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Abstract

This article explores the activities of George Soros and his charitable organization, Open Society Foundations (OSF), in advocating for the full decriminalization of the sex trade industry. Research finds that OSF spends only a small amount of money on grass roots “sex worker” groups around the world advocating for full decriminalization, but the foundation awards larger amounts of funds to large human rights groups whose reports and policies have a wider reach. OSF’s rationale for full decriminalization fails to consider violence and coercion in the sex trade industry, misreads research, and does not include research from venues where full decriminalization of prostitution has occurred. Thus OSF and its grantees have created a partial view on prostitution that they advocate to the public. Those concerned with trafficking for sexual exploitation, violence, coercion, and abuse in prostitution should be cognizant of these strategies used by decriminalization advocates funded by OSF and be prepared to point out the unsupported assumptions and meet OSF’s allegations with proven facts.

Keywords

prostitution, decriminalization, George Soros, Open Society Foundations, funding, sex work, public policy

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DECRIMINALIZATION OF PROSTITUTION: THE SOROS EFFECT

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the activities of George Soros and his charitable organization, Open Society Foundations (OSF), in advocating for the full decriminalization of the sex trade industry. Research finds that OSF spends only a small amount of money on grass roots “sex worker” groups around the world advocating for full decriminalization, but the foundation awards larger amounts of funds to large human rights groups whose reports and policies have a wider reach. OSF’s rationale for full decriminalization fails to consider violence and coercion in the sex trade industry, misreads research, and does not include research from venues where full decriminalization of prostitution has occurred. Thus OSF and its grantees have created a partial view on prostitution that they advocate to the public. Those concerned with trafficking for sexual exploitation, violence, coercion, and abuse in prostitution should be cognizant of these strategies used by decriminalization advocates funded by OSF and be prepared to point out the unsupported assumptions and meet OSF’s allegations with proven facts.

KEYWORDS

George Soros, prostitution, Open Society Foundations, prostitution, funding, decriminalization, sex work, public policy

AT EVERY TURN, there seems to be an organization or journalist promoting the full decriminalization of prostitution as a solution to problems associated with the industry—from eliminating HIV to preventing trafficking for sexual exploitation. Many of these groups and individuals have taken funding from the Open Society Foundations (OSF), established by George Soros. What is Soros doing? What is he funding in this area? What is the impact of these efforts? What are the implications of his activities for anti-trafficking advocacy and for prevention of violence against women? This research paper attempts to provide some preliminary answers.

The research presented here demonstrates that grants for promoting total decriminalization of prostitution represent only a small percentage of the total OSF budget. However, OSF funding strategies have supported a string of grass roots “sex worker” groups throughout the world advocating full decriminalization, who then influence “research” reports by large Soros policy grantees. These documents ignore a large body of reputable research and create an “alternative reality” about the sex trade industry that ignores known facts. Soros’s alternative universe

maintains that all indoor prostitution venues are safe from coercion, abuse, and violence from buyers; that indoor managers protect prostituted women from abuse experienced on the streets; and that trafficking for sexual exploitation is overstated as most participants choose prostitution without coercion. Thus the industry can be decriminalized without adverse effect.

Part I of this article discusses how OSF meets Soros's goals. Some of the material has been garnered from hacked documents published in 2016. Part II describes the OSF position on the sex trade industry, examining the "facts" upon which the foundation relies for its advocacy of full decriminalization of prostitution, briefly comparing them to knowledge from reputable research about decriminalization. Part III summarizes what OSF has funded in this area, from small grantees to large human rights organizations and individuals receiving fellowships. This section also analyzes the viability of OSF grantee research and the sources used to support full decriminalization. Finally, Part IV offers conclusions about the effectiveness of the OSF decriminalization effort, and determines what, if anything, can be learned from it that can be applied to efforts to eliminate the sex trade industry.

Note: Due to his positions on legalizing drugs and gay marriage, his support for Hillary Clinton, and his condemnation of Israel's treatment of Palestinians, George Soros is a hated figure among conservatives the world over. The Internet is replete with accusations and opprobrium against the investor, some of it reeking with antisemitism (*Definitive Report*, 2016; Bayefsky, 2010). In this article care has been taken only to present as facts material corroborated through official documents or mainstream, reputable sources.

Who Is George Soros And How Does His Foundation Operate?

The Open Society Foundations (OSF) is an international grant making body founded by hedge fund operator George Soros in 1993. Currently Soros, now 86 years of age, is the 30th richest man in the world, with assets of 24.4 billion dollars (Bloomberg, 2017). Of Jewish origin, Soros was born in Hungary and survived the Nazi occupation of his country by posing as the Christian godson of an official of the fascist Hungarian government. He immigrated to England in 1947 and has lived in the United States since 1956 (Guilhot, 2007). Soros made his name and reputation by trading, or betting on, foreign currencies in 1992 and 1997 (Ahmed, 2011). Since 2011, Soros's hedge fund, The Quantum Fund, has only invested money from his family fortune, to avoid U.S. financial disclosure rules (Ahmed, 2011). Soros provides revenue each year to OSF (there is no endowment), but in 2015 he publicly announced that the foundation would go on in perpetuity after his demise, creating one of the biggest foundation endowments in the world (Callahan, 2015). Recently, Soros transferred \$18 billion to OSF, one of the largest transfers of wealth ever made by a private donor to a single foundation (Gelles, 2017).

The foundation's mission is "to strengthen the institutions and practices that keep societies open, and by that we mean open to criticism and debate, open to correction and improvement, and open to the participation of all people" (*OSF Budget*, 2017). In its 33 years of operation, the foundation states it has made expenditures of close to 14 billion dollars (*OSF Expenditures*, 2017).

OSF has 47 offices in 42 countries, employing more than 1,600 staff members (*OSF Budget*, 2017). According to Inside Philanthropy, an organization committed to exploring the role of private money in public life, OSF is the most complex foundation ever created (Callahan, 2017); no single board has full authority over the

whole organization. Its current director, Chris Stone, has remarked that the foundation needs to be streamlined and made more unified, a process that he has begun (Callahan, 2015). In 2017, 517.2 million dollars was allocated for grants; program administrative expenses, including salaries and benefits, will amount to \$207.4 million (*OSF Budget*, 2017). The high administrative costs of the foundation reflect the fact that it is proactive, with staff members advocating, publicizing, conferencing, and undertaking other networking activities to promote foundation goals. Grants have increased modestly over the last few years, but recently Soros has announced a plan to make up to \$500 million in equity investments in businesses that benefit migrants, not reflected in these figures (*OSF Budget*, 2017).

How Does The Foundation Meet Its Goals?

Information about how the foundation conducts its business comes from hacked computer files made public in 2016, when a group called D.C. Leaks posted more than 2,500 documents going back to 2008 from the foundation's servers. (D.C. Leaks, 2016). This cyber security breach is said to share similarities with attacks against other institutions, like the Democratic National Committee (Riley, 2016). The introduction to the files clearly reflects open antagonism to George Soros, who is described as "an architect and sponsor of almost every revolution and coup around the world for the last 25 years...The USA is thought to be a vampire due to him and his puppets, not a lighthouse of freedom and democracy" (D.C. Leaks, 2016). Curiously, no major media (such as *The New York Times*, *CNN*, or *The Washington Post*) put reporters to the task of analyzing the leaked documents, but some conservative outlets did (*The Bizarre Media Blackout*, 2016). OSF documents posted at D.C. Leaks, mainly confidential materials intended for board members, illustrate the many ways the foundation operates. The following summary comes from a reading of only a small percentage of the posted material, which in the main is bureaucratic, dull, and repetitious. Prostitution policy only rarely figures in the reviewed documents.

For example, the material reveals that although the foundation funds a great many small grass roots groups, its focus is on supporting large organizations with wide-ranging reach and media influence (*OSF U.S. Programs Board Meeting*, 2014). Often it is proactive, approaching like-minded entities to offer funding. OSF foundations operating in individual countries are expected to convene meetings, meet with key individuals, and bring groups and individuals together. By funding fellowships for like-minded individuals, especially journalists, it pursues a media strategy enabling its policy goals to reach a wide audience. Fellows, one memorandum states, "can enhance the effectiveness of our interventions," and thus are expected to inject OSF priorities into the broader public debate (*OSF U.S. Programs Board Meeting*, 2015).

One hacked document has garnered particular attention from those critical of George Soros's funding methods. It proposes selecting journalists from five target countries (Germany, France, Spain, Italy, and Greece), offering them long stay reporting trips in the Ukraine: "Rather than specify what they should write about they should make suggestions for articles; we retain a veto on stories we think are counterproductive" (*Ukraine and Europe Media Project*, 2015). The memorandum, however, admits this veto approach would damage its credibility with independent journalists. For this reason, it recommends that OSF not act as the main liaison with journalists, but that a third party should receive the grant, acting as

the intermediary to undertake editorial functions. It is not known from the document whether this project ever was funded.

OSF views the filing of *amicus* briefs as another important advocacy strategy, as do other organizations, but it takes a more expansive view of their purpose beyond the individual case. Another funding summary describes how the foundation attempts to influence U.S. Supreme Court decisions: “Grantees are seeking to influence the Justices (primarily via a sophisticated *amicus* briefs and media strategy) in hopes of securing a favorable ruling in *U.S. v. Texas* (a case involving the legality of President Obama’s executive order deferring deportation of illegal immigrants who arrived in the U.S. as children, known as DACA), and using the case to redefine messaging and align the movement” (*OSF U.S. Programs Board Meeting*, 2016, p. 24).

Finally, George Soros himself puts money into the campaigns of individuals running for district attorney who support his agenda of full decriminalization of drugs and prostitution. Documents indicate that Soros has invested \$1.45 million in an independent political action committee backing civil rights attorney Larry Krasner in what was considered to be a long-shot quest to become district attorney in Philadelphia. Krasner won, 18 points ahead of the second-place finisher (Hassan, 2017). News articles report that Soros poured \$600,000 into the Houston district attorney’s race in 2016, with a purported \$7 million on prosecutorial races in the two previous years (Hassan, 2017).

What is the Soros (and Open Society Foundation’s) position on prostitution?

OSF uses the term “sex work,” and accordingly considers the sex trade industry a benign and legitimate practice or institution that should be protected by removing criminal prosecution of all those associated with it, including buyers and pimps. The argument is this: full decriminalization of the sex trade industry means “sex workers” are more likely to live without stigma, social exclusion, violence, and fear of violence.

An OSF report, *10 Reasons to Decriminalize Sex Work* (2015), reveals an astounding myopia about the real facts of prostitution, failing to consider the issue of violence and coercion in the sex trade industry, and a misreading of research. The position of OSF in this document is that total decriminalization helps guard against violence and abuse, reduces the risk of HIV and sexually transmitted infections, and allows for effective responses to trafficking. Its conclusions rest on its contention that “Sex work is not inherently violent; it is criminalization that places sex workers at greatest risk” (*10 Reasons*, 2015, p.2). No research is cited to buttress this point, and no reference is made to violence from customers, managers, or pimps heavily documented in the literature about prostitution.

In another document (*Understanding Sex Work*, 2015), the foundation asks, Is sex work inherently harmful? The answer:

Sex workers, like most workers, have diverse feelings about their profession. Many sex workers find their work personally empowering and rewarding. Others view it simply as a way to make a living, while yet others dislike it. When critics claim that sex work itself is harmful, they ignore not only this diversity of opinion and experience, but also the autonomy and consent of the women, men, and transgender individuals selling sexual services (p.2).

However, the foundation ignores another diverse opinion, failing to take notice of the experiences of those coerced into the sex trade industry or suffering violence within it. We are left only with the bland phrase “others *dislike* it” (emphasis added).

The foundation’s handling of trafficking for sexual exploitation is also curious. It alleges that full decriminalization allows for effective responses to trafficking for sexual exploitation; those in prostitution, it avers, will cooperate with law enforcement to identify pimps and traffickers once they were freed from threat of criminal penalties (*10 Reasons*, 2015). This is a simplistic prevention analysis-- that trafficking can be eliminated through increased reporting, as if coerced individuals would be able to safely reach out to police.

OSF also rejects the Swedish, also known as the Nordic, prostitution policy model, which decriminalizes the seller but retains penalties for the buyer. The foundation asserts that this prescription forces the activity underground and perpetrates the social stigma against prostitution (*Understanding Sex Work*, 2015). With this position Soros and OSF make clear their view of the legitimacy of buying and selling sex, as well as their sense of the harmlessness of this activity and their desire to destigmatize it.

The *Lancet* Article

OSF, and hence its grantees, make much of an article in the prestigious journal *The Lancet* (Shannon, et. al., 2015) for the proposition that full decriminalization reduces HIV infections, claiming that after decriminalization prostituted women “are empowered to insist on condom use by clients,” although it is difficult to understand why customers would be more willing to use condoms were the activity to be decriminalized. The work is part of a symposium in *The Lancet* on “sex work” and HIV, supported by funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which appears to have joined the decriminalization effort. As OSF and its grantees make continual use of this *Lancet* article, it is important to understand how the authors’ conclusions are based on unproven assumptions.

Importantly, the article is not research but a review of 100 research articles. Although the authors do not provide the reader with a listing of the reviewed research, we can examine one such study cited in their reference section which surely was consulted. That research interviewed 205 women selling sex on Vancouver, British Columbia streets (Shannon, et. al., 2009). Of these, 25% reported having been pressured by a client into unsafe sex without a condom in the last six months. Researchers asked all participants various questions, but crucially did not inquire about whether the women had a pimp, despite affirming that trafficking for sexual exploitation has consistently been linked to increased odds of HIV infection and condom non-use, citing three research articles to that effect (Decker et. al. (2011); Urada et. al., 2012); Sagguti et. al. (2011). How, then, according to the researchers, did those coerced into condom-free sexual encounters differ from those using condoms? They were not dissimilar in age, ethnicity or drug use. However, there was a greater likelihood they were working in areas away from downtown or main streets in industrial areas, some being there because previous drug convictions did not allow them to solicit on more open streets.

The researchers conclude that decriminalization would increase condom use. Why? The prostituted women could move back into more open and safer environments, where condoms are more routinely accepted and used. Upon close

inspection, however, this assumption may not be justified. It is probable that the prostitution venue is related to condom use because the more aggressive customer is drawn to these hidden locations where he knows the prostituted women are especially vulnerable and increased payment for unprotected sex would be attractive. For this reason, these locales might continue to prosper with buyers. If, however, all the women were to desert the industrial locations for more populated areas, would the customers automatically give up their interest in unprotected sex? With prostitution decriminalized, might they be more empowered to demand and pay extra for unsafe sex, since they could not be held to account by law enforcement? Lastly, with decriminalization one might have more individuals now eager to buy sex, some of whom do not want to use a condom, and hence more unprotected sex, and more HIV cases.

Thus, the conclusion from this Vancouver research study rests on untested assumptions, since the researchers did not compare condom use in a decriminalized venue to the one in Vancouver. They present no research about condom use in decriminalized regimes, but only conjecture.

From their review of a large number of research studies *The Lancet* authors conclude that physical and sexual violence, whether by clients, police, managers, or pimps, are among the most influential determinants of HIV acquisition, linked to inconsistent condom use. They, too, go on to assume that physical and sexual violence will decrease in decriminalized venues.

Importantly, however, the review authors admit that elimination of violence cannot occur with the stroke of a decriminalizing legislative pen. They agree that detailed and complex structural interventions will be necessary to impact the HIV epidemic, because eliminating violence in prostitution presents a considerable challenge. In Vancouver, for example, the article states that decriminalization of prostitution could avert nearly 39% of HIV infections, but only

through immediate and sustained effects on violence, police harassment, and safe work environments, and associated condom use. These predictions represent the maximum effect that interventions reducing violence or police harassment or legislation can have because the complete elimination of violence or stigma could be challenging (Shannon et. al., 2015, p. 63).

Thus, the review authors do not make the categorical statements attributed to it by OSF. Nor does OSF, along with the article's peer reviewers, understand that unproven assumptions do not amount to legitimate research. Nonetheless, OSF boasts on its web site for its public health program, "We support health initiatives that are based on evidence" (*Public Health Program Summary*, n.d.). OSF's reliance on *The Lancet* article is disappointing for such a prominent entity advocating for free and open societies, where thought is not controlled and facts not manipulated or disregarded.

What Does Research Say About Violence In Decriminalized Venues?

As we have seen, OSF asserts that fully decriminalized venues provide greater safety and better health for prostituted women. These assumptions are contradicted by recent research in countries or areas in which full decriminalization or legalization has occurred. Yet when reading OSF and grantee research reports one would never know these major studies existed. Although this is not an exhaustive research

survey, here are a few examples that describe some of the research with which OSF should be engaging.

New Zealand

In 2003 New Zealand fully decriminalized prostitution, requiring brothels to be certified and open to inspection, and buyers to adopt safe sex practices or be subject to fines (*Report of the Prostitution Law Committee, 2008*). Later, the New Zealand Ministry of Justice created an independent committee to evaluate the effects of the legislation (*Report of the Prostitution Law Committee, 2008*). The effort involved surveys of 772 “sex workers” in five locations in the country, and 58 in-depth, follow-up interviews, along with information from 38 brothel owners.

Due to less than reliable baseline figures, the committee could not determine whether the number of prostituted women had increased between 2003 and 2007. In terms of safe sex, however, the study found that no substantial change in the use of safer sex practices as a result of the law had occurred; most said they always practiced safe sex. Nor was violence from customers affected; most respondents agreed that there will always be violent clients, causing the report to conclude, “It appears that adverse incidents, including violence, continue to be experienced by those in the sex industry” (*Report of the Prostitution Law Committee, 2008, p.58*). There was conflicting information on whether violence is reported more often since decriminalization, but clear evidence that most complainants did not follow through. The committee especially singled out street venues, where violence and threats of violence, rape, kidnapping, and theft, all perpetrated by buyers, were still the norm after full decriminalization.

The committee considers that the purpose of the PRA [the New Zealand law], particularly in terms of promoting the welfare and occupational health and safety of sex workers, cannot be fully realized in the street-based sector. The committee recognizes the danger that street work poses to sex workers, and acknowledges the concerns and upset it causes communities (*Report of the Prostitution Committee, 2008, p.131*).

Removing individuals from street work to indoor settings or from prostitution altogether was the only remedy, said the committee.

Australia (Victoria)

Legalization in Victoria has been found to increase competition among brothels, legal and illegal, with demands from management that women service abusive buyers or give in to demands for unsafe sex. A newspaper investigation in 2004 found that at least 10 Melbourne brothels acknowledged they were willing to take imported women, even if their passports were confiscated, indicating they were open to dealing with trafficked individuals. Convictions for trafficking for sexual exploitation in Victoria have all involved legal brothels (Sullivan, 2005). In their interviews in legal brothels in Victoria, researchers found condom use was not a uniform practice, in contravention of the law, and that prostituted women were subject to considerable pressure from clients for unsafe sex (Pyett and Warr, 1999). Those on drugs (heroin) had the most trouble resisting client demands, although use of drugs and alcohol on brothel premises was illegal.

Germany

A comprehensive research review by Germany’s Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth (*Report by the Federal Government,*

2007) found the 2002 legalization of prostitution in the country appeared to have no effect on violence: “There are as yet no viable indications that the Prostitution Act has reduced crime. The Prostitution Act has as yet contributed only very little in terms of improving transparency in the world of prostitution” (*Report by the Federal Government*, 2007, p.79). Between 2002 and 2015, at least 55 women were reported to have been murdered while engaged in prostitution in Germany; no women in prostitution in Sweden have been murdered since 1999 (Waltman, 2017).

Nevada

Between 1998 and 2002 researchers (Brents and Hausbeck, 2005) interviewed 40 prostituted women in Nevada’s legal brothels, and surveyed an additional 25. They found continual apprehension of violence, and that “the persistent fears associated with disease and violence clearly can take their toll” (Brents and Hausbeck, 2005, p.289). The researchers conclude, “The structure of the legal prostitution industry and the culture of work therein are not immune to violence in any of its forms” (p.293). Thus advocates’ claims that full decriminalization will reduce violence aimed at prostituted women is an assumption not grounded in fact. And, if violence is not reduced, stigma, an issue of great concern to decriminalization advocates, obviously remains. Similar instance of violence and exploitation were documented in research in the state of Rhode Island which decriminalized indoor prostitution for a time (Shapiro & Hughes, 2017).

In summary, OSF’s position rests on an assertion that “sex work” is not inherently violent or coercive, but no reference is made to research establishing the contrary position. By only viewing violence as stemming from police officers, it adopts an approach of full decriminalization, which liberates individuals in prostitution from police abuse, but fails to hold buyers and pimps/traffickers accountable for coercive acts. It touts an article in *The Lancet*, whose conclusions rest on unproven assumptions about decriminalization and HIV transmission. No consideration is given to the proposition that violence, coercion, and trafficking for sexual coercion might increase in decriminalized venues, and research evidence to this effect is ignored. Thus OSF has created an “alternative reality” that it continuously hammers home and is accepted by segments of the media and public not well versed in the facts.

What Does OSF Fund On The Subject of Prostitution?

According to OSF’s 2017 budget document (*OSF Budget*, 2017), “Legal recognition of sex work and gender identity” was one of the 20 largest OSF funding concepts (the 20 making a total of \$45.8 million) in 2017, handled through its Public Health Program. According to the budget summary, only \$1.5 million in this category was allocated in 2017 for legal recognition of “sex work.” Syrian refugee empowerment topped the list at \$6.5 million. However, hacked documents indicate that from time-to-time the foundation departs from its budgeted figures, using reserve funds to respond to new developments. Vis-a-vis prostitution, one report explains, “Our response has been to support community efforts to counter this recent wave of criminalization, using Reserve Funds to advance the debate in the EU” (*Public Health Program Strategy Update*, 2016).

In 2017 OSF announced a call for proposals from groups in France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom for 24 months of funding to change dominant narratives about “sex workers” (*Changing*

Narratives, 2017). Proposals should describe projects that raise awareness of the consequences of criminalization of sex work, “highlighting a multiplicity of perspectives on sex work and contributing to critical debates on the decriminalization of sex work.” Although the request for proposals talked of “amplifying the voices of ‘sex workers’ and empowering them to tell their own stories,” it was clear that it was only the voices of women in prostitution who wanted to decriminalize the sex trade industry that were to be heard, given the purpose of the grants to “raise awareness of the consequences of criminalization” of prostitution. Applicants could apply for a maximum of \$50,000 for a period of no more than 24 months.

The U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) requires yearly Form 990 filings, enumerating grants made and funds paid out during the year by charitable organizations. OSF’s filings for 2013, 2014, and 2015 (the last posting), available on the Foundation Center’s web site, were examined. Due to limitations of Form 990, discussed below, additional research to locate past and present grantees was undertaken. Although this analysis did not uncover all OSF grantees in this subject area, it begins to fill in the picture regarding the types of groups receiving funds from OSF for sex trade industry activities as well as typical grant amounts. Grantees are divided among small organizations and large advocacy groups, the foundation’s preferred donees.

Several issues interfered with the analysis. The organization’s budget figures do not provide easy breakdowns. Funds for OSF country or regional offices, which are closer to the ground and make grants to indigenous groups, must be in the 2017 budget, but it is unclear into what categories these grants are found, or whether they are divided among the various funding concepts. As funds to the regional offices are itemized on the 990, providing information about grants made by these subsidiaries would be duplicative, and are not enumerated on the 990. Nor can an IRS filing provide information about the activities of these 46 regional offices. (Google searches can provide some glimpses.) The IRS document, in addition, can give a picture of what was granted in the given year but offers no information about what was granted in previous years.

From other funding summaries found on the Internet, it appears that from time to time the foundation uses front groups to further its goals, as seen in the proposed Ukrainian project. A grant in 2005 and 2006 to the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (see Table 2) of \$104,360 was intended to strengthen and expand the Sex Worker’s Rights Advocacy Network in the region. An award of \$46,000 to the Urban Justice Center in 2005 in New York supported the Center’s Sex Workers Project, and was renewed in 2007 in the amount of \$25,000 for media advocacy. This procedure protects groups operating in undemocratic regimes from retaliation, but hampers attempts to identify groups receiving funding for prostitution decriminalization.

Small Grantees

The foundation’s 990 IRS form for calendar year 2015 revealed only four small grantees in the amount of \$336,703 (detailed in Table 1), whose work on the IRS form was identified as involving prostitution policy. A review of OSF’s 2014 990 form found only one different grantee, the Pivot Legal Society of Vancouver, in the amount of \$110,005, indicating that OSF had supported an organization included in the litigation and advocacy that held Canada’s prohibitions on prostitution unconstitutional. In 2013, the foundation stated it had supported the society in the amount of \$174,517. Although the Canadian statute was declared unconstitutional,

a ruling upheld on appeal, ultimately the legislature adopted the Nordic model for Canada, decriminalizing only for the seller of sex, but creating penalties for customers (Raphael, 2017). No additional small grantees were discovered in the 2013 review.

**Table 1: Open Society Foundation Grantees
Large and Small grantees listed in the 2015 IRS 990 OSF Form**

GROUP	AMOUNT	PURPOSE
Global Network of Sex Work Projects (Edinburgh)	\$150,000	(for general operating support); as the IRS indicates the original grant date was 2013, this was undoubtedly a multi-year grant
POWER: Prostitutes of Ottawa-Gatineau Work Education and Resist	\$59,984	for research and meetings
HYDRA e.V. Treffpunkt und Beratung für Prostituierte	\$72,000	to investigate mental health needs of those in the sex trade industry
London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine	\$54,719	to document the harms of criminalization of prostitution
Human Rights Watch	\$10,080,225	
Amnesty International	\$2,018,206	
American Civil Liberties Union	\$336,167	
The International Gender Policy Network	\$300,000	
International HIV/AIDS Alliance	\$100,000	
International Women's Rights Action Watch	\$269,993	
Coalition for the Sexual Health Rights of Marginalized Communities	\$81,077	
The International Gender Policy Network*	\$300,000	
International HIV/AIDS Alliance*	\$100,000	
International Women's Rights Action Watch*	\$269,993	
Coalition for the Sexual Health Rights of Marginalized Communities*	\$81,077	

From a recent report on funding for “sex worker” rights, published in collaboration with OSF (*Funding for Sex Worker Rights*, 2014), it would appear that many more grass roots “sex worker” organizations have received funding from OSF than are revealed in the 990 forms. Perhaps these groups have received funding from

OSF country-wide or regional offices; the 990 form does list funds for these regional entities, some as large as \$10 million, with even more to the office in Budapest. The web sites of these offices do not reveal the grants made. According to the funding report, OSF was the largest giver of any foundation in the world in 2013, with 2,600,000 euros going to 51 grantees, not enumerated (all funding was in the report converted to euros). The Ford Foundation, with 570,000 euros was the next largest. Researchers surveyed 183 donee organizations in 40 countries, 75% of which had budgets of less than 100,000 euros a year, and 35% less than 10,000 euros--demonstrating that OSF grants can represent a large proportion of an organization's budget. (Were the money equally divided, that would amount to 50,000 euros per grantee. As of this writing, the euro is roughly equal to the dollar.) What is not known, of course, is the number of individuals actively participating in each funded group.

An idea of the identity of some of these grantees can be obtained from information on the Internet. The Public Health Program of the OSF published a listing of grantees online, but undated. Very few of these organizations showed up on the IRS 990 for 2015, 2014, or 2013. Later, when an attempt was made to confirm the URL for the listing, the document was found to have been removed from the Internet.) These grantees are listed in the Appendix without citations. Google searches uncovered some additional grantees. Here's one example.

Sex Workers Alliance Ireland (SWAI) is one such very recent grant recipient recently figuring in the Irish media. After the Irish parliament began to seriously consider a proposal to adopt the Swedish model on prostitution, SWAI, which was lobbying against the bill, was approached by OSF. A spokesperson for the group confirmed that OSF said that funding might be available, and was indeed received (Brophy, 2015). Despite OSF money, the bill supporting the Swedish model eventually passed. Kate McCrew, who appears to be the chief decriminalization lobbyist and spokesperson for the Irish group, is not the indigenous leader one would have imagined. McCrew, who says she works only part-time in the industry at present, is an American originally from Ohio who has in the past worked for Greenpeace (Holland, 2014).

OSF confirmed to the Irish press that it had long supported similar groups, including the Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network (SWAN), serving central and Eastern Europe and central Asia, the Global Network of Sex Worker Projects, and Sex Work Europe (Brophy, 2015).

All small grantees advocate for the full decriminalization of prostitution. The statement of the Global Network of Sex Work Projects is representative of all. On its web site it states it has 3 core values:

Acceptance of sex work as work. Opposition to all forms of criminalisation [sic] and other legal oppression of sex work (including sex workers, clients, third parties, families, partners and friends). Third parties include managers, brothel keepers, receptionists, maids, drivers, landlords, hotels who rent rooms to sex workers and anyone else who is seen as facilitating sex work. Supporting self-organization and self-determination of sex workers (Consensus Statement, 2013).

**Table 2 Small Open Society Foundation Grantees
Identified by an Internet Search**

GROUP	AMOUNT	PURPOSE
Hungarian Civil Liberties Union	\$104,360 for one year in 2006	to expand SWAN, the Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network
Urban Justice Center, New York City	\$46,000 for one year in 2005; a further one-year grant of \$50,000 in 2006; and \$25,000 in 2007	to support the Sex Workers Project (SWP)
Sex Worker Advocacy Project	amount unknown	to support eight policy/advocacy projects in Central Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in 2004
Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers	\$40,000 for one year in 2006; \$60,716 in 2009	
International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe	\$25,000 for six months in 2006	
Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP)	\$20,000 in 2006	
Sex Worker Education and Advocacy Task Force, SWEAT, Cape Town, South Africa	\$30,000 in 2006	
Stella, Montreal, Canada	\$30,000 in 2006	
Hungarian Civil Liberties Union Sex Work Advocacy Hub	one year in 2005, amount unknown	
Scottish Prostitutes Education Project	\$50,000 for one year in 2009	
Keeping Alive Societies Hope, Kisumu, Kenya	\$30,000 for one year in 2009	
Health Options Project Skopje, Macedonia	\$16,147 for seven months in 2009	
Global Alliance against Traffic in Women, Bangkok, Thailand	\$39,934 for one year, 2009	
Davida Prostituição, Latin America and the Caribbean	\$20,000 in 2009	

OSF's failure to acknowledge the links between decriminalization and trafficking for sexual exploitation was brought home by the 2015 conviction of Maria Alejandra Gil Cuervo in Mexico City. Gil reportedly controlled a pimping operation

controlling approximately 200 women. Known as the “Madam of Sullivan,” she was one of the most powerful pimps of Sullivan Street, an area of Mexico City notorious for prostitution, and connected with traffickers in Tlaxcala State, who brought her victims (Vela, 2015). Most important for our purposes, Gil Cuervo, sentenced to 15 years in prison, was, until her arrest, Vice President of the Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP), an OSF grantee in 2015 and in other years.

Gil Cuervo denied that the women she dealt with were coerced, alleging that prostitution was being conflated with trafficking. Two women, however, testified at her trial that they were forced to engage in prostitution on the capital’s streets under Gil Cuervo’s control. Police found about 100 victims in the area (Animal Politico, 2015). U.K. activist Kat Banyard, who broke the news to Europe on her publisher’s blog, asks, “How could a pimp wind up second in command at a global organization that officially advised UN agencies on prostitution policy...?” (Banyard, 2015). She didn’t have to divorce her interests as a pimp when she was advocating with NSWP, Banyard advises: “To fulfil her role as Vice President of NSWP, Gil didn’t have to mask her vested interests as a pimp, she had a mandate to pursue them” (Banyard, 2015). In this instance, traffickers have either infiltrated NSWP, or it has always been a front operation for pimps. Either alternative should cause disquiet.

Small Grantee Summary

A perusal of the web sites of these small groups confirm that they all have a mission of fighting the criminalization of prostitution. Many also say they try to improve the safety and health of those in the sex trade through other activities, such as promoting provision of safe sex supplies, undertaking outreach and distributing condoms, needles and sponges, and working against violence from law enforcement. Notably, not one organization makes any reference to violence from customers, pimps or traffickers, or lists elimination of trafficking or coercion as a goal on its web site.

What do we make of all this? The Global Network of Sex Work Projects lists approximately 115 member organizations on its web site (Where Our Members Work, n.d.). Based on the 2013 report, *Funding for Sex Worker Rights*, OSF funds about 43% of them, with OSF money constituting a large percentage of their budgets. With a relatively small amount of funds OSF has thus shored up a network of grass roots groups promoting full decriminalization of prostitution throughout the world, readily available, as we shall see, to advise official bodies; Global Network of Sex Work Project members sit on boards, commissions, and advisory councils of research projects of larger organizations, purporting to represent all those in the sex trade industry. This small group of OSF grantees thus has a large-sized global influence as it networks with larger OSF grantees, as will be described below.

Large Organizations

To drive a particular policy, OSF is wedded to making large investments by providing a “very large, long-term grant to a single organization or initiative, whether new or previously established, able to lead that change” (*OSF 2017 Budget*, p. 4). Large U.S. grantees include Human Rights Watch, the American Civil Liberties Union, The Institute for New Economic Thinking, The Climate Policy Initiative, and the Drug Policy Alliance, among others. In a hacked document, describing the strategic framework 2015-18 for U.S. programs, OSF further describes the “anchor” concept for its board members:

Anchors are involved in virtually all areas of concern. We seek to provide them with multi-year, general operating support since they are *effectively proxies of ours* (italics added). We currently have 10 anchors and expect they will comprise between 15-20% of our budget in the next 4 years (OSF U.S. Programs Strategic Framework 2015-2018, p.5).

U.S. anchors mentioned in the document are The ACLU; The Advancement Project; The American Constitution Society; The Brennan Center for Justice; The Center for American Progress; The Center for Community Change; The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities; The Drug Policy Alliance; The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights; and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) (OSF U.S. Programs Strategic Framework 2015-2018).

Significant funding commitments to large organizations with strong communication/media capability have resulted in “research” reports advocating total decriminalization of prostitution. These entities then cite each other’s reports, while ignoring other data by independent researchers. With its funding, OSF has thus created an alternative universe of facts about the sex trade industry. In addition to examining funding to these large organizations, this section will explore this interconnected network and its “research” methods.

Human Rights Watch (HRW)

OSF’s 990 IRS form reflects a grant to Human Rights Watch in 2015 of \$10,000,000 for general operating support, \$75,000 for a special fellowship, and \$5,225 for a redesign project (unspecified). The \$10 million is part of a 10-year commitment from OSF, amounting to \$100 million; it is a challenge grant, requiring the organization to increase its annual revenue from \$48 million to \$80 million (Lynch, 2010). As HRW received total funds in 2015 of \$68,511,163 (Human Rights Watch, 2017), OSF’s money made up 14% of its revenue that year, making the foundation the number one funder of the organization, with the OSF donation the largest in the history of HRW (Lynch, 2010).

OSF made clear that the grant was intended to help Human Rights Watch be present in more parts of the globe, addressing local issues, allied with local rights groups, and engaging with local government officials, moving the organization from a western, U.S.-based advocacy group. OSF asserts that human rights have been resisted because they have been seen as an American cause. When the grant was made, George Soros noted that the funding commitment was intended to build Human Rights Watch into a truly international organization (Lynch, 2010).

With a staff of approximately 400 (*About HRW*, n.d.), Human Rights Watch operates by researching and documenting, through reports, human rights issues and violations of the laws of war in approximately 90 countries throughout the world, followed by advocacy. It produces an annual World Report, a global review of human rights practices. In its 2014 report the organization affirmed support for the full decriminalization of prostitution (*World Report 2014*). Criminalization, the organization stated, can cause or exacerbate a host of human rights violations, including “exposure to violence from private actors, police abuse, discriminatory law enforcement, and vulnerability to blackmail, control, and abuse by criminals” (World Report, 2014, p.47).

It was not possible to read the hundreds of reports issued by the organization each year, but a perusal of a handful yielded insights on Human Rights Watch’s research methods. One report, described here, is typical of the others reviewed. In

its report on Cambodia (*Off the Streets*, 2010), HRW urged removal of prohibitions on solicitation and a halt to the arrest and detention of those in the sex trade industry. In Cambodia, 94 individuals in prostitution were interviewed, three who proved to be under 18 years of age. The research, however, was strictly limited to the issue of police abuses. As HRW explained:

This research focused specifically on abuses committed by police, public park security guards and staff associated with the centers and offices of the Ministry of Social Affairs. It is beyond the scope of this report to consider trafficking, violence, and other abuses that sex workers face at the hands of clients or others... (*Off The Streets*, 2010, p.13).

Not surprisingly the research unearthed a plethora of abuses law enforcement committed against the respondents, including torture and cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment. Given the limited scope of the research, the remedy was easy: eliminate the authority of the police to arrest those in prostitution. But no thought was given to how total decriminalization might then increase abuse from other sources, like buyers, who can act with impunity without fear of social or legal concern, or whether increased demand for paid sex generated in decriminalized regimes might lead to increased trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Would Human Rights Watch have received such largesse from OSF had it not embraced George Soros's views that drugs and prostitution should be decriminalized in an open society? The answer might lie in the fact that Human Rights Watch and George Soros have been close collaborators from the very beginning. Aryeh Neier, co-founder of Human Rights Watch and executive director for twelve years, then served as president of OSF from 1993-2012 (*Aryeh Neier*, n.d.).

Amnesty International

In 2015, according to OSF's IRS 990 form, Amnesty International (AI) received \$2,018,206 from OSF; OSF's 2014 IRS form indicates total grants of \$1,405,025 to AI. The money was not unrestricted for general operating expenses, but granted for specific projects which did not include full decriminalization of prostitution. With income of \$69,921,000 in 2015 (*Global Financial Report*, 2015), OSF's contribution represented only 2% of AI's income in that year. In 2014 OSF announced it would fund nine nonprofits to help new leaders implement their visions. The total fund, providing two-year grants to the new leaders, amounted to \$2 million. Steve Hawkins, Executive Director of AI USA from 2013 to 2015, was one of the recipients (*New Nonprofit Leaders*, 2014).

AI is a membership organization, operating through stimulating mass letter-writing campaigns and adopting individuals as prisoners of conscience and lobbying for their release. At its International Council Meeting in Dublin, Ireland, in August 2015 AI approved the full decriminalization of the sex trade industry in order to respect, protect, and fulfill the human rights of "sex workers" (*Amnesty International Policy*, 2016). AI's new policy pronouncement received widespread coverage in the media. It is instructive to examine AI's research justifications for its policy, as it illustrates how policy is created by an organization in a bubble. Because AI's research conclusions are continually used by other OSF grantees as they advocate for full decriminalization of the sex trade industry, AI's research will be explored in depth here.

In a publication justifying its policy (*Explanatory Note*, 2016), AI avoids discussing the many research reports over the last number of years demonstrating the violence and abuse experienced by those in the industry from buyers, managers, and pimps/traffickers. It focuses only on abuse from law enforcement. When it does mention trafficking for sexual exploitation, it is only to minimize the extent of it: it alleges that the data are flawed and there are no good estimates of trafficking. AI also admits it is impossible to say whether trafficking for sexual exploitation is reduced under criminalization or decriminalization of buyers. Acknowledgment that there are violent buyers does creep into AI's document, in the claim that criminal laws against prostitution undermine the ability to collaborate with the police to report violent clients. Never does AI confront that violence directly.

Importantly, many of the research citations AI provides do not prove its claims. For example, AI states that suggestions by anti-trafficking advocates that the majority of those in the sex trade industry enter as children, were sexually or physically abused as children, are addicted to drugs, and forced against their will to participate have been shown to be misrepresentative of a large proportion of those in the industry (*Amnesty International Policy*, 2016). For this proposition AI cites an article (Vanwesenbeeck, 2001), reviewing research literature from the prior decade. AI thoroughly misinterprets the author's findings. The reviewed research covers only those prostituted women on the streets, where these vulnerabilities exist. However, characteristics for those working in indoor venues, (where most prostitution occurs) cannot be provided, as they have not been studied by the research reviewed by the author. This certainly does not mean, as AI avers, that those in indoor venues, where the majority of the women see buyers, differ from women on the streets in terms of various vulnerabilities. Another article (Klatt, Cavner, and Egan, 2013), cited for the assertion that the bulk of those in prostitution do not have vulnerable characteristics, does not support the statement either; since not all vulnerable women become involved in prostitution, this research sought to identify factors that predict involvement in the sex trade industry, and does not come to conclusions about the characteristics of all women in prostitution.

For a further example, consider AI's characterization of an unfavorable report on the effects of the Swedish prostitution model (Dodillet & Ostergren, 2011). AI uses the Dodillet report to assert that since the law was enacted in 1999, some researchers have reported that prostituted women have become more reliant on third parties. There is, however, no mention of third parties in the Dodillet report. In her own research Ostergren explicitly states she did not attempt to contact prostituted women who had bad experiences with prostitution, but intentionally sought those with completely different experiences. Her 2003 graduate thesis refers to interviews with 15 prostituted women, of whom "most have a positive view of what they do." Yet her inherently biased "research" continues to be cited by scholars outside Sweden, using it to support advocacy for decriminalization (Waltman, 2011).

AI's own research demonstrates a lack of expertise in undertaking research and presentation of results. In Papua New Guinea (*Outlawed*, 2016), 29 prostituted women were interviewed but no information was given as to how they were selected. No summary of the interview questions is provided. The report does contain information about abuse from buyers, but AI avers, regardless, that "Violence should never be considered an inherent aspect of sex work, and states have an obligation to protect sex workers from violence regardless of whether or not sex work is criminalized" (p.51). With this statement AI admits that the sex trade industry

can be violent. Thus the report contains an internal contradiction; AI is advocating full decriminalization of a violent industry, calling upon the state to guarantee the safety of prostituted women. The New Guinea report cites *The Global Commission on HIV and the Law* report (see below), as well as *The Lancet* article, for the proposition that criminalization has dire consequences for HIV prevention.

Amnesty's Hong Kong report (*Harmfully Isolated*, 2016), is based on 16 interviews with those in the sex trade industry, (two of whom did not even describe themselves as involved in prostitution), with no information about how they were selected and what questions were asked. Human Rights Watch reports on condoms and the police are cited, as well as *The Lancet* article. Violence and abuse from customers are documented. AI's research report on Buenos Aires, Argentina (*What I'm Doing*, 2016), involved interviews with 15 individuals, with no information about how they were selected. Again, *The Lancet* article and *The Global Commission on HIV and the Law* report are cited. In Norway, 30 prostituted women were interviewed, without any information as to how they were selected or the questions they were asked. The Norway report (*The Human Cost*, 2016) is peculiar, however. Norway adopted the Swedish model, but it did not come into effect until October 2015, after AI's research was completed. By avoiding Sweden and interviewing in Norway before the new law took effect, AI failed to look at the effects on prostituted women under the Swedish model. Nor did it interview in countries which had legalized prostitution, such as The Netherlands and Germany. As one researcher (Geist, 2016) has observed, "This left Amnesty free to criticize other models without putting its own (or the closest comparison to its own) under the microscope" (p.15).

The influence of OFS on the AI policy process was revealed when one U.K. journalist obtained an outline of a 2013 meeting of an AI subcommittee, clearly indicating that the organization had already decided to support full decriminalization prior to the consultation process (Bindel, 2015). Internal notes direct that materials to be developed should "incorporate 10 Reasons to Decriminalize Sex Work," an OSF online document.

The official Hansard Report (2014) of a committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly, taking testimony on a bill aiming to reduce human trafficking by criminalizing the purchase of sex, captures the interrogation of an AI official about the involvement of Douglas Fox, founder of Christony Companions, one of the U K's largest escort agencies, in AI. In response, the AI official confirmed that Fox was a member of the Newcastle upon Tyne AI group, which as early as 2008 was proposing an AI decriminalization policy. Incredulously the legislator commented, "You allowed a person who ran the largest prostitution ring in north-east England to have major input in your policy development" (Hansard Report, 2014). In his summary of an AI conference he attended, Fox openly admitted his goal of influencing AI:

...we need to pursue them mercilessly and get them on our side, they are really anyway they just need a little shove in the right direction. Also some more out [sic] workers joining Amnesty branches may not be a bad idea (Fox, 2014).

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)

A hacked document lists the American Civil Liberties Union as one of 10 anchor programs (*OSF U.S. Programs Strategic Framework 2015-2018*, n.d.). However,

the OSF IRS 990 shows only a grant award of \$336,167 for 2015. OSF's IRSs filing for 2013 reports a much larger amount, including \$1,250,000 for general support and \$600,000 for an affiliate initiative. As total revenue for the ACLU in FY'15 was \$137,493,060, OSF funds are not a critical part of the ACLU's operations (*ACLU Annual Report 2015*).

Since 1977 the ACLU has supported decriminalization of prostitution; Policy 211 (ProCon.org, 2008) favors removal of criminal penalties for prostitution and supports total sexual freedom among consenting adults in private. In a recent *op ed* the ACLU of New Jersey, which received a grant from OSF of \$50,000 in both 2013 and 2014, supported the decriminalization of prostitution, citing the agreement of a host of other OSF grantees, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and UNAIDS (LoCicero and Ofer, 2016). An attorney for the New Hampshire Civil Liberties has taken the same position (Dinan, 2012).

In 2016 the ACLU Foundations of Southern and Northern California filed an *amicus* brief in an appeal to the United State Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in *Erotic Service Provider Legal Education & Research Project v. George Gascon* (ACLU *Amicus* Brief, 2016). The case challenges the constitutionality of California's statute making prostitution criminal. Due to the legitimate government interest in preventing violence against women and human trafficking, which provides a rational basis to justify the criminalization of prostitution in California, the district court below (*Erotic Service Provider Legal Education & Research Project v. Gascon*, 2016) ruled the statute constitutional. Using arguments employed by many OSF grantees, the brief alleges that decriminalization of the sex trade industry "has been shown to reduce violence" (p.29). The ACLU's brief is an example of how OSF grantees misconstrue existing research and bend it to their own purposes.

Two authorities form the bedrock of the ACLU's assertion that decriminalization reduces violence. One is the research work of Cunningham and Shah (2014), who, the ACLU said, determined that temporary decriminalization of indoor prostitution in Rhode Island significantly reduced reported cases of rape. Rhode Island decriminalized indoor prostitution between 1980 and 2009. Measuring the number of reported rapes in the state, Cunningham and Shah used the period 2003 to 2009, claiming 2003 was the effective date of the Rhode Island law, which it was not. In 2003 there was a reported rate of rape of 46.9 per 100,000, but this was an outlier year. The reported rate dropped in the year 2012 to 27.4, when the decriminalizing law had already been repealed, a lower rate than it was in the years 2004 and 2005 when prostitution was legal indoors (Brooks & Hughes, 2014).

Second, the ACLU brief cites a research paper (Brents and Hausbeck, 2005) that reportedly found that legalized prostitution in Nevada reduced violence and fear of abuse as compared with non-legal venues. A reading of this article does not justify the use made of it by the ACLU. It has many biases, including the fact that the researchers obtained entry to the brothels with help from the Nevada Brothel Association, and appeared to take at face value everything said by brothel owners. Importantly, the investigators did not compare violence and fear of violence in criminalized venues with legalized venues in rural Nevada. And, based on their interviews with women in the legal brothels, the researchers found, as we have seen, violence and continual apprehension of violence.

United Nations Agencies

In justification of its decriminalization policy Amnesty International quoted extensively from U.N. reports on HIV and the sex trade, which it hoped would appear authoritative for the uninitiated reader.

U.N. Global Commission on HIV and the Law

One report was from the U.N. Global Commission on HIV and the Law, established by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon in 2011, and backed by the United Nations Development Programme and UNAIDS. Two years later its report (*HIV and the Law*, 2012) was published. OSF and the Ford Foundation, as well as a host of other organizations, provided funding for the effort. The Commission was made up of 14 individuals from around the world, many of them elected officials, guided by a technical advisory group of 22 members, including a senior program officer for the Global Drug Policy Program of OSF and Cheryl Overs, the founder of the Global Network of Sex Projects, an OSF grantee. Not surprisingly, the Commission's report urges repeal of laws that prohibit consenting adults to buy or sell sex, as well as others prohibiting living off the earnings of prostitution or brothel-keeping.

The group's report places the responsibility on the illegal nature of prostitution for the fact that "sex workers" are eight times more likely to be infected with HIV than other adults. Again, trafficking is minimized, as the report claims that trafficking for sexual exploitation and prostitution have been wrongly conflated: "Sex work is not always a desperate or irrational act; it is a realistic choice to sell sex in order to support a family, an education or maybe a drug habit. It is an act of agency" (p.39), citing the UNAIDS Advisory Group on HIV and Sex Work, (see below), along with Human Rights Watch country reports.

By sponsoring the Commission's activity, OSF caused an official report to be created, which could be used as a reference in other studies. In a brief on the report, OSF hailed the findings, erroneously claiming that "The Commission was an *independent* body of experts and respected statespersons established by United Nations Development Programme to address the ways in which human rights abuses, stigma, and discrimination fuel the global HIV epidemic" (*The Global Commission*, n.d., p. 1, emphasis added).

Report of the UNAIDS Advisory Group On HIV And The Sex Trade

The *Report of the UNAIDS Advisory Group on HIV and the Sex Trade* (2011) emerged from the work of UNAIDS, the international body responsible for leading global efforts to reverse the spread of HIV. In 2011, UNAIDS organized an Advisory Group on HIV and Sex Work that included representatives of groups affiliated with the Global Network of Sex Work Projects, an organization funded by OSF (see Section III). The Advisory Group apparently believed that involvement of the Global Network satisfied the requirement of giving voice to a representative universe of individuals in the sex trade industry. One journalist claims that the Advisory Group was co-chaired by the Global Network of Sex Work Projects (Banyard, 2015), although this fact cannot be corroborated in the issued report, and its funders are not mentioned. This report also called for full decriminalization of prostitution as a strategy to combat AIDS as well as trafficking for sexual exploitation.

This author has a copy of the report, but when checking the references for it, she found that it was no longer available on the Internet. Information on the web site of the Global Network of Sex Work Projects (McCulloch, 2011) indicates that

the report was withdrawn for revisions, but no final report seems to have appeared. Instead a different document is featured on the UNAIDS web site (*UNAIDS Guidance Note*, 2012), which does recommend full decriminalization of prostitution.

Curiously, the document begins with the statement that it does not necessarily represent the views of all members of the advisory group, nor the stated positions of UNAIDS. There is no reference to any research in the report, with trafficking for sexual exploitation minimized at every opportunity, again with no supporting research, as in this passage:

However, it is important to understand that being trafficked is *often* a temporary situation: people who are trafficked do not necessarily remain in situation of powerlessness and coercion. For example, individuals who have been trafficked into the sex industry, or those who find themselves tricked or coerced once within the sex industry, can find their way out of situations of coercion but remain in sex work operating more independently and usually with support from their fellow sex workers, their clients, their intimate partners, and their managers or agents (p. 17) (emphasis added).

The report echoes the OSF position that the majority of harm and abuse suffered by individuals in prostitution comes from law enforcement:

However, many sex workers work in situations where there is no greater exploitation than that experienced by many other workers. Moreover, the harm and abuse that do occur in contexts of sex work often have nothing to do with trafficking. For instance, a major source of violence and extortion against sex workers is law enforcement officials, who are supposed to be preventing rather than causing harm (p. 18).

Sex Work And The Law in Asia And The Pacific Report

A third report is the *Sex Work and the Law in Asia and the Pacific Report* of 2012. With this 212-page document UNAIDS, the United Nations Population Fund, and the United Nations Development Programme supported total decriminalization. Written in partnership with a number of “sex worker” organizations in Asia and the Pacific, including the Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers and the China Sex Worker Organization Network Forum, this report describes situations in 32 separate countries. It adopts, however, the framework from the *Report of the UNAIDS Advisory Group on HIV and Sex Work*, quoting liberally from its pages to buttress its statements about prostitution and trafficking.

OSF Fellows

For many years now OSF has funded generous journalist fellowships for a period of up to 18 months. In addition, 12-15 non-journalists each year are selected to pursue, full-time, criminal justice reform projects in the United States. OSF uses these fellowships to promote the causes it endorses (*Open Society Fellowship*, n.d.). Of the 350 awards made since 1997, only a small handful of individuals have won fellowships for research and writing projects dedicated to the decriminalization of the sex trade industry (*OSF Fellowship Grantees*, 2016).

A hacked document (*Investigative Reporting*, 2014), a review of the investigative reporting fellowships written for OSF board members, provides revealing insights about OSF’s goals for the fellowships. The report makes reference to other

prestigious journalistic fellowships, but makes clear that it views these other awards as motivated by promoting excellence in journalism by those who believe advocacy is anathema to reportorial objectivity. Instead, OSF maintains that its program's "measure of success has always been service to OSF;" journalism is seen as "a tool in the Open Society kit" (*Investigative Reporting*, 2014, p.1).

Grantee journalists are those who can magnify the impact of their investigative reporting, and one of the ways is publishing in outlets in which they are not preaching to the already converted. The hacked document discusses some recent journalistic fellowships and what was learned from them. In 2010-2011 Noy Thrupkaew received \$99,969 for a project entitled "Human Trafficking Myths Reconsidered." OSF hoped that Thrupkaew's credibility as a journalist would enable her to reach non-traditional audiences with reportage on the harm caused by law enforcement suppression of "sex work." During her fellowship Thrupkaew produced only one short *op ed*, and later ran into trouble, as the conclusion of this case study reveals:

In addition, some colleagues were alarmed when Thrupkaew announced her intention to write an opinion piece critiquing a Human Rights Watch report on trafficking (which OSF had partly funded). They argued that OSF should present a common front to the public on sensitive issues and that the fellows with different stances would be perceived as writing on behalf of the organization. As the journalist wrote at the time: "I feel like OSF still hasn't figured out its relationship to journalists" (*Investigative Reporting*, p.10).

Since then, OSF writes that fellows have been given broader latitude to publish on issues that remain unsettled at OSF (p.10). Criticizing "settled" issues, even with facts on the ground, would apparently not be within a fellow's remit, however.

Recently *Anthropology News* ran a piece by Elzbieta Gozdzia (2016) entitled "How Exaggerated Media Reports Misconceive the Realities of Migration and Displacement," in which the author argues that reports of trafficking are overstated, although no research is cited to support the author's contention. The anthropologist author, a professor at Georgetown University, served in 2016 as the George Soros Visiting Chair in Public Policy at the Central European University in Budapest, Hungary. In a recent book on children coming to the U.S. to make money (Gozdzia, 2016), the professor asserts that none of the 140 children she interviewed were kidnapped or physically forced to accompany their transporters, and thus, she says, they were not trafficked. Close family members facilitated the journey of the majority of the girls. Therefore, she writes, "Sex work is an economic strategy for the whole family, not an abuse of girls and women by their kin" (Gozdzia, p 58).

Another example of OSF's attempts to influence journalists may be a major piece in the *New York Times Magazine* by Emily Bazelon (2016), *Should Prostitution Be a Crime?* Bazelon was a Soros Media Fellow in 2004 and her grandfather's foundation, the Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, is a Soros grantee, receiving \$200,000 in 2015, and a similar amount in the previous year. The magazine piece makes no claim to objectivity: the views of those against full decriminalization receive no coverage. In the article, major Soros grantees, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, UNAIDS, and The Global Commission on HIV are heard from. When *The Lancet* article makes yet another appearance, suspicions of OSF influence arise. In the article, one side of a contentious

issue is always presented as fact, with no airing of more diverse views. Two examples are given here.

Without reference to research in New Zealand, Bazelon claims that after full decriminalization in New Zealand trafficking did not increase and those in the industry are now able to control their own working environments. Feminist blogger Meghan Murphy (2016) heard from one prostitution survivor in New Zealand who was interviewed by Bazelon, but whose comments did not make it into the article. Sabrinna Valisce, a volunteer with the New Zealand Prostitutes Collective, said she told Bazelon that after decriminalization unsafe sex practices and violence became the norm: “I’m talking more about the everyday violence of gagging, throttling, spanking, hair pulling, rough handling, and hard pounding.” Writes Murphy (2016), “Valisce says there has been a notable rise in men’s sense of entitlement and a normalization of abuse since the new law came into effect,” but her experience was nowhere mentioned in the New Zealand section of the article.

The journalist’s discussion of SANGRAM, an organization distributing condoms in a red-light district in rural southern India, is also compromised. Bazelon states that the group returned American government funds in 2005 because it could not sign the anti-prostitution pledge required by Congress. The real story, however, may be different. Restore International claims that USAID withdrew financial support from SANGRAM because it was thwarting attempts to rescue minors in a brothel. This writer has been unable to find any official documents in the matter, but UNICEF does report the suspension of funding in a research brief (*US Accuses NGO*, 2005), and Rep. Mark Souder (R., IN) refers to the defunding in a letter to USAID in 2005. Given these dueling contentions, Bazelon should certainly have made reference to the factual controversy.

OSF Regional Or Country Offices

Regional or country OSF offices receive substantial funds from the foundation, often in amounts as large as \$10-20 million a year (IRS Form 990, 2015). Country OSF web sites, often for very good reasons, provide very sketchy details about activities. The South African office web site is one of the few that does provide information about grant-making, indicating that in 2017 the Justice, Equality, and Rights Program (JER) was a funding priority. JER supports, among other activities, “efforts that advocate and litigate toward a decriminalization of sex work” (*Justice, Equality, and Rights Programme*, 2017).

Nor is it easy to obtain information about activities other than grant making. An Internet search revealed only a few examples: a workshop for prostituted women from the East African region was banned by the Uganda government in 2008. According to BBC News (*Uganda Prostitute Workshop Banned*, 2008), flights and living expenses were to be paid by the Open Society Initiative for East Africa and a Ugandan-based women’s group. In 2006 an international gathering in Johannesburg, South Africa sponsored by OSF discussed decriminalization as a remedy to improve the lives of those who sell sex (*Harm Reduction*, 2006).

Conclusion

George Soros’s prostitution policy activities have proven successful in that many major non-governmental human rights organizations have bought into his vision. We are starting to see the effects. For example, hacked documents quote former Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, in a conversation with Black Lives Matter activists, declaring, “I mean there is a difference between an adult sex

worker and a child trafficked into being a sex worker, so you cannot just make a blanket statement, you have to figure out what the different situations are” (*Full Transcript*, 2015). Soros made the sixth largest contribution, at \$10.5 million, to Clinton’s presidential campaign (*Top Contributors*, n.d.). And Ambassador John Miller (2008), former head of the U.S. State Department’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking, has described the attitudes of male Justice Department lawyers, sympathetic to the sex trade industry, and not hostile to pimps because they hold that vast numbers of women engage in prostitution by choice. We cannot directly link this attitude to OSF, but these ideas are very much in the air, helped along by the foundation’s efforts.

On the other hand, democratically-elected bodies lately have failed to be persuaded. Time after time, legislative bodies have chosen the Nordic model-- decriminalizing only the sellers of sex--adopted within the last few years in Canada, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Iceland, France, and Norway; in 2014, both the European Parliament and the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly endorsed reports and passed resolutions in support of the Nordic Model in addressing prostitution and trafficking for sexual exploitation. This position is because the facts on the ground do not support decriminalization, and stringently conducted research is persuasive in legislative settings. Soros recognizes only state sanctioned coercion, violence, and abuse from law enforcement, ignoring individual violence from buyers and pimps. Every day law enforcement—from police officers to state attorney generals—are confronted with coercion and violence, and they have begun to speak out.

There is an increasing recognition in the U.S. that philanthropic efforts of billionaires can work in undemocratic ways. Money that would be paid in state and federal taxes and “democratically directed is shielded from public control for private use” in the United States (LaMarche, 2014). In 2011 tax subsidies for charitable giving cost the U.S. Treasury an estimated \$53.7 billion (LaMarche, 2014). A new book dedicated to this issue (Callahan, 2017) asks what the end result will be when the rich have the wherewithal to advance views that are not necessarily shared by their fellow citizens. Furthermore, there exists no mechanism for members of the public to influence philanthropic capitalists across the political spectrum, whether Bill Gates, Michael Bloomberg, George Soros, or the Koch Brothers, which accounts for some of the frustration with their activities. Elimination of the tax deduction for policy advocacy activities is one solution, although defining what qualifies for a deduction would be a difficult task. As one professor maintains, “Quite literally, every American who pays taxes today is subsidizing the attempt of fabulously rich people to dominate our public policy” (McWilliams, 2017, p.2).

Often, however, these billionaires come up against the power of democracy. One example is the effort of investment banker “Pete” Peterson pushing deficit reduction. As a result of his lobbying and spending on this issue, President Barak Obama relented and created the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, consisting of members of Congress with two former officials chairing. The stage was then set: one of the top staffers was paid by the Peter G. Peterson Foundation, and another staffer funded by the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, which obtained much of its support from the Peterson Foundation. However, the Commission’s ultimate recommendations were ignored by President Obama and were dead upon arrival in Congress (Callahan, 2017).

George Soros is just one of many U.S. billionaires who may have achieved an outsized influence due to money and strong advocacy for public policy views. Another example of the phenomenon is Donald Trump's rapid ascent into the U.S. presidency, illustrating the power and influence of billionaires in American society by those who may not necessarily represent the views of the majority of citizens. Soros's techniques are similar to Trump's-- misstatements and reiteration, which historian Timothy Snyder calls "shamanistic incantation," depending upon endless repetition, designed to make the fictional plausible (Snyder, 2017, p.66-7).

Callahan generalizes about billionaire philanthropists in general, but could be talking about George Soros:

If you're rich, you can pay the salaries of policy experts to advance your beliefs within the corridors of power. You can underwrite books and magazines and sway broader audiences. You can support lawyers who use litigation to achieve change (Callahan, 2017, p. 76).

We may not be able to stop Soros, but there are important lessons to be learned from his activities. Abolitionists can do a better job of presenting the facts and harnessing the power of law enforcement. As I have recently explored (Raphael, 2017), presentations to policy bodies have been replete with overstated estimates of trafficking, false facts, and ideology that have proven confusing to legislative bodies. Facts from research in decriminalized venues, along with testimony from trafficked individuals, require better packaging and presentation. Influential organizations and commissions need to create reports that can be used in legislative testimony.

Through its funding OSF has created a body of "research" to support its policy of fully decriminalizing prostitution. This material fails to deal with an entire group of findings put forward by entities seeking legitimate evaluation of decriminalization. For this reason, it would not be inaccurate to label OSF's conclusions as "false news," a term used by President Trump for any information that criticizes his actions. In 2012 Steve Bannon, former advisor to President Trump, established a Government Accountability Institute in Tallahassee, Florida, to produce new stories about the corruption of the Clintons, "to help shift the media culture to the right" (Lebovic, 2017). Soros and OSF have been engaged in such media culture shifting efforts for some years. Those concerned with trafficking for sexual exploitation, violence, coercion, and abuse in prostitution should be cognizant of these strategies used by decriminalization advocates, pointing out their unsupported assumptions, and meeting their allegations with proven facts.

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