**SOC 3290 Deviance**

 **Overheads Lecture 24: Prostitution 2**

\* Today we continue our look at prostitution by considering:

 - the problem of defining prostitution

 - misconceptions about prostitution

 - its extent in Canadian society

 - a profile of Canadian prostitutes

 - entry into prostitution

 - theories of prostitution

 **Defining Prostitution:**

\* Prostitution not easily defined: not simply “exchanging sex for money” as surveys suggest. Consider:

 - exchanging sex for other goods/services

 - marrying for money

 - “marriages of convenience” (i.e. for security)

 - arranged marriages / negotiating over dowries

 - marrying for immigration status

\* Where do you draw the line? Canadians surveyed consider sex for money wrong (62%), but fewer (53% ) think the same of exchanging sex for other goods. Disagreement on definition of prostitution

\* Sociological definition: prostitution is:

 (1) Sexual in nature (i.e. exchange of money/goods for sex at time)

 (2) Relationship involves neither love nor affection

 (3) Either a full or part time vocation

 (4) Engaged in by men, women, straight & gay, youth & adult

 **Misconceptions about Prostitution:**

\* Many misconceptions are fostered by curiosity, controversy & the media. The facts are that:

- most prostitutes are NOT forced into the life by threats, violence,

 & drugs (though to some extent for teenage runaways)

- most prostitutes do NOT work for pimps, but are “self-

 employed”

 - there are relatively few links with Canadian organized crime

 - most prostitutes are not addicted to drugs

 - most have criminal records, but for minor & prostitution offences

 - prostitution is NOT prominent in the spread of STD’s & AIDS

 - prostitution isn’t necessarily distasteful & unpleasant work,

 especially for those with little education/job skills when

 comparing their options

 - prostitutes aren’t necessarily guilt ridden with low self-esteem

 - prostitutes don’t necessarily despise their customers

 - prostitutes are largely heterosexual & have enjoyable sex lives

 with those they love

 **Extent of Canadian Prostitution:**

\* Official police data is virtually useless:

 -number of charges doesn’t = number of prostitutes

 -arrests for offences other than prostitution related ones

 -high status prostitutes rarely arrested

 -“victims” won’t come forward

 -“crackdowns” distort official figures

\* Police estimates of number of prostitutes in urban areas: largely speculative, but estimates generally follow population:

 - larger cities: 500-600 full time (many more part time)

 - medium cities: 100-400

 - small municipalities: 20-100

  **A Profile of Canadian Prostitutes:**

\* Most between 22-25, beginning career in teens

\* Career lasts about 10 years (women working longer)

\* Ratio of females to males 4:1. Most single (20% of women married)

\* About half from “broken homes”

\* Most from lower- middle or middle class backgrounds

\* Majority have little formal education (call girls the exception)

\* Many have suffered physical/sexual abuse at home

\* We must be *cautious* about *assuming* that humble origins + abuse = a career in prostitution. Many people experience both & don’t become prostitutes, & prostitutes may make such claims to ward off stigma

 **Entry into Prostitution:**

Lautt (1984): three entry points:

 (1) exploitation by pimps (mostly teenage runaways)

 (2) recruitment by a “big sister figure” (youth peer groups)

 (3) conscious pragmatic decisions (older individuals 18-24)

\* Novices must learn the subculture (“training”):

 (1) *Job skills*: -initiating contact

 -negotiating services & fee

 -protecting self from hazards

 -soliciting discreetly & effectively

 -payment up front/ inducing orgasm ASAP

 -knowledge of fee structure

 -avoiding STD’s /suspicious customers

 -protecting oneself

 -not using alcohol/drugs while working

 (2) *Subcultural values/ideologies*:

 -not undercutting competitors/leaking information

 -to exploit clients

 -acquiring self-protective rationalizations (e.g.

 performing “vital social functions”/ not hypocrites)

\* Most common activities: manual & oral sex, followed by intercourse (contrary to stereotype, prostitutes will NOT ‘do anything with anyone”)

\* Incomes vary: Males earn more than females (esp. pimped females)

 Street prostitutes earn less than escorts

 Youth earn less than adults

 **Theories of Prostitution:**

\* Three major theories attempt to explain prostitution:

 (1) *Functionalist theory* (Davis): Prostitution persists because:

 -Sexual morality (“meaningful” vs. “meaningless” sex; “moral” vs. “immoral” acts sex) unintentionally encourages it

 - prostitution functions to strengthen the sexual morality of

 “conventional” women

 Problem: functionalist theory is sexist in its definitions of morality

 (2) *Social psychological theory*: People become prostitutes due to:

 - predisposing factors (parents promiscuity, neglect, or abuse)

 - attracting factors (money)

 - precipitating factors (unemployment, connections or

 pressure from others)

 Sociologists & psychologists emphasize different factors

 (3) *Feminist theory*: sexism & patriarchy explain prostitution:

 - creating both supply & demand at the same time

 (socialization, unequal social structure/opportunities)

 - selling bodies as commodities reinforces sexist

 views/reproduces patriarchal structures

 **Conclusion:**

\* Today we have concluded our review of prostitution, defining it, reviewing its characteristics, members and practices, and attempting to explain it in various ways.