

The roots of prostitution in the uk

[Law](#), [Crime](#)



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Introduction

Prostitution is having sex with strangers in exchange for money or other valuables. It is implied that the payment is made for a specific reward.

Prostitution is a service that can be done by men or women to request either men or women takes place in cities around the world and has certain common characteristics, although the number of prostitutes vary widely from city to city that is next to it. (Leheny 2005 367)

According to sociologist, Giddens prostitution can simply be defined as “ the granting of sexual favours for monetary gain.” (Anthony Giddens 2003). He went on further to explain the genesis of the word stating that: “ The word ‘ prostitute’ began to come into common usage in the late eighteenth century. In the ancient world, most purveyors of sexuality for economic reward were courtesans, concubines (kept mistresses) or slaves.” (Anthony Giddens 2003).

In the United Kingdom, prostitution has been an occupation carried out by many men and women of a variety of social status' and ages. The act of prostitution has been used as a means to make ends meet. Over a period of decades to prostitute ones self or par take in the act of prostitution was not seen as illegal until recent times.

Although sexual encounters occur regularly between males and females of the opposing sex, the exchange of money and gifts have now changed what was once commonplace to a taboo. Some individuals still see the act of prostitution as a deviant act and it is not a kind of ambition a parent would wish for his or her children. Others have accepted that this is now a part of the ' norm' although they disagree with such acts feel there is no need to condemn those that indulge.

Despite this, research has shown that “ almost 80, 000 (people) are involved in prostitution in the UK. Up to 95% of those involved in street-based prostitution are problematic drug-users, and many are homeless. Continuous research has shown that 4. 3% of men have paid for sex in the last three years (8. 9% in London, 3. 5% nationally).” (Paying the Price, Home Office Consultation, July 2004).

The act of prostitution is practised mostly in urban areas. According to (Bullough Vern et al. 1982 page 154), “ prostitution in the middle ages was, much as it is today, primarily an urban institution.” Prostitution is an urban institution because it is mostly in cities that these sex workers are groomed. Nowadays, people are far more aware of sex workers and their activities but

choose to overlook such indiscretions and have accepted them as the norm. This then leads us to the following causes of prostitution.

The history of prostitution dates back to thousands of years ago (Tannahil, *Sex in History*). Although it is difficult to say precisely what era prostitution started, it is evident that the profession is ancient as it can be seen from the Bible that prostitutes existed. Giddens states that the word prostitution began to come into common usage in the late eighteenth century. In the ancient world, most purveyors of sexuality for economic reward were courtesans, concubines (kept mistresses) or slaves." (Anthony Giddens 2003). From the Mesopotamian times to the present, the debates around prostitution continue to question why it exists in the society and how it can be eradicated. However, there have been negative perceptions about prostitution; there have also been views that prostitution in medieval Europe was influenced by the views of the early Churches. It was tolerable as it was seen as unavoidable (Tannahill, *Sex in History* (1982), 279).

Research on prostitution dates back to the nineteenth century. A prominent researcher of prostitution was Dr William Sanger who sought to examine why women went into prostitution. The research into prostitution is still a popular topic and its continuance reveals the problematic nature of this supposed profession in our society. The problems which prostitution causes will be discussed in the latter part of the essay.

The continuing debate on prostitution would be irrelevant if one cannot define what it actually is. Though the definitions of prostitution are interlinked, the complexity arises because of the differing definitions that

exist between different theorists. In the "Reflections on the Sad Profession" (Time Magazine, August 23 1971), the difficulty of defining prostitution was noted. It stated, "The whole subject of prostitution is full of ambiguities and hypocrisies.

The Encarta dictionary defines prostitution as "the act of engaging in sexual intercourse or performing other sex acts in exchange for money, or of offering another person for such purposes (Encarta Dictionary Tools (2006)). The definition in the dictionary is the attitude an ordinary person in the society holds about prostitution. However, there have been arguments that prostitution goes beyond the engagement of sexual intercourse in exchange for money. In her article titled "A Theory of Prostitution" (February 2002, Journal of Political Economy), Lena Edlund claims that "a prostitute cannot simply be a woman who sells her body since that is done every day by women who become wives in order to gain a home and a livelihood. The definition Edlund presents is arguable to the extent that patriarchy in our society has greatly reduced in comparison to traditional times. The increase in employment in recent times shows that women are able to be independent of men even when they do become wives without the need to exchange their bodies for livelihood. In the "Philosophy Statement" of a Minnesota-based nonprofit organization, prostitution was defined as a "systematic sexual violence and oppression against women and girls" (Breaking Free Inc.). For the reason that the organization focuses on helping women and girls who have been involved in prostitution, one can argue that this definition is biased. However, as it will be discussed later in detail,

domestic violence remains one of the adverse effects of prostitution showing some truth in the definition of the organization.

In the article "The History of Prostitution through the Renaissance", Magistra Rosemunde of Mercia asserts that there are various theories on prostitution and it can be broken down into four basic categories. The first theory asserts that prostitution cannot be avoided because nature determines certain roles for men and women of whom one of the roles women have is to satisfy the sexual needs of men. Some theorists such as Lars Ericsson hold this view (Schwarzenbach, Contractarians and Feminists Debate Prostitution 1991). The second view is the socialist/Marxist view is that prostitution is inevitable result of capitalism (Vern and Bonnie Bullough, Women and Prostitution: A Social History (1987; 3-4)). The third view is widely held by some anthropologists, which asserts that prostitution is a holdover from early matriarchal societies where it was practiced without negative social stigma that is present today (Bullough, 5-8). The final theory is that prostitution is a function of a patriarchal and male dominated society. Mainly feminists (Tong, Women, Sex and the Law (1984)) and traditional anthropologists hold this view.

Causes of prostitution

There are various reasons why people turn to prostitution in the society and some of these reasons would be discussed and analysed in this case study.

One of the reasons why people engage in the act of prostitution according to Taylor is because of children being sexually abused. Sexually abused children tend to act in a manner in which they had been brought up

from childhood. It was stated in the video of 'the Prostitution Agenda' on YouTube "93% of prostituted women are survivors of sexual abuse" (www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_ngNPsYgLc)

Furthermore, in the UK people especially women have been attracted into prostitution because of the high rate of divorce. Giddens states, "The increasing divorce rate has tempted some newly impoverished women into prostitution" (Anthony Giddens 2003). Some divorced women turn into prostitution because they just want to get the sexual pleasure that they are not getting.

Another reason why individuals turn to prostitution is Poverty. "Poverty can be defined as a situation in which an individual or individuals in a society are not able to live up to the average standard of expectations in a society which is being below the stated poverty line and having low life chances." (Seebhom Rowntree). In modern days, people get involved in prostitution because they believe it is an easier way to get money or drugs without having to do much. According to Giddens "Prostitution in the UK today come mainly from poorer social backgrounds, as they did in the past, but they have been joined by considerable numbers of middle-class women." (Anthony Giddens 2003). More tragic are the women in low-income situations, doing it out of pure economic necessity. Sometimes they are single mothers, who simply have not been able to find any other way to make it.

Another reason why people engage in the act of prostitution is due to unemployment and the nature of their former job. Urbanized cities in the UK

have very big class struggle such that the life chances of individuals are very low and they can do many things to survive; Things like robbery, fraud and murder talk less of prostitution. People can also practice prostitution due to the nature of their former job or generally experiences. According to Gerdes, “ ex- strippers, massage parlour workers, call girls, escorts, pornographic-actors and/or actresses are likely to be involved in the act of prostitution later on” (Louise I. Gerdes 2007).

The culture, particular mass media, is playing a large role in normalizing prostitution by

Portraying prostitution as glamorous or a way to make a lot of money quickly and easily. Of course, within the commercial world of entertainment, there are many connections between the film and publishing industries and pornography production, between tourist entertainment and sex tourism. Generally, the media is invested in supporting the expansion of the sex industry. Within academia, and to my great disappointment, the area of women’s studies, prostitution is Presented as “ sex work.” In addition, “ sex workers” are represented as being empowered, independent,

Liberated women. This false and destructive ideology has invaded our courses in

Universities. We should be asking, “ Who really benefits when we redefine prostitution as a legitimate form of work for women?” Do women and girls benefit Where are these women and girls going to come from Because as

prostitution become legal and normal, more and more women and girls will be needed. Is this our solution to women's poverty and unemployment?

Certainly, it will benefit the exploiters, and the state will easily solve the poverty and

Unemployment problem for one sector of society. Turn them into sex workers.

Within the culture, churches are the voice of moral authority. Unfortunately, in the battle against Prostitution, the voice of moral authority that condemns all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse is being lost. Some churches are compromising on their mission and their vision. In years past, they have been accused of being "moralistic," so they have retreated into "non-judgmental" positions and ways of addressing prostitution. They need to re-examine their retreat from this issue and reengage in the debate. There is an important role for churches to play in describing the harm of prostitution to women, children, families, and communities. Religious communities, from the grassroots to the leadership, need to use their voice of authority to combat the increasing sexual exploitation of victims and its normalization.

(Donna M. Hughes

Professor & Carlson Endowed. July 1, 2, and 3, 2004 Female Prostitution: Proposals and Interventions)

Health Effects of Prostitution

When violence against women is considered, prostitution is often exempted from the category of violence against women. However, a consideration of

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the dire health consequences of prostitution demonstrates that prostitution not only gravely impairs women's health but also firmly belongs in the category of violence against women.

The health consequences to women from prostitution are the same injuries and infections suffered by women who are subjected to other forms of violence against women. The physical health consequences include injury (bruises, broken bones, black eyes, concussions). A 1994 study conducted with 68 women in Minneapolis/St. Paul who had been prostituted for at least six months found that half the women had been physically assaulted by their purchasers, and a third of these experienced purchaser assaults at least several times a year. 23% of those assaulted were beaten severely enough to have suffered broken bones. Two experienced violence so vicious that they were beaten into a coma. Furthermore, 90% of the women in this study had experienced violence in their personal relationships resulting in miscarriage, stabbing, loss of consciousness, and head injuries (Parriott, Health Experiences of Twin Cities Women Used in Prostitution).

The sex of prostitution is physically harmful to women in prostitution. STDs (including HIV/AIDS, Chlamydia, gonorrhoea, herpes, human papilloma virus, and syphilis) are alarmingly high among women in prostitution. Only 15 % of the women in the Minneapolis/St. Paul study had never contracted one of the STDs, not including AIDS, most injurious to health (Chlamydia, syphilis, gonorrhoeal, herpes). General gynaecological problems, but in particular chronic pelvic pain and pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), plague women in prostitution.. The Minneapolis/St. Paul study reported that 31% of the women

interviewed had experienced at least one episode of PID, which accounts for most of the serious illness associated with STD infection. Among these women, there was also a high incidence of positive pap smears, several times greater than the Minnesota Department of Health's cervical cancer screening program for low and middle-income women. More STD episodes can increase the risk of cervical cancer.

Another physical effect of prostitution is unwanted pregnancy and miscarriage. Over two-thirds of the women in the Minneapolis/St. Paul study had an average of three pregnancies during their time in prostitution, which they attempted to bring to term. Other health effects include irritable bowel syndrome, as well as partial and permanent disability.

The emotional health consequences of prostitution include severe trauma, stress, depression, anxiety, self-medication through alcohol and drug abuse; and eating disorders. Almost all the women in the Minneapolis/St. Paul study categorized themselves as chemically addicted. Crack cocaine and alcohol were used most frequently. Ultimately, women in prostitution are also at special risk for self-mutilation, suicide and homicide. 46% of the women in the Minneapolis/St. Paul study had attempted suicide, and 19% had tried to harm themselves physically in other ways.

More succinctly, women in prostitution suffer the same broken bones, concussions, STDs, chronic pelvic pain, and extreme stress and trauma that women who have been battered, raped and sexually abused endure. In fact, the case can be made that women in prostitution — because they are subject to being battered, raped and sexually abused all at the same time

over an extensive period — suffer these health consequences more intensively and consistently. For example, in another survey of 55 victims/survivors of prostitution who used the services of the Council for Prostitution Alternative in Portland, Oregon, 78% were victims of rape by pimps and male buyers an average of 49 times a year; 84% were the victims of aggravated assault and were thus horribly beaten, often requiring emergency room attention and hospitalization; 53% were victims of sexual abuse and torture; and 27% were mutilated (Documentation available from the Council for Prostitution Alternatives).

In developing countries, it has also been estimated that “ 70 percent of female infertility... is caused by sexually transmitted diseases that can be traced back to their husbands or partners (Jodi L. Jacobson, *The Other Epidemic*, p. 10). Among women in rural Africa, female infertility is widespread from husbands or partners who migrate to urban areas, buy commercial sex, and bring home infection and sexually transmitted diseases. Women in prostitution industries have been blamed for this epidemic of STDs when, in reality, studies confirm that it is men who buy sex in the process of migration who carry the disease from one prostituted woman to another and ultimately back to their wives and girlfriends. In what becomes a vicious cycle, infertility leads to divorce and, in some cases, the ex-wife who is cast aside herself turns to prostitution to survive. “ The movement of abandoned or rejected ‘ barren’ women to urban prostitution has been documented in Niger, Uganda, and the Central African Republic. Numerous studies in Africa and Asia by the World Bank and a number of international research organizations have found that divorced or separated women comprise the

great majority of prostitutes or 'semi' prostitutes' (Jacobson, p. 13)." Thus, a major health effect of the mass male consumption of commercial sex and the expansion of sex industries in developing countries, is not only a rampant increase in sexually transmitted diseases but an exponential increase in infertility. The further effects of this vicious cycle insure that a whole new segment of women who are abandoned by their husbands due to infertility, are propelled into prostitution for survival.

Anti-AIDS groups have largely focused on negotiating "safe sex" by promoting condom usage. In both developing and industrialized country contexts, current campaigns to control the spread of HIV/AIDS by advocating "safe sex" for women in prostitution fail to address the blatant inequities between women who are bought for sex and the men who pay for it. Any AIDS strategy based on negotiating condom use between the purchaser of sex and the woman who must supply it assumes a symmetry of power that does not even exist between women and men in many personal consensual relationships. If AIDS programs are serious about eradicating AIDS, they must challenge the sex industry.

Women in prostitution are targeted as the problem instead of making the sex industry problematic and challenging the mass male consumption of women and children in commercial sex. This is institutionalized when governments and NGOs argue for the medicalization of prostitution when they propose laws on prostitution which subject women to periodic medical check-ups. It is stated that women in the sex industry would be better protected if they submitted, or were required to submit, to health and especially STD

screening. The way in which sex industries are responsible for the widespread health problems of women and children is mystified with proposals to implement health checks of women in the industry. No proposals have been forthcoming, from those who would propose both mandatory and voluntary medical surveillance for women in the sex industry, to medically monitor the men who would purchase sex.

On the other hand, women's groups have soundly rejected proposals to medical female genital mutilation. Women's human rights organizations have refuted arguments that girls and women undergoing genital cutting would be better protected from its health risks and physical trauma if it were performed in hospitals under trained medical supervision. Although policies and programs that medical female genital mutilation may reduce some injury and infection, women's groups have stressed that these policies and programs do not address or end the abuse of women's human rights represented by the very institutionalization of this unnecessary and mutilating surgery in a medical context.

The same is true with current attempts to medical prostitution. No action will stabilize the sex industry more than legitimating prostitution through the health care system. If medical personnel are called upon to monitor women in prostitution, as part of "occupational health safety," we will have no hope of eradicating the industry. Furthermore, from a health perspective alone, it is inconceivable that medicalization of women in the industry will reduce infection and injury without concomitant medicalization of the male buyers. Thus medicalization, which is rightly viewed as a consumer protection act for

men rather than as a real protection for women, ultimately protects neither women nor men.

As with other forms of violence against women, eradicating the health burden of prostitution entails addressing but going beyond its health effects. To address the health consequences of prostitution, the international human rights community must understand that prostitution harms women and that in addition to needing health services; women must be provided with the economic, social and psychological means to leave prostitution. Until prostitution is accepted as violence against women and a violation of women's human rights, the health consequences of prostitution cannot be addressed adequately. Conversely, until the health burden of prostitution is made visible, the violence of prostitution will remain hidden.

The Relationship between prostitution and Crime.

It has been said earlier that prostitution itself is not illegal but it is the “ activities associated with it, including soliciting, advertising using cards in telephone boxes and kerb crawling, are criminal offences.” (David Blunkett 2004). The validation for making prostitution illegal as a rule has to do with the protection of women, and the management of sexually transmitted diseases. This could be sensible if in general prostitution itself was illegal. “ In practice however, the fact that prostitution is illegal, normally results in the exploitation and abuse of prostitutes, and does contribute to the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.” (Anon, 2001). This thereby leads us to the following ways in which prostitution is related to crime.

One of the ways in which prostitution is related to crime is because of the involvement of drugs. According to Blunkett's definition of prostitution as "the exchange of sexual services for some form of payment - usually money or drugs" (David Blunkett 2004), it could be noticed that most of the prostitutes especially the street ones take drugs. In one of the research on prostitution done, one of the prostitutes said that if she gives prostitution, she would not be able to get money to buy drugs (, 2008). In addition, because of the addictiveness of drugs, it would be very difficult to leave this act.

Another way in which prostitution is related to crime is because of the sex crimes involved. Sex crimes such as rape, child molestations, teenage sexual abuse and sexual harassment in general are all factors that relate prostitution to crime. In addition, because of the fact that prostitution itself is illegal, the perpetrator and the victim who would both be seen as perpetrators would not report these sexual crimes to the police if they happen to take place. Because of this, the sex criminals take advantages of this and commit their crimes because they know the case would not be reported. These acts are part of the risks prostitutes face in doing their work.

This leads us further to another mode in which prostitution is related to crime. The police do not take seriously some reports on sex crime inflicted on the prostitutes. In other words there is no criminal justice. According to Gerdes, "the case of the infamous serial killer 'Peter Sutcliffe' also known as the Yorkshire Ripper was not taken too seriously until it was found that he also attacked other women who were not prostitutes." (Louise I. Gerdes 2007).

Furthermore, the act of 'Kerb crawling' in prostitution is seen as a criminal act. Kerb crawling "is the act of driving slowly beside a sidewalk looking for a prostitute to pick up." (Encarta Dictionary Tools 2006). During the period of 1958-2002, there was a high rate of cautions and convictions in of Kerb crawlers in England and Wales. The chart below shows this:

Another way in which prostitution is related to crime is through the act of Brothel Keeping. A brothel "is a place where people pay to have sexual intercourse with prostitutes." (Encarta Dictionary Tools 2006). Also, during the period of 1985-2002 there was a high population of individuals cautioned and convicted for brothel keeping. The chart below shows this:

How the Government can curb prostitution

The government can reduce the ever-increasing act of prostitution in several ways. One of the major ways is that the government can reduce the act of prostitution is by banning it. According to 'The Prostitution Agenda' video, a way in which the government can curb prostitution is by "recognising prostitution as a social exploitation and making it an offence to buy sex" This Act was called the Swedish approach. (www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_ngNPsYgLc).

Another way in which the government can put an end to the act of prostitution is by making the risks involved known to the individuals. A recent Non-Government institution has been engaging in a campaign on the risks prostitutes face and how every woman involved in prostitution is a victim of violence and other sex crimes.

Furthermore, the government can also curb prostitution by acting very strictly to the offenders of this sex work because if offenders were punished with no leniency, the high rate of prostitution in the UK would surely reduce.

According to the present law, one prostitute may work from an indoor premise, but if there are two or more prostitutes, the place is considered a brothel and it is an offence. Historically, local police forces have wavered between zero tolerance of prostitution and unofficial red light districts.

During recent years, there has been long and widespread debate about the legal situation of prostitution in the UK, and, currently, the government appears to favor tough "anti-prostitution" laws. The debate had centered around whether UK should follow the example of Netherlands, Germany or New Zealand and tolerate prostitution, or whether the country should make it illegal to pay for sex, like in Sweden, Norway and Iceland. In 2006, the government raised the possibility of loosening the prostitution laws and allowing small brothels in England and Wales, but in the end, the plans to allow "mini brothels" were abandoned, after fears that such establishments would bring pimps and drug dealers into residential areas. Instead, it was decided that prostitution should not be tolerated and the laws should become even stricter.

After this, government ministers suggested that rather than permitting mini-brothels, they would like to tackle the "demand side" of prostitution and make it illegal to pay for sex. One proponent of this was (Minister for Women and Equality, Harriet Harman) Ministers pointed to Sweden, where purchasing sexual services is a criminal offence.

The government's tougher approach towards prostitution began to make legislative progress in 2008, as (Home Secretary Jacqui Smith) announced that paying for sex from a prostitute under the control of a pimp would become a criminal offence. Clients could also face rape charges for knowingly paying for sex from an illegally trafficked woman, and first-time offenders could face charges.

The Policing and Crime Act 2009 made it an offence to pay for the services of a prostitute "subjected to force" to implement that proposal. It also made other provisions in relation to prostitution.

The law on prostitution

Conclusion

Prostitution overall is a very risky business which is internationally known all over the world. Prostitutes are aware of the risks involved in this business before and/or during their involvement in it. The Government can only play a role in trying to put an end to prostitution cannot do it completely. It now depends on the individuals involved and if they are ready to give up this risky business for a more decent life because I believe that only by going to the root cause of prostitution, which are the factors that make up the demand, will we end the sexual exploitation and abuse of women through prostitution. We need to urge all governments, NGOs, and religious communities to focus on reducing the demand for victims of sex trafficking and prostitution. All the components of the demand need to be penalized - the men who purchase sex acts, the exploiters - the traffickers and pimps who profit from the sale of women for sex, the states that fund deceptive

messages and act as pimp, and the culture that lies about the nature of prostitution.

We could greatly reduce the number of victims, if the demand for them was penalized. If there were no men seeking to buy sex acts, no women and children would be bought and sold for any sexual reasons. If there were no brothels waiting for victims, no victims would be recruited. If there were no states that profited from the sex trade, there would be no regulations that facilitated the flow of women from poor towns to wealthier sex industry centres. If there were no false messages about prostitution, no women or girls would be deceived into thinking prostitution is a glamorous or legitimate job.

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