Empowering Young Men to End Sexual Exploitation

2010-2011

Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE)



*Abstract*:

The purpose of this report is to explore attitudinal change on the issue of sexual exploitation from late adolescent males who participated in a curriculum titled: *Empowering Young Men to End Sexual Exploitation,* created by the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE). The curriculum is geared toward adolescent males between the 8th and 12th grades and teaches about issues of sexual exploitation. It is broken into 4 different sessions where each week addresses issues relating to gender inequality, violence against women, and the demand that is created by those who buy sex. Data was gathered by administering a pre-test prior to the four-session curriculum and a post-test after the four-session curriculum is complete to assess the program’s effectiveness in terms of attitudinal change and potential behavioral change regarding sex trade patronage.

*Introduction*:

The Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE) works to end sexual assault and sexual exploitation through policy reform, legal services, prevention, and community engagement. CAASE encourages members in the community such as churches, schools, non-profit organizations, and college students to take action to end sexual harm. To help prevent sexual exploitation from occurring, CAASE has created a four week prevention curriculum comprised of four 45-minute sessions that address issues of sexual exploitation. The target group for the prevention curriculum is adolescent males in grades 8 through 12. CAASE’s curriculum is implemented in an all-male space for the following reasons:

* Men generally make up the vast majority of those who purchase sex.
* Male facilitators are able to demonstrate pro-social behavior which encourages similar behavior by the adolescent males, which in turn can result in positive male attitude changes toward women and girls.[[1]](#endnote-1)
* Young men tend to talk more openly about these subjects when it is “just the guys.”

Research in Chicago has found that the average age that men begin using prostitution is 21, which is why CAASE strives to reach out to adolescent males while they are still in high school.[[2]](#endnote-2) It is by teaching young men about the damaging and harmful impact of the sex trade on both those being prostituted, but also those purchasing sex, that participants can recognize prostitution as harmful and work to help stop sexual exploitation through personal action and community activism.

CAASE’s curriculum was launched in 2010 and is the first curriculum in the country aimed at teaching adolescent males about the harms caused by prostitution and sexual exploitation. Since it was launched, it has been implemented to over 1,000 participants and the curriculum is now being used as a national model throughout the country. Participants in the curriculum are challenged to critically think about issues of gender, masculinity, hyper-sexualization in our culture, and what they can do to be part of the solution of ending sexual exploitation. Session one of the curriculum addresses social constructs of masculinity and highlights media that objectify and degrade women. Session two defines common terms of the sex trade, examines various examples of exploitation, and explores how the sex trade exists because there is a demand to purchase sex. Session three deconstructs misconceptions of the sex trade by discrediting ideas such as women enter prostitution by choice and that pimps protect women in prostitution. Session three also addresses the role of demand in fueling the sex trade and shows how the recruiting of people into prostitution is a direct response to those who wish to purchase sex. It also helps students understand the various forms of the sex trade as not only prostitution, but also including pornography, street prostitution, escort services, and strip clubs. Lastly, session four demonstrates how demand for sex is a global problem and asks the participants to state what they can do to take action against sexual harm.

To assess the effectiveness of this program, CAASE created a pre-and post-test which was administered to all participants. Both tests provided Likert scale questions with the post-test included open-ended questions such as: “I learned that…” “I was disappointed with…” “What I still want to know is…” and “From now on I will…”

164 students represented the group that had completed both the pre-test and the post-test, though 716 students participated in the curriculum. Students were eliminated from the sample if they did not fill out both questionnaires.

*Methods*:

The pre-test was given to all participants at the beginning of the first session and a post-test was given at the end of the fourth session to assess attitude change among participants. The tests were administered to 164 adolescent males between the ages of 13 to 18. The students were asked to evaluate 23 statements on a 5-point Likert scale that related to sexual exploitation issues. Examples of questions included: “Women choose to enter prostitution,” “Pimps provide protection to women in prostitution,” and “Women in prostitution often experience violence from their pimp.” The post-test included these same questions as well as open-ended questions related to what the adolescent males had learned, what they were surprised by, what they still wanted to know, and what they will do differently because of the curriculum.

*Results:*

Data from the pre-tests and post-tests indicate a significant change of attitude in one-third of the 23 Likert scale questions. These findings were calculated by analyzing the mean, mode, and Ttest for each question.

The questions that showed significant improvement in attitude from the pre-test to the post-test are as follows:

* The existence of prostitution is a serious problem in the U.S.
* Women involved in prostitution are there by choice
* Most of the money a prostitute makes goes to her pimp
* Prostitutes can stop having sex for money whenever they want
* Most women enter prostitution as children
* Purchasing sex is just a way to express normal male desires and behaviors
* Prostitutes cannot be raped if they are getting paid

The following questions did not show statistically significant change in attitude:

* Prostitution is an easy way to make a lot of money
* Some prostitutes live a rich and glamorous lifestyle
* Prostitution is just another form of work
* Prostitutes enjoy having sex with their customers
* Prostitution mostly takes place on the street
* Pimps offer real protection to prostitutes
* Most prostitutes are controlled by their pimp
* Most men prefer young prostitutes
* Prostitution does not hurt anyone involved
* Prostitutes often experience violence from their customers
* A reason men purchase sex is because there are no consequences for getting caught
* Prostitution exists because men’s willingness to purchase sex creates a demand for it
* The availability of prostitution reduces the occurrence of rape
* Arresting prostitutes is a good long term solution for ending prostitution

Questions that showed improvement, but were not statistically significant (i.e. *p* >.05) were:

* There is nothing wrong with prostitution
* It is OK for a man to go to a prostitute if he is unhappy with his girlfriend or wife

When analyzing the participants’ open-ended responses in the post-tests, 41% of participants were surprised by the age in which women enter prostitution, which is consistent with the attitude change in the participants’ Likert scale answers related to the same issue. Thirteen percent of participants were disappointed with not only the actions of pimps, but also the lack of knowledge of prostitution and sexual exploitation prevalent in our society. Out of the male students evaluated, 9% of participants wondered why girls entered prostitution and why the law does not do more to prevent prostitution. When asked what the students can do to end sexual exploitation, 18% of participants would like to raise awareness of issues of sexual exploitation and 13% said they would like to work toward reducing the demand. Lastly, 38% of participants said they will become more respectful not only to themselves, but others, including women in general and women in prostitution. Some of the ways in which they will increase appreciation for women included, but was not limited to: refraining from name calling, stopping the use offensive language toward women, and treating women with respect.

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| Table 1.1 |  | Pretest | Post-test |
| The existence of prostitution is a serious problem | Strongly Agree | 25% | 42% |
| *Desired response: Strongly Agree* | Agree | 38% | 41% |
|  | Neutral | 3% | 2% |
|  | Disagree | 26% | 10% |
|  | Strongly Disagree | 6% | 5% |
| Women involved in prostitution are there by choice | Strongly Agree | 13% | 5% |
| *Desired response: Strong Disagree* | Agree | 33% | 22% |
|  | Neutral | 2% | 5% |
|  | Disagree | 38% | 42% |
|  | Strongly Disagree | 14% | 26% |
| Prostitutes can stop having sex for money whenever they want | Strongly Agree | 12% | 7% |
| *Desired response: Strong Disagree* | Agree | 23% | 10% |
|  | Neutral | 3% | 2% |
|  | Disagree | 43% | 43% |
|  | Strongly Disagree | 19% | 38% |
| Most women enter prostitution as children | Strongly Agree | 10% | 26% |
| *Desired response: Strongly Agree* | Agree | 37% | 59% |
|  | Neutral | 1% | 4% |
|  | Disagree | 41% | 10% |
|  | Strongly Disagree | 11% | 1% |

*Discussion:*

It is clear after reviewing Table 1.1 that many of the participants recognized by the end of the four session curriculum that prostitution is a serious problem in the United States. Also, participants were surprised and impacted by the age women were recruited into prostitution. The male participants seemed most impacted by the average age in which women enter prostitution. The effectiveness was evident by both improvements shown on the post-tests, as well as responses to open-ended questions which displayed attitude change.

Due to the number of questions that did not show significant improvement, CAASE discussed ways to improve the survey with the Center for Urban Research and Learning (CURL) at Loyola University. With the help of CURL, many questions from the original pre-test and post-test have been re-worded or removed to formulate an improved 5-point Likert scale questionnaire.

The new survey removed or revised the following questions from the multiple choice section because the questions were based more on opinion rather than fact, or they could be interpreted in ways that did not accurately reflect reactions to material presented:

* ‘Prostitution is an easy way to make a lot of money’ was changed to ‘Prostitution is a safe way to make money.’
* ‘Women involved in prostitution are there by choice’ was changed to ‘Women enter prostitution because they have few alternatives.’
* ‘Some prostitutes live a rich and glamorous lifestyle’ was changed to ‘People in prostitution make a lot of money.’
* ‘Prostitution mostly takes place on the street’ was removed entirely from the questionnaire.
* ‘Most of the money a prostitute makes goes to her pimp’ was changed to ‘How many prostitutes have a pimp.’
* ‘Prostitutes can stop having sex for money whenever they want’ was changed to ‘Prostitutes can easily leave prostitution.’
* ‘The availability of prostitution reduces the occurrence of rape’ was changed to ‘More prostitution would mean less rape.’
* ‘Arresting prostitutes is a good long term solution for ending prostitution’ was removed entirely from the questionnaire.

The revised survey will hopefully result in a more accurate reflection of the attitudinal change and also assess for potential behavior change. It seems that many of the participants expressed progressive knowledge and attitude change in the open-ended questions, thus revising the Likert survey should demonstrate these changes more clearly.

*Conclusion:*

Pre- and post-test results from this four-session curriculum clearly showed the curriculum to be effective in helping confront misconceptions surrounding the sex trade and increasing empathy towards prostituted people. Responses to both the multiple choice questions and the free response section showed that the participants learned valuable information pertaining to the dangers and realities of sexual exploitation and what they can do to help be part of the solution. However, the evaluations also showed a need for improvement in the wording of some multiple choice questions, which have been changed for the 2011-2012 school year. By working with young men to prevent the demand that drives the sex trade – which breeds the majority of the sexual violence and exploitation that prostituted individuals face – CAASE hopes to continue to not only clarify societal misconceptions about prostitution but also to empower young men to take action against it. Men must play a key role in bringing an end to gender-based violence through: choosing not to patronize the sex trade; holding male peers and community members accountable for exploitive actions; challenging our current culture of sexism; and by standing with women in condemning sexist and violent attitudes and behaviors. By refocusing anti-sexual exploitation efforts to male audiences, CAASE’s curriculum helps prevent the occurrence of future sexually harmful acts while creating a community of young male activists allied against violence and exploitation.

1. Burque, Allison Dunn (2009, June). *Empowering Young Men to End Sexual Exploitation.* (pp. 8). Retrieved January 20, 2012 from The Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation Website: http://g.virbcdn.com/\_f/files/54/FileItem-149405-CAASEcurriculum1\_19.pdf. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Durchslag, Rachel & Samir Goswami (2008, May). *Deconstructing the Demand for Prostitution: Preliminary Insights From Interviews With Chicago Men Who Purchase Sex.* (pp. 13). Retrieved January 20, 2012 from The Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation Website: http://g.virbcdn.com/\_f/files/40/FileItem-149406-DeconstructingtheDemandForProstitution.pdf. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)