

**INTERVENTION STRATEGIES
FOR PROSTITUTION: A
QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE EFFICACY
OF INTERVENTION PROGRAMS IN
COMPARISON TO INCARCERATION**

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Prostitution: An Increasing Social Issue

- Approximately 1 million women in North America alone are involved in prostitution. www.veronicasvoice.org
- Cities spend an average of \$7.5 million each year on prostitution control. www.veronicasvoice.org
- There is a significant amount of research on why women enter prostitution, but research on methods for exiting the trade and reducing recidivism appears to be lacking...



Our Research Question: How effective are intervention efforts in reducing prostitution activity when compared to incarceration efforts, in regards to women who have a history of prostitution?

- **Objective: To look at different intervention programs and methods and compare their efficacy to that of incarceration.**
 - **What do programs that are in existence have to offer to participants?**
 - **What is included in the methodologies for treatment and rehabilitation?**
 - **How does the judicial system differ, and how does incarceration impact the rates of recidivism?**



Our Research Methods

- Our goal was to conduct a qualitative investigation into what works as an intervention strategy for women involved in prostitution.
- Underwent full IRB review with multiple sets of revisions and submissions.
- In finding subjects, we utilized convenience sampling to obtain research participants. For finding subjects who have been involved in prostitution, we contacted the Empowerment Program in Denver, which runs a support group called the Chrysalis Program . The Chrysalis Program is a program that is specifically designed for women who have been arrested for prostitution. Members are involved on both a voluntary and court-mandated basis.
- We conducted interviews with pertinent subjects which included staff at the Empowerment Program, participants in the Chrysalis Program, and law enforcement officers within the Vice Unit of the Denver Police Department.
- For these interviews, we used questionnaires to collect qualitative data through a self-reporting format. We developed the questions after reading the literature for our research, in order to identify relevant themes.

Research Methods Continued...

- After gathering data, field notes and transcribed interviews, we read through all documents multiple times in order to find patterns and relevant themes.
- We identified themes and color-coded categories throughout the notes and transcriptions to reveal issues and commonalities.
- From this, we were able to identify reoccurring themes among each group of participants, as well as other relevant issues to the area of prostitution.

Findings Unique to Participants in the Chrysalis Program

Through our research we found the following prevailing themes common to all subjects:

- **Alcoholism/Alcohol Abuse****
- **Drug Abuse/Addiction****
- **Financial Need/Gain****
- **Negative Relationships with One or Both Parents**
- **Incarceration**

Additional issues were found regarding:

- **Sexual Abuse**
- **Physical Abuse**
- **Multiple Intervention Program Attempts**
- **Issues with Unemployment**
- **Mental Illness/Health Issues**

** Indicates most prevalent themes among participants

Findings Unique to Law Enforcement Officers within the Vice Unit of the Denver Police Department

Through our research we found the following prevailing themes common to all subjects:

- Experience with repeat offenders in the area of prostitution.
- All found incarceration to be beneficial in some circumstances, and also agreed that intervention programs were beneficial in other instances.
- All subjects mentioned new trends in sex work via online media and internet-based solicitation.

Additionally, one or more subjects discussed benefits unique to incarceration.

Additional Findings Related to Law Enforcement Approaches

- **Area Restriction**
- **Mandatory Health Testing**
- **Johns T.V.**
- **Alternative Sentencing Options**
- **Certain areas are decriminalizing prostitution**

Findings Unique to Staff at the Empowerment Program

Through our research we found the following prevailing themes:

- There were primarily negative feelings towards incarceration for women arrested for prostitution.
- Relapse and recidivism for participants is to be expected and accepted due to the nature of addiction.
- Participants are in the program for other offenses in addition to prostitution, such as drug abuse. These individuals are also enrolled in concurrent treatment groups tailored to these needs.

Conclusion

Initially, our hypothesis was that incarceration is not the best deterrent, and that programs designed specifically as intervention methods would work best to address the underlying issues and reduce prostitution from reoccurring.

Following our research:

- Did not prove nor disprove our hypothesis
- Limitations in our study included;
 - time constraints
 - lack of full participation from research subjects
- Came up with more questions which need additional research to be addressed
- Both incarceration and intervention programs are necessary components to addressing the problem as both are beneficial and there is variability in whether or not women are actually ready to exit prostitution.

Reflection on the Process

- Recognize and acknowledge limitations within our proposed research.
- Reliability with research subjects and logistics.
- Difficulties in finding necessary research thus far.
- Made mistakes along the way such as:
 - Irrelevant questions in interviews
 - Not pursuing the IRB process in a more timely manner
 - Not anticipating certain issues which arise in human subject participation.
- This process was critical to our success as social work students and in learning about the research process.