did not enjoy the sex of prostitution.

In another contradiction, 71% of our interviewees stated that prostitution should be treated like any other business. At the same time 42% believed that prostitution lowers the moral standards of the community. Throughout our interviews with these men, we noted many such dramatic inconsistencies in their thinking. These contradictions are important because they may be points of entry for future prostitution prevention programmes.

The 110 punters in Scotland were deeply conflicted regarding whether or not prostitution was a choice. The following quotes highlight these contradictions. Many were committed to the falsehood that prostitution is a job choice for women in prostitution.

*“They’re just doing a job. It’s not a hard job – they enjoy it, they make money.”*

*“They made the jump to do it overtly. They say to themselves: I’m going to choose that for a job.”*

*“It’s a service they provide – for example a joiner can use his hands to produce something with wood, that’s a service. If a woman can use part of her body, that’s a service, too.”*

Some men explained that they used women in prostitution because the prostitutes themselves chose it. For example

*“They choose to have people pay for sex with them; most women don’t.”*

Similar findings come from other research studies where men who buy sex also declared that the purchase of sex – a commercial enterprise – was a mutually beneficial, mutually enjoyable experience (Plumridge 1997b). One of our interviewees constructed mutuality in the prostitution transaction as follows.

*“It has to do with desire – the male’s in the main – and the female’s business acumen.”*

### **Prostitution Justified because Punters Declare that Prostitutes are Qualitatively Different From Other Women**

The punters interviewed by our research team attributed personal characteristics to prostitutes that enabled the punters to justify prostitution. For example some men described women in prostitution as “free-spirited” or as people who were comfortable having lots of sex. One man ominously proposed that prostitutes are fatally flawed and somehow “morally different” from other women. Another suggested that women in prostitution are more materialistic than other women, a typical victim-blaming maneuver. Employing a classic and brutally judgmental double standard that divided “good” and “bad” women, one punter said,

*“If you found out your girlfriend was an ex-prostitute that would be bad.”*

In order to justify prostitution, punters declare that prostitutes like the sex of prostitution and that they are more sexually liberated than other women.

*“Prostitutes are more open and honest about their aims and objectives. They are probably very comfy with their bodies.”*

28% of our interviewees stated that prostitutes enjoy prostitution, but 85% at the same time told us that prostitutes do *not* enter prostitution because they like sex.

Against common sense, the punters we interviewed insisted that the women they bought for sex were sexually satisfied by the punters’ sexual performances. Half (49%) of the men deluded

themselves that the prostitutes they purchased were sexually satisfied 50%–100% of the time. In fact, nothing could be farther from the truth.

Despite the fact that the sex of prostitution has been described as “paid rape” by survivors, other researchers have also found that punters insist that women enjoy the sex of prostitution. Most of Plumridge’s New Zealand interviewees (1997a) believed that the women enjoyed prostitution and were not faking sexual pleasure. This opinion was deeply rooted and entrenched. With prostituted women themselves interviewing punters, Plumridge (1997b) noted that men retain their conviction that women enjoy the sex of prostitution even when confronted by contradictory evidence, such as a woman telling the punter, “No, I did not enjoy that.”

The experience of having to acquiesce to unwanted sex in order to survive economically results in psychological damage. This fact has been established via many studies that document depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorders, dissociative disorders, and bipolar disorder in women in prostitution. (McKeganey, 2006, Routes Out of Prostitution Intervention Team, 2004, Farley et al., 2003) Articulating the appearance of choice but with underlying coercion, women have described prostitution as “paid rape” and “volunteer slavery.” These conditions exist in prostitution regardless of its legal status or its location on the street, in a massage brothel, in a lap dance club, a flat, or in a business class hotel. In order to endure the unwanted sex, women dissociate either by emotionally distancing themselves from the reality of prostitution or by use of drugs and alcohol.

Having carefully observed the women’s dissociative symptoms, several punters told us that they believed that the capacity to detach or “switch off,” differentiated prostitutes from other women.

*“It has negative effects therefore you pigeon hole your whole life – separate it from work life. They put what they do to the back of their mind – they couldn’t exist otherwise as a prostitute 24 hours a day”*

*“She’ll end up drinking and doing drugs just to get all those things out her head. Circumstances are forcing her to do it.”*

None of these men described the women’s dissociation as symptomatic evidence of prostitution’s harm although dissociation is a psychological defense commonly used by people who are suffering from unbearable and inescapable stress.

Men who buy sex are not the only members of the community who fail to acknowledge the psychological damage from prostitution. Over the years, the Women’s Support Project has offered trainings and public education about prostitution. We have learned that although people can grasp that there are many physical health risks inherent to prostitution, most have not considered the adverse psychological impact of the unwanted and rape like sex of prostitution. Increasing the public’s awareness regarding the lasting psychological damage of unwanted sex is an important component of any prostitution prevention programme.<sup>4</sup>



## Prostitution Justified as Rape Prevention (“Catharsis Theory”)

Several of the punters explained that if men’s sexual needs were not met then rape was inevitable. They reasoned that if prostitution did not exist then some men would rape women who were not prostitutes. While none admitted that they themselves would rape, they were adamant that other men were incapable of controlling their impulse to sexual predation.

A significant number of the punters subscribed to the catharsis theory of rape and prostitution. This theory posits an inverse relationship between prostitution and rape. 41% of our interviewees believed that the availability of prostitutes makes the rape of other women less likely.

*“People who might be tempted to commit a sexual crime could get rid of their frustration if they can go with a prostitute.”*

Another man said *“Prostitution keeps a lot of people off the street who might otherwise attack women, such as shy people with no confidence.”*

Chillingly, one man stated, *“Men decide to use a prostitute as a surrogate instead of getting sex through subterfuge or force.”*

A slightly veiled version of this theory was also expressed: *“There will never be an end to prostitution; if men are looking for sex then someone is going to provide it.”*

There is no evidence supporting the theory that prostitution prevents rape. Rape rate statistics from the U.S. raise the possibility that there may even be a positive association between legal prostitution in Nevada and higher rape rates in that state. The Nevada rate of rape was higher than the U.S. average and it was significantly higher than rates of rape in several more populous U.S. states – California, New York and New Jersey. Official rape rates in Las Vegas and Reno, Nevada, were significantly higher than rape rates in other U.S. tourist destinations such as New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, where prostitution is not legalised.<sup>5</sup>

The notion that men are not responsible for violence, rape, or sexual exploitation if their sexual expectations are unmet has been promoted with respect to rape and incest, as well as prostitution. Some social scientists define the purchase of women in prostitution as normal, maintaining that men’s prostitution behaviour is simply part of human nature. This definition of normalcy is then reflected in public policy that defines prostitution as a form of labour (sex work) where prostitution is considered an unpleasant job but not different from other kinds of unpleasant jobs, like factory work. From this perspective prostituted women are viewed as “simply another category of workers with special problems and needs” (Bullough & Bullough, 1996). The notion that prostitution is work tends to make its harm invisible.

Decades of research indicate that sexual violence is a cultural phenomenon rather than a result of individual psychopathology (Davis, Parks & Cohen 2006; Lee, Guy, Perry et al 2007). Recent sexual violence prevention programs have used community-based approaches including educational campaigns, and community prevention strategies (Lee et al, 2007). Since sexual violence is a result of social and cultural forces, it is necessary to create a change in cultural norms so that sexual violence such as prostitution is excluded from the mainstream.

Blaming their non-prostitute sex partners for causing them to seek out prostitutes, some of the punters interviewed in Glasgow and Edinburgh told us that prostitution provided them with sex acts that they could not obtain from their wives, girlfriends, or non-prostitute sex partners. They specifically mentioned that they sought anal sex, corporal punishment, sadism and masochism, and

*“things you wouldn’t dare ask a normal female for – a female that’s not a prostitute, that’s not offering sex for cash.”*

79% of the punters told us that it was easier for them to ask a prostitute to perform certain sex acts than to ask their regular partner. Most frequently, these sex acts tended to be oral and anal sex.

Other researchers have found that men search for sex acts that they can’t obtain from their regular partners (McKeganey, 1994; Plumridge et al, 1997). Pointing out the role of pornography in guiding his sexual preferences, one punter clarified the relation between pornography and prostitution.

*“Some guys watch a lot of pornography and expect their partners to perform certain acts. They’ll either pressure their partner to a certain point or then go and get what they want.”*

## **Responses to**

### **‘What changes would have to take place in order to end prostitution?’**

The men struggled with an open-ended question about what it would take to end prostitution. Many were stumped, declaring that prostitution would never end, even that it would take “*Armageddon*” to end prostitution. Like a mantra, they repeated, “*It’s the oldest profession*,” suggesting that the historical existence of a phenomenon justified its continuation. Yet these men would not be likely to justify murder simply because murder has been around for a long time.

Unable to think beyond the conceptual limits of their entitlement to sex, other punters told us that in order to stop the institution of prostitution, all women would have to function as prostitutes.

*“Women would have to be available for sex at any opportunity, whenever men wanted it.”*

*“You’d have to invent women sex robots.”*

Some of the men we interviewed were aware of the root causes of prostitution. A third (34%) stated that prostitution is based on the subordination of women. A slightly greater percentage (39%) acknowledged that prostitution is sexual exploitation. Some men clearly understood the relation between prostitution and sex inequality, although most failed to describe their own contributions to the exploitation of women in prostitution.

*“Prostitution has to do with women’s position in the economy; women are not as valued. Maybe for some, prostitution’s the only way to earn a certain amount of money.”*

Several men mentioned male violence as precipitant to women’s entry into prostitution. They noted the role of childhood sexual abuse and also the role of abusive adult partners who pipped them into prostitution. Despite their insights into the women’s vulnerabilities, this did not stop them from buying sex.

*“A lot of boyfriends have them out doing it, beating them up. Lassies go out because they’re scared, and they have nowhere else to turn to.”*

A number of men understood that major social change would be necessary in order to eliminate prostitution. They listed the following as essential: the eradication of poverty, promotion of sex equality, and programmes for women currently prostituting. A number of the interviewees had an awareness of the relationship between sex inequality and prostitution:

*“I have no idea about how to end prostitution but I think it’s to do with inequality. I think some men find prostitution empowering – they feel like they’re buying a woman. It would take total equality between men and women. We’re meant to be equal but socially we’re not – women are still looked down on.”*

*“We’d need better job opportunities and prospects for women. Better education for men and women. It’s a patriarchal society. Women would have to be treated more as equals, have more say.”*

*“Prostitution could end if there was less poverty, social exclusion, and if attitudes changed towards women.”*

*“How do you expect a woman to bring up a child with the money the government provides, it’s ridiculous.”*

*“A better social security system especially for mums with two kids, maybe get her into training so she can get a better job, one with a future. Try and help the drug addicts if they want to help themselves. This country’s got a bad attitude to prostitutes in general, seeing them as diseased and addicted but some are just women with a couple of kids and that’s the only way to make that much money, prostitution brings in much more than working in a bar.”*

*“I think they’d have to devise a programme for prostitutes to provide alternatives to prostitution.”*

Several men alleged that they would tell other men that prostitution had not been a positive experience.

*“At the beginning, it’s exciting to have a choice and to know you’ll get sex but you’ll learn it’s not that great as you get older.”*

*“It’s nothing other than a release, an expensive one. It’s a bit degrading on both accounts. I would tell them to consider what they were doing. It’s an empty experience.”*

*“It’s sleazy, you feel bad afterwards, maybe not that night. It’s just using someone and messing with their feelings. I wouldn’t advise it.”*

*“It’s not all it’s cracked up to be. I was divorced, insecure, unstable. I thought that going with prostitutes would be a solution but it wasn’t. My friends were also bachelors – prostitution was part of the social scene from 4pm to 4am. One pal said, ‘I go for dinner and then I get them early, when they’re fresh.’ He reasoned that later on the women would be worn out.”*

Two men told us that men do not talk honestly with each other about prostitution.

*“Most guys exaggerate, telling each other prostitution’s great. I would lie [also] because it’s not great.”*

A second man stated, *“I don’t know anyone who goes into detail about it, except prices.”*

## **Punters’ Opinions on Legal or Decriminalised Prostitution**

Historically in Europe, regulation of prostitution was actively promoted by coalitions of military administrators and conservative politicians, often with the tacit approval of dominant religious organisations. Those advocating legalisation – like many of the punters interviewed for this research – assumed that men were not capable of attaining sexual continence. They therefore sought contexts (prostitution) in which men could buy sex – assuming incorrectly that legal prostitution is disease-free prostitution and that legal prostitution would preserve men’s

sexual health (Limoncelli, 2006). Today's attempts to legalise prostitution make the similar assumption that men are inevitably sexually incontinent. Self-interested, most of the punters we interviewed recommended legalising or decriminalising prostitution because it would spare them the social embarrassment or the inconvenience or the negative legal consequences of buying sex.

While a majority of the men we interviewed were aware that women were not in prostitution by choice, nonetheless they favored legalisation (94%) or decriminalisation (89%) of prostitution. In a profoundly self-serving way, these men maintained that legalisation would somehow miraculously remove the harm of prostitution.

*"I'm assuming that if it's legal, no-one would have to work there unless they really wanted to,"* reasoned one punter.

In spite of their advocacy for legal prostitution and in spite of the fact that 67% would not object if their sons went to brothels – only 14% of these punters felt that it would be acceptable for their daughters to grow up to be prostitutes. One wonders whose daughters they think their sons will buy.

One man wistfully commented, *"I wish they would build a centre where people would know they could come and get them."*

On the other hand, another interviewee commented, *"Legalising prostitution could also be very bad – it creates a bad name for a city."*

As a result of eleven years of offering training and awareness-raising about prostitution, the Women's Support Project has learned that many members of the community share the punters' fantasy that legalisation of prostitution would improve conditions for women. Information regarding the harmful effects of legal as well as illegal prostitution is an essential component of a comprehensive prostitution prevention programme.<sup>6</sup> Education regarding the harm of buying sex in someone else's country is also important, given the globalisation of today's world and the fact that more than half of the punters we interviewed used women outside UK for prostitution.

### **What Would Deter These Punters From Buying Sex**

59% of the men we interviewed in Scotland stated that, to some degree, they had feelings of guilt, shame, or badness regarding their use of women in prostitution. There are opportunities for intervention, education, and prevention of prostitution even with men who are currently using women in prostitution.

We asked these 110 men what might deter them from using a woman in prostitution. We offered a list of consequences including legal penalties, financial penalties, public exposure, jail time, registration as a sex offender, and attending an education programme.

**Table 7. What Would Deter Men in Scotland from Buying Sex**

Being added to a sex offender registry	89%
Having your picture and/or name on a billboard	86%
Having your picture and/or name in the local newspaper	84%
Having to spend time in jail	79%
Having your picture and/or name posted on the internet	78%
A letter being sent to your family saying you were arrested for soliciting a woman in prostitution	77%
Greater criminal penalty	72%
Having your car impounded	70%
Higher monetary fine	69%
Required to attend an educational program for men who buy prostitutes	56%

The men's responses suggest that there are a number of equally effective alternatives that would reduce men's demand for prostitution, if legal sanctions were enforced. These include being publicly named as a sex offender, being publicly exposed via billboard, newspaper, Internet, or letter to his family. Jail time, higher fines and greater criminal penalties would also deter these men from buying sex if, and only if, they were convinced that laws would actually be enforced.

The punters understand that activities around prostitution, such as soliciting, are illegal. Nonetheless, in Scotland, United States and elsewhere, men who buy sex depend on the fact that existing laws will not be enforced. Regardless of Scotland's prostitution policy and laws, many men simply did not think that police or politicians would enforce the law. As one punter explained,

*"If I thought any of those things were really going to happen it would be a deterrent."*

Another told us, *"I wouldn't like to get caught but I'll go on the lack of probability of getting caught. If I got caught so would half the male population."*

A number of men were skeptical about there being any effective deterrent, yet at the same time they acknowledged that the possibility of criminalisation deterred them. One man commented that he only bought sex where prostitution was legal.

*"I don't do it here because it's not legal."*

Another man stated that no deterrent would work but at the same time said that he did not use prostitutes in Scotland since it was illegal and he wanted a clean criminal record.

### **Classifying Prostitution as a Sexual Offence and Other Public Exposure**

89% of our interviewees told us that being placed on a registry of sex offenders would deter them. Naming men who buy prostitutes as sex offenders would – with just two words – remove the glamour from buying sex, instead categorising punters as sexual predators. This naming is important since it places men who buy sex in the same category as rapists, pedophiles and other social undesirables. Many of our interviewees were ambivalent about their purchase of sex, feeling both attracted to and repulsed by it. To name them as sex offenders would send a strong

message and reinforce their already-existing knowledge of the harm they perpetrate, which they struggle to deny.

77%–86% of the men said that they would be deterred by public exposure such as having their photos or names posted on the Internet, in the local newspaper or on a billboard.

*“You can buy a lot of things but you can’t buy your reputation – losing your reputation is the biggest deterrent,”* one punter explained.

While many feared that their wives or girlfriends would find out about their visits to prostitutes, this appears not to have operated as a deterrent so long as there is little risk of wives and families finding out. One man indicated that the threat of public exposure had been enough to change his behaviour.

*“The police came and said move out or we’ll get your number plate and write to your wife. That was the last time I went. It was a strong deterrent for me.”*

Women who are prostituting in Scotland tell us that men buy sex during tea breaks and lunch hours, often using company vehicles. Several men stated that they would be deterred from buying women for prostitution purposes if their employers discovered their prostitution activities. For example, *“losing respect in a working environment”* was a deterrent to one man.

### **Criminal Penalties Including Time in Jail**

69–79% of the punters we interviewed stated that they would be deterred by greater criminal penalties, such as a greater monetary fine, having a car impounded, or jail time. Some of the men suggested that a combination of criminal sanctions and public exposure would be most effective.

Most of the men told us that any amount of jail time would deter them.

*“An hour would be enough.”*

Another recommended, *“Zero tolerance – police everywhere”*.

One man suggested harsh penalties: *“Maybe a minimal jail sentence of two years for the clients if caught soliciting.”*

Another man suggested a combination of penalties, *“Some guys have plenty money so a big fine might be nothing to them. They should get a warning first time, than public exposure and a heavy fine.”*

In similar findings, Brewer, Potterat and colleagues (2006) found that arrest deterred 70% of men from buying women in prostitution a second time. In an extensive analysis of data from one U.S. city, they concluded, just as our interviewees in Scotland did, that arrest was a powerful factor in deterring men from using women in prostitution.

### **Prostitution Education Programmes.**

Only 56% of the men we interviewed told us that being required to attend an educational program for men who buy prostitutes would deter them. This is consistent with anecdotal reports from other countries. Our findings here reflect what has been learned from decades of legal and social attempts to deter batterers. Counseling and educating alone do not deter men who batter. It is necessary to combine educational approaches with strong legal or social consequences such as jail time (Stubbs, 2007). For example, a study of homicides of battered

women found that previous arrest of the abuser was a protective factor against homicide of women by an intimate partner (Campbell et al., 2003).

Unless didactic programmes are combined with sophisticated role modeling and participant behaviour enactments that challenge men's acceptance of prostitution, educational programmes are not likely to produce their intended results. Katz (2006) described the effectiveness of teaching men to become empowered bystanders in confronting sexist abuse and violence such as prostitution. Using a mentoring program among college-aged male athletes, the program taught men specific techniques of countering peer pressure to commit acts of violence against women.

We recommend that education programmes be offered in addition to, rather than as an alternative to, legal sanctions. Given the significantly large numbers of interviewees who told us that they would be deterred by actively enforced criminal penalties and by public exposure, education programmes would be most effective post-court.

## Conclusion

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Once viewed as a form of violence against women stemming from sex inequality, prostitution is best understood as a transaction in which there are two roles: exploiter/predator and victim/prey. Since there is a vast power differential between the punter and the woman he buys in terms of her poverty, social status, abuse history, and often immigration status, the women (or men) who are purchased in prostitution would not be categorised as criminals because they are victims.

The Prostitution (Public Places) (Scotland) Act of 2007 is the first Scottish legislation that challenges men's demand for purchased sex. This legislation makes it an offence to solicit or loiter in a public place for the purpose of obtaining the services of a person engaged in prostitution. Thus men convicted of buying sex can be easily identified via criminal databases. However this legislation does not sit within Scottish Legislation on sexual offences and women continue to be criminalised for soliciting or loitering for the purposes of prostitution.

At the time of this writing (March 2008) there have been calls for both the Scottish and the UK governments to adopt the Swedish model to prevent and combat prostitution and trafficking. Acknowledging the enormous social injustice and harms intrinsic to prostitution, the Swedish legislation criminalises punters, pimps and traffickers. Those who are bought for prostitution are understood by the Swedish Parliament to be victims regardless of whether or not they were overtly physically coerced or whether they were emotionally coerced by prior sexual assault, abandonment, brainwashing by pimps or whether they were coerced by a sexist or racist lack of job alternatives, or coerced into prostitution by poverty. While those buying and selling sex are arrested, women in prostitution are not criminalised in Sweden. Instead, they are offered social services similar to those offered by the Routes Out Project in Glasgow (Bindel, 2004).

Swedish police statistics indicate that there has been a dramatic decline in prostitution since the law went into effect. "We have significantly less prostitution than our neighboring countries," a Stockholm police officer stated. (Anwar, 2007) Two years after the Swedish law's passage, a government taskforce reported that there was a 50% decrease in the number of women prostituting and a 75% decrease in the number men who bought sex. According to the Swedish National Rapporteur on Trafficking the law that prohibits the purchase of sexual services has "a direct and positive effect in limiting the trafficking in human beings for sexual purposes to Sweden" (Ekberg, 2004).

Laws affect cultural practices. The Swedish law has a social impact on the way prostitution is viewed by its citizens. The 1999 Swedish law "is a concrete and tangible expression of the belief that in Sweden women and children are not for sale. It effectively dispels men's self-assumed right to buy women and children for prostitution." (Ekberg, 2004).

In addition to imposing serious legal consequences on men's purchase of sex, we at the same time need to increase the public's understanding of why prostitution is harmful in and of itself, and to ensure that prostitution is regarded as predatory and sexually exploitative behaviour rather than sexual behaviour. Ultimately, the effectiveness of any criminal justice program depends on the community's understanding of the issues and its commitment to justice for prostituted women and children. Its success also depends on the willingness of police departments to enforce laws that have been passed (Moe, 2007).

Additional research on men who buy sex is needed. Because of their need to minimise the harms of prostitution and thereby justify its existence, and because of the punters' desire for



social invisibility, we are confident that the statistics in this Report are conservative and are likely underestimates of, for example, the men's frequency of using prostitutes, their violence, and their misogyny.

Using this report, and additional information from this research database, prostitution prevention programmes, including some aimed specifically at young men in schools and colleges, can be initiated. We remain cautiously optimistic regarding men's capacity for change.

## Endnotes

1. See Glasgow City Council prostitution policy at [http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/en/YourCouncil/PolicyPlanning\\_Strategy/Corporate/Equalities/Women/Prostitution.htm](http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/en/YourCouncil/PolicyPlanning_Strategy/Corporate/Equalities/Women/Prostitution.htm)

See also Julie Bindel (2004) Streets Apart. *The Guardian* UK. May 15, 2004 discussing the differing approaches to prostitution in Glasgow and Edinburgh at Available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2004/may/15/weekend7.weekend4>.

2. 52% of men interviewed in Glasgow had bought sex abroad and 63% of men interviewed in Edinburgh bought sex abroad.

3. The constructs of hostile masculinity and rape myth acceptance have some overlap.

4. Education about prostitution would also include discussion of sex inequality, men's demand as the driving force behind the economic success of sex businesses, men's demand as the root cause of the supply of women in prostitution, reasons for entry into prostitution, harm to families and communities, organised crime, and evidence for the negative effects of legalised or decriminalised prostitution including expansion of sex trafficking and prostitution of children.

5. FBI Uniform Crime Report (2004) Table 6 [http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius\\_04/](http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius_04/) Official rates of rape are known to be far lower than the probable actual incidence of rape because so many women do not report rapes to the police.

6. See several articles about the harmful effects of legalised prostitution at <http://www.prostitutionresearch.com/c-laws-about-prostitution.html>. These include articles by Julie Bindel (2004) Streets Apart. *The Guardian* UK. May 15, 2004, Melissa Farley (2004) 'Bad for the Body, Bad for the Heart: Prostitution Harms Women Even If Legalized or Decriminalized. *Violence Against Women* 10: 1087–1125, Janice Raymond 2004 Prostitution on Demand: Legalizing the Buyers as Sexual Consumers. *Violence Against Women* 10: 1156–1186.

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