

**Sex, education and the city: The urban  
politics and pedagogies of Kerb Crawling  
Education Programmes**

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## **Abstract**

This paper offers an insight into the ways in which urban sexualities are taught, a lacuna in the emerging work on cities and sexualities. To do this, it synthesises the literatures on the geographies of sexualities, sex education and the geographies of education. It then critically examines the complex and sometimes contradictory politics and pedagogies of Kerb Crawling Education Programmes (KCEPs). Such programmes have emerged in parts of England since 1998, modelled on the 'John School' which has been rolled out in many towns and cities in North America and more recently in South Korea. Attendance at a KCEP in England is a 'voluntary' alternative to a court hearing for those arrested for kerb crawling for the first time, where they will be informed of the 'harms' and 'victims' that are created as a result for their behaviour. It draws on a case study of one anonymised KCEP to consider its moral messages, location and governance as well as how these aspects are shaped by social relations and politics that stretch beyond the 'classroom'. In so doing, the paper argues that future research needs to pay close attention to the place of sexuality education, the gendering of sexuality education, and the links between sexuality education and the criminal justice system.

Key words: sexualities, cities, sex work, policing, education

## **Introducing urban sexualities**

A small body of work has begun to explore the diverse ways in which cities shape, and are shaped by, discourses and embodied performances of sexuality (see, for instance, Brown 2008b; Brown 2009; Houlbrook 2006; Johnston and Longhurst

2010; Sanders 2009; Turner 2003). Perhaps the most comprehensive analysis of this relationship is provided by Phil Hubbard's (2012) fascinating book *Cities and Sexualities*. Here Hubbard demonstrates that cities are key nodes in a diverse array of sexual economies and cultures. They are also spaces where people have opportunities to mingle, observe, hide, discover and exchange sexual experiences. Nevertheless, Hubbard quite rightly cautions against overly romanticised representations of the sexual city, for there are limits and pressures on the sexual possibilities the city has to offer. Indeed, Hubbard reasons that cities are also sites of sexual inequality and injustice as well as places 'where sexuality is most intensely scrutinized, policed and disciplined' (*ibid*, xiv; see also Brown 2009; Hubbard 1999). The policing of 'deviant' sexuality in the city, he shows, is often accompanied by discourses asserting that certain sexual practices, encounters and bodies are immoral and dangerous and therefore need to be punished, excluded or contained in marginal spaces of the city (Hubbard 1998).

*Cities and Sexualities* draws upon and echoes the wider literature on the geographies of sexuality that first emerged in the mid-1990s (see, for example, Bell and Valentine 1995; Browne *et al.* 2007; Johnston and Longhurst 2010). Despite the differences within this emerging sub-discipline, many of the scholars within it would agree with Brown *et al.*'s (2007, 4) epistemological argument that 'sexuality – its regulation, norms, institutions, pleasures and desires – cannot be understood without understanding the spaces through which it is constituted, practised and lived'. Echoing Browne *et al.*'s conception of space, Hubbard sees the city as not simply an inert backdrop to our sexual desires and practices. Instead, the very materiality of the city – from the street to the pub, the 'family home' to the ceramics, urinals and doors of public toilets (Brown 2008a) – shapes our sexual

experiences. The city, furthermore, is also a discursive construction and the ways in which the city is represented also shapes the socio-spatial ways in which we behave and interact in the city (Hubbard 2006a). A geographical approach, therefore, is fundamental in understanding the relationship between sex and the city.

This paper seeks to expand upon this emerging work on sexualities, space and urbanism by considering how appropriate urban sexualities are *taught* in the city. While the aforementioned literature on urban sexualities has paid close attention to the ways in which the boundaries between appropriate and inappropriate sexual behaviours in the city are socially constructed and policed, there have been surprisingly few studies that have focused on how sexual behaviours are taught and certain forms actively promoted. This paper will begin to address this important lacuna by examining the socio-spatial politics and pedagogy of Kerb Crawling Education Programmes (KCEPs).

The first KCEP emerged in Leeds, England during 1998 (Campbell and Storr 2001) with an estimated 15 operating in different towns and cities in England at the end of 2012. Their origins, however, are from North America as they are based on 'John Schools', the first of which opened in 1981 in Grand Rapids, Michigan (Shively *et al.* 2008). Since then, John Schools have subsequently spread across parts of the United States, Canada and South Korea. The common bond between all KCEPs and John Schools is their pedagogic focus: the negative consequences of men buying, or attempting to buy, sex. The majority of KCEPs and John Schools are based in urban areas and while their role varies from place to place, the majority of these programmes are available as a 'voluntary' alternative to going to court<sup>1</sup>. The 'entry crime' in the UK is kerb crawling, while in the USA it is generally soliciting for the

purpose of buying sex in public space, in Canada it is communicating for the purpose of buying sex in public space, and in South Korea John Schools are for those caught buying sex.

In order to get an in-depth understanding of the politics and pedagogy of KCEPs, this paper will focus in-depth on one KCEP in the anonymised town of Redtown in England. To do this it will draw upon a variety of methods including documentary analysis, participant observation at one programme<sup>ii</sup>, and qualitative interviewing with those running the scheme and regulating prostitution more widely in Redtown. The paper will consider three important issues. First, it will reflect on the scheme's introduction and its embeddedness in local and extra-local contexts and processes. Second, it will consider the construction and location of the 'classroom' environment. Third, it will critically analyse the ways in which the scheme represents the socio-spatial harms of buying of public sex. It is also important to highlight here what this paper will *not* do. It will not attempt to evaluate the success of KCEPs – itself a highly contentious issue and one that has been addressed by other empirical studies of John Schools in North America (Wortley *et al.* 2002; Kennedy 2004; Shively *et al.* 2008). Its focus on the politics and pedagogy of KCEPs is equally important as little is known about what happens within the KCEP classroom or its multi-scalar politics outside of North America. In order to conceptually frame the analysis, this paper will first explore the wider literatures on sex education and bring it into dialogue with the emerging literatures on the geographies of education.

## **The geographies of sex education**

Kerb Crawling Education Programmes are not the only institutions that teach people about appropriate and inappropriate sexualities. A large body of literature has considered the ways in which schools have taught sex and sexuality to youths as well as the wider politics of teaching sex in the classroom (see, for example, Allen 2011; Epstein and Johnson 1998; Epstein *et al.* 2003; Irvine 1995; Mort 2000). Teaching sex and sexuality, as Mort (2000) has shown, continues to be subject to intense debate, resistance and scrutiny, often with adults speaking, and making decisions, on behalf of young people's 'best interests'. Its place in the school classroom has been particularly scrutinised. For some, teaching sex education in schools is inappropriate and out-of-place as sex education is viewed as a 'family matter' to be delivered by parents or guardians in the family home. Others, meanwhile, have argued that the state has a moral public duty to all its citizens which is best conducted in a public educational setting (Coleman *et al.* 2010).

As Epstein and Johnson (1998) have shown, public scrutiny by parents, the media, and government among others, combined with a wider moralistic and heteronormative understandings of sex and childhood, has shaped the *raison d'être* of sex education in the UK. For them, sex education is focused on warning children of the risks of sex and the potential problems of 'unwanted' teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (see also Allen 2011). Here sex is portrayed as a biological act of reproduction conducted between consenting adults. Children are responsabilised and at the same time normatively framed as desexualised citizens who must wait for a loving (heterosexual) adult relationship and be safe. For Fine (1988), the discourses of pleasure and desire are completely absent from discussions

about sex in schools, justified by a need to maintain the 'innocence' and 'purity' of children. Another fundamental silence in sex education, highlighted by Epstein and colleagues (Epstein and Johnston 1998; Epstein *et al.* 2003), is around non-heterosexuality. In schools, Epstein *et al.* (2003, 2) argue, 'heteronormativity is promoted, sustained and made to appear totally natural'.

The teaching and learning of sex and sexuality as many of these studies show is subject to subversion in, and of course beyond, the classroom. Allen (2013) shows how young people learn about sexuality in school through subversive appropriations of space, for example, sexual contact behind the bike shed. Furthermore, as Coleman *et al.* (2010) show in a study of young people in New Zealand, young people also learn about sex and sexual health beyond the school premises in different ways, at home and in informal settings, with family members and with friends. For both studies, 'place enables and constrains conversation regarding sexual matters' (Coleman *et al.* 2010, 61), an argument that strikes a chord with the literature on the geographies of education that has emerged in recent years (see, for example, Brooks *et al.* 2012; Thiem 2009; Holloway *et al.* 2010; Holloway and Jöns 2012; Collins and Coleman 2008). Echoing the work on the geographies of sexualities, the geographies of education literature reflects on the active role of space in the processes of educating and learning where space is understood as being much more than a passive container to social processes. We shall now explore this literature further.

Much of the geographies of education literature, like the work on sex education, has focused on the institutions of formal education: schools, colleges and universities. Here the geographies of education literature offers useful insights into

the spaces of education, particularly the design and surveillance of the school classrooms, corridors and playgrounds, but also into the ways in which educational spaces are appropriated, controlled, represented and experienced (see, for instance, den Besten *et al.* 2011). However, this narrow focus on formal educational spaces is problematic, as recognised by Brooks *et al.* (2012, 1, emphasis original) who subsequently call for studies to take account of ‘the *plurality* of spaces (such as homes, workplaces, international space and cyberspace) within which learning can take place, as well as the ‘non-traditional’ stages in the life course at which it occurs’ (see, for example, Kraftl forthcoming; Mills 2013).

The pluralisation of the spaces and forms of education is also linked to the evolving technologies of education. Nelson and Martin’s (2004) edited collection, *Sexual Pedagogies*, for example, demonstrates how an evolving and expanding array of technologies such as books, magazines and films, used in a variety of formal and informal spaces, have been extensively used by youths and adults to learn about sex and sexuality. The empirical focus in this article on KCEPs, with their use of a variety of teaching technologies – such as PowerPoint presentations, videos, role play – together with their focus on adults over the legal age of consent (16 in the UK), therefore provides further insight into the spaces of ‘non-traditional’ adult education and the role of diverse pedagogical technologies within this.

Another important insight from the geographies of education literature is the necessity to understand education spaces in relation to the wider socio-spatial contexts and networks in which they are situated (Thiem 2009). These contexts and networks are path-dependent and shape the ways in which subjects are taught and learnt (see, for example, Pyckett 2009). Relatedly, it is also important to recognise

the desire and (constrained) ability of teachers, educational programmes and institutions to change the contexts in which they are based. This maybe through direct action – think, for example, of the activism-beyond-the-academy by numerous radical scholars – or through the teaching and ‘enhancement’ of others (Castree 2000). Ontologically, therefore, we can see educational spaces such as the KCEP classroom in a similar way to how Massey (2005) understands place as being surprisingly open, connected and porous with messy boundaries.

It is also important to make sense of the relationship between the politics and pedagogies of urban educational schemes (such as KCEPs) and the city. Important questions need to be answered, such as how does the local and extra-local politics of the city shape education programmes? How do educational programmes seek to re-shape the city and the students’ ‘geographical imaginations’ of the city? To answer these, and as this section has demonstrated, we must first pay close attention to the ways in which material and discursive boundaries are constructed between appropriate and inappropriate sexualities in the city, as well as how particular sexualities are silenced. Second, we must pay critical attention to the *politics* of educational programmes such as KCEPs and their position in wider networks and contexts. This dual conceptual focus will frame the empirical examination of KCEPs that will now begin with an overview of the local and extra-local politics of sex work and kerb crawling in Redtown.

## **The local and extra-local politics of sex work and kerb crawling**

In England and Wales kerb crawling was criminalised under the Sexual Offences Act 1985.<sup>iii</sup> Kerb crawling was defined in the Act in gender-specific terms as a man soliciting a woman for the purposes of prostitution from, or within the vicinity, of a motor vehicle. It would only be a criminal offence if it were conducted ‘in such manner or in such circumstances as to be likely to cause annoyance to the woman (or any of the women) solicited, or nuisance to other persons in the neighbourhood’ (as defined in the Sexual Offences Act 1985). For Janet Fookes, then the Conservative MP for Plymouth Drake who led the accompanying Private Members’ Bill through Parliament, the Act would address ‘the unhappiness and distress caused to ordinary women who do not want to be approached... in streets where, over the years, residents have been increasingly plagued by the activities of prostitutes’ (quoted in Wooster 1985, 7). Kerb crawling here was framed as an annoyance to ‘ordinary’ women, using what Pheonix (2008, 35) calls the ‘discourse of public nuisance’ which had dominated political debates over prostitution for several decades prior to this. Importantly, though, the 1985 Act and the surrounding discourse began to reposition the male client as an offender, away from previous hegemonic understandings of men as “innocent’ in their submission to the predatory nature of fallen women who lured them into their dens of inequity’ (Sanders 2008, 134; see also Kantola and Squires 2004).

Redtown, a mid-sized town in England, has a long but largely unwritten history of indoor and outdoor prostitution markets. Following the rolling out of the 1985 Act the police in Redtown, as with many other police forces in urban areas in England and Wales, began to target kerb crawlers alongside female sex workers.

Indoor markets were largely left alone with the focus squarely on street sex work through *ad hoc* quick-and-hard ‘crackdowns’ (Hubbard 2006). Male sex work, according to the police officials interviewed, is very small or non-existent in Redtown, unlike several other towns and cities in England (Whowell 2010). The crackdowns in Redtown were concentrated in the town’s two red light districts (both in industrial and warehouse areas adjacent to the town centre). The primary tactic used during the crackdowns were the use of undercover or uniformed police officers to monitor the streets of the red light districts, with undercover officers dressed as sex workers or in unmarked cars ready to ‘pounce’ on those engaging in soliciting or the act itself. This was also accompanied by the sending of letters to owners of cars seen acting ‘suspiciously’ in the district, the installation of CCTV cameras, and alley-gating in the nearby residential area. The murder of two sex workers in the early 2000s provoked more rounds of crackdowns but these were, yet again, short-term operations focused on specific geographical areas.

Although the town’s police force publicly announced in the local newspaper shortly after the murders that they were seeking to ‘stamp out’ kerb crawling in the town, the *de facto* policing of public sex in Redtown involved a significance degree of tolerance (cf. Hubbard 2006b). The police sought to spatially contain the buying and selling of sex in the two industrial red light districts and at the same time remove it from a working class residential area, anonymised here as Northside, which is adjacent to one of the red light districts and where sex work would occasionally ‘spill over’ into. A few years later it was announced that the police would impose a day-time ‘curfew’ on sex workers and their clients, between 6am and 8pm in the red light districts so as not to disturb the ‘working hours’ of businesses located there. Although there remain disputes locally as to whether the two districts actually

constituted 'tolerance zones', such strategies clearly echo Hubbard's (1999) argument that authorities seek to delimit good and bad sexualities through the ordering of space and time. This selective tolerance is reflected further in the infrequency which with the police and courts in the town have utilised the increasing powers given to them by the New Labour government including the power of arrest, the ability to seize a motor car, and the ability to issue an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) (see Table 1; see also Brooks-Gordon 2010). Prostitution and kerb crawling, as a police official interviewed (#1, December 2011) noted, were not a high priority of the police.

Alongside the police actions against sex workers and kerb crawlers in Redtown, a new outreach project, delivered by a local voluntary organisation and funded by the council, was set up in the early 2000s. Still operating, the project seeks to support and exit women from street prostitution through the provision of advice and support on a range of issues including health care, drugs and alcohol, employment, welfare and housing. It also offers a comfortable and safe venue in one of the red light districts where sex workers can relax and socialise during the night. Following the Policing and Crime Act 2009, the project began delivering Engage and Support Orders (ESOs) given by the courts to street sex workers who have caught loitering or soliciting on two or more occasions over a three-month period. ESOs require sex workers to attend three meetings with a court-appointed supervisor in order to plan their exit from prostitution – a form of what Sanders (2009) calls 'forced welfare'. While there has been a change in the attitudes by the authorities in Redtown and nationwide towards sex workers – viewing them increasingly as both offenders *and* victims when previously they were simply seen as offenders (Matthews 2008) – critics have argued that ESOs continue to criminalise and exclude sex

workers, particularly those who do not actively seek to exit sex work (e.g. by not attending the meetings) (see Sanders 2012; Scoular and O’Neill 2008).

<b>Act of Parliament</b>	<b>Offence(s)</b>	<b>Punishment</b>
1985 Sexual Offences Act (Sections 1 and 2)	(1) Kerb crawling (in a manner likely to cause annoyance to a woman or neighbourhood) (2) Persistent soliciting of a woman	Fine not exceeding level 3 on standard scale for offence (1) and (2)
1998 Crime and Disorder Act (Section 1)	Behaviour ‘in a manner that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household as himself’	Anti-Social Behaviour Order
2000 Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act (Section 146)	Any offence	Disqualification from holding a driving license
2001 Criminal Justice and Police Act (Section 71)	Kerb crawling	Arrest
2009 Policing and Crime Act (Sections 14 and 19)	(1) Soliciting in a public place (irrespective of frequency) (2) Strict-liability offence to pay for the sexual services of a person subject to exploitative conduct (force, threats, coercion, or deception) from third person	Fine not exceeding level 3 on standard scale for (1) and (2)

**Table 1:** Summary of legislation relating to kerb crawling in England and Wales

Source: [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)

The development of the outreach project received strong and vocal criticism and complaints from some residents of Northside who argued that the establishment of the outreach service and premises encouraged and concentrated sex work in the adjacent red light district. These complaints were part of a much wider series of

complaints to, and fractured relations with, the authorities over the presence of sex workers and kerb crawlers in ‘their’ neighbourhood stretching back over a decade (cf. Hubbard 1999). Alongside this, the local newspaper became increasingly vocal in calling for action against kerb crawlers. In this context, a petition signed by over two thousand people – many of these were residents of Northside – was submitted to the police and the council as well as the Home Office during 2006. The petition demanded that officials stop taking a ‘soft-touch’ approach to policing sex work, and instead take a ‘zero-tolerance approach’ targeting the kerb crawlers in particular.

According to those interviewed, the petition was the key catalyst behind a new partnership-based strategy to police prostitution in the town. Rolled out in 2007, one police official interviewed (#1, December 2011) argued that the message of the new strategy was not about zero tolerance but focused on ‘pulling out the plug and turning the tap off’. In other words, it sought to address both the ‘supply’ and ‘demand’ of street prostitution through exiting women from street sex work, deterring kerb crawlers and to a lesser extent discouraging entry into prostitution. Its focus strongly echoed the New Labour government’s *Co-ordinated Prostitution Strategy* published a year earlier (Home Office 2006; see also Sanders 2012). Importantly, Redtown’s new strategy, as with previous prostitution strategies in the town, did not target indoor sex work but focused explicitly on street sex work. Furthermore, a council official interviewed (December 2011) argued that in order to ‘win the hearts and minds of the community’, the public rhetoric around the new strategy has continued to emphasise the ‘toughened’ approach to policing kerb crawlers. The support and exiting elements of the strategy, meanwhile, have rarely been publicised for fear of upsetting residents. The new strategy, therefore, was strategically selective, both materially and discursively.

The policing of kerb crawlers now involves undercover police operations in the red light districts at least once a week and running a Kerb Crawling Education Programme. Beginning in 2007, the KCEP is only available for those arrested for kerb crawling for the first time (providing they admit to the offence). They must attend one KCEP session where they will receive a police caution. Those who deny the offence and those who have previously been arrested for kerb crawling are not given the option of attending a KCEP and must attend a court hearing instead. By the end of 2011, 20 sessions had taken place with several hundred men attending.

The KCEP in Redtown was not the first in England and Wales; by then a handful had emerged in other towns and cities, several of which were, and continue to be, run by one private organisation that specialises in delivering KCEPs (see Campbell and Storr 2001; Sanders 2008). While those behind the Redtown KCEP – the police, the council and the outreach project – did not research the emerging KCEPs elsewhere in any depth, they felt that a ‘DIY awareness scheme’ was needed in Redtown (council official, interview, December 2011). In other words, a scheme developed and run by the police, council and outreach project in the town that could draw on their day-to-day local experiences, encounters and knowledge to run the scheme (council official, interview, December 2011). The rationale for the KCEPs was explained further by a police official interviewed (#1, December 2011):

‘The people who did the petition said we want the kerb crawlers – no ifs, no buts – taken straight to court and named and shamed. And while it is important to respond to what the community wants, at the same time we thought if we did that, we would have lost the opportunity to sit down with those people [the kerb crawlers] and explain a different reality of street

prostitution, because they would have gone to court, got fined and gone back out.’

For those interviewed, the kerb crawlers were seen as making a conscious but ill-informed decision to buy sex. Therefore, educating them about the wrongs and harms of kerb crawling and buying sex could, or should, discourage them from re-offending. Targeting the clients, they also argued, would reduce the ‘demand’ which in turn would reduce the ‘supply’ as sex workers relied on the money provided by the kerb crawlers. In short, the KCEP seeks to *responsibilise* the clients making them into self-governing subjects (Garland 2001). For one interviewee, the KCEP is designed to ‘give the power back into the hands of the men by giving them the information’, therefore making them ‘think twice before doing it again’ (outreach official #1, interview, January 2012).

A key problem, however, as several of the interviewees acknowledged, is that those running the scheme did not know *why* people kerb-crawled. As Sanders (2008) notes in her study of the motivations and identities of clients, there is an inherent problem if clients are punished punitively and told to change their behaviour if the authorities do not understand why they buy sex in the first place.

### **Inside the KCEP session**

Now we have explored the wider context of the Redtown KCEP scheme, let us now look inside its classroom and examine the key messages outlined to its attendees.

The KCEP sessions are held in a police station near to both red light districts. Police stations are popular choices for KCEP session venues, although some sessions in

North America are held in other venues such as community halls, courts and even churches. The first KCEP in the UK was held in an unmarked residential property in Leeds (*Modern Times: Paying for It* 1998). The choice of venue is important. As geographers and other social scientists have recognised, different places offer different physical affordances and emit different messages to the people occupying the space (see Cresswell 2004). In a recent study, Millie (2012) argues that some British police stations emit messages of reassurance to those outside and inside of the station, acknowledging that everyone experiences and reads places differently. Reassurance, in its positive sense at least, is not offered to those attending the KCEP sessions in Redtown. Instead, the decision to host the KCEP sessions at the police station is in part an attempt to encourage the participants to relive the *memories* of the night they were arrested and brought to a police station (see Till (2003) on the geographies of memory). The venue choice is also designed to convey the message that the police station is where 'sexual deviants' belong, and the seemingly ever-present power and reach of the police in the town.

The KCEP session takes place in a room in the private area of the police station. The room is set up in the style of a 'classroom' where rows of chairs are lined up to face the presenters who stand at the front alongside a projector screen and a television. The venue and the set up of the room help to convey the power and authority of those teaching.

The KCEP lasts between one and two hours. Unlike several other KCEPs in the UK and elsewhere, there is no attendance fee as a fee was seen as potentially discouraging some people from attending. Echoing many KCEP sessions elsewhere (some of which last for over six hours), the Redtown KCEP is structured around

presentations by selected 'community stakeholders'. In Redtown, each presentation takes the style of a short lecture to the attendees with little or no interaction with the audience. The speakers are a police representative, a community safety manager and a social worker from the council, and a representative of the outreach project. We will return to the politics of selecting the speakers later.

The core message of Redtown's KCEP sessions echoes many other KCEP and John School sessions elsewhere. Indeed, it resonates with Fischer *et al.*'s (2002, 396) account of the Toronto John School Diversion Programme where

'its central message... [is] that prostitution causes a great variety of 'victims' and 'harms' – all of which are caused by the 'John' and his selfish, immoral behaviour. The 'John' is cast as a fundamentally irresponsible citizen who is unable to control his sexual urges.'

As with the Toronto example, harm and victimisation are the central themes of the Redtown KCEP sessions. The offenders – the kerb crawlers – are framed as naïve but destructive characters who, as several of the interviewees noted, need to view buying sex as more than just a 'monetary transaction' between two people, but something that has negative consequences for many people. The victims in the Redtown KCEP sessions, echoing many KCEP sessions elsewhere, are the sex workers, the neighbouring community, the town as well as the kerb crawlers themselves. The behaviour of the kerb crawlers is portrayed as being both 'legally and morally wrong' – a phrase used in the letter from the police that every person caught kerb crawling in Redtown receives immediately after their arrest.

The Redtown KCEP session is introduced and concluded by a police representative who focuses on the first victim, the kerb crawler – a victim, according to the session, solely of his own making. Echoing the Toronto John School Diversion Programme some more, the message conveyed is that the attendees ‘have been given a merciful ‘break’ for their harmful and immoral behaviour’ (Fischer *et al.* 2002, 394). Should they re-offend, the message continues, they will be severely punished. In outlining this message the police representative in Redtown outlines the illegal status of kerb crawling and the sustained police operations to ‘catch’ kerb crawlers and the likelihood of being caught. As a police official who occasionally speaks at the session exclaimed in an interview (#2, December 2011):

‘I talk about how much I enjoy going out and locking people up, how much my team go out and enjoy locking people up. The reality is that we enjoy doing our job... and we do it well. So if you go back and reoffend, we will be there and we will be arresting you, and this is what will happen to you.’

The centrepiece of this presentation involves the police representative holding up a front page of the local newspaper. On this page the first person to be arrested for kerb crawling having already attended one of the Redtown KCEP sessions is ‘named and shamed’. Details of his subsequent court appearance, fine and driving ban are read out. The police representative warns those attending not to re-offend as ‘there is no second chance...you will go to court, you will be fair game to the press... we tell them and you will be named and shamed’ (taken from fieldwork diary, January 2012).

The second victim – the (street) sex worker – is focused on by the speakers from the outreach project and the council’s social services department. The

outreach representative reads one or two poems from a collection of poems written by sex workers who work or have worked in the town. The themes of the poems range from experiences of physical abuse to their negative attitudes towards clients and pimps. A short film is shown by the social services representative. The film consists of an interview with an anonymised ex-sex worker in the town who was forced into street sex work in order to pay for her father's drug addiction. The motivation behind the use of these technologies is to reveal the 'harsh realities' of being a sex worker (a phrase often used by KCEPs). For them, sex work is *never* a choice and that the sex workers only engage in sex work because they have either been coerced into it or are need of 'fast money' (often in order to pay for drugs). Furthermore, they argue that sex workers suffer on-going mental and physical victimisation including assaults, thefts, rapes and even murders, echoing Matthews (2008, 59) framing of sex workers as being 'repeat victims and multiple victims... [whose] victimisation is... compounded, continuous and concentrated' (cf. Prior *et al.* 2012). The outreach worker in one session observed affirmed that 'you are destroying a little bit more of her soul' and asks those attending why, if they would not let their sisters, daughters or nieces work in such conditions, do they find it acceptable to fund women to remain in such conditions (fieldwork diary, January 2012)?

The influence of what Weitzer (2012) terms the oppression paradigm on sex work in the Redtown is clear. Increasingly popular with policymakers and parts of the media and led by radical feminists such as Barry (1995) and Jeffreys (1997), it is neatly summarised by Weitzer (2012, 10-11, emphasis in original):

‘the oppression paradigm holds that sex work is the quintessential expression of patriarchal gender relations and male domination... Not only does the sex industry objectify and commodify women’s bodies; it also gives men the idea that they have a right to buy erotic entertainment from women; thus reinforcing women’s subordination to men... [E]xploitation, subjugation, and violence are intrinsic to and ineradicable from sex work – transcending historical time period, national context, and type of sexual commerce. As oppression theorists are fond of saying, sex work is violence, categorically.’

The gendered ideas of prostitution as commodification, prostitution as violence, and prostitution as men dominating women – the *leitmotifs* of the oppression paradigm – run through the Redtown KCEP sessions.

The third victim – the neighbouring community – is focused on by the council’s community safety representative. The representative focuses on the experiences of the residents of Northside in the first instance by

‘waving this [petition] about and saying, “well I haven’t made this up, it has two thousand signatures on that and not one of them says Mickey Mouse. They are real people who put their addresses. And some of the Mosques supported it.” (Council official, interview, December 2011)

This is followed up by giving each attendee copies of four letters from four invited and anonymised residents of Northside which in the words of the representative ‘show what it is like to live in a community blighted by prostitution’ (fieldwork diary, January 2012). They are told to carefully read each of the letters in the session. Echoing the discourses of public nuisance discussed earlier, the letters use emotive

language to highlight the distress caused by the out-of-place presence of sexual practice and detritus (e.g. discarded condoms and tissues) in the red light district and 'their' adjacent neighbourhood (see Cook and Whowell 2011; Cresswell 1996). Each letter blames the kerb crawlers for making women and children fearful and restricting their mobility in the public areas of the neighbourhood (cf. O'Neill *et al.* 2008; Pitcher *et al.* 2008). The letters also position the kerb crawlers as *the* root cause of the social decline of the neighbourhood, described in one letter as becoming a 'hell-hole'. Together, the letters and the speaker stress and reinforce 'a moral geography in which sex work is deemed incompatible with family occupation' (Hubbard and Prior 2013, 6).

A fourth victim – Redtown – is drawn out by the community safety representative. This positioning of the town as a victim reflects the interviews conducted where those interviewed often spoke of the need to 'clean up' the streets of the red light districts in order to prepare them for economic regeneration (namely a hotel and an office complex). The visible presence of sex workers and kerb crawlers was framed as hindrances to these 'modernising' plans. This argument echo Raco's (2003) point that local elites in an era of intense inter-urban competition for investment are increasingly focused on re-creating public spaces as spaces that are safe and *seen to be safe* for potential investors and gentrifiers (see also Atkinson and Helms 2007). Therefore, in the session observed street sex work and kerb crawling was framed as being not only being harmful to an extended array of people but also the town's prosperity. Furthermore, the idea of civic responsibilities is drawn upon in the sessions, when the community safety representative demanded that the attendees become responsible and respectful

citizens and visitors who 'join in with this aspiration for the town' (fieldwork diary, January 2012).

Despite the apparent ontological certainties of the 'harsh realities' discourse espoused by many KCEPs, it is important to stress that these messages are situated, selective and involve strategic silences. It is worth highlighting the key silences that run through Redtown's sessions. Beginning with the speakers, as noted earlier two of the key 'victims': the sex workers and the neighbouring residents are not present at the sessions. For the organisers interviewed, while it was seen as important to inform the attendees of the residents and sex workers' views, it was seen as being too confrontational and potentially dangerous to invite them to speak at the session. Therefore, it was decided that the organisers would speak on their behalf. This is in contrast to many John Schools in the United States and Canada where residents and ex-sex workers are invited to speak to the attendees (see, for instance, Fischer *et al.* 2002; Monto 1998).

The messages portrayed in the Redtown sessions are likewise somewhat selective, focusing on particular spaces, life-stories and communities while silencing others. To begin, the session focuses only on street sex work, never mentioning the indoor spaces in which sex work is performed in Redtown and largely unpoliced. Here its discursive exclusion is seen as necessary in order to give the *impression* of the all-encompassing reach and power of the police in the town and the across-the-board unacceptability of buying sex.

Moving onto the stories of the victimised street sex workers and community members, it is important to stress that while these are often distressing stories, their selection is guided by the perceived need to demonstrate the *extreme* and *universal*

forms of violence and hostility. On the one hand, these are valuable insights, but they do not necessarily provide the attendees with the *heterogeneous* experiences of residents and sex workers in the town or of sex work more widely (Sanders 2008; Weitzer 2012). Positive or ambivalent accounts about the practices and implications of sex work and kerb crawling are not included. Borrowing from Weitzer (2012, 16, emphasis added), the Redtown KCEP overlooks the ‘*constellation* of occupational arrangements, power relations, and participants’ experiences’ in sex work. Instead, it favours a narrative that, while genuinely concerned with the victimisation of sex workers and residents, is too reductionist, simplistic and monolithic. The underpinning of these messages by the oppression paradigm also rules out any *possibility* that a sex worker can experience any form of agency or pleasure in their work (Sanders 2008). In addition, the labelling of all residents as ‘the community’ is at times troubling as it effectively homogenises the attitudes, beliefs and experiences of those living next to the red light district (England 2011). Even though many of them may be vehemently against the presence and visibility of sex work and kerb crawling near to their home, this effectively ignores and silences any indifferent, liberal or tolerance attitudes which do not view ‘sex work as anti-social [and]... antithetical to the cultivation of community space’ (O’Neill *et al.* 2008, 74). Identities are, in effect, homogenised and essentialised in the Redtown KCEP.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has considered the relationship between sex, education and the city. It has offered an introductory but partial insight into this complex relationship by focusing on the contingent and at times contradictory politics and pedagogies of

Kerb Crawling Education Programmes. In so doing, it provides three key insights. First, it demonstrates the importance of research into the ways in which 'appropriate' urban sexualities are taught. Here it speaks to the emerging literature on the geographies of education by affirming the presence and importance of sexuality education outside of the 'traditional' spaces of education (typically schools, colleges and universities). It also points to a link between education and the criminal justice system. However, to claim that the introduction of KCEPs and John Schools mark a criminalisation of sexuality education is going too far. While their numbers are expanding, there are many towns and cities across the world where they are not in operation. Furthermore, where they are in operation they are merely a small part of a complex network of formal and informal educational schemes and technologies with diverse and sometimes non-existent direct links to the criminal justice system. Clearly future research is needed to explore the complex and situated relations between sexuality education and criminalisation further.

The second key insight is the gendering of sexuality education. Echoing other forms of sexuality education (Allen 2011; Epstein and Johnson 1998), the study demonstrates that KCEPs and John Schools are deeply gendered. They target male clients, frame men as naïve but damaging individuals, and focus on men's 'inappropriate' behaviour in the city. They use a range of technologies and speakers to put across often essentialised messages of harm and victimisation caused by male clients. In the case of Redtown, the victims are presented as being the female sex workers, the community (frequently female and youth residents), the town more widely, and the male client (a victim of his own making). As highlighted earlier, these gendered messages reflect and reinforce the increasingly hegemonic but somewhat problematic oppressionist ideologies of prostitution whereby the purchasing of sex is

not only immoral but also a form of male-orchestrated commodification, exploitation and violence against women.

The third key insight is the recursive relationship between place and education and the necessity for those studying education to think geographically. It has demonstrated how the classroom location and environment, together with its position in wider social-spatial contexts and networks, contingently shape the form of KCEPs and their sessions. Simultaneously, it has shown how the messages of KCEPs *spatialise* harm and responsibility, focusing on how men behave, and should behave, in 'their' town and key areas within it. The goal for those running the KCEP is to produce a different type of place, one where potential kerb crawlers and in turn residents, sex workers and investors think about, and act differently in, the town. These moral messages and goals are inherently geographical.

On a final note, further research is needed into KCEPs and John Schools. Future studies need to consider the multiple experiences of the clients in educational programmes such as KCEPs examining their decisions to attend (or not to attend), their experiences at the programme, their consumption of the lessons, and the effects of attending on their lives. It is also important for future research to consider the ways in which KCEPs, prostitution policy and forms of sexuality education are circulated and constructed into mobile policy models. Focusing on the example of KCEPs and John Schools here, further research can draw on the emerging body of work on policy mobilities (e.g. Cook and Ward 2012; McCann and Ward 2011; Peck and Theodore 2010) to explore the ways in which they have moved and morphed between places. It can also draw upon this literature to make sense of the technologies used to learn from elsewhere such as study tours, conferences and the

wider 'informational infrastructures' that developed around John Schools and KCEPs that shape and lubricate the circulation of knowledge about them. Furthermore, scholars can explore the ways in which the John School model have been rejected and contested in some places. Future research into the John School model as well as sexuality education more widely will help us develop an increasingly nuanced understanding of the complex, contingent and evolving relationship between sex, education and the city.

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<sup>i</sup> As studies by Shively *et al.* (2008) and Monto (1998) show, there are a small number of John Schools in the United States used as part of the court sentencing of convicted 'Johns'.

<sup>ii</sup> Access was restricted to attending one session. Nonetheless, those interviewed stated that the KCEP sessions were highly structured with little, if any, unplanned discussions taking place. With this in mind, attendance at several sessions would not have been necessary.

<sup>iii</sup> Although the wording of the laws vary, soliciting and loitering for the purposes of obtaining the sexual services of another person became illegal over two decades later in Scotland (under the Prostitution (Public Places) (Scotland) Act 2007) and in Northern Ireland (The Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008).