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“For Their Own Good?”: Sex work, social control and social workers, a historical perspective

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This article provides an overview of the social responses to prostitution since the mid 1800s and how the responses of social workers have been shaped by shifting social contexts. Understanding the complex interplay of these forces is key to mapping out the divergent social work practice approaches with sex workers and their influence over time. The article presents three main constructs which have influenced social work responses to sex work; 1) the notion that women needed to be protected for their own good, 2) competing class values and, 3) social control.

Introduction

Social work practice with women who exchange sex for material goods dates back to the beginnings of the social work profession in the settlements, benevolent societies and charity organizations. This article provides an overview of the social responses to prostitution since the mid 1800s and how the responses of social workers have been shaped by shifting social contexts. Understanding the complex interplay of these forces is key to mapping out the divergent social work practice approaches with sex workers and their influence over time. As social workers are increasingly called upon to ‘intervene’ in sex work related issues via public health, social welfare and policy, an understanding of past motivations and forces informing service creation and delivery holds the potential to facilitate increasingly sensitive and responsive programs for female sex workers.

The grounding premise of this paper is that social work involvement with prostitution demonstrates the extent to which social work practice reflects larger social beliefs and values. It will be argued that social work responses to sex work have been located within a constant effort to negotiate the influence of social reins on women and sex workers, and those forces which have helped shape our profession. This article identifies three main constructs that have influenced social work response to sex work: 1) the notion that women needed to be protected for their own good; 2) social control and competing class values and; 3) the fear of sex, specifically female sexuality. The third construct concerning female sexuality is interconnected and infused with the first and second constructs in the discussion that follows.

Protecting Women For Their Own Good

Evangelical Reformers

In every period, from the early social workers in the Evangelical movement, the Charity Organization Societies (COS) and the settlements, to present day interventions with women struggling with substance use, women on AFDC, or street youth, social work practice in this domain is threaded through with beliefs about what constitutes reasonable, and indeed moral conduct, particularly for women. The idea that women need to be protected for their own good is grounded in a sexist view of women that perceives women as "less capable" than their male counterparts. The more a woman deviated from what was considered acceptable female conduct, the more she was seen as lacking in moral character and the weaker she was perceived to be. Many of both early and more contemporary social workers considered prostitutes the weakest of the weak. Rarely have sex workers been regarded as the experts on their own lives. Rather, they have historically been perceived by the social work profession as incapable of taking care of themselves and therefore in need of protection.

Much of the early social work practice with prostitutes took the form of evangelical work during the mid 1800s. Evangelical female moral reformers tended to be from the middle and upper classes. Although they focused their efforts on the "dangerous" lower classes, they were also concerned with the upper class women, whom they believed had no one to chaperone them.

Because society did not have a place for women who had lost their virtue, evangelical reformers took it upon themselves to attempt to control male sexual aggression in order to protect women. Overall, their efforts included: 1) advocacy for legal remedies to punish men who violated chastity codes; 2) coercion of men to marry the women they had seduced and; 3) the urging of women to form alliances that they hoped would eventually compel men to adopt similar norms of behavior and accountability that were applied to women. Reform societies such as the New England Female Moral Reform Society were created to:

. . . guard our daughters, sisters, and female acquaintances from the delusive arts of corrupt and unprincipled men and to bring back to the paths of virtue those who have been drawn aside through the wiles of the destroyer (Hobson, 1987 p. 55).

The Society's interventions included a moral reform journal named the *Friend of Virtue* that warned women of male aggressiveness. Steeped in the moral earnestness of evangelical Christianity, the *Friend of Virtue* admonished women to watch out for libertine men cloaked in respectability.

Concerned with the urban moral order, female reformers endeavored to assert society's right to influence every aspect of personal behavior (Pivar, 1973). Consequently, moral reformers found themselves seduced by illicit sexuality. Reformers of this period regarded non-marital sexual relationships as always being a result of the exploitation of women, never an issue of freedom of sexual expression as has been argued in more contemporary times. They viewed the sexual double standard as an extension of the imbalance of power between the sexes (Hobson, 1987; Rosen, 1982). In fact, they linked prostitution to male dominance in economic, political, and social life. Prostitutes, according to the reformers, were victims of male aggression and prostitution was analyzed in terms of women's lack of protection rather than their lack of equal rights.

The approach of the religious reformers to prostitution excluded the voices and perspectives of prostitutes and thus obscured the possibility that women were not victims and that perhaps women exercised agency in their choice to engage in sex work. Interestingly enough, an 1858 study of two thousand prostitutes in New York's House of Correction on Blackwell's

Island, did not support the evangelical's claim that seduction and male sexual aggression pulled women into prostitution. Sanger (1858) found that only 15 percent of the prostitutes in his study listed seduction as the cause of prostitution. Indeed, more than one third of the study participants reported having a "personal inclination" to prostitution, "wanting an easy life", or ironically, "being too lazy to work" as reasons for entering prostitution.

Despite an awareness of a broader theoretical framework for understanding prostitution, one that considered the impact of political and economic forces on women's lives, evangelicals chose to adopt an individualized "treatment" approach that essentially held *fallen women* accountable by focusing on their individual weaknesses and targeting them for interventive strategies. This practice fit with the wider belief of the time that held individuals responsible for their own problems and poverty. The practice of saving women from their destructive (and perhaps dangerous) selves exercised by the evangelical workers laid the groundwork for future legal reforms and social work practice around sex work in the charity organizations, settlements and contemporary social service programs.

White Slavery Laws

Organized movements against "White Slavery" were prominent during the Progressive Era. The specter of White Slavery became an image used to depict commercial sex as a form of slavery where women were "trafficked" against their will into the trade by third parties, typically foreign men, such as pimps, madams and proprietors who were increasingly organizing the business. One of the first publicized exposes on sexual trafficking appeared in 1885, when a British journalist, W. T. Stead, described his purchase of a young woman in London from her mother, supposedly for use in prostitution in Paris (Chapkis, 1997; Connelly, 1980). This story, among others, created the impression that all prostitution involved the sexual enslavement of young girls.¹ Consequently, the fear of White Slavery was based not on a large number of documented cases, but rather, was fueled by fears of cultural contamination (due to immigration), moral pollution, social anxieties about changing gender roles, sex, class and race relations at the turn of the century. Some have argued that the

recent emancipation of African American slaves added to racial anxieties in the US where freed slaves were perceived as threats to sexual and racial purity (Chapkis, 1997). Studies suggest that very few prostitutes, when asked, reported being trapped or coerced into bondage (Connelly, 1980; Rosen, 1982).

The perceived threat of White Slavery was one of the forces that led to the development of laws regulating prostitution in 1874, 1881, 1907 and 1910. The earliest of these laws prohibited the trafficking of immigrant women into the US for prostitution while the White Slave Traffic Act otherwise known as the Mann Act, of 1910, prohibited the importation of any girl or woman for immoral purposes or prostitution between countries or across state lines. By 1920, almost every city in the U.S. had outlawed soliciting and had enacted abatement laws to close down brothels. It was in the name of protecting women, white women, that the Mann Act placed restrictions on women's bodies, to safeguard them from sexual slavery. Ironically, vice commission statistics on prostitutes demonstrated that with the exception of the traffic in Asian women, the majority of prostitutes were native-born daughters of immigrants (Hobson, 1987; Rosen, 1982). This note is significant because there is anecdotal data that suggests that contemporary prostitution regulations disproportionately target immigrant women and women of color (Bell, 1987; Delacoste & Alexander, 1987; McClintock, 1993).

Unwed Mothers

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, women who engaged in non-marital sexual relations and thus stepped outside of acceptable roles of female sexual behavior were believed to have fallen from "virtuous womanhood" (Rothman, 1978). Social deviants such as prostitutes and women who engaged in non-marital sexual relations were regarded by reformers to be in desperate need of rescue and reform. One result of increasing concern over the rates of illegitimacy was the development of rescue homes for fallen women and maternity homes around the country. Kunzel (1993) notes however, that before turning their attention to unwed mothers, rescue homes worked almost entirely with prostitutes. Rescue homes, which were first opened in the 1880s in the United States, represented one of the first organized responses to the plight of

fallen women. The homes were meant to be temporary sanctuaries for women who had gone astray and lost their chastity. Radical evangelism, hospitality and 'salvation' were offered by the homes for women/victims who were believed to have been led astray and exploited by libertine men. While Bullough (1987) argues that the argument of protection for women has been the Achilles heel of women's movements, as it has justified punitive action against women for their own good, this author contends that 'the argument' has been misleading. For, it was women's sex, specifically their virginal, pure, chaste sex that lay at the core of society's call for protection, not the whole woman.

Social Control and Competing Class Values

Although (heterosexual) prostitution encounters typically involve a female worker and a male client, historical and contemporary social and legal reform efforts have almost exclusively targeted the women. Women's bodies, not men's, have been regulated and controlled as a result of social concerns around prostitution. Social workers have contributed to and perpetuated the social control of women's bodies by exclusively targeting women through reform and rescue efforts, and therefore contributing to the belief that women are at the heart of the "prostitution problem".

While the legislature created laws such as the Mann Act to protect women from exploitation and dangerous male desire, it simultaneously created laws to protect men from the "disease carrying prostitute". The vigorous attention to social hygiene moved the prostitution debates out of the religious realm and into the realm of science and politics (Connelly, 1980; Cree, 1985; Pivar, 1973; Rosen, 1982). The Progressive crusaders' attempts to "cleanse the nation" helped support the discovery of the impact of sexually transmitted diseases on the physical conditions of the armed forces prior to and during W.W.I. With an insatiable focus on sex, and an overall objective to have love conquer lust, purity reformers played a hand in bridging professional and moral divides between physical and spiritual salvation. Because the purity reformers viewed sexual morality (and behavior) as the underpinnings of social morality, they spent a considerable

amount of energy influencing the medical profession and social hygienists to join their anti-prostitution crusades. Consequently, purity reformers infused religious values into health movements by attempting to control citizens' sexual behaviors (Pivar, 1983).

In 1910, the New York legislature passed the Page Bill requiring women convicted of prostitution offenses to be examined for sexually transmitted diseases. American feminists who had rallied behind Josephine Butler for her crusade against the Contagious Diseases Acts² (CDA) in England, organized an opposition to such laws in the States. Like Butler, American feminists, in tandem with some purity reformers, argued that mandatory medical exams on prostitutes perpetuated a sexual double standard that held prostitutes, not their clients, responsible for the transmission of disease. Many of the purity reformers argued, like Josephine Butler, that the mandatory medical exams were a form of sexual assault. Opponents of legislation like the Page Bill regarded the matter as one of individual liberty versus state control, rather than an issue of patriarchal exploitation of vulnerable women.

Charity Organization Society (COS) and Friendly Visitors

Charity organizations had their beginnings in 1877, in Buffalo, New York. By the 1890's over 100 cities in the US had charity organization societies (COS) designed to more systematically provide relief to the poor. Issues of morality and a belief that the poor were morally responsible for their own circumstances and flaws were the guiding forces behind charity organizations (Boyer, 1978; Kemp, 1994). Consequently, they saw their main objective as the eradication of the "immoral taint" simmering at the core of every slum (Boyer, 1978).

COS used middle and upper class volunteers, mostly female, known as friendly visitors to attempt to transform the social and moral characters of their 'slum' neighbors through the assumed power of friendship and human interaction. A leader in the COS movement, Mary Richmond's 1899 manual, *Friendly Visiting Among the Poor* reaffirmed the long-standing charity organization hope that the poor would unconsciously imitate the middle-class visitor and gradually adopt her values (Boyer, 1978).

Although the friendly visitors labeled their work as guidance and neighborliness, social control was often at the root of

their efforts. Unlike the Evangelical workers who saw women as victims of male aggression, COS workers regarded women as incapable of "making good decisions" consequently making themselves susceptible to sexual advances (Stadum, 1992). To protect the feeble women, COS workers and friendly visitors toiled to solicit information about unknown men who called on young women. Did the neighbors know him? Did it appear that he was welcome? Some friendly visitors even went as far as to enlist neighborhood women as lookouts to check for men's union suits on the clotheslines of single or *deserted* women (Stadum, 1992). Like their evangelical predecessors, friendly visitors were greatly disturbed and/or intrigued by sexuality and rumors of female immorality.

The Settlement Houses

While the concept of the settlement house originated in London, the first American settlement house was founded in New York City in 1886. Jane Addams founded Hull House three years later in Chicago. The young social work profession saw settlement houses as innovative and fortuitous in helping immigrants adapt to life in the US, useful in helping meet the needs of the low-income neighborhoods and beneficial in bringing about reform (Trolander, 1987). Like the COS, settlement houses were concerned with helping the poor and restoring social order. However, settlement houses paid more attention to the impact of external conditions on individuals' lives than did the COS. Settlement houses also differed from charity organizations in their perceptions of the urban moral situation and the responsibilities of the middle class toward the poor. Settlement leaders, for instance, tended to be less outwardly judgmental of the urban poor than their COS counterparts. While the COS worked to collect data about individuals and their families, settlement workers, equally interested with data, labored to collect information about neighborhoods, the political world and industry.

While Jane Addams and other notable female Hull House reformers worked to abolish prostitution, they also engaged in data collection on the demographics of prostitutes.

Reformers believed that scientific investigations of prostitution would yield a solution, as laboratory experiments isolated bacteria

and produced cures for disease. However, hidden agendas, unconscious motivations, and assumptions about sexual and social relationships permeated the social laboratory in prostitution studies. (Hobson, 1987, p. 155)

While the move towards data collection among settlement workers reflects social work's turn to science as a means to professionalize and establish jurisdiction over given social problems, it also reflected a broader belief held by reformers that scientific knowledge was evidence of the evolution of *man*. There was hope that this evolution would provide answers to the mastery of the mind, body and soul relationships. Hidden agendas and social values embedded in research were visible through 'scientific questionnaires' and coding of the data. Categories for answers to, "reasons for entering the business" included; mental deficiency, degeneracy and, weakness of character (Hobson, 1987).

Although early social workers shared a belief that society could be perfected (Addams, 1912) they often differed on the means through which to achieve such social change. For instance, while evangelical workers believed that society could change for the best by relying on spiritual 'armor' and conversion tactics, settlement workers and case workers adopted the Progressive belief of social change similar to Enlightenment thinking, that valued statistical analysis and scientific theories. Despite their apparent openness to the way of life in their local communities, settlement workers were part of the second anti-prostitution crusade (Bullough & Bullough, 1987) in the early 1900s. Influenced by the notion of prostitution as sexual slavery, in her book *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil* (1912), Addams referred to prostitutes as "victims of White slavery" who needed to be rescued from immoral people and forces. American feminists agreed with Addams that prostitution was "the social evil" (Vice Commission of Chicago, 1911, cited in Addams, 1912, p. 4) that rendered women powerless to save themselves. Jane Addams believed that prostitution would eventually go away once society moved to the next level of moral development (Addams, 1912).

Many of the settlement leaders, not just at Hull House, were feminists who believed, like many of the early 20th century feminists, that a prostitution-free society was essential for the emancipation of women (Abrams, 2000; Rosen, 1982). As women gained

a foothold in the public arena through such venues as social work and the settlement houses, competing feminist groups banded together to launch public debates over prostitution policy. Although different women's groups analyzed prostitution differently, there seemed to be a consensus among the female social reformers that prostitution was both a symbol of moral corruption that sanctioned sexual and financial exploitation of women's bodies, and a threat to women's homes (via venereal diseases). This perspective deviated from the construction of the individual predatory man of the earlier era.

World War I

With the onset of W.W.I, the prostitute was no longer seen as a victim of White Slavery, rather she became the number one enemy on the home front where her sex and sexuality were considered dangerous. War propaganda constructed the prostitute as diseased and predatory, a woman who "could do more harm than any German fleet of airplanes" (Hobson, 1987, p. 165). The portrayal of prostitutes as disease carriers was heightened by a national concern with venereal diseases at the time (Pivar, 1973; Rosen, 1982). The fear of prostitutes as vectors of disease created even more work for women engaged in rescue and reform work. Women engaged in settlement work and other types of community service were called upon to help fight the war of disease on the home front. For instance volunteer hostess clubs that offered *wholesome* entertainment near training camps were established and chaperoned for servicemen and single women at public dances (Hobson, 1987). Federal legislation, much like that proposed to deal with TB and HIV in more contemporary times, was also developed that mandated the quarantine of civilian venereal disease carriers. Because women were perceived as the infectors of men, women were disproportionately targeted for legislation. These forms of legislation represent some of the most blatant examples of sex discrimination in the history of American justice. Some of the quarantined women eventually found themselves in long term custodial care in homes for the "feeble-minded" run by rescue workers. Feeble-mindedness in women was believed to be related to early sexual maturation and sexual promiscuity. The theory behind feeble-mindedness held

that "an overdeveloped body signaled an underdeveloped mind" (Hobson, 1987, p. 191). Women sent to the special institutions for the feeble-minded were labeled as "imbeciles" who did not have the backbone to say no to vicious men and therefore needed protection. Consequently, their sexuality was simultaneously viewed as dangerous and in need of protection.

1920s–1950s: Shifting Social Work Roles and Identities

During the 1920s social workers continued the struggle to construct their identities as social work professionals and to distance themselves from the image of the benevolent and moralistic female worker. Social workers, especially women, challenged the notion that care taking and nurturing were natural female roles. An increased use of science, the refinement of social work curricula (Kemp, 1994; Trolander, 1987) and a close relationship with the fields of psychiatry and medicine served as tools to gain professional status (Abbott, 1988; Abrams & Curran, 2000; Kemp, 1994).

[s]ocial workers were finding individual approaches to personal problems far more congenial than the social-diagnosis paradigm bequeathed to them by Mary Richmond. The individual approaches, which they borrowed directly from psychiatry, offered therapeutic answers that casework did not . . . Psychiatric social work flourished during the nineteen twenties, becoming the most prestigious of the social work specialties (Abbot, 1982, p.302).

Class Informs Professional Responses

As social workers began to professionalize they attempted to set themselves apart from those doing Christian and church-based work, namely the evangelical and charity workers. Consequently, class tensions associated with social and occupational status developed between the "professionals" and the "non-professionals." Despite the tensions, moral reform workers and social workers essentially performed the same kind of familiar rehabilitative and rescue work they had always engaged in with fallen women. Social workers tried to rehabilitate fallen women by changing their personalities through case work and therapy, while evangelicals used religion. Both groups of reformers thus used interventions that focused almost entirely on the individual.

Psychoanalytic Theory

As professional social workers attempted to set themselves apart from their Christian counterparts, interventions grounded in medical models of treatment became more prominent among the professional social workers. Consequently, for 40 years after W.W.I the discourse on prostitution was largely shaped by psychiatrists who considered that the causes of prostitution could be traced back to the individual "neurotic," "frigid" and/or "masochistic" female (Hobson, 1987). Edward Glover's research on prostitutes provides an example of one of the more influential contributions to this school of thought. In 1945, Glover, a psychiatrist, published a paper, *The Psycho-pathology of Prostitution* in which he interpreted prostitution as evidence of an unresolved Oedipus conflict. Prostitutes, according to Glover, had unresolved hostilities towards their mothers, acute disappointments with their fathers, were sexually frigid, hostile to men, and had homosexual tendencies. Frank Caprio (also a psychiatrist who conducted interviews with prostitutes in brothels across the country) similarly argued in 1953, that prostitution was a behavior deviation that primarily appealed to women who had homosexual tendencies. Consistent with social attitudes that blamed individuals for social problems, Caprio reported that prostitutes were emotionally "sick people" who tried to hide their lesbian tendencies by openly engaging in sexual activities with men for money. In his 1958 study "The Call Girl", Harold Greenwald, concluded that call girls suffer from anxiety, have a poor self-image, have an inability to form lasting relationships, are lonely and suffer from depression.

Like most delinquents the girls could not accept the values of our society and make them part of their own value system, but while there was little evidence of a consistent value system, all of the girls interviewed showed varying degrees of guilt feelings. They seemed unable to restrain themselves from impulsively acting out in a manner that made them social outcasts. Becoming social outcasts only added to their feelings of guilt. This guilt, when internalized was frequently the cause of intense depression (Greenwald, 1970, p. 186).

Greenwald, a social psychologist, urged social workers, parents and teachers to be very aware of these tendencies and take

appropriate steps to prevent their "flowering into full-scale professionalism" (p. 242), especially since they tended to appear early in youth. Appropriate interventions included referral to mental hygiene clinics. Unlike the evangelical workers who believed that women "fell" into prostitution as victims, Greenwald repeatedly referred to "the personality which makes it possible for a girl to choose the prostitutes' profession" (p. 242). Ironically, his pathologizing of prostitutes acknowledged a girl's agency to choose the profession, a controversial recognition that is still highly debated within the social work profession in the 1990s.

Sex Workers Speak Out:

Reactions to Social Control and the Case for Protection

Prostitution re-emerged as a spotlight issue within feminist arenas in the 1960s. The interest in prostitution reform during the 1960s came about in much the same way it had in the past, that is, it rode on the coattails of other social movements (Hobson, 1987). As the civil rights movement led a heightened awareness of all human rights, individuals began to protest governmental interference in private sexual acts. Civil libertarian lawyers and feminist activists again contested prostitution laws and social injustices against sex workers.

The relationship between feminism and sex work has been rocky at best. In fact, the contemporary feminist debates on sex work, which began in the 1960s over pornography, have often been referred to as the "feminist sex wars". Contemporary debates on sex work largely revolve around a polarized argument that constructs sex work as either exploitive or liberating and, sex workers as coerced victims or empowered whores (Sloan & Wahab, 2000). Proponents of sex work as exploitive and victimizing are often labeled as abolitionists while members of the other camp, those who challenge such a construction, are frequently labeled sex positive. Abolitionists such as Kathleen Barry, Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon, reject the notion that women freely choose sex work. Rather, they contend that in the United States, with its high rates of child abuse, wife battering, rape, poor female-headed households and inequitable wages, women live with civil inequity that does not allow free choices (Sloan & Wahab, 2000).

Sex positive voices can be heard through the sex workers' rights movement. In 1973, Margo St. James founded the first American sex workers' rights organization, COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics). By the mid 1970s other sex workers' rights organizations sprang up across the country and the world.³ In 1985, several groups came together in Amsterdam to form The International Committee on Prostitutes' Rights (ICPR). The prostitutes' rights movement's membership, international in structure, is open to all, but leadership has been mostly in the hands of sex workers. The sex workers' rights movement was founded on three general tenets. First, members of the movement do not believe that all sex work is forced and/or coerced. On the contrary, activists argue that many sex workers freely choose the occupation (Jenness, 1993; Pheterson, 1989). Second, members argue that sex work should be recognized as legitimate work (Jenness, 1993; Pheterson, 1989). Third, members argue that it is a violation of a woman's civil rights to be denied the opportunity to engage in sex work (Jenness, 1993; Pheterson, 1989). Consequently, the presence of sex workers' rights groups has provided a space for sex workers to speak for themselves and educate others including social workers about their varied experiences, desires and needs.

Social work services have been most greatly influenced by the anti-prostitution voices, perhaps because the arguments and agenda of these camps have proved more consistent with historical social work perspectives that regarded prostitutes as victims and/or deviants in need of rescue and/or reform. Although few social service programs in the US provide services specifically to sex workers, social workers provide services to some sex workers through correctional, AFDC, domestic violence, rape relief, public health and HIV/AIDS related programs. However, because sex workers rarely disclose their occupation to social service providers for fear of stigma and arrest (Boyer, Chapman, & Marshall, 1993; Weiner, 1996), social workers don't always know when a client is involved in the sex industry, limiting the social worker's ability to meet the needs of clients that are specific to sex work. Women who are unable to hide their sex worker status are frequently the most vulnerable because they are either homeless, addicted to drugs or perhaps have serious health conditions (Weiner, 1996). Consequently, many women who reveal their status are

turned away from social service programs (like domestic violence shelters or long term alcohol and drug treatment) out of fear that they will compromise the programs by continuing to trade sex for drugs or money (Weiner, 1996). Besides past and present sex worker-run organizations like COYOTE, California Prostitutes' Education Network (Cal-Pep), Black Stockings, Hooking is Real Employment (HIRE) and, Prostitutes of New York (PONY), there remain limited programs that provide services directly to sex workers.

HIV/AIDS

Despite the fact that there is no evidence that female sex workers have a higher rate of HIV infection than do non-sex working women, sex workers have again been scapegoated for the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (Sacks, 1996). The stigmatization of sex workers as vectors of HIV has provided an avenue for tenuous legitimization for some sex workers. As sex workers' groups and other organizations have created HIV / AIDS education outreach programs to those in the industry, governments have provided financial support for some of these programs. The onset of the AIDS epidemic and the emergence of "John's Schools"⁴ (Moto; 2000) across the country have created opportunities for social workers, once again, to play a hand in the profession's historic battle against vice through needle exchange programs, HIV / AIDS outreach programs, safer sex education and public health programs for people with HIV.

Conclusion

The Evangelicals believed that women needed to be protected from aggressive male desire, COS workers believed that women needed to be protected from lower class values, and settlement workers like Jane Addams, believed that women needed to be protected from White Slavery. Contemporary social workers, like the Evangelical workers, argue that female sex workers need to be protected from the patriarchal exploitation of women.

Ultimately, competing class values and fears about sex helped shape the strategies used by social workers to protect women for their own good. As discussed in this article, from the mid 1800s to

the early 1900s immorality was largely perceived to be a characteristic of the lower classes. Sexual deviancy, such as prostitution and unmarried motherhood attracted much attention from middle and upper class men and women engaged in reform, rescue and early social work efforts, who believed that their class positions exempted them from any implications of immorality.

Despite different perspectives on prostitution adopted by moral, religious, and social workers since the mid 1800s, virtually all of the organized efforts to reform prostitution have targeted individual women and their character. The COS workers believed for example, that poverty related problems (such as immorality) were rooted in individual weaknesses, and their efforts focused on reforming moral character, especially that of low-income women. The settlement workers moved beyond a strictly individualized analysis of prostitution by acknowledging social forces that led women into prostitution, but continued to stress the individual components of prostitution by portraying prostitutes as victims of sexual slavery, and by calling for the protection of the "weak", as did evangelical workers, rather than holding the perceived perpetrators accountable. Likewise, the view of prostitutes as pathological deviants and victims of feeble-mindedness held by social workers in the 1950s continues to influence much of contemporary social work efforts with this population today. Finally, many of the beliefs and values that shaped early social work practice with fallen women continue to inform contemporary social work practice with women in the sex industry. One might argue that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

Notes

1. Chapkis (1997) reports that historical records suggest that most British prostitutes were not sold into the trade, rather they were young women who consciously engaged in prostitution for economic reasons.
2. In order to control the spread of venereal diseases to the armed forces, the British government established the Contagious Diseases Acts (CD). The CD acts of 1864, 1866 and 1869 legislated for the examination, regulation and isolation of women who were believed to be prostitutes (Cree, 1995). Under the CD acts, prostitutes were subject to mandatory medical exams (Bullough & Bullough, 1987; Roberts, 1992). Foucault (1978) argued that the CD acts represented a contest over who had the authority to speak about prostitution and sexual behavior and about how prostitution was to be constructed.

3. The United States Prostitutes Collective (US PROS) began as an extension of the New York Prostitutes Collective (NYP) that began in 1979. The English Collective of Prostitutes came together in 1975 as an independent organization within the International Wages for Housework Campaign. The Red Thread in the Netherlands began as a support group for past and present sex workers in January of 1984, initiated by Jan Viseer of the A de Graff Foundation. SIN was previously known as the Prostitutes Association of South Australia (PASA) formed in 1989 by a sex worker/madam who was fed up with police harassment. Prostitutes Of New York (PONY) has had three incarnations; it was first founded in the late 1970s by Jean Powell, the second phase was organized by Iris de la Cruz in the 1980s, as of 1989 PONY is led by a steering committee. Other prostitutes rights groups include, Canadian Organization for Prostitutes' Rights (CORP) and Hooking Is Real Employment (HIRE).
4. Most Johns Schools are diversion programs that are offered to first time offenders of prostitution. The Johns School is usually a full day activity comprised of several workshops addressing issues of sexual health, ethics, morality etc. Although each John School is different, many of the "Schools" employ ex-sex workers to speak to offenders about their horrible experiences as sex workers. The objective is often to use guilt as a means to deter clients from purchasing the services of sex workers in the future. Members of prostitutes' rights organizations argue that John Schools simply perpetuate the myth that all sex workers regard themselves as victims of exploitation, and that they are incapable of speaking on their own behalf.

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