

**SOC 3290 Deviance**  
**Overheads Lecture 23: Prostitution 1**

\* Today we begin our look at prostitution. We cover the following:

- types of prostitutes
- the world of prostitution
- the subculture of prostitution
- other participants in prostitution
- social reaction to prostitution
- prostitution in a global perspective

**Types of Prostitutes:**

\* While there is great variety among prostitutes, common varieties include: streetwalkers, child/adolescent prostitutes, house prostitutes & call girls

\* *Streetwalkers*: low status  
less educated  
more drug use/ STD's  
work on street/in cars  
most subject to arrest  
most likely to be abused (customers/pimps/police)

\* *Child prostitutes*:  
“Baby pros” (pre-teen to young teenage)  
raised/live in chaotic families  
have suffered physical/sexual abuse  
work part time

\* *Adolescent prostitutes:*

aged 13-17  
disorganized families  
physically/sexually abused  
runaways  
often heavy drug users  
may be pimped  
demand driven by belief youth=less chance of STD's

\* *House prostitutes:*

work in a brothel  
share earnings with operator (the "madam")  
less common now (though in some areas legal)  
madam encourages condom use/screens for cops  
workers generally don't stay for extended time  
advantage: relative safety/security/comraderie  
disadvantage: work hours set/sharing  
earnings/vulnerability in room with client

\* *Call girls:* highest status/charge more  
more educated/sophisticated/tasteful attire  
use answering service/referrals  
careful not to give wrong impression in public  
often claim lucrative career/ independence?

### **The World of Prostitution:**

\* The social/working lives of prostitutes: common features:

- not all victims of child abuse, heavy drug users, suffer low self esteem , immature, etc.

- such stereotypes come from clinical samples/ those arrested
- many prostitutes don't differ significantly from conventional women of same social/demographic background (though their work places them at greater risk of sexual assault)
- stereotypes about entering prostitution don't stand up in most cases: major factor is economic, supplemented by personal contacts
- most Western prostitutes don't have a high incidence of STD's (except IV drug users)
- many Western prostitutes practice safe sex

### **The Subculture of Prostitution:**

\* Prostitutes often hold beliefs about themselves & their work:

- as morally superior/ "honest" about what they do
- "respectable" customers are hypocrites
- prostitution as functional for society/ 'humanitarian' focus
- fueled prostitutes civil rights movement (i.e. "right to sell their bodies just as others do in conventional ways"/feminists disagree)

### **Other Participants in Prostitution:**

- \* The *madam*:
  - owner/manager of brothel/experienced
  - runs establishment as a business
  - deals with problems of illegality: customers & police
  - recruits employees/ trains/ supervises them/ ensures harmony & enforces rules
  - helps find clients/ ensures satisfaction so will return
  - deals with police/ avoids or works out "arrangements"
- \* The *pimp*:
  - usually take virtually all prostitute's earnings
  - tells them to go out & solicit

- maintains “stable” of prostitutes that support him
- male-dominant subculture (money is everything/ conspicuous consumption the norm/ no thought to future)
- often resort to violence to control women/ yet women so emotionally entangled often cannot see it as such

- \* The *john*:
  - tend to be men who have slept with a variety of women/ not monogamous
  - many prefer quick, uncomplicated sex to dating ritual/ problems of commitment/ others enabled to avoid rejection
  - may be able to enjoy variety of sexual experiences/ practices
  - most johns are occasional/ but some are habitual or compulsive (i.e. with psychological issues)

### **Societal Reaction to Prostitution:**

- \* In some civilizations, prostitution not considered evil (e.g. ancient “Temple prostitution” seen as sacred)
- \* Today regarded as a social evil in most societies, but one that cannot be easily eradicated. Two common responses:
  - (1) Prostitution legal, but public solicitation is not; or
  - (2) Prostitution is illegal, but law is not strictly enforced
- \* Arguments for strictly enforcing anti-prostitution laws:
  - (1) It brings with it mugging, robbery or assault
  - (2) It is a breeding ground for organized crime
  - (3) It spreads STD’s & AIDS

- (4) It subjects innocent citizens to offensive solicitation
- (5) It is destructive to public morals
- (6) It is a form of female sexual slavery

\* Arguments for legalization:

- (1) Most problems associated with prostitution stem from the laws
- (2) If legalized, prostitution can be regulated & made safer
- (3) Current laws don't uphold public morals, but encourage police corruption, moral hypocrisy, & disrespect for the law
- (4) Money spent on police enforcement could be better spent

\* Public opinion varies, though many remain against legalization

**Prostitution in Global Perspective:**

\* Prostitution a growing industry worldwide: yet sex workers in other countries suffer more than those in the West (e.g. "Sex tourism")

\* Many women from former Soviet bloc & Asia either choose, or, more often are forced or tricked into the trade

\* Prostitution more prevalent in developing world than in West (some claim due to poverty, neocolonialism, globalization, traditional patriarchal societies)

**Conclusion:**

\* Today we introduced the prostitution by examining its types, subculture, participants, social reactions, & global context

\* Next class: defining prostitution, common misconceptions, extent of prostitution, its Canadian profile & explanatory theories