

The Impact of John Schools on Demand for Prostitution

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Abstract

John schools are programs developed in the United States, Canada, and Europe that aim to reduce recidivism of men who have been caught soliciting street prostitutes. While studies have indicated that john schools may reduce recidivism rates, their broader impact on society and on prostitution may be more problematic. Not only do john schools reinforce double standards for buyers and prostitutes within the criminal justice system and society, they do not address the broader societal problems that lead to sex trafficking. Additionally, in general, they do not hold individual participants accountable for their actions and they may even contribute to more dangerous conditions for prostitutes.

Introduction

John Schools are a common method used in the fight against sex trafficking and prostitution throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe. They provide a tertiary prevention option with the goal of reducing recidivism of men who have been caught soliciting a street prostitute. Efforts to reduce demand for sex trafficking incorporate reducing demand for prostitution more generally because customers of individuals who have been sex trafficked are indistinguishable from customers of willing sex workers. Holding buyers accountable for their actions and overall contribution to sex trafficking is vitally important to this work. However, while john schools might reduce recidivism, their broader impact may be more problematic. Not only do they reinforce double standards for buyers and prostitutes within the criminal justice system and society, they do not address the broader issues that cause sex trafficking, they do not hold the men accountable for their actions, and they may even create more dangerous conditions for prostitutes.

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John schools aim to “decrease demand for prostitution, and hence, reduce the amount of human trafficking and sexual exploitation that occurs” (Shively, Kliorys, Wheeler, and Hunt, 2013, p. 2). There has been much debate regarding the differences between prostitution and sex trafficking. Some scholars have argued that prostitutes have agency and should be able to choose their profession. Others counter that prostitution is simply another word for sex trafficking since individuals who enter prostitution often do so under necessity if not coercion. As Madden Dempsey writes: “No choice is free in the sense of being wholly without constraint, and of those who might be said to have made a choice to sell sex, most do so because of economic need or other pressures—which is simply to say that prostitution ‘is not an option many women choose with alacrity, when many other options are on their plate’” (2010, p. 1761). Furthermore, even if some prostitutes enter the profession willingly, they subsequently face significant danger as a result of their vulnerable status. Studies have shown that upwards of 73% of prostituted women in the United States have been raped while working (Shively, Kliorys, Wheeler, and Hunt, 2012, p. 13). Buyers of sex often cannot distinguish between willing prostitutes and those who have been trafficked since those who are trafficked usually do not reveal that information. Additionally, demand drives the market for prostitution, which in turn encourages sex trafficking because increased profits attract traffickers. Thus, efforts to reduce demand generally do not distinguish between demand for willing prostitutes and demand for trafficking victims since only reductions in overall demand will be likely to affect rates of sex trafficking (Shively, Kliorys, Wheeler, and Hunt, 2012, p. 4). As a result, for the purposes of john schools, prostitution and sex trafficking are treated interchangeably.

The first John Schools were formed in the 1990s in response to increased outcry at the ways the criminal justice system was handling prostitution. John Schools were designed as a means for holding buyers or “johns” accountable for their actions. The first well-known school was the San Francisco First Offenders Prostitution Program (FOPP), which utilizes collaboration between the police, District Attorney’s office, and The SAGE Project, an agency headed by a survivor of sex trafficking that assists survivors in addition to administering FOPP (Shively et al., 2008, p. 2). After the establishment of FOPP, other john schools began opening throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe. As of 2013, there were john schools in approximately fifty locations in the United States (Shively, Kliorys, Wheeler and Hunt, 2013, p. 3).

One definition of john schools is “an education or treatment program for men arrested for soliciting illegal commercial sex” (Shively, Kliorys, Wheeler, and Hunt, 2013, p. 1). Topics covered in the curriculum go beyond sexual health and cover a range of issues meant to persuade buyers to no longer seek to buy

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sex (Shively, Kliorys, Wheeler, and Hunt, 2013, p. 1). Most programs, which are based off of the FOPP model, include information on laws regarding prostitution, the effects of prostitution on the communities in which it occurs, sexual health, the dangers to buyers associated with purchasing sex from prostitutes, the dynamics of sex trafficking and prostitution, and sometimes information on sex addictions (Shively, Kliorys, Wheeler and Hunt, 2013, p. 1).

Most john schools take place on one single day over approximately eight hours and include a series of lectures (Shively, Kliorys, Wheeler and Hunt, 2013, p. 8). Approximately two-thirds of the programs in the United States are designed as “diversion programs,” and the rest are incorporated as one aspect of sentencing (Shively, Kliorys, Wheeler and Hunt, 2013, p. 1). If a john school is a diversion program, that means completion of the john school replaces the criminal justice system response. In other words, the men are “done” after attending class. They will face harsher punishment if they are arrested again for prostitution charges as they may be prosecuted for both arrest charges with no option of attending a john school again, but they do not have to face any more consequence if they attend the school and are not arrested within the year after attendance (Shively et al., 2008, p. 14).

In order to achieve their goal of reducing demand, john schools rely on the assumption that “there are several key attitudes and beliefs that cause or allow men to solicit sex, and that the programs reach at least some of the men by countering erroneous beliefs and filling gaps in knowledge” (Shively, Kliorys, Wheeler, and Hunt, 2013, p. 2). These assumptions center on the notion that these men are ignorant of the prevalence and nature of prostitution and sex trafficking, the laws about soliciting prostitutes, and the dangers involved. Other attitudes that john schools assume buyers have are that they may be unaware of the risk of STDs, the possibility that they may be robbed by a prostitute because someone who is robbed while committing a crime is unlikely to report it to the police, and the reality that prostitutes are motivated by money and do not desire the men who buy sex from them (Shively, Kliorys, Wheeler, and Hunt, 2013, p. 2-3)

John schools ultimately aim to reduce recidivism rates of individuals who have been caught soliciting prostitution already. By reducing reoffending, prostitution and thus sex trafficking would in turn decrease because there would be less financial incentive for traffickers or pimps. Hughes (2004) describes john schools as: “an effort to move from criminal prosecution of purchasers of commercial sex acts to intervention and rehabilitation. They aim to reduce criminal justice system costs and improve community health and quality of life” (Hughes, 2004, p. 31). John schools are thus a form of tertiary prevention in that they seek to work with people who have already committed the crime.

In evaluating whether john schools are effective at preventing sex trafficking, it is important to acknowledge the reasons for why this issue exists. Prostitution occurs in response to demand, and sex trafficking arises because it is profitable and victims are vulnerable enough to make it worthwhile for traffickers. Shively et al. (2008) write: "The links between street prostitution and both domestic and international trafficking have been empirically confirmed, with the market forces of prostitution driving the demand for most human trafficking" (Shively et al., 2008, p. 4). Thus, as buyers determine demand, they are an integral piece in the cause of and solution to ending sex trafficking. With that said, the methods through which prevention efforts are implemented affect the broader results. John Schools may reduce recidivism in buyers who have been arrested for prostitution charges but they continue to contribute to a society in which prostitutes and survivors of sex trafficking are stigmatized and treated unequally and they may put prostitutes in even greater danger.

The Evidence

Research on a number of john schools has not yielded uniform results. Some reasons for differences in these findings may be the types of programs, content of those programs, and the challenges associated with evaluating behavior change based on self-reported survey results and data on subsequent arrests.

Supporting Evidence

Research has indicated lowered rates of recidivism for participants in some john schools. Shively et al. (2008) looked in depth at the FOPP program in addition to arrest records one to two years after completion of the program. They found that "the collective evidence strongly supports the conclusion that the FOPP significantly reduces recidivism" (p. v). The researchers explain their results in this way: "the apparent disconnect between what is assumed to be effective and what the FOPP provides may lie in differences between most offender populations and those that solicit sex ... The pools of men arrested for soliciting have little or no criminal histories, are older, and are far more likely to be employed, educated, and either married or in relationships ... It is possible that the cross-section of men who solicit sex contains a substantial number who are amenable to change through a simple infusion of information"

(Shively et al., 2008, p. 85). Ostensibly, those with a stake in conformity are less likely to reoffend.

Other research has indicated changes in attitudes regarding prostitution as a result of attending a john school. Kennedy (2004) writes: “The results of this study indicate that the British Columbia diversion program appears to significantly change attitudes towards prostitution, towards prostituted women, and towards purchasing sexual services in male clients of street prostituted women. More importantly, all of the attitude changes occurred in the direction expected by the program” (p. 55). These attitudes centered on whether prostitution was an issue for society, whether participants would allow their children to solicit prostitutes or be a prostitute, and whether prostitution should be treated more seriously (p. 51). Findings showing attitude changes are not the same findings showing behavior changes, but certainly attitudinal change is a step in the direction towards which the program aims to push its participants. By changing participants’ attitudes, “clients will make a more informed choice about whether they subsequently want to engage in this behavior” (Kennedy, Klein, Gorzalka, and Yuille, 2004, p. 42).

Another benefit of john schools is that they may increase the number of buyers who are caught as a result of purchasing sex. For example, the FOPP program exists in part due to a Memorandum of Understanding with the San Francisco Police Department that states the police must conduct a certain number of sting operations every month (Majic, 2014, p. 21). While this program depends on whether the police follow this directive, it also means that significantly more buyers are arrested and held accountable to a certain extent.

Furthermore, many see john schools as a positive option that works outside of the criminal justice system with a semblance of restorative justice. Majic (2014) writes: “john schools in theory would divert men from the criminal justice system and, instead, treat and rehabilitate them as criminal offenders” (p. 9). Although controversial, some john schools also incorporate survivors into their programs, who may tell their stories as part of their recovery process. Likewise, the fees required of participants of FOPP in San Francisco go in part to services for survivors of sex trafficking and also to cover administrative expenses for much of the program (Shively et al., 2008, p. 2). Thus, FOPP does not draw funding from the criminal justice system. Wortley, Fischer and Webster (2002) state: “this approach represents an innovative solution to street prostitution—while simultaneously reflecting the current social and political orientation toward more cost-effective, victim oriented and deinstitutionalized criminal justice measures” (p. 371). Thus, john schools may offer a means through which crime can be reduced without utilizing the costly and limited efforts of the criminal justice system.

Evidence Against

Although there are certainly proponents of john schools and some evidence to support the notion that they reduce recidivism in participants, there is also research and opinions that refute these findings. With respect to the findings of researchers like Shively (2008), critics point to alternative explanations for what seemed to be behavior change as a result of the john school. One alternative explanation is that the arrest itself is enough to deter the types of buyers who qualify for john schools (those that do not have criminal records). Brewer et al. (2007) state:

Our analyses indicate that arrest reduces the likelihood of a future patronizing arrest by about 70% ... Taken together, our results suggest that apprehending clients decreases their patronizing behavior substantially ... Arrest may be a significant deterrent for clients because they generally are otherwise law-abiding men who could suffer loss of reputation and marital or romantic relationship conflict as a consequence of arrest. Such themes are often apparent in clients' comments at arrest, both as others have noted and we have observed in arrest narratives from several jurisdictions." p. 6

In other words, john schools may not impact buyers more after the deterrence effect caused by the arrest experience itself (Scott and Dedel, 2006, p. 27; Wortley, Fischer and Webster, 2002, p. 389). Offenders have even admitted that programs like john schools probably would not have much impact on them. In Scotland, Farley (2011) found that when he asked offenders what deterrent methods would likely work, "most of the men indicated that being placed on a registry of sex offenders, public exposure (having their photos or names posted on the Internet, in the local newspaper, or on a billboard), and greater criminal penalties (a greater monetary fine, having a car impounded, or jail time) would deter them from buying sex. Many expressed the belief that deterrents were unlikely to be enforced" (p. 9). Furthermore, although they had not been through a john school, the men in this study rated all other deterrents higher than john schools in terms of how likely they were to be effective (p. 11).

Another explanation for the low rates of rearrests may be that the buyers are learning from their experiences and locating prostitutes in other ways besides street prostitution, where they are most likely to be caught by police. They may even learn from their original arrest how to spot a police sting. Hughes (2004) states: "Interviews with experts in the area of prostitution agree that once a man is caught soliciting a prostitute, he is rarely caught again. This is most likely because most men are caught by the use of female decoys on the

street. Men learn to recognize and avoid them or purchase sex acts in venues, such as escort services and massage parlors, where decoy police officers cannot or do not work" (p. 40). If a buyer has been caught seeking to buy sex on the street and knows it holds higher risks, he likely will learn to find more hidden and less policed prostitution locales. Monto and Garcia write: "Nearly all men arrested for trying to hire prostitutes in Portland are caught in sweeps in which they approach a female police officer who is posing as a prostitute, an arrest strategy employed by law enforcement agencies nationwide. Because it is relatively easy to avoid rearrest given adequate knowledge, and because regular customers may have established networks of prostitutes they know personally, it is likely that first-time or occasional customers are over-represented among those arrested" (2001, p. 7).

In fact, overall, the number of buyers utilizing street prostitution has decreased over time while police continue to focus on street prostitution when conducting stings. As a result, FOPP has seen lower numbers of participants, which could explain why previous clients are not being arrested at higher rates. "Changes in the practice of prostitution in the city largely explain these outcomes. The development and increased accessibility of internet and cell phone technologies have moved the bulk of prostitution solicitation from public streets to indoor locations" (Majic, 2014, p. 28). Furthermore, the aggressiveness of the police response to buyers varies over time in most locations, particularly as funding levels change (Scott and Dedel, 2006, p. 27). Thus, in addition to wise up regarding avoiding police stings, buyers are likely adhering to trends toward greater use of technology for the purposes of soliciting sex. The varying nature of the police response, in addition to changes in the ways buyers find prostitutes make it very challenging to collect accurate data on recidivism rates of participants in john schools.

Finally, most of the research that indicates efficacy of john schools focuses on attitudinal changes by using pre- and post-tests during the day of the school. This method of evaluation is problematic because it does not look at long-term attitudinal change, it occurs in a situation in which participants may not feel comfortable answering honestly, and it also fails to determine whether behavioral change occurs when attitudinal change happens. Wortley, Fischer and Webster (2002) note: "even after attending John School, one out of every ten respondents report that they might still use prostitutes in the future. Interestingly, this figure is more than four times greater than the official program recidivism rate (2.4%). This divergence might indicate that some men, after attending John School, continue to engage in prostitution but are able to avoid police detection" (p. 389). These researchers go on to write: "Although our findings document significant post-program changes in attitudes towards pros-

titution, these attitudinal changes do not seem to translate into significant changes in anticipated future behaviour. Indeed, the area in which the impact of the John School appears weakest is with regard to deterring future prostitution-related activities" (p. 393). Thus, there are a number of significant weaknesses in the methods used to evaluate the impact of john schools on recidivism rates of participants.

Broader Impact of John Schools

Making it Easy for Buyers

John schools may be well intentioned in their attempts to rehabilitate buyers without involving the criminal justice system, but they also perpetuate the centuries-old pattern in which prostitutes are treated worse and stigmatized more than buyers by the criminal justice system and society at large. As Campbell (2001) writes: "There is no doubt that the policing of prostitution in the UK has on the whole provided a graphic illustration of the double standard enshrined in English law: female sex workers are criminalized whereas their male clients are not" (Campbell, 2001, p. 96–97). This dynamic is also well documented in the United States. John schools offer a false cover for those asserting that the criminal justice system treats buyers "equally" to prostitutes. One way in which john schools provide this double standard for buyers is that, as diversion programs, they are offered as a way for buyers to avoid the courts and a criminal record. "According to the representative from the San Francisco DA's office, this policy represents a way to 'start thinking outside of the box with prostitution.' Instead of simply punishing johns by sending them to jail, the First Offender can 'break the cycle of prostitution by making people stop and think about what they are doing'" (Majic, 2014, p. 19). This quote reflects the irony of john schools—buyers have almost never been sent to jail for their crimes. Rather, in response to calls for harsher responses to demand, they provide an avenue that continues to allow buyers off the hook for their crimes while those who sell sex continue to be arrested, fined, and hold felony or misdemeanor records that negatively impact their lives and choices.

Not only do john schools protect buyers from going to jail, they also lack methods of accountability for whether participants absorb any of the material. Many, if not all, john schools have no measure of whether the men are paying attention or learning the lessons taught. Even Shively et al., who are proponents of the FOPP program, describe this issue: "There is no system for ensuring that offenders learn the material presented in the john school. The lack

of a quiz or test at the end of the day to motivate participants may help to explain why each class has at least one chronic sleeper, some men reading newspapers or magazines, and others appearing disengaged” (p. 55). Thus, john schools are claiming efficacy despite allowing participants to complete the program without any evidence of participation beyond physical attendance.

Missing the Mark on Cultural Change

Buyers as Rational Consumers, Prostitutes as Violent and Diseased

The basic theories around which john schools are designed, centering on the fact that buyers rationally choose to solicit prostitutes and thus can be convinced to stop, stand in stark contrast to the ways in which prostitutes are framed to the men. Majic (2014) describes the FOPP program in this way: “the program assumes that men possess rational and strategic capacities when engaging in sexual behavior: by taking the class, they could learn to make better (in other words, legal) sexual decisions. Conversely, First Offender consistently presents females as only sellers of commercial sexual services with little agency in the transaction” (p. 23). Not only does the curriculum of john schools create an image of prostitutes as lacking agency, they also demonize them in an effort to scare off the buyers. The dangers of buying sex are clearly outlined for the men in these programs, and while these stories might be framed in a narrative of prostitutes who are under the control of pimps, they paint a nasty picture of women who are being victimized: “The second speaker … discusses the many dangers that men face when they decide to engage in street prostitution. The Johns are told, for example, about drug addicted prostitutes who have stabbed their clients with AIDS infected needles, about prostitutes who have drugged their clients and stolen their money” (Wortley, Fischer, and Webster, 2002, p. 373). This imagery may scare off some men but it also perpetuates the societal stigmas about prostitutes and reinforces the double standard for men who buy sex from prostitutes in comparison to the individuals from whom they are buying sex.

Feminist Values Discouraged

Although research has shown that sex trafficking demand is affected by buyers’ attitudes about women, john schools have been discouraged from incorporating feminist values into their curriculums (beyond the overall goal of reducing prostitution which aligns with radical feminist thought). Busch, Bell, Hotaling, and Monto (2002) write: “The correlations between more conservative attitudes toward sexuality, guilt about sex, and more frequent pornography

use suggests a sexual stereotyping of prostituted women that allows some women to be seen as ‘other’—women whose feelings of pain do not need to be considered. Consequently, violent behavior perpetrated against prostituted women can be justified.” (p. 1108). Yet, john schools do not address these issues or attempt to change them. Even when programs have incorporated feminist values and lessons regarding cultural change into curriculum, they have been met with distrust and a lack of community support. The failure of the SEEP program in Portland, Oregon is an example of this. Hughes (2004) writes: “The [SEEP] curriculum’s strong ideological message challenged many people, from the purchasers of commercial sex acts to the county officials that sponsored the program. After two years of operation, the district attorney’s office withdrew support for SEEP and the program ended in February 1997. A former SEEP educator said that conflict arose between the SEEP staff and county officials over the content of the curriculum. Officials objected to testimony from survivors of prostitution and the linking of prostitution to pornography, domestic violence, and rape” (p. 33). Thus, although john schools may seek the same overall goals as radical feminists regarding the elimination of prostitution, their approach to educational curriculum and the methods through which they convey it do not adhere to feminist values about survivors of trafficking and gender equality more broadly. As a result, they are perpetuating the patterns that lead to trafficking in the first place.

The Role of Shame

Another way in which feminist values and cultural change efforts are removed from john schools is through the role of shame in the curriculum. Although all humans should be treated with respect, without shame, john schools allow the men to come away with taking even less accountability for their actions. Norma Hotaling, the founder of FOPP and SAGE, is quoted as telling participants:

When you walked in today, and there were other men here and people were looking in your face, you were like, ‘Oh my God. How do I deal with this? [I]t feels really shitty, shameful, and stigmatizing. [O]ne of the reasons that we allow you to come here today, and we don’t do a John TV or send your names into [the] paper is that this is a chance to sit and think about your life and not tear apart any personal relationships you might have or not embarrass you or shame you, but to have you have a chance to think about a subject that nobody else is talking about. Nobody else talks to men about being involved in prostitution.” Hughes, 2004, p. 35

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This question of whether shaming the men is helpful or hurtful has been debated throughout the United States and Canada. This issue stems from differing opinions on whether buyers are entirely self-centered or simply misinformed (Hughes, 2004, p. 32). On the one hand, there are individuals like Joe Parker, who works at a john school in Portland, Oregon. He states: “These men have already violated moral standards—and they know it. Talking about right or wrong aren’t compelling arguments for them. They are criminals who have chosen to break the law and hurt people, many of them young people.” Parker believes these men are self-centered and have little regard for the women or children they purchased. Given this type of personality, Parker tries to change the men’s future behavior by telling them why it is in their own self-interest not to purchase sex acts. This john school believes the men are more likely to stop purchasing sex acts if it is in their own self-interest” (Hughes, 2004, p. 36–37). Similarly, “The British Columbia program … makes every effort to leave shaming out and instead tries to teach its participants about street prostitution within an atmosphere of mutual respect” (Kennedy, Klein, Gorzalka, and Yuille, 2004, p. 56–57). This approach is problematic because talking to men about why “it is in their own self-interest” simply further reinforces the broader issues of power and control that lead to trafficking in the first place. Additionally, the argument for this being someone’s daughter, mother or sister disregards the fact that this is someone of value regardless of her relationship to a man.

In contrast, a program in Toronto “tries to educate its participants ‘through a confrontational shaming ritual” (Kennedy, Klein, Gorzalka, and Yuille, 2004, p. 56–57). The results of these different approaches seem to be mixed. Shively et al. describe reactions in this way: “As one would expect, some of the men would get defensive and uncomfortable in response to a confrontational approach. Other participants showed signs of defiance and rejection of the messages, while still others appeared shamed and remorseful” (2008, p. 48). The “confrontational shaming ritual” described can be quite beneficial, particularly if it is viewed from a restorative justice perspective. As Hughes (2004) describes, survivor testimony can be a vital piece of the restorative justice process: “A prominent feature of the FOPP curriculum is the personal testimony of survivors of prostitution who talk about the impact of prostitution on their lives, including violence and drug abuse … The act of speaking out and participating in educating perpetrators is part of the women’s own recovery from prostitution and reintegration into the community” (Hughes, 2004, p. 34). These stories also have the potential to contribute to a shift in power that is necessary in the fight against the unequal power structure that makes women vulnerable to sex trafficking. Although some may disagree with the shaming process, they are missing an opportunity to make a bigger impact when they try so hard

not to shame. If these programs do not address the underlying issues that make it acceptable in society to solicit prostitutes who are likely trafficking survivors, then they are also not holding buyers accountable for their actions and failing to address the social structures that condone it.

Making It Worse

John schools may in fact be contributing negatively to society as a result of the discriminatory ways in which buyers are targeted and the characteristics of those caught by police stings. There are a number of issues relating to the ways in which buyers are caught. The first is that police stings almost exclusively target buyers who are soliciting street prostitutes. Buyers who are then entered into john schools tend to be lower income individuals because street prostitution is one of the least expensive avenues for buying sex. They are also more likely to be first time buyers because they have not become smart enough to evade the stings. Van Brunschot (2003) describes this phenomenon in this way: “The effect of policing this particular venue is that the persons who are informally controlled are those of lesser social and financial means” (p. 226).

Not only are participants of lower incomes, they are “disproportionately ... working class, immigrant populations” (Wortley, Fischer, and Webster, 2002, p. 395). Multiple sources have noted that language barriers have come up as issues within john schools. Kennedy, Klein, Gorzalka, and Yuille note: “data from an additional 12 participants were not included in the statistical analysis due to apparent language difficulties identified in the intake interview” (2004, p. 44), and Wortley, Fischer, and Webster note “without the use of trained interpreters, it may be that the program has little or no educative impact on such non-English speaking participants” (p. 395). Combined with the fact that john schools do not measure whether participants are learning the material taught during the program, these hints at language barriers in the research likely indicate a larger issue.

Additionally, john schools only accept men who have been arrested for soliciting female police detectives pretending to be prostitutes. As a result, the increased arrests of buyers of prostitutes as a result of agreements between police and john schools neglect buyers seeking male or transgender prostitutes (Majic, 2014, p. 20). In other words, john schools may be increasing police arrests of buyers but they are not affecting those buyers who do not fit a specific type. Thus, john schools likely do not affect the demand for male and transgender individuals who have been trafficked. This issue may be especially problematic if police are only conducting the number of stings stipulated by MOUs with john schools. If so, they are neglecting an entire section of trafficking victims.

Ultimately, john schools may be creating worse conditions for prostitutes. John schools only accept buyers who do not have criminal records or previous arrests for soliciting prostitution. As a result, the participants are probably the least violent buyers and the most easily deterred: “It is likely that individuals who have a history of criminal violence would not show the same degree of attitude change as individuals whose only experiences with the criminal justice system was for soliciting sex” (Kennedy, Klein, Gorzalka, and Yuille, 2004, p. 58). Similarly, the john school curriculum includes information about how prostitutes are often underage and the consequences for the buyers if they solicit those individuals. However, participants were arrested for attempting to buy sex from an adult police officer acting as a prostitute. Thus, it is entirely possible that they do not make up the segment of the demand driving child sex trafficking (Shively et al., 2008, p. 57). If john schools do, in fact, deter the safest buyers from soliciting prostitutes, they may be creating environments in which prostitutes are facing more violent clients who are more knowledgeable about avoiding police stings, with fewer options to choose from. All in all, the individuals who may be affected most by john schools are likely more poor, marginalized in society, and less violent than other buyers.

Conclusion

There is some evidence that john schools reduce recidivism for participants. However, there are broader issues surrounding sex trafficking and demand reduction efforts that indicate that john schools’ impact must be evaluated from other perspectives. A number of factors affecting the accuracy of the data on recidivism call into question claims showing the efficacy of john schools. Furthermore, john schools’ approaches to curriculum are highly problematic given the topic they are addressing. Eckberg (2004) writes: “In Sweden, it is understood that any society that claims to defend principles of legal, political, economic, and social equality for women and girls must reject the idea that women and children, mostly girls, are commodities that can be bought, sold, and sexually exploited by men. To do otherwise is to allow that a separate class of female human beings, especially women and girls who are economically and racially marginalized, is excluded from these measures, as well as from the universal protection of human dignity” (p. 1188–1189).

Not only do john schools contribute to stigmas surrounding women who are prostitutes, they also reinforce the dichotomous image of buyers as rational consumers and prostitutes as dangerous and diseased. This type of imagery plays a role in the societal patterns that cause prostitution and trafficking de-

mand in the first place. Unless john schools work against these images, they contribute to the overall problem. Additionally, john schools encourage discrimination against certain types of buyers by pushing police to focus on likely already marginalized set of individuals. These practices also neglect the demand side for LGBTQ prostitution, a major piece of sex trafficking. Finally, john schools may actually be deterring the safest clients from seeking prostitution, leaving prostitutes to meet quotas with clients who are likely more dangerous overall.

Recommendations for improvements to john schools would be to increase accountability for the participants in the form of quizzes or tests in order to pass. Additionally, police should be arresting buyers of all modes of prostitution, including through online markets and LGBTQ populations. Also, john schools should alter curriculum so that prostitutes are not being depicted as dangerous and diseased: “In the light of research indicating enduring pressures from clients for unsafe sex and enduring violence against street workers, a number of researchers have suggested interventions with clients which address issues of respect for prostitutes and prostitutes’ rights” (Campbell, 2001, p. 98). Finally, considerably more research must be completed in order to better understand whether participants’ behavior changes as a result of john school. Ultimately, john schools as they currently exist contain several major flaws that must be addressed if demand for trafficked individuals is to be eliminated.

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