

# Comparing Sex Buyers With Men Who Do Not Buy Sex: New Data on Prostitution and Trafficking

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## Abstract

We investigated attitudes and behaviors associated with prostitution and sexual aggression among 101 men who buy sex and 101 age-, education-, and ethnicity-matched men who did not buy sex. Both groups tended to accept rape myths, be aware of harms of prostitution and trafficking, express ambivalence about the nature of prostitution, and believe that jail time and public exposure are the most effective deterrents to buying sex. Sex buyers were more likely than men who did not buy sex to report sexual aggression and likelihood to rape. Men who bought sex scored higher on measures of impersonal sex and hostile masculinity and had less empathy for prostituted women, viewing them as intrinsically different from other women. When compared with non-sex-buyers, these findings indicate that men who buy sex share certain key characteristics with men at risk of committing sexual aggression as documented by research based on the leading scientific model of the characteristics of non-criminal sexually aggressive men, the Confluence Model of sexual aggression.

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Researchers of prostitution have been largely polarized into two camps based on whether they understand prostitution to be primarily sexual labor (Jenness, 1990; Leigh, 1997; Milrod & Weitzer, 2012) or primarily sexual abuse (Deer, 2010; Dworkin, 2000; Leidholdt, 1993). Differences in perspective can be discerned in differing perceptions of power relations, for example, whether or not payment for sex acts in a context of poverty, sexism, and racism constitutes empowerment/agency or exploitation/abuse. The present study offers data relevant to these disparate models by investigating the characteristics of men who buy sex.

Although most research on prostitution—perhaps as much as 99% (Perkins, 1991)—focuses on women who sell/are sold as sex, men who buy sex are increasingly recognized as drivers of the sex trafficking<sup>1</sup> industry (Anderson & O’Connell-Davidson, 2003; Di Nicola, Cuaduro, Lombardi, & Ruspini, 2009; Shively, Kliorys, Wheeler, & Hunt, 2012). We examined whether men who buy sex differ from men who do not buy sex on some of the same factors as those distinguishing men at higher risk of sexual aggression from those at lower risk of such aggression. We assumed that work is not abuse from the client’s standpoint and that the client would not be motivated by aggression toward the service provider. Is a sex buyer’s use of a woman in prostitution motivated by the same dynamics that lead a person with resources to seek a service provider to clean their house or shine their shoes, or is the use of a woman in prostitution more akin to the dynamics seen in perpetrators of sexual violence? If parallels to the latter are found, this would more systematically address the question of whether sexual aggression and prostitution may have some common origins, such as a cultural climate that may breed an ideology that supports treating women as objects to be used in ways that differ from egalitarian social interactions. If buyers of sex, compared with those who do not buy sex, score higher on attitudes and behaviors of sexual aggression, given that prostitution is also a sexual practice, that result would empirically suggest that, for the consumer population, prostitution is a practice that is consistent with those attitudes and behaviors, making it more similar to a practice of sexual aggression than to the purchase of other services.

We investigated sex buyers’ sexual aggression because that is how prostitution is frequently described by those who have been in it and have exited:

as an act of sexual aggression (Abramovich, 2005; Farley et al., 2003; Miller & Schwartz, 1995; Silbert & Pines, 1982, 1983). The question of whether prostitution is more like a job or whether it is more like abuse/sexual aggression is an important question on a societal level as well because it leads to very different policies. If prostitution is understood primarily as labor, then it needs to be legalized and regulated (as in the Netherlands, Germany, and Australia). If prostitution is understood primarily as abuse/sexual aggression, it needs to be abolished (as in Sweden, Norway, and Iceland).

Violence against women has been associated with attitudes that promote men's beliefs that they are entitled to sexual access to women, are superior to women, and are entitled to be sexual aggressors (Flood & Pease, 2009; Koss & Cleveland, 1997). Dehumanizing women or viewing them as inferior to men occurs through objectification, a process in which women are "made into a thing for others' sexual use" (American Psychological Association, 2010). Objectification is associated with increased aggression (Greitemeyer & McLatchie, 2011; Haslam, Loughnan, Reynolds, & Wilson, 2007). There is a significant association between acceptance of rape myths (for example, the notion that certain clothes worn by women signal a desire to be sexually assaulted) and acceptance of prostitution myths (for example, the notion that women become prostitutes because they like sex; Cotton, Farley, & Baron, 2002).

There is evidence for a connection between sexual aggression and prostitution. Buying sex has been associated with men's perpetration of gender-based violence, including perpetration of physical and sexual violence against intimate partners (Decker et al., 2009; Raj, Reed, Welles, Santana, & Silverman, 2008) and perpetration of rape against both partners and non-partners (Jewkes et al., 2006; Monto & McRee, 2005). College-aged men who used women in prostitution reported having committed more sexually coercive behaviors than men who had not used women in prostitution (Schmidt, 2003). In samples of more than 1,000 men each in Chile, Croatia, India, Mexico, and Rwanda, men who had ever bought sex were more likely to perpetrate rape (Heilman, Herbert, & Paul-Gera, 2014).

We investigate attitudes and risk behaviors associated with the Confluence Model of sexual aggression, an empirical framework for a multifactorial integration of the characteristics of men likely to commit sexual aggression (Malamuth, Sockloskie, Koss, & Tanaka, 1991). The Confluence Model is ". . . the most commonly used etiologic model of sexual aggression in nonincarcerated populations" (LeBreton, Baysinger, Abbey, & Jacques-Tiura, 2013, p. 817). Malamuth and Hald (in press) summarized evidence for components of this model. Key factors predictive of sexual aggression include promiscuity/impersonal sex, hostile masculine identification, narcissism, history of family violence, delinquency

in adolescence, frequent pornography use, and attitudes supportive of aggression. Sexually aggressive male college students demonstrate greater hostility toward women, a stronger inclination toward dominance in relationships, and a greater acceptance of rape myths—factors in the Confluence Model (Abbey, Jacques-Tiura, & LeBreton, 2011; DeGue & DiLillo, 2005; Koss & Dinero, 1988; Wheeler, George, & Dahl, 2002). Sexually aggressive men are more accepting of rape myths (Truman, Tokar, & Fischer, 1996; Vogel, 2000). Logan-Greene and Davis (2011) found that hostile masculinity, a major component of the Confluence Model, was superior to 11 other measures as a predictor of sexual aggression (Murnen, Wright, & Kaluzny, 2002). In a 10-year follow-up, the Confluence Model successfully predicted sexual aggression via assessment of hostile masculinity and impersonal sex (Malamuth, Linz, Heavey, Barnes, & Acker, 1995). In one study, the highest levels of sexual aggression were evident among men who scored the highest on hostile masculinity and impersonal sex (Logan-Greene & Davis, 2011).

These two relatively independent components of the Confluence Model, hostile masculinity and impersonal sex, are hypothesized to be the strongest predictors of sexual aggression (Malamuth, Hald, & Koss, 2012; Malamuth et al., 1995). Hostile masculinity is a personality profile combining hostile-distrustful orientation, particularly toward women, with attitudes supporting aggression against women such as rape myth acceptance, and sexual gratification via domination of women. Among men who buy sex, rape myth acceptance (an attribute that is related to hostile masculinity) was associated with more frequent use of women in prostitution in some studies (Farley, Macleod, Anderson, & Golding, 2011; Monto & Hotaling, 2001) but not others (Klein, Kennedy, & Gorzalka, 2009). Hostile masculinity includes hypersensitivity to rejection by women. Consistent with this conceptualization, Australian sex buyers who visited brothels had more discomfort and less confidence than non-sex-buyers on a scale measuring social-sexual effectiveness (Xantidis & McCabe, 2000). Previous studies have not investigated associations of hostile masculinity with whether or not a man buys sex.

Men who score high on impersonal sex prefer frequent, casual sexual relationships to long-term, monogamous relationships (Malamuth, 2003). A high number of sex partners is considered indicative of a preference for impersonal sex (Abbey et al., 2011; O'Connell-Davidson, 1998). Although a preference for impersonal or non-relational sex tends to be ideologically connected to men's sexuality in general (Levant et al., 2003), men with high scores on measures of impersonal sex and hostile masculinity are also at higher risk of sexual aggression than other men (Malamuth & Hald, in press). Sex buyers have a more impersonal orientation to sexuality than non-sex-buyers (Monto & McRee, 2005; Monto & Milrod, 2014). Sex buyers

who participate in an online subculture promoting prostitution (Blevins & Holt, 2009) had many more sex partners than either a national sample of men or a sample of men arrested for buying sex (Milrod & Monto, 2012; Milrod & Weitzer, 2012).

A key prediction of the Confluence Model pertains to the interaction of the characteristics associated with the two constellations, impersonal sex and hostile masculinity. The model predicts that men who are higher on both sets of characteristics are the most likely to be sexually aggressive. Specifically, it is predicted that being high on impersonal sex alone is not likely to be predictive of risk for sexual aggression, but men who combine impersonal sexuality with hostile masculinity would be at high risk of committing sexual aggression. We reasoned in the current study that being high on impersonal sexuality alone would be expected to be associated with buying sex, because being low on impersonal sexuality and therefore high on "personal sexuality" (seeking to experience sex within the context of an intimate, personal relationship) would tend to be inconsistent with buying sex. We predicted, though, that being high both on impersonal sexuality and also relatively high on a composite of the characteristics of hostility/aggressivity (e.g., hostile masculinity, self-reported likelihood of raping, sexual aggressivity) would characterize men who buy sex.

Reduced empathy has been associated with sexual aggression (Lisak & Ivan, 1995). When empathy is present in men who are otherwise at high risk of sexual aggression, Confluence Model research has found that the aggression is moderated (Abbey, Parkhill, BeShears, Clinton-Sherrod, & Zawacki, 2006; Dean & Malamuth, 1997).

The prevalence of childhood sexual abuse is higher among sex offenders than non-offenders (Thomas & Fremouw, 2009), and being sexually abused during boyhood has been associated with sexual aggression and participation in prostitution (Dhaliwal, Gauzas, Antonowicz, & Ross, 1996). We predicted that sexual abuse during childhood would be more common among sex buyers than among men who do not buy sex.

The present study compares the attitudes and behaviors of men who buy sex with age-, ethnicity-, and education-matched men who do not buy sex. We compare the two groups on variables associated with sexual aggression. We hypothesize that if prostitution is a form of violence to a greater extent than it is a form of labor, then (a) men who buy sex will show a greater preference for non-relational sex than men who do not buy sex, as indicated by a higher number of lifetime number of sex partners and responses to relevant questionnaire items; (b) men who buy sex will score higher than men who do not buy sex on hostile masculinity; (c) hostility/aggressivity and impersonal sex will interact to predict sex buying; (d) men who buy sex will report

greater average fear of rejection by women than will men who do not buy sex; (e) men who buy sex will score higher than men who do not buy sex on rape myth acceptance; (f) men who buy sex will report a greater likelihood to rape than men who do not buy sex; (g) men who buy sex will report a history of more actual sexual aggression than men who do not buy sex; (h) men who buy sex will accept and normalize prostitution to a greater extent than will men who do not buy sex; (i) men who buy sex will be more likely than men who do not buy sex to see women in prostitution as intrinsically inferior and less than human when compared with other women; (j) men who buy sex will display less empathy for women in prostitution than will men who do not buy sex; (k) men who buy sex will perceive potential deterrents to using women in prostitution as less effective than will men who do not buy sex; and (l) the prevalence of childhood sexual abuse will be higher among men who buy sex than among men who do not buy sex.

## Method

### Participants

**Recruitment.** Respondents were recruited via newspaper (*Boston Phoenix*) and online (*Craigslist*) advertisements in Boston, Massachusetts, seeking adult men for a research study of sexual attitudes and behaviors. The ads noted that the 2-hr interviews were confidential and offered a US\$45 honorarium.

**Definitions.** Sex buyers (SB) were defined as those who acknowledged that they had bought sex from a woman or man in prostitution, escort, sex worker, or massage parlor worker or had exchanged something of value (such as food, drugs, or shelter) for a sex act. Non-sex-buyers (NSB) were defined as men who had not bought a sex worker, massage sex worker, or escort, phone sex, or a lap dance; had not been to a strip club more than once in the past year; had not exchanged something of value for a sex act; and had not used pornography more than once in the past week. We determined that there were likely to be sufficient numbers of men to constitute our NSB group even if we required infrequent pornography use.<sup>2</sup> Our decision to include men who used pornography once a week or less frequently was based on data from two studies of the prevalence of pornography use among college men. Among 595 men, 76% were using pornography on the Internet (Neil Malamuth, personal communication, September 7, 2009), and in another study, 48% of 313 men aged 18 to 26 used pornography once a week or more often (Carroll et al., 2008).

We conducted phone screenings of 1,247 men to select for the two groups (SB and NSB) and to match the two groups on age, ethnicity, and education. The groups were matched within 5 years on age. We used guidelines from the Massachusetts Census to establish approximate size of ethnic groups (Metro Boston Data Common, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000) who were categorized as African American, Asian or Pacific Islander, Latino or Hispanic, Native American, White European American or Caucasian, and multiracial. We classified five levels of education: less than high school diploma or GED, high school diploma/GED, some college, college degree, and graduate or professional degree.

### Procedure

Interviewees, who were anonymous, provided informed consent and were given contact information for a social worker who was available in the event of distress. The research protocol was approved by Prostitution Research and Education Ethics Review Committee and by the Pacific Graduate School of Psychology Institutional Review Board.

Eight interviewers were provided a week's training in interview techniques and questionnaire administration, including observed and practice interviews. Because secondary posttraumatic stress disorder is not uncommon among sexual violence researchers (Zurbriggen, 2002), the training included a discussion of psychological self-care. We provided biweekly debriefing and troubleshooting sessions to interviewers. In 7% of the interviews with NSB, interviewers were *somewhat* uncomfortable. In 13% of the interviews with SB, interviewers were *very* uncomfortable, sometimes feeling unsafe as a result of physical sexual harassment, for example, being touched in a sexualized manner.<sup>3</sup>

### Measures

We administered quantitative and qualitative measures as part of individual, face-to-face, structured interviews comprising 150 items. Interviews included both previously validated scales and questions developed specifically for this study.

Over a period of several years and with input from formerly prostituted women, attorneys, trafficking experts, psychologists, service providers, and advocates, we constructed items regarding sex buyers' general perceptions of women and their attitudes toward prostituted women in particular. This interview protocol has been used in previous samples of SB (e.g., Farley et al., 2011). Questions included history of using women in prostitution, perceptions

of women in prostitution, pimp–prostitute relationships, awareness of trafficking, and deterrents to prostitution. Sample items include,

What are the most important five reasons that men buy sex? (Five reasons were recorded verbatim and subjected to content analysis)

Prostitutes are different from other women. (Please indicate extent of your agreement): 100% 90% 80% 70% 60% 50% 40% 30% 20% 10% 0%

I am sensitive to rejection by women. (Please indicate extent of agreement): 100% 90% 80% 70% 60% 50% 40% 30% 20% 10% 0% We asked the interviewee to explain his response.

We asked the men whether or not each of 11 possible deterrents (e.g., greater criminal penalty, fines, educational program, public exposure) would deter men from buying sex, with responses coded 0 (no) or 1 (yes).

To clarify interviewees' perception of the emotional reality of prostitution for women in it, we asked them to describe what they believed the prostitute herself felt (Elliott, Bohart, Watson, & Greenberg, 2011). Empathy was operationally defined as the men's ability to describe accurately the overall percentage of positive or negative emotions that prostituted women themselves reported in a separate study (Kramer, 2003). Two coders independently rated the men's responses as positive, negative, or neutral. Interrater reliability (percentage of agreement in coding each word given by interviewees as positive, negative, or neutral) was 95.8% for coding NSB responses and 93.7% for SB responses.

Rape myths are false beliefs that shift the blame of rape from perpetrators to victims, justifying male sexual aggression against women (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). We used the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale Short Form (Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999) to measure the men's acceptance of rape myths. This scale includes 19 items scored on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). Cronbach's alpha in the present sample was .84 (.83 among SB and .86 among NSB), indicating strong internal consistency reliability.

We measured likelihood to rape using Malamuth's (1981) measure, which begins with, "If you could be assured that no one would know and that you could in no way be punished, how likely, if at all, would you be to . . ." Respondents rate sexual behaviors on a scale of 1 (*not at all likely; I would not do that*) to 5 (*very likely; I would probably do that*). Consistent with prior use of this measure (e.g., Malamuth, 1981), we used a response greater than 1 to either the item, "make a woman do something sexual she didn't

really want to do” or the item, “commit rape” to indicate at least some likelihood to rape.

We used the Sexual Experiences Scale to measure a “continuum of sexual aggression [that] . . . range[s] from intercourse achieved through verbal coercion and threatened force to intercourse achieved against consent through use of physical force (rape)” (Koss & Oros, 1982, p. 455). Internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s  $\alpha$ ) in the present sample was .82 (.83 among SB and .39 among NSB). The low Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  among NSB is attributable to low variability in this group on 10 of the 11 items.

Another measure assessed hostile masculine identity based on adversarial sexual beliefs, hostility toward women, the desire to dominate in relationships with women, and attitudes accepting of violence against women (Malamuth et al., 1991). The scale contains 34 items scored on a 7-point scale from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 7 (*agree strongly*). In the present sample, Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for the Hostile Masculinity Scale was .86 (.87 among SB, .83 among NSB).

We created composite variables representing hostility/aggressivity and impersonal sex. To represent hostility/aggressivity, we used a summed composite of the Hostile Masculinity scale (Malamuth et al., 1991; 0 = below vs. 1 = at or above the sample mean), Likelihood to Rape (Malamuth, 1981; 0 = no likelihood on both items vs. 1 = at least some likelihood on at least one item), and sexual aggression as measured by the Sexual Experiences Scale (Koss & Oros, 1982, 0 = below vs. 1 = at or above the sample mean). We represented impersonal sex using a summed composite of the items, “I like having sex with no emotional involvement or commitment” (0 = *disagree*, 1 = *agree*) and “I like having a variety of sex partners” (0 = *disagree*, 1 = *agree*) with lifetime number of sex partners (0 = at or below the sample median, 1 = above the median).

## Results

### Demographic Characteristics

Mean age was 41 (range = 20-75) for sex buyers (SB) and 40 (range = 18-77) for non-sex-buyers (NSB),  $t(199) = -0.067, p = .505$ . Median annual family income was about US\$40,000, with no significant difference between SB and NSB,  $\chi^2(1, N = 199) = 2.264, p = .132$ . About a third of each group had a college degree (32% of SB, 33% of NSB), a third reported some college education without a degree (36% of SB, 34% of NSB), and about one tenth indicated a graduate or professional degree (12% of SB and 11% of NSB),  $\chi^2(4, N = 200) = 0.500, p = .974$ . Slightly more than half of each group (56%

of SB, 58% of NSB) were European American, about one third were African American (32% of SB, 31% of NSB), and smaller proportions of the sample were Latino or Hispanic (6% of SB, 4% of NSB), multiracial (4% of SB, 6% of NSB), Native American (2% of SB, 0% of NSB), or Asian or Pacific Islander (0% of SB, 1% of NSB),  $\chi^2(2, N = 201) = 0.133, p = .936$ .

A large majority of the men (89% of SB and 93% of NSB) identified as heterosexual, with fewer identifying as homosexual (4% of SB and 3% of NSB) or bisexual (7% of SB and 4% of NSB). No respondents in either group identified as transgendered. Sixty-one percent of SB and 70% of NSB currently had a wife or girlfriend,  $\chi^2(1, N = 199) = 1.800, p = .180$ .

### *Number of Sex Partners*

SB had significantly more lifetime sex partners than NSB with 76% of SB and 33% of NSB reporting more than 15 sex partners,  $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 38.003, p < .001$ . Twice as many SB (70%) as NSB (28%) said they liked having a variety of sex partners,  $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 35.947, p < .0001$ , and that they preferred non-relational, non-committed sex,  $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 30.013, p < .0001$  (62% of SB and 24% of NSB).

### *Hostile Masculinity*

On the Hostile Masculinity Scale, SB had a more hostile masculine identity ( $M = 89.8$ ) than NSB ( $M = 79.7$ ),  $t(197) = -3.44, p = .001$ .

### *Fear of Rejection by Women*

SB more frequently reported that they feared rejection by women. On a scale of 1 to 7, SB averaged 5.27 (more sensitive to rejection) compared with 3.54 for NSB  $t(199) = -3.46, p = .001$ . The men described how prostitution mitigated their fear of rejection: "It's a service that you can go to for sexual favors if you're too shy to pick up women yourself, if you're insecure" (SB). Another said, "[A prostitute] is a person you can practice having sex with and not worry about being judged" (NSB).

### *Acceptance of Rape Myths*

Scores on the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale Short Form indicated that both SB and NSB tended to accept rape myths that normalized and justified sexual violence. SB had a mean rape myth score of 41.13 compared with NSB mean of 39.74,  $t(199) = -1.07, p = .287$ . SB (32%) were more likely

than NSB (20%) to believe that prostitution reduces the likelihood of rape,  $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 3.90, p = .048$ . A sex buyer explained,

They're frustrated, they can't get laid, so they go out and they're raping people. They get pissed off . . . Where there is no prostitution, there will be lots of rape; where there is lots of prostitution, no rapes.

### *Self-Reported Likelihood to Rape*

On Malamuth's (1981) scale, SB (15%) were more likely than NSB (2%) to report that they would force a woman to have sex or rape a woman if they could get away with it and if no one knew about it,  $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 11.00, p < .001$ .

### *Sexual Aggression*

On the Sexual Experiences Scale (Koss & Oros, 1982) SB reported that they had engaged in more sexually aggressive behaviors than had NSB, with a mean of 1.59 types of sexually aggressive behavior ( $SD = 1.83$ , range = 0-10) among the former compared with a mean of 0.53 ( $SD = 0.79$ , range = 0-4) among the latter,  $t(188) = -5.63, p < .001$ .

### *Interaction of Hostility/Aggressivity With Impersonal Sex*

We used a three-step hierarchical logistic regression model to test the hypothesis that the interaction of hostility/aggressivity with impersonal sex would be associated with buying sex. In the first step, the hostility/aggressivity composite served as the sole predictor of group membership (SB vs. NSB). In this model, hostile masculinity is significantly associated with buying sex, odds ratio (OR) = 2.18, 95% confidence interval (CI) = [1.56, 3.06]. In the second step, we included hostility/aggressivity and impersonal sex to predict buying sex. In this model, both hostility/aggressivity (OR = 1.82, 95% CI = [1.24, 2.67]) and impersonal sex (OR = 3.22, 95% CI = [2.24, 4.63]) have significant main effects on buying sex. In the final step, we included the interaction of hostility/aggressivity and impersonal sex. In this model, the main effect of hostility/aggressivity is not significant (OR = 0.84,  $\chi^2 = 0.257, p = .612$ ), the main effect of impersonal sex persists (OR = 1.83,  $\chi^2 = 5.953, p = .015$ ), and their interaction is significant, OR = 2.00,  $\chi^2 = 7.351, p = .007$ . To explicate this interaction, we estimated the main effect of hostility/aggressivity on buying sex in two groups: men who were below the sample mean on impersonal sex ( $n = 103$ ) and those who were at or above the mean on impersonal sex

( $n = 83$ ). Among men who were low on impersonal sex, hostility/aggressivity was unrelated to buying sex,  $OR = 1.31$ ,  $95\% CI = [0.83, 2.07]$ . Among men who were high on impersonal sex, hostility/aggressivity had a strong positive association with buying sex,  $OR = 4.37$ ,  $95\% CI = [1.86, 10.27]$ .

**Table 1.** Words Used by Sex Buyers, Non-Sex-Buyers, and Prostituted Women to Describe Feelings of Women During Prostitution.

	Positive Feeling Words	Neutral Feeling Words	Negative Feeling Words	Total Words
Sex buyers	40% (182)	17% (76)	44% (201)	459
Non-sex-buyers	18% (79)	11% (47)	72% (319)	445
Women in prostitution (Kramer, 2003)	9% (41)	14% (64)	77% (127)	232

## Empathy

To assess the men's empathy with women in prostitution, we asked them to estimate how women felt during prostitution, and compared these responses with those of women in another study who described how they actually felt during prostitution. We identified the men's positive, negative, and neutral descriptors of how they imagined the women felt. Common negative words used by both SB and NSB included *bored*, *used*, *disgust*, *sad*, *scared*, *dirty*, *degraded*, and *anxious*. Common positive words used by both groups included *happy*, *satisfied*, *excited*, *enjoyment*, and *pleased*. Common neutral words used by both groups included *money* or *payment*, *business*, and *job* or *work*. SB were less likely than NSB to accurately assess the emotional state (positive or negative) of women in prostitution. The assessment of the women's emotional state by NSB tended to be closer to the women's actual feelings during prostitution (Table 1).

## Acceptance of Prostitution

A minority of SB (23%) and NSB (11%) saw it as acceptable for their daughters to work in strip clubs, but this opinion was more common among SB,  $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 5.24, p = .022$ . Similarly, more SB (56%) than NSB (20%) felt that it was acceptable for their sons to go to brothels,  $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 28.00, < .001$ .

SB (48%) were more likely than NSB (26%) to agree that "most men go to prostitutes once in a while,"  $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 10.70, p = .001$ . More SB (62%) than NSB (37%) viewed prostitution as consenting sex,

$\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 12.94, p < .001$ . When the question was framed as choice, acceptance of prostitution increased in both groups although SB (93%) were more likely than NSB (66%) to state that women should have the choice to prostitute,  $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 22.00, p < .001$ . One man explained his understanding of choicelessness:

I don't think prostitution is quite the same as rape. Rape is worse. But it's close to the rape end of the spectrum. It's not rape, because there is superficial consent. On the face of it, the prostitute is agreeing to it. But deeper down, you can see that life circumstances have kind of forced her into that, even though she has agreed to it. It's like someone jumping from a burning building—you could say they made their choice to jump, but you could also say they had no choice. (NSB)

SB (37%) were more likely than NSB (21%) to state that once sex is paid for, women are obligated to do whatever the buyer wants,  $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 6.43, p = .011$ . SB (38%) were less likely than NSB (65%) to view prostitution as sexual exploitation  $\chi^2(1, N = 200) = 14.59, p < .001$ . Noting the history of childhood sexual assault common to most of those in prostitution (Abramovich, 2005; Silbert & Pines, 1983), an interviewee said, "Most of their baggage has to do with incest, rape, sexual abuse. They just carry a lot of baggage and they just carry on with it, doing that stuff over and over like they deserve it" (SB).

### *Opinions About Why Men Buy Sex*

We asked SB and NSB why men buy sex. When all 202 men were considered one group, they most commonly named sexual satisfaction or pleasure (21%) and relationship dissatisfaction or wish for variety (19%) as reasons for buying sex. The two groups were equally likely to report that men buy sex for these two reasons, and also because of a lack of emotional commitment, because it is a thrill, or as a form of male bonding. However, NSB were more likely than SB to report that control or domination,  $\chi^2(1, N = 202) = 4.029, p = .045$ , and addiction or emotional problems,  $\chi^2(1, N = 202) = 6.788, p = .009$ , were reasons why men buy sex. Comments by SB regarding why they bought sex included, "If my fiancée won't give me anal, I know someone who will." Some explained that they often perceived women in prostitution as objects: "For me, being with a prostitute is not a relationship. It's like having a cup of coffee, when you're done, you throw it out" (SB).

We asked interviewees how they would describe sex buyers. SB more often than NSB described men who buy sex in terms of positive dominance, endorsing terms such as *player* (44% of SB vs. 26% of NSB),  $\chi^2(1, N = 200)$

= 6.579,  $p = .010$ , or *stud* (20% vs. 7%),  $\chi^2(1, N = 200) = 6.939, p = .008$ . More NSB labeled sex buyers as *losers* (52% vs. 35%),  $\chi^2(1, N = 198) = 5.850, p = .016$ ; *unethical* (65.7% vs. 33%),  $\chi^2(1, N = 199) = 21.227, p < .0001$ ; or *desperate* (83.0% vs. 63.4%),  $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 9.859, p = .002$ . Fewer NSB (43%) than SB (67%) labeled sex buyers as *normal*,  $\chi^2(1, N = 180) = 11.064, p = .0009$ .

### Beliefs About Women Who Are Prostituted

SB were more likely to believe that prostituting women are intrinsically different from other women. On a scale ranging from 0 to 10 that evaluated this belief, the SB mean rating was 5.09 and the NSB mean rating was 3.61,  $t(197) = -3.09, p = .002$ . Some men explained how attitudes toward women in prostitution generalized to relationships with non-prostituting women. "It affects how you view the opposite sex . . . if the man has gone with prostitutes a lot he is going to think the woman he is with is like the prostitute" (SB).

### Sexual Abuse History

There was no statistically significant difference between SB (21%) and NSB (10%) in the prevalence of reported childhood sexual abuse,  $\chi^2(1, N = 195) = 3.380, p = .066$ . Yet a substantial minority of SB who reported a history of sexual abuse (41%) stated that their sexual abuse affected their decision to use women in prostitution. Fewer NSB (9%) viewed their sexual abuse as affecting their decision not to buy sex.

### Awareness of Pimping and Trafficking

Forty-one percent of SB had used a woman in prostitution who was controlled by a pimp. A similar proportion (43%) of NSB had observed a woman under pimp control. Two thirds of SB (66%) and NSB (66%) stated that a majority of women are lured, tricked, or trafficked into prostitution.

SB (96%) and NSB (97%) shared the opinion that minor children are almost always available for prostitution in bars, massage parlors, escort, and other prostitution in Boston. An SB reported that pimps had sought his help in recruiting women, asking him to "find them certain types of girls in the psych hospital . . ." Another SB observed that many men pimped their wives and girlfriends.

Both groups of men observed low self-esteem, depression, substance abuse, and dissociation in prostituted women. An NSB said, "Prostitution ruins self-esteem, self worth . . . it gives them a distorted image of men . . ."

An SB explained, "I think a lot of times they feel degraded. I mean the ones I know have no self confidence, so they feel less than a person, and more like a commodity." SB were aware of prostituted women's dissociation: "it's like she's not really there," and "Let's face it; sex with 3,000 guys tends to diminish real feelings."

### *Opinions About Deterrents to Prostitution*

Both SB (91%) and NSB (88%) agreed that the most effective deterrent to buying sex would be to list sex buyers on a sex offender registry,  $\chi^2(1, N = 200) = 0.479, p = .489$ . Next most effective were jail time (80% of SB, 83% of NSB),  $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 0.263, p = .608$ , and public exposure techniques such as having their name or photo publicized on a billboard (84% of SB, 83% of NSB),  $\chi^2(1, N = 200) = 0.064, p = .800$ , newspaper (82% of SB, 85% of NSB),  $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 0.292, p = .589$ , or the Internet (84% of SB, 85% of NSB),  $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 0.027, p = .869$ . A majority of both groups viewed greater criminal penalties (70% of SB, 81% of NSB),  $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 3.122, p = .077$ , vehicle impoundment (71% of SB, 82% of NSB),  $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 3.219, p = .073$ , and driver's license suspension (73% of SB, 84% of NSB),  $\chi^2(1, N = 198) = 3.595, p = .058$ , as effective deterrents. The men described how much jail time and what size fines would deter them. For SB, any amount of time in jail would deter 22%; several hours would deter 34%; 3 days would deter 71%; 3 weeks would deter 83%, and 1 month would deter 100%. NSB gave similar responses. Among SB, a fine of US\$50 would be sufficient to deter 17%, US\$300 would deter 41%, US\$500 would deter 66%, US\$2,000 would deter 90%, and US\$4,500 would deter 100%. NSB predictions were similar.

Many interviewees believed that laws against prostitution are rarely enforced, and even when enforced, they viewed the laws as having a trivial impact on them. Only 35% of SB said that there was a 100% likelihood that legal penalties for buying sex would affect their behavior, compared with 55% of NSB,  $\chi^2(1, N = 194) = 7.52, p = .006$ . Most of the men (96% of SB, 89% of NSB) believed that prostitution would never be abolished,  $\chi^2(1, N = 199) = 3.457, p = .063$ .

## **Discussion**

We compared a matched sample of 101 men who buy sex with an equal number of men who do not buy sex on various attitudes and behaviors, most of which have been empirically associated with increased likelihood of sexual aggression. We found that a greater number of these correlates were reported

by sex buyers. These findings are more consistent with an understanding of prostitution as sexual aggression than as sexual labor.

In keeping with previous research, not all of the factors associated with sexual aggression differentiated sex buyers from non-sex-buyers. Particularly noteworthy, we did not find differences in acceptance of rape myths. This may be a result of the existence of moderate levels of rape myth acceptance not only among arrested sex buyers (Monto & Hotaling, 2001) but also among samples of general population (Burt, 1980), college (Banyard, 2008), and community men (Widman, Olson, & Bolen, 2013). As a result of publicity about rape generally and rape myths specifically, there may be a general reluctance to endorse some rape myths, such as the belief that unless a weapon was used to coerce the woman, it should not be considered rape. The development of updated assessments of beliefs about rape may be needed.

There were no differences between the two groups on variables that are not correlates of sexual aggression. These include beliefs that a majority of women are lured, tricked, or trafficked into prostitution, that almost all bars and strip clubs in Boston hired minors, and beliefs regarding which deterrents to prostitution would be effective (e.g., arrest and jail time were considered effective as contrasted with community service and educational programs, which were considered ineffective).

Importantly, the present data supported most of the differences between sex buyers and non-sex-buyers predicted by the Confluence Model of sexual aggression. These included findings that sex buyers had more sex partners, were more likely to express a preference for impersonal sex, had greater hostile masculinity, had greater self-reported likelihood of raping, and had a greater history of sexual aggression. Particularly intriguing was this study's support for the prediction that the interaction of impersonal sexuality and high hostility/aggressivity characterized sex buyers, that is, being high on both impersonal sex and hostility/aggressivity best described sex buyers. The data were consistent with other findings correlating buying sex with committing rape (Heilman et al., 2014; Monto & McRee, 2005).

In related findings that suggest rationalization for rape, sex buyers in this study more often tended to see prostituted women as intrinsically different from other women and to deny the humanity of women in prostitution. Dehumanization of women has been associated with men's increased aggression (Greitemeyer & McLatchie, 2011; Rudman & Mescher, 2012).

We also found that sex buyers show less empathy for prostituted women than do non-sex-buyers. A key element in empathy is the ability to identify what someone else is feeling (Elliott et al., 2011). Future research on sex buyers might include general measures of both narcissism and empathy (Grijalva et al., 2015; Wheeler et al., 2002).

## Limitations of This Study

Given the logistic difficulties and cost of obtaining a random sample of men who are representative of sex buyers (Faugier & Cranfield, 1995; McKeganey & Barnard, 1996), our sampling procedure represents an advance over studies that rely solely on data from men arrested for soliciting prostitution. Yet, it is possible that men who respond to advertisements requesting participation in research on sexual attitudes may differ in unknown ways from the general population of men including sex buyers. Sex buyers in this study may have been more willing to reveal information about themselves because of the lack of police oversight and their anonymity. The physical and verbal sexual harassment of interviewers would probably not have occurred in a police-sponsored program.

Much of the information collected in this study was obtained by self-report. It is likely that participants' responses were influenced by their attempts to respond in a socially desirable direction, a common response set (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964). To the extent that a social desirability response set was operating, the men's responses would *minimize* endorsement of socially undesirable phenomena such as sexist attitudes, reports of sexual violence, and so on. Therefore we suggest that the numbers reported here may underestimate the attitudes and behaviors we assessed.

In considering alternative explanations for the current findings, one could suggest that the reason that men who buy sex were more like men at risk of sexual aggression than non-sex-buyers is that in the current context where prostitution is illegal, it is the more deviant, marginalized, and/or more hostile men who risk seeking out women in prostitution. Yet, the fact that we did not find differences on variables unrelated to sexual aggression is somewhat inconsistent with such an explanation, since we might expect more "deviant" men to generally differ on a wide variety of measures. In future research, a comparison of men who buy sex and those who do not in countries where prostitution is legal would provide useful data relevant to this issue.

## Policy Implications

There is considerable evidence that people in prostitution experience the sex industry as a form of aggression and exploitation (Boyer, 2008; Dworkin, 2000; Miller & Schwartz, 1995). Validating this perspective, in this study, men who bought sex demonstrated more sexually aggressive attitudes and behaviors than did non-sex-buyers.

Reducing or eliminating men's use of women in prostitution has been recommended based on the role of men's demand for prostitution in promoting

sex trafficking (Raymond, 2004; U.S. Department of State, 2005; Waltman, 2011a). Although a detailed discussion of legal approaches to prostitution is beyond the scope of this article, the abolitionist approach of the Swedish law differs significantly from the better-known approaches of criminalization, decriminalization, or legalization.<sup>4</sup> The Swedish law (a) decriminalizes the person selling sex/being sold in prostitution, (b) criminalizes the sex buyer, and (c) provides funding for exit services for those in prostitution. Evaluations of this approach suggest that it has significantly reduced trafficking (Waltman, 2011b, 2014).

As this study and others suggest, reducing men's demand for prostitution may also have broader positive social consequences. Having found that in five diverse cultures, buying sex was associated with perpetrating rape, Heilman et al. (2014) concluded that "it is critical to dedicate resources and effort to programs that directly tackle issues of power, gender norms, entitlement, and sexism . . ."

### **Authors' Note**

Lina Nealon was the project coordinator. Angel Daniels managed and supervised data entry and data summaries.

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### **Notes**

1. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act defines trafficking as "[T]he recruitment, [enticement,] harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act" (U.S. Code, 2012). Prostitution often meets the legal definition of human trafficking in that pimping of a prostituted person cannot be distinguished from the identical crimes perpetrated in trafficking. Noting the impossibility of separating prostitution from trafficking in the real world, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons noted that prostitution as it is practiced "usually does satisfy the elements of trafficking" (United Nations Economic and Social Council of the Commission on Human Rights, 2006). According to 18 estimates from 10 countries, most people in prostitution are pimped or trafficked (84%, ranging from 50% to 99%

- with 14 of the 18 estimates falling between 80% and 90%; Farley, Franzblau, & Kennedy, 2014).
2. Pornography production is usually filmed prostitution. Pornography may meet the legal definition of trafficking to the extent that the pornographer recruits, entices, or obtains the people depicted in pornography for the purpose of photographing commercial sex acts.
  3. Sexual harassment is defined as “unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that tends to create a hostile or offensive work environment.” Both sex buyers and non-sex-buyers sexually harassed interviewers, for example, “do these questions turn you on?” Harassment by non-sex-buyers included asking inappropriate personal questions such as where the interviewer lived or addressing the interviewer as “baby” or “darling.” Other sexual harassment by a non-sex-buyer included his statement that he was late for the interview because he was busy having sex with his wife. Sexual harassment by sex buyers was more frequent and more extreme; sometimes the interviewees treated the women interviewers like they treated prostituted women. For example, female interviewers were asked how they masturbated or had an interviewee’s “big dick” described to them. One interviewer commented, “He compared me to what he would have wanted a prostitute to look like. He just said, ‘Like you, a stereotypical fantasy girl.’” Several interviewers were propositioned for sex by sex buyers. An interviewer wrote in her notes, “He made me uncomfortable a few times when he stared at me in a certain way and also when he said he liked to use his memory and think of someone he was attracted to as pornography for himself.”
  4. For a discussion of empirical and legal evidence regarding decriminalized prostitution, see Waltman (2014).

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**Melissa Farley** is a psychologist who is Executive Director of Prostitution Research & Education. She has 49 publications in the field of violence against women, most of which address prostitution, pornography, and sex trafficking.

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**Neil Malamuth** is Professor of Communication and Psychology at UCLA. He has close to 150 publications, primarily focusing on the characteristics of men in the general population more likely to commit sexual aggression. His Confluence Model has enabled a successful profiling of such men.

**Laura Jarrett** is a litigation associate at Latham & Watkins LLP in Chicago, IL. A graduate of Harvard Law School, her current practice includes white collar defense, government investigations, and complex civil litigation in federal and state court.