

Human Trafficking vs Prostitution

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Human trafficking and prostitution are by definition the selling and soliciting of sex. The only difference is that a prostitute “wants” to sell themselves, or do they? Where does one draw the line between a victim and a whore? Is it possible that a predator could be so cunning as to convince their target that they “want” to solicit themselves? If so, we should not consider prostitutes criminals, but rather victims of another's perverse crime.

The common conception of human trafficking is that it is a forceful event, something where a person or a group is targeting a defenseless child or woman and stealing them away from their families for their own personal profit whether that be money or sexual pleasure. But is that all human trafficking is? The full definition of human trafficking is “...the trade of humans for the purpose of forced labour, sexual slavery, or commercial sexual exploitation for the trafficker or others”. Notice that included in the definition is “...or commercial sexual exploitation for the trafficker or others”, in other words a prostitute with a pimp should be legally considered a human trafficking victim. “Experts estimate that 80% of prostitutes solicit sex before they turn 18”(John Marshall) meaning that many of the prostitutes were likely sexually abused, or trafficked at young ages and did not know or believe that they could do anything else besides allow themselves to be used. So, they went into prostitution.

A prostitute with a pimp is being sexually exploited (or turned for tricks) by their pimp. Most prostitutes with pimps also are not compensated for their “work”. By definition a prostitute with a pimp, or sugar daddy, etc is being trafficked because they are benefiting their pimps by exploiting themselves sexually. So why punish the victim rather than the consumer?

It has been found that “Most prostitution is street-level, pimp-controlled prostitution, and prostitutes often report being raped or assaulted by sex buyers or *Johns*.” (John Marshall) even

high-level prostitutes are often assaulted by “Johns”, the biggest problem being that the prostitutes can not just go to law enforcement for help out of fear of punishment. Perhaps if we lowered the demand for prostitutes, rather than taking a few prostitutes off the streets- sex trafficking would not be such a big problem.

On the opposing side, however, how do we classify a true victim from someone who enjoys the game for example prostitutes who “pimp” themselves? By definition they are not being trafficked as their work is not benefitting anyone but themselves. So should self-prostitution be legal? Perhaps if self prostitution was legal it would waive interest in street-level prostitution that often involves violent pimps and johns, and allow sex workers to ask for law enforcement’s help when clients get too violent.

In conclusion, prostitution is a dangerous thing that many young woman are groomed into through sexual abuse. Prostitutes should be considered victims of their circumstances rather than criminals and should be treated as such whereas buyers and pimps should be imprisoned for their crimes.

## Citations

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