

**1997 Herman Goldstein Excellence in Problem Solving Award****"Prostitution"**

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**Introduction**

Prostitution became a city wide Problem-Oriented Policing project as a result of quality of life issues raised from the concerns of businesses and residents in all three of the city's districts. Prostitution is commonly known as the oldest profession and a victimless crime. However, as a result of our analysis several victims were identified. Through the analysis, victims were identified and responses were created. The thought was not to eliminate prostitution but to eliminate the environment and the needs of someone needing to resort to selling oneself.

A city wide core group of patrol officers was created to use traditional and non-traditional strategies to combat prostitution. The core group works with the community, city and county governments, media and drug treatment organizations as responses of the analysis. The core group along with neighborhood groups has been responsible for the creation of local and state law changes and a treatment program for the prostitutes. Through Operation Par, a non profit drug treatment organization, project H.O.P.E (Healthy Options Promoting Esteem) was created to help women who have a history of substance abuse and prostitution related legal problems.

The prostitution Problem Oriented Policing project is an ongoing project. Will we eliminate prostitution ? No, it is the oldest profession but it is **not** a victimless crime. Through the efforts of the core group, neighborhood groups and state and local legislations prostitution activity will decrease in the city of St. Petersburg.

## Scanning

Although some view prostitution as a victimless crime, the city of St. Petersburg Police Department and its businesses and residents did not view it this way. The problem gained attention through repeat calls for service generated by the business community and residents in the affected areas. Community officers in these areas, mostly main thoroughfares in the city, noticed an increase in repeat calls associated with this type of crime. The community officers also received information through personal contact with the businesses and residents and also individual observation.

The department chose to actively address the city's prostitution problem because the activity was city wide in all three districts. Prostitution negatively impacts the area it's located within. Not only does it increase the criminal activity in the area but it also decreases the perception of the area. An area that has acquired a poor perception can experience negative economic impact including but not limited to a decrease of property value and patronage. The prostitution problem in St. Petersburg was one that was very visible to locals as well as visitors. The problem plagued the three main thoroughfares in the city, thirty fourth street and both fourth street south and north. All three of these areas are surrounded by businesses and residences that are being adversely affected by this criminal activity.

The department identified three offender groups associated with this problem. This includes the prostitutes themselves. Many of whom were either presently or previously addicted to illegal narcotics. The "Johns" were also identified as offenders. "Johns" are hard to categorize and come from varying backgrounds.

The final offender group identified are the motels in the affected areas. This group is listed as a "offender" because of their practices of renting rooms to known prostitutes and drug dealers, adding to the difficulty of eliminating this element from the area.

## Analysis

The police department looked at the problem of prostitution from a variety of view points. Officers attended business and neighborhood meetings to listen to public opinion of the existing problem. The department also looked at calls for service relating to the problem. The calls for service relating to prostitution increased from 369 in 1992 to 452 in 1993. Businesses and residents in the affected area were also surveyed. Respondents to the survey shared their desire to rid city of drugs and prostitution and also mentioned a noticeable increase in prostitution activity since the onset of crack cocaine.

Through post-arrest surveys, the department compiled a profile of the female offender (the prostitute). Most were single white females twenty seven years of age. The average educational level was twelfth grade. Half of the women surveyed had children. Approximately 95 percent denied having sexually transmittable diseases and 84 percent admitted to either present or past addiction to crack cocaine. Most respondents claimed their motivation was either money, drugs or both. (See attachment #1)

The victims of this type of crime are varied. The prostitutes themselves are victims. For many prostitutes their drug addiction leads them into a vicious cycle of prostituting in order to feed their drug appetite. As their need for the illicit drugs increased, the need to "work" more to earn money increased. The prostitutes habit does not allow her to hold a normal position and would probably not afford her the income necessary to feed her habit.

The "Johns" family is also an innocent victim in this crime. The wives may unknowingly contract sexually transmitted diseases from their unfaithful partners. The family also suffers when the "John" is arrested and goes through the legal system. The family must endure this trauma due to no fault of their own.

The surrounding residents and businesses are also victims. The resident must fear for their family due to the increase in associated criminal activity that accompanies prostitution. The residents must endure the potential decrease in property value because of the surrounding criminal activity. Businesses in the community can suffer economically from decrease of clientele. Customers do not want to patronize businesses in crime ridden areas. The businesses can also suffer economically from a decrease in property values.

The prostitution problem had been previously addressed by the police department with limited success. Patrol officers would respond to prostitution related calls for service with little or no success. Undercover detectives were successful in building cases but this method only targeted one element of the problem, the prostitutes, and had limited effectiveness.

### **Response**

Once the analysis was completed, a core group of community and patrol officers was formed. This group also included an administrative officer to track the information gathered. The main function of this group is to plan strategies for responses of each element of the problem. The first plan was a traditional method of undercover operations. Although arrests were made, the prostitutes returned to the area. Maps of the areas affected by the problem were created. This was called the mapping process. Once a prostitute has been arrested on a prostitution related offense, the arresting officer attaches a map to the arrest affidavit. That follows the defendant through the court system. The map details the limited boundaries suggested to the court. (See attachment #2) If the defendant is found guilty of the charge, the court then has the option of implementing the mapping process as part of the defendant's court ordered probation. The prostitute violates her probation if she is seen in the mapped area by an officer.

Why is she prostituting herself? This is another question for the prostitutes, the core group needed to address. Operation Par, a non profit drug treatment organization, was contacted for possible programs relating to drug addiction and prostitution. Operation par was interested in helping but did not have any programs for prostitution related drug addictions. Through a magazine article written by Stephanie Abarbanel for Family Circle magaize, the Mary Magdalene Project was discovered by our department. The Mary Magdalene Project is a residential treatment program for street prostitutes. It is located in Reseda, California and run by Reverend Ann Hayman. This article was shown to Operation Par who wanted to assist the police department with a treatment program for prostitutes. A task force was formed with Operation Par and local law enforcement agencies. Through this task force Project H.O.P.E (Healthy Options Promoting Esteem)was created. Project H.O.P.E will be a residential treatment center focusing on the drug addict prostitutes. It will consist of case management services, education, self-esteem counseling and drug treatment services. This will also be apart of the prostitute's court ordered probation. (See attachment #3)

The core group then started to focus on the "Johns". Again, the traditional method of undercover operations were conducted but using female decoys. The core group created an informative letter which is sent to all the arrested "Johns". The information from the county health department is also included in the letter pertaining to the sexually transmitted diseases and will be sent to the arrested subject's residence. (See attachment #4)

Research was also conducted on traffic laws pertaining to prostitution. Florida State Statue 322.26(7) Mandatory Revocation Of License, a very seldom used statue which provides for the revocation of a convicted person's Florida driver's license or privilege if such

person violates the law against lewdness, assignation, and prostitution where as such violation has been effected through the use of a motor vehicle. Now another deterrent towards solicitation will be used against the "Johns". (See attachment #5)

With the help of the news media, a non traditional method of placing names and photographs of subjects arrested and convicted of prostitution related offenses on television using a city government access cable channel has been implemented. The names, date of birth, addresses and the jail booking photo will scroll across the screen several times. This program would air several times a month at varying days and times, including primetime viewing periods. The object of this program is not to shame or disgrace the families of those arrested for prostitution. The objective is to make it well known that soliciting for prostitution will not be condoned in St. Petersburg. The local newspapers also wrote articles with warnings of the consequences of sex for hire. (See attachments #6-10)

The core group wanted to focus on educating the motels owners who were renting rooms to known prostitutes along the main thoroughfares. A book with booking photos along with the booking sheets was put together of all the prostitutes arrested for prostitution. This book along with information regarding nuisance abatement was handed out to each of the motels. The motel owners and management were encouraged to be more selective of their clientele.

Local city ordinances were looked at to assist the patrol officers. The core group, working with city attorneys, developed a new city prostitution ordinance. This ordinance allows an officer to arrest prostitutes who have a previously verified pattern of solicitation activity. The activities can included repeat beckons to, stops, or attempts to stop or engage passersby or motorists in conversation, the asking or searching for articles that would indentify a police officer and the request of touching or exposure of his or her breast, groin or buttocks.

The goal of the response phase is to reduce the prostitution activity in the city of St. Petersburg. We know that we will never rid the city of prostitution but to have decreases in calls for service pertaining to prostitution is a start. During the above responses we have encountered some problems. The first problem was with mapping. The maps were getting lost between booking and arraignments. There was also the problem of getting the judges to agree to mapping. Meetings were held with the head of the misdemeanor division. These meetings included the head of the core group, Lt. Deborah Prine, Salvation Army, State Attorneys and the head judge. The results of the meetings was to order the mapping as part of probation should the defendant choose probation. Another problem was identified as part of mapping. The prostitutes on probation were seen in the mapped areas and Field Interrogation Reports were conducted and sent to the Salvation Army. It took several months before the violation of probation would occur. Through research we determined, it would take new state legislation giving law enforcement authority to arrest a subject on probation who was in violation of their probation. This problem was brought up at a crime watch meeting for crime tract number 276. The head of the crime watch group, Loraine Compton, took it upon herself to contact the local State Representative, Lars Hafher, with this idea for new legislation. Thanks to this neighborhood crime watch, the new law goes into effect October 1, 1997.

The next problem was with Operation Par's H.O.P.E project. Funding was needed to operate the project. A "John" school was developed to help with funding. The "John" school consists of higher fines and classes that the "John" would have to pay for and attend several times during a six month period.

We also discovered that the traffic citations being issued to the "Johns" for using their vehicle for solicitation were not being followed-up on. Research is being done now to locate the

citations and see how many "Johns" actually had their driver's licenses revoked upon their conviction. As of this date the data is not available.

Another response presently being looked at is a new city ordinance. This ordinance is fashioned after a West Palm Beach city ordinance for impoundment of the vehicle used for solicitation for prostitution or drug offenses. The city attorneys are looking at this ordinance which will allow a police officer to tow and impound a vehicle of a "John" or others arrested for drug offenses. The "John" would be responsible for the cost of towing and storage. The core group believes that this will be another deterrent in the fight against prostitution.

In creating our strategic plan for the Problem-Oriented Policing project several resources were made available. The entire police department was made available including the Vice and Narcotics unit, Community and Uniform officers, Crime Awareness unit, the Public Information officer, Crime Analysis unit and Computer Project unit. This includes chain of commands in the Police Department who encouraged the core group to seek new ideas and non traditional methods. In addition to the Police department, other resources that were used included the State Attorney's office, site visits, the media and most important, the neighborhood and business groups. Without the resources that were made available, a project of this size would not exist.

### Assessment

The core group determined that a positive evaluation of this project would include a reduced number of prostitution related calls for service, repeat arrests and decreased concerns of business and neighborhood groups. The administrative officer will be responsible for gathering necessary data to compare the calls for service, it will also be responsible for following up on arrests and tracking the defendant through the judicial system. The Community

Police Officers will be responsible for the business and neighborhood groups by attending meetings, forming crime watch groups and conducting surveys.

The number of prostitution related calls have decreased from 452 in 1993 to 344 in 1994. The calls for prostitution related service decreased 23.89 percent between 1993 and 1994. Though success is difficult to evaluate at this time. The community has become involved in this project generating more calls for police service relating to prostitution. The number of "Johns" arrested as repeat offenders is only four as of this date. The results of business and residential surveys demonstrates the concerns the community has for this problem. When asked about the city's efforts to force prostitution from the city streets, an overwhelming majority, 82.5 percent of respondents indicated that they are aware of the city's efforts. A majority of respondents, 86.58 percent, share the police department's point of view that prostitution is **not** victimless crime and that it encourages other crimes.

The core group has grown to 65 officers and has the assistance of Ameri-Corp volunteers who assist with undercover operations. Approximately two undercover operations are conducted twice a month. The operations vary from male decoys to female decoys and are operated for a ten hour shift. The crime watch from crime tract 276 also conducts their own resident patrol in the affected areas.

This Problem-Oriented Policing project is ongoing with new and non-traditional ideas being used. Prostitution may be the oldest profession but the police department and the community are making it hard for prostitutes to find work.

## PROSTITUTE PROFILE

<u>RACE/SEC</u>	<u>AVG AGE</u>	<u>ED. LEVEL</u>	<u>MARRIED/SINGLE</u>	<u>CHILDREN</u>	<u>DISEASE</u>	<u>#ARR</u>
W F	27	12 72%	M 8% S 87%	50%	NO 95%	AVG 3

### ANALYSIS OF SURVEY INPUT

OF THE WHITE FEMALE ARRESTEES, 57% WERE CHARGED WITH PROSTITUTION AND OTHER RELATED CHARGES.

OF BLACK FEMALE ARRESTEES, 47% WERE CHARGED WITH PROSTITUTION AND OTHER RELATED CHARGES.

OF THE TOTAL FEMALE ARRESTEES, MOST HAD BEEN ARRESTED AT LEAST 3 TIMES IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS, WITH CHARGES RANGING FROM NARCOTIC DRUG LAW VIOLATIONS, AUTO THEFT, BURGLARY, FRAUD, RESISTING ARREST, BATTERY, ASSAULTS AND OTHER CRIMES. THIS ALSO VALIDATES THE ASSERTION THAT **PROSTITUTION IS NOT A VICTIMLESS CRIME.**

THE FEMALES ARRESTED RANGE IN AGE FROM 54 Y.O.A. TO LESS THAN 24 Y.O.A., WITH THE LARGEST AGE GROUP OF ARRESTEES BETWEEN THE AGES OF 25 AND 34 Y.O.A. THE FOLLOWING CHART ILLUSTRATES THAT FACT.

THE FIRST LINE DENOTES THE YRS. OF BIRTH. THE SECOND LINE SHOWS THE AGE GROUP FOR THOSE YRS. OF BIRTH. THE THIRD LINE IS THE PER CENT OF ARRESTEES WITHIN THAT AGE GROUP.

<u>1920-29</u>	<u>1930-39</u>	<u>1940-49</u>	<u>1950-59</u>	<u>1960-69</u>	<u>1970+</u>
65-74	55-64	45-54	35-44	34-25	24/LESS
0%	0%	6.1 B%	21.65%	60.82%	11.35%

THE FEMALES LARGEST AGE GROUP WAS BORN BETWEEN 1960 AND 1969, AND ARE 25 TO 34 YRS. OF AGE. THE SECOND AGE GROUP IS 35 TO 44 YRS. OF AGE, AND THE THIRD AGE GROUP IS 24 OR LESS YRS. OF AGE.