Which governmental policy response to prostitution ultimately better insures the safety of individuals involved in the sex trade? With this study, we hope to compare the successes and relative merits of the Nordic or Swedish model of prostitution law with full decriminalization, as typified by Rhode Island's 2003 accidental decriminalization of prostitution. Following the analysis, we hope to be able to propose a solution which ensures the safety of women who choose to engage in sex work without ignoring the very real threat of sex trafficking.

Society has made the gender difference between men and women quite clear when it concerns social, political, and economical issues. Now one may ask how does the act of prostitution relate to gender? Well, since men are known to have the most power and usually are the ones to make important laws, women appear to be inferior to men. Women are most likely to fall victim to prostitution because of many factors, such as financial issues, abuse (as a child or adult), drug addictions, and so forth, all of which may be the results of harsh treatment by men or feeling the need to provide for themselves or their families. In a research project, Jens Kod interviewed a group of women and came forth with this statement: “A majority of female escorts and female clinic prostitutes gave sexual curiosity as a reason for entering prostitution.” That means that there’s a percentage of women who have not experienced unfair treatment and decided to become involved with the prostitution ring self-willingly.

Women activists or “anti-prostitution feminists” have concluded that prostitution is a way of exploiting women and it strongly depicts the affect male dominance has over women. With that being said, acts such as the Norwegian Prostitution Policies (or the Nordic Model) and the Kvinnofrid Law (1999), also known as Violence Against Women Act, includes the criminalization of purchases in the prostitution services and even aims to address sexual harassment in the workplace. While many countries consider prostitution to be illegal or even go as far as to ban it within its surrounding area that still is not enough. This is an ongoing war, according to an article based on feminist views on prostitution, where it was stated that “The Abolitionist Perspective agrees that the government should try to get rid of prostitution permanently, and the Outlaw Perspective sees it as a ‘stepping stone to a better career/experience of sexual freedom.’”

Sociological Perspectives

Through the lens of a functionalist, an argument could be made that the criminalization of sex is vital to how our society functions. If people can legally just buy sex when they want, then they could easily allow what Freud called the “id” to take over, and perhaps certain people would no longer have to worry about certain social structures, such as relationships, because the need that relationships satisfy would already be fulfilled.

Expected Findings

Responses which seek to regulate the behaviors of sex workers are frequently rooted in traditionalist constructions of women as helpless and sexual in the face of male power and sexual aggression. While we do not mean to downplay the threat of sexual violence or trafficking, preliminary evidence does show that decriminalization resulted in safer working conditions for sex workers in Rhode Island. Given this fact, we expect that decriminalization will ultimately allow for better working conditions and greater safety than the Swedish/Nordic model.

Conclusions

As students of mainly criminal justice majors, our future jobs and careers are based solely on maintaining peace in our society and creating a structure of justice that will keep the innocents/victims out of harm’s way. After being introduced to our topic at the Annual Showcase at John Jay College that will be held this December, we hope to increase the awareness about the dilemmas regarding prostitution. Most students are either unaware of the issues that women or men who participate in this act face, do not know about the issues of prostitution, or simply do not care to acknowledge it. Our goal is to inform others and hopefully the students or teachers can carefully digest the information and bring forth different alternatives to ending this world wide crisis or simply decreasing the rate of it in many countries.

Works Cited