Reviewer’s report

Title: An ethnographic exploration of factors that drive policing of street-based female sex workers in a U.S. setting - identifying opportunities for intervention.

Version: 0 Date: 23 Jun 2019

Reviewer: Mikael Jansson

Reviewer's report:

Dear Authors,

this is important work and the best study of the behavior and approach of police to sex workers that I am aware of. I found the method and analysis appropriate and clearly described. The conclusion logically follows from the data. I only have a very small number of suggestions that may add a little to the importance of this paper.

1. I think that it should be made clear quite early in the manuscript whether or not the data refers only, or primarily, to sex workers who meet their clients in public settings. This appears to be the case but it may be that police also refer to sex workers who advertise on the internet or find clients in other settings. Studies that include a heterogeneous sample of sex workers have quite different findings viz the prevalence of any, and particularly negative, interactions with police. Data such as those presented in this paper echo the views of sex workers in studies that sample primarily from street engaged sex workers (Benoit, C., Smith, M., Jansson, M., Magnus, S., Ouellet, N., Atchison, C., … Shaver, F. (2016). Lack of confidence in police creates a "blue" ceiling for sex workers’ safety. Canadian Public Policy, 42, 456-468. doi:10.3138/cpp.2016-00)

2. There is a quote on page 13 in my copy "The women look very rough….." It would be good to assure the reader that this is the police officer speaking. The quotation sound to me as if it may spoken by the resident. I assume that this is not the case because data from residents should not be included with the data from the police, nor is it likely to be ethically permissible to include data from the resident.


4. The data suggest to me that the police officers that interact with female sex workers have different attitudes than the police leadership. If I am correct, I would appreciate if you would try to explain why that is the case.

5. You describe that the interaction between police and female sex workers is unpredictable for many reasons; sweeps, personal attitudes etc. This is particularly the case in a criminalized context. It may be appropriate to mention in your conclusion that unpredictability inhibits trust in police and increases the vulnerability of marginalized groups such as substance using poor substance using female sex workers who meet their clients in public settings.
6. The overlap between sex work, substance use, poverty and victimization in these data should be explicitly mentioned and devoted a little bit of further attention. The preponderance of evidence presented show that these police officers stigmatize the sex workers that they encounter. Hard as it may be, it would be great if you could further convince me that the attitudes of police is not primarily caused by substance use, poverty and victimization. Maybe also list this as one of the limitations of these data? To illustrate what I mean I note that the prevalence of substance use is not as widespread in heterogeneous samples of sex workers for example: Benoit, C., B. McCarthy, and M. Jansson. 2015b. "Stigma, Sex Work, and Substance Use: A Comparative Analysis." Sociology of Health & Illness 37(3):437-51. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.12201.

7. I do not quite understand the stated limitation related to race. Please show how race may bias the data collected from police. Note that the few comments above are really just small additions that may improve the impact of your article which is already likely to be very high.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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