

The Experiences of Prostitution Court Participants and Social Bond Theory

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by

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my amazing family. Thank you for your endless support and belief in me. I love you all.

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I would like to thank my family, friends, and educators who have made this moment possible, my parents and grandparents who pushed me to do my best every day, Dr. Danielle Rudes who taught me how to thrive in graduate school, and the other members of my committee who were of invaluable help.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Project Dawn Court.....PDC
Problem Solving Courts..... PSC
Social Bond Theory SBT
Social Learning Theory..... SLT
Specialized Prostitution Diversion Program..... SPD

ABSTRACT

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Prostitution Diversion Programs are amongst the least prevalent and under-studied types of problem-solving courts in the United States. This has subsequently led to a knowledge gap in the understanding of prostitution court participants, how they perceive the program, and what factors participants believe aid in their success. This study analyzes interview transcripts from seven prostitution court participants in two courts within Baltimore and Philadelphia. I first identify how the components of Social Bond Theory (SBT) appear in the lives of these participants and then use these components to explain how prostitution court participants interpret their experiences in treatment. The components of attachment, commitment, and involvement are discussed in the findings and the theoretical/practical implications are acknowledged.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In 2014, there were only 28 prostitution diversion programs in the United States with most serving roughly 10 to 20 participants each (Slayton, 2014). Limited research on these particular courts has created an empirical gap in the literature. Although qualitative analyses on sex-workers are available, there are no studies analyzing participants of prostitution courts. Similarly to other subjects in qualitative work, it is imperative to directly study these lesser known populations to gain an understanding of their perspectives. These data provide insight on how these participants view current aspects and procedures of treatment. In this study, I analyze 20 interview transcripts from seven prostitution court participants and identify where/how the components of Social Bond Theory (SBT) occur during their time in treatment. In select interviews, I analyze how these diversion programs create and/or strengthen these social bonds and how this affects the participants' perceptions of their respective programs. The findings of this study have direct implications on the structural compositions of prostitution diversion programs and provide suggestions for treating participants.

Literature Review

A Brief Background of Problem-Solving Courts

Two of the fundamental goals of the criminal justice system are to stop current crime and prevent future crime. In recent history, both criminal justice practitioners and researchers have examined several crimes that may be prevented without incarceration. Some examples include drug/alcohol-related offenses, crimes involving mental health, and prostitution. These ideas eventually led to the creation of problem-solving courts (PSCs) beginning in 1989, which are now present in every state (Slayton, 2014). These courts are also referred to as “treatment courts” because they are implemented to treat the causes of a specific crime, contrary to the traditional penal system. There are several different types of PSCs, including: drug treatment courts, DUI courts, domestic violence courts, and prostitution diversion courts. These courts generally consist of the judge, prosecutor, defense attorney, probation, and the docket of the treatment court’s participants (Weiner, 2013). The crimes associated with the participants of these programs are viewed as amendable. Specifically, these courts attempt to rehabilitate and divert individuals from criminal activity through the treatment court program (NSWP, 2018).

The court dynamics of PSCs shift from the adversarial process of traditional criminal courts, to a collaborative process commonly called therapeutic jurisprudence in which all parties work together towards a common goal. In most PSCs, the presiding judge is typically the head of the program and holds weekly/biweekly check-ins with the treatment court docket. Admission into the PSC program is selective. In most PSC’s,

defendants with violent felonies, current/prior gang membership, and/or sex-related convictions are ineligible to participate in these treatment courts (Slayton, 2014), (NADCP, 2018). The defendant's attorney or public defender may ask the court to grant an individual a place on the treatment court docket and in many courts, prosecuting attorneys hold tremendous power over participant selection (NADCP, 2018). These particular defendants often have long criminal histories and court determines that "treatment as usual" is not effective. Most PSC programs range from six months to two years and are completed in lieu of incarceration (Castellano, 2011). Prostitution diversion programs generally follow the structure outlined above, but will be summarized further in a later section.

Sex Work Statistics & Prostitution Diversion Programs

There are four main types of sex workers. These include: street level, brothels, escort services, and private workers. Prostitution diversion programs primarily focus on street-level workers. Street-level prostitution typically requires individuals to frequent corners, parks, or other public places soliciting sex (Murphy, 2010), (ProCon.org, 2008). Servicing occurs in the buyer's car or other private place. Street-level sex work is widely regarded as the most dangerous form of prostitution for the workers. In fact, some sex-workers report being assaulted by their clients (Smith, 2007). Although these dangers persist, street-level sex workers report primarily working alone and using their funds to fuel substance dependencies. This appears to be a common trend in street-level sex work, especially in the inner-city.

There is unfortunately very little public information on specific prostitution diversion programs. Researchers claim this is a result of vastly differing responses to the crime in local jurisdictions. To illustrate, I will compare the two states with the highest number of prostitution arrests. California and Texas led the United States in prostitution arrests in 2016 with 7,601 arrests for prostitution in California and 4,506 in Texas (ProCon.org, 2018). Both states are also in the top 10 for prostitution arrests per 10,000 people. However, the legal response to the crime differs drastically between these states. In California, an individual arrested for prostitution can be charged with a misdemeanor; with maximum penalties of six months in jail and a \$1,000 fine (Mince-Didier, 2022). Conversely, Texas is much stricter with maximum penalties of a felony charge, alongside two years in jail, and a \$10,000 fine (Thiessen, 2021). Each state has their own unique policy and criminal code regarding prostitution. These differences in enforcement likely alter the components of some prostitution diversion courts and in some cases, punitive sanctions may entail these diversion courts are not available.

Prostitution diversion programs are amongst the least common types of PSCs in the United States. As of 2014, there were 28 prostitution courts in the U.S, with most program participants comprising of street-level sex workers. These courts generally treat participants of the program as victims of their circumstances and work to provide opportunities to change their lifestyles (NSWP, 2018). In prostitution diversion courts, the primary “staff” that participants regularly interact with consists of: social workers, probation officers, and community treatment providers. Treatment providers vary widely from substance abuse counselors to residency (housing) providers (Chrysanthi, 2019).

Through a therapeutic jurisprudence approach that includes both treatment and services, prostitution diversion courts try to assist participants with finding and maintaining positive community connections that both serve them during and after the program. The dockets of prostitution diversion programs are generally small cohorts. One benefit to this approach is the concept of customized treatment. Many treatment courts tailor treatment plans based on each individual's needs. Although components of the treatment plans are unique, most participants work frequently with probation during their time in the program. Weekly requirements often include drug testing, check-ins, and various forms of counseling (trauma, substance abuse, etc.). These treatment courts commonly use phase levels beginning at one and ending around three or four. The participant begins intensive supervision in phase one which gradually subsides as they move through the remaining phases and stay in compliance with the PSC's requirements. Finally, when the phases are complete, the participant graduates the program and generally receives a sentencing incentive, such as dismissal of the prostitution charge. The literature on prostitution diversion programs is limited, making it difficult for researchers to examine the viewpoints of prostitution court participants and how they perceive their experiences in the program. Fortunately, future researchers can use criminological theories to explain the treatment perceptions of this population.

Social Bond Theory

Travis Hirschi's Social Bond Theory (SBT) is considered one of the most influential and empirically supported criminological theories alongside Social Learning Theory and Strain Theory (Cullen et al. 2018). The main hypothesis of SBT asserts that

individuals with strong social bonds will be less likely to engage in crime and delinquency than individuals who are weakly bonded to society (Chriss, 2007), (Cullen et al. 2018). The four types of social bonds include: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. Empirical evidence shows the strength of these social bonds are negatively associated with criminal behavior for both juveniles and adults (Cullen et al. 2018).

Attachment refers to the emotional connection an individual has with others. These social bonds are generally shared with parents, extended family, children, significant others, and peers (Cullen et al. 2018). The theory postulates if a person is attached to prosocial individuals, they have a solidified support system and thus refrain from crime. An individual who is considering engaging in criminal behavior may reflect on the shame they would feel if their family and friends knew of their actions. Commitment involves the degree towards one's goals. Therefore, stronger social bonds create a higher motivation towards prosocial goals. These goals can be multifaceted and may include: education, employment, and various social goals. In practice, the theory holds that stronger commitment will make an individual less likely to commit crime because delinquency could jeopardize the ability to reach their goals (Cullen et al. 2018).

As the name suggests, involvement refers to one's engagement in conventional activities (Cullen et al. 2018). These range widely but encompass any legal activity. This is an important distinction because individuals engaged in crime often continue antisocial behaviors in periods of leisure (i.e., drug use, gambling,). When an individual is constantly involved in prosocial activities, there is little/no time to commit delinquent acts (Cullen et al. 2018). Finally, belief refers to the extent an individual believes they

have a responsibility to follow the rules or regulations of conventional society (Cullen et al. 2018). This social bond is heavily dependent on the previous three bonds because it is completely internal. SBT asserts that when an individual believes they should obey the laws of conventional society, criminal behavior is unlikely (Cullen et al., 2018), (Chriss, 2007). This study will be the first to examine how the components of SBT provide explanations for participant attitudes and perceptions of their respective treatment programs.

Prostitution Diversion Program Studies

To my knowledge, there are no other studies with analyses of participants in prostitution diversion programs. In their study, Leon & Shdaimah, (2019) analyze two prostitution courts but interview treatment staff instead of program participants. Most comparable studies focus on interviewing street-level sex workers and analyzing their justifications for engaging in prostitution and the barriers impeding them from exiting prostitution. Both areas of research are extremely valuable for prostitution diversion programs. Collecting these data will provide treatment courts with information on best practices for program components. Comprehension of the barriers blocking effective treatment will provide further insight on removing these obstacles when participants join the program.

As previously stated, substance abuse is consistently cited as a major concern in street-level prostitution. In the literature, substance dependency is one reason individuals begin and fail to exit prostitution (Murnan, 2021), (Murphy, 2010), (Smith, 2007). The findings of Murphy (2010) revealed that many street-level sex workers do not have

access to quality substance abuse treatment in their communities, thus they remain in a cycle of using prostitution to support their addiction. Smith (2007) also asserts that psychological treatment is likely necessary for any form of meaningful treatment tasked with preventing prostitution. Many respondents from these studies stated they were raised in impoverished neighborhoods; in single family households. Crime was rampant in these communities and the respondents were introduced to drugs and sex work at a young age. The sample collected by Murphy (2010) consisted of 12 street-level sex workers who on average, began prostituting at 19-years-old. One respondent in the sample began as young as 12-years-old (Murphy, 2010). Psychological trauma, both before and during the initiation of sex work presents another barrier to exiting prostitution. The literature widely supports the need for quality substance abuse and mental health treatment, while providing participants opportunities to maintain sobriety (Murphy, 2010). If prostitution diversion programs do not adequately address substance dependencies and personal trauma, recidivism back to prostitution is extremely likely.

Upon review, there were no studies that specifically analyze the components of SBT in the context of sex-workers; this includes participants of prostitution diversion programs. However, in the qualitative literature on street-level sex workers, the components of attachment and involvement appear as the main catalysts of exiting prostitution. For example, Murnan (2021) interviewed 15 street-level sex workers and examined the effect their social network had on their substance treatment decisions. The findings revealed that social attachments to family members and significant others had significant implications on treatment outcomes for these women. Within the study, 46%

of the women had antisocial family backgrounds (Murnan, 2021). Some of these respondents reported mothers who engaged and introduced them to prostitution and aunts/other family members who frequently used drugs. These social attachments were identified by the respondents as barriers to successful treatment and many emphasized personal desires to separate from these family members (Murnan, 2021). In contrast, 54% of respondents cited their family members (mothers, grandmothers, etc.) as the primary motivations to seek substance treatment and maintain sobriety (Murnan, 2021). These findings highlight the importance of attachment in SBT and call for further empirical inquiry regarding the role of attachment in the lives of prostitution court participants. If a treatment program can improve social bonds between participants and prosocial family members/peers, there may be favorable outcomes towards sobriety and prostitution desistance.

Factors of involvement appeared in the study conducted by Murphy (2010). When examining the motivations women had for remaining in prostitution, the monetary benefits were mentioned by many respondents. Many women expressed favorable views about the frequency and ease of payment. Respondents reported earning \$20 for roughly 10 to 20 minutes of servicing (Murphy, 2010). As previously stated, most street-level sex workers have less than a high school diploma. For these individuals, prostitution likely provides more economic stability than a traditional and legal occupation (Murphy, 2010). This issue is intensified if a drug dependency is present alongside the responsibilities of food, housing, and childcare. Further research is needed to determine what role

involvement and the remaining components of social bond theory have in the lives of prostitution court participants.

Methods

Data for the current study were collected by Dr. Corey Shdaimah of the University of Maryland for the following project: *Problem-Solving Courts, Street Level Bureaucrats, and Clients as Policy Agents in a Prostitution Diversion Program*. In the original study, Dr. Shdaimah and a research assistant conducted interviews of prostitution court participants. The two study sites included the Project Dawn Court (PDC) in Philadelphia, PA and the Specialized Prostitution Diversion Program (SPD) in Baltimore, MD. The interviews were private between the interviewer and the participant and each lasted approximately 30 minutes. I received 20 total interview transcripts from the Qualitative Data Repository at Syracuse University. This is a free, relatively open-source data repository where Dr. Shdaimah (and others from various studies) upload their data, coding materials, interview questionnaires, and subsequent publications for others to use. The 20 interviews I received involved seven different treatment court participants: two from the PDC and five from the SPD. Each participant was interviewed at least once; however, most were interviewed two or three times, and one participant was interviewed four times. The principle researcher's goals were to interview each participant two to three times during the program and once post-graduation. However, all interviews were voluntary and some participants did not complete every interview session. All interviews were audio-recorded verbatim and only involved female prostitution court participants. Each audio file was then transcribed into a Microsoft Word document transcript.

The primary method for my study involves a secondary qualitative data analysis using line-by-line qualitative coding techniques of previously collected interview data. All coding was completed using Atlas.ti (a qualitative data management program). The interview questioning primarily probed participants' perceptions of the prostitution diversion court program and their goals during/post-treatment. Each transcript was read in its entirety and inductively coded in the preliminary stage of analysis. This process involved reading each transcript line-by-line and coding the themes/patterns that appeared in the data. Although no specific themes were targeted in the preliminary coding, my main interest was examining how the participants perceived their experiences in the treatment program. This procedure was implemented over three months and ended with an initial analysis of the major themes of the data.

I determined that the theories of Social Bond and Social Learning were prevalent throughout the transcripts and shifted to deductively analyze those two theories and their subsequent components. The components for SBT included: attachment, belief, commitment, and involvement. The components specific to SLT included differential association and differential reinforcement. I also coded for the techniques of neutralization (SLT) which include: appeal to higher loyalties, condemnation of condemners, denial of injury, denial of responsibility, and denial of victim. I wanted to analyze the principles of these theories to examine their roles in explaining participants' attitudes/perceptions of their respective treatment programs. Afterwards, I re-read each interview transcript twice and coded for SBT and SLT separately. The most prevalent principles of SBT were: attachment (102), commitment (83), involvement (37). The most

common components of SLT included: differential association (73), differential reinforcement (45), and denial of responsibility (15). After the three rounds of coding were completed, SBT provided the strongest explanation for how participants experienced the court and understood what they needed. I was the only coder for this project and thus did not conduct inter-coder reliability tests. However, I consulted with another researcher with expertise in problem solving courts throughout the coding process. This served as the primary assessment of intra-coder reliability for the study.

Table 1: Study Context Two Prostitution Diversion Programs

<i>Participant Gender</i>	<i>Existing Legal Penalties</i>	<i>Program Duration</i>	<i>Pleading Requirement</i>	<i>Program Arena</i>	<i>Program Content</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>
Program: Specialized Prostitution Diversion Program (SPD)						
Any	Up to 1 year and/or \$500 in fines	90 days	Pre-plea	Social work and pretrial offices at the courthouse, outside programs	Individualized	Success: null-processing; can request expungement Failure: return to plea stage
Program: Project Dawn Court (PDC)						
Cisgender female	Up to 5 years and/or up to \$10,000 in fines for first degree misdemeanor (3 offenses)	Minimum one year (four phases)	Nolo contendere*	Court and probation offices; outside programs	Individualized with requirement of sexual trauma therapy	Success: case dismissed with prejudice; can request expungement after one year if no evidence of drug use/prostitution. Failure: guilty verdict entered and sentencing

**The Colloquy signed by participants specifies participants give up rights to appeal and a trial*

Table 1 (above) outlines the details of the PDC and SPD. The PDC was significantly more intensive in penalties and duration of the program. The PDC program lasted one year at the time of the study compared to a 90-day program of the SPD. The penalty for expulsion from the PDC was up to five years of incarceration and/or a \$10,000 fine. In comparison, the SPD posed up to a one-year sentence with the possibility of a \$500 fine. Both courts used community treatment providers as additional resources for the participants (primarily additional substance abuse treatment). Both programs also provided individualized treatment based on the needs of the participant. However, the PDC was unique in requiring sexual trauma therapy for all participants. This mandatory counseling was seen as burdensome by at least one respondent who emphasized she did not experience previous sexual trauma, but was forced to participate in the treatment. Lastly, both courts provided judicial incentives to participants for successfully completing the program. The PDC granted dismissal with prejudice and the SPD granted null processing for successful completers. Many participants mentioned these two incentives in their interviews as strong motivators for joining the treatment program.

Table 2: Demographics

Participant Demographics

<i>Name</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Court</i>
<i>(pseudonym)</i>					
Sarah	Black	Female	40-50	11 th grade	SPD
Hannah	White	Female	40-50	GED	PDC
Penny	Black	Female	30-40	8 th grade	PDC
Veronica	Black	Female	Mid 20s	10 th grade	SPD
Rachel	White	Female	30-40	11 th grade	SPD
Emma	White	Female	Early 50s	11 th grade	SPD
Tina	Unknown	Female	30-40	High school diploma	SPD

Note. Basic demographics of all included respondents. Education refers to highest level of education completed at the time of the study.

Table 2 covers the demographic information for each treatment court participant included in the data. Each respondent has a pseudonym to protect their confidentiality. All participants interviewed in these two courts were female, even though the SPD treatment court permits both men and women. Race across the sample is distributed

evenly with 50% of respondents identifying as White and 50% identifying as Black. One respondent's race is unknown because the interviewer did not ask a racial identification question. The age of the sample is diverse with most respondents being in their 30s. The highest level of education is similar across the sample; most participants did not complete high school and no respondents earned a college degree. Lastly, most of the sample comes from the SPD. Five respondents were participants in the SPD and two were participants in the PDC program.

CHAPTER TWO

Findings

After reviewing the data post-preliminary coding, Social Bond Theory (SBT) was widely prevalent in the interviews of the Baltimore Specialized Diversion Program (Baltimore, MD) and the Project Dawn Court (Philadelphia, PA) treatment court participants. The components of this theory provided explanations for participant attitudes and perceptions of their respective treatment programs. As previously outlined, the main pillars of SBT are attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief (Cullen, 2018)¹. All components of SBT appeared in the data at least once.

Attachment

The principle of attachment was the most common, appearing 102 times throughout the 20 interview transcripts. In SBT, attachment is generally associated with other individuals in a person's life. If an individual has many attachments to prosocial individuals, they are less likely to engage in criminal behavior. In the interviews, attachment circulated around three main groups: family, treatment court staff, and close friends. Many of the participants in the program expressed emotional attachment to their children and held strong desires to amend (or create) meaningful relationships with them. The following quote comes from "Sarah" of the Specialized Prostitution Diversion Program (SPD). She is originally from Virginia and talks to the interviewer about her three children who live with her mother there:

¹ The SBT component of "belief" only appeared once in the data and was therefore excluded from the findings section.

I've got three kids. But my oldest son, I got him a car – put down a \$1000 on his car with the lump sum I get. Of course they want phones and laptops, my other two kids. So I'm going to try to do what I can do for them. I want them to buy clothes, but they grow so fast! You know my daughter is just “wow!” and then she is in [training] so she is slimming down. She's like “oh I'm smaller than you now.” I said “oh lord!” I said “those hips ain't going nowhere!” she's got big thighs like her dad's side of the family. So I'm looking forward to being down there when she starts dating because it's almost time.

Sarah's children are primary motivators for success in the program. She expresses excitement at the opportunity to financially provide for her children because she has not played a significant role in that aspect of their lives. Her children were still preteen-teenaged during the interview; this may provide a greater opportunity to mend familial social bonds compared to participants with older children. Sarah's particular attachment with her daughter (presumed youngest) provided a significant motivation to complete the program and subsequently leave the state of Maryland and rejoin her children.

This finding of social attachment towards offspring was not age-specific, several women with older children expressed feelings of attachment towards their children which may serve as motivation to complete the program or maintain sobriety. “Hannah” of the Project Dawn Court (PDC) addresses her relationship with her sons:

But I learned that my children accepted my addiction long before I did. And they had to learn how to cope. And thank god for a [Community Center] and my mom's willingness to step up to the plate and be the grandmother.

INTERVIEWER: So you're in touch with your mom it sounds like?

RESPONDENT: Both my sons and my mother. My sons are kind of like, I get texts Matter of fact my son called me Sunday. I text him, 'Ah I'd like to talk to you this afternoon if you got a minute.' And he text me back, 'I'll call you after work.' And he did; he follows through. And that's probably why he's a [Position in Job]. And last year in my recovery he flew me into North Carolina, down to [Worksite]. He's at another place now, which my younger son came and we did football and Chinese in the living room and I met his girlfriend. They're willing, but they're, they know my patterns. ... I can tell 'em how I got into this awesome court and they're, I know they're happy to see I am getting help...' Mom's trying it again, let's see how this goes'...

This presents a contrast from the previous quotation as Hannah's children are older and are no longer dependent on their mother for financial or emotional stability. Hannah recognizes her struggles with substance abuse and prostitution have damaged the social bonds between her and her children as they are hesitant to trust her completely. However, she feels that the program has provided some opportunity to mend the previous emotional damage that has eroded her children's trust. There is partial support that Hannah's presence and progress in the program may have begun to repair the social bonds between her and her children. This seemingly simple engagement gave her a strong motivator to not only complete the program, but to maintain sobriety post-graduation.

As previously stated, other family members (excluding children) were also common sources of social attachment for many participants. Roughly 72% did not

mention a father figure or explicitly stated their father was not involved in their lives. In most cases, the participant's mother was the primary social attachment barring children. The following quote is from "Penny", a participant of the Project Dawn Court. She is roughly halfway through the program during this interview and speaks on her relationship with her mother:

She asked me did I want anything. And I told her, 'No, I'm just grateful for another day.' And when I came home from coming here, she surprised me with a cake, a tiara, cause she say, 'You're my queen for one day,' and brought me some perfume from Victoria's Secrets, and all these little printed socks I like. Oh my god, I love my mom. She said, 'Just keep doing what you doing,' 'cause she know I don't have no income right now and I'm struggling. And she's giving me a roof over top my head. I do get Food Stamps, but she said, 'Just keep doing what you doing.' The little money I do get from here, my friends, whatever, I'm saving. So my mom said, 'Don't worry about it; just keep doing what you doing. Long as you keep doing what you doing, I'm here to support you.'

Penny's mother is providing both financial and social support in this situation. These avenues of support may stem from Penny taking prosocial advancements in the program itself. It appears Penny's mother addresses her progress in the program as a notable change in Penny's life and expresses her willingness to support her if she "keeps doing what (she) is doing." This is very important to note because although participants receive social support from treatment staff, many (as outlined above) are often unstable financially and lack prosocial attachments (people). Penny would have been homeless

without the social support/attachment of her mother. This specific example is partially related to strain theory and shows the levels of disadvantage this population experiences.

The last (and perhaps most important) social attachment of the prostitution court participants involved the treatment court staff and community partners. The interviews probed participant perception of the treatment court staff and the fairness of their practices, and in nearly every instance, participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Furthermore, participants often viewed staff as support systems, role models, and even friends. The following quote is from “Veronica” of the SPD speaking about one of the program’s social workers:

It was actually Brigit because Brigit had belief in me and trusted me that I would be able to make the right decisions. And that she believed in me. And it’s been a long time since someone said they believe in me or they are proud of me. And she was that person.

As previously stated, many participants do not have structured, social bonds with other individuals. The emotional support and simple motivation to continue prosocial behavior is alien to many of them. In many cases, these social attachments add motivators towards compliance and work to develop a prosocial network for participants; thus, decreasing the threat of continuing criminal behavior. In this quote, Veronica clearly shows social attachment towards her social worker (Bridgit). This emotional bond with a prosocial individual may have motivated Veronica to remain in compliance with the treatment requirements because Bridgit’s perception of her holds value. This represents a strong

example of the SPD creating social bonds of attachment by providing role models for participants to emulate.

Many treatment courts collaborate with community treatment providers to grant participants access to basic necessities. This occurred fairly frequently because several participants were homeless while completing the program. The following quote is from Hannah of the PDC. She was staying in a catholic affiliated halfway house and left one night during conflict with her significant other. This noncompliance is considered a technical violation of probation/the treatment court requirements:

Well do me a favor.” And I said “what’s that?” And she said, “Call Sister Ann so she can sleep tonight.” Ah, that broke my heart. Well, the next morning, well I called Sister Ann. And she said, “... I want you to understand that we will do what we can to make sure you don’t go back to jail.” I did not know they were gonna come pick me- Monday I showed up at the PO. Sister Ann came to the probation office, talked to Catherine, and got me released to her again.

The halfway house supervisor had the discretion to terminate Hannah from the residential program. Instead, the supervisor showed genuine concern for the participant and worked to amend the situation. Hannah was aware of this and felt remorse for her actions of noncompliance. This instance shows a very strong social attachment with a prosocial influence. Her guilt of noncompliance is yet another motivator to successfully complete the program, and the supervisor’s willingness to forgive the noncompliance increases the social supports in her life.

Commitment

This commitment principle was the second most-common, appearing 83 times in the interviews. Commitment in SBT generally refers to an individual's degree of effort towards their goals (Cullen et al. 2018), (Chriss, 2007). Respondents reported feelings of commitment to conventional society in three main ways. The first involved commitment/desire of prosocial goals, such as the participant completing education or becoming employed. This was often associated with a hope of a better future. Participant commitment to goals also appeared in conceptual forms. For example, commitment of being a better parent or role model for children was a common aspiration for some participants. These goals are not tangible, but remain extremely important for participants as they strengthened social bonds with conventional society. Commitment also appeared to promote prosocial behavior in the interviews. Many respondents felt they had gained valuable progress in the program and avoided antisocial behavior in fear of losing the skills/freedoms they had gained. Finally, some participants reported committing to the program and a prosocial life from a personal realization. These epiphanies are typically caused by a dramatic fall in the individual's self-image, generally a result of incarceration or a monumental life-event.

As stated above, the interviewers often directly asked respondents about their goals both during and post-program and probed how they would achieve those goals. The following quote comes from Penny of the PDC. Penny briefly describes the social support she received from the treatment staff and how it kept her committed to her goals. "I love it... I feel loved, I do. I like being acknowledged for all the good work I'm doing.

It's keeping me focused." Afterwards, she describes her experience roughly mid-way through the program and outlines some of her goals:

Well, my experiences is just like everybody else's, but I just know that I ain't going back there. And can't nothing or nobody make me pick up a drug or a drink today. I'm 38 years old, I got kids that's growing up and they starting to notice me. I don't wanna be like a girl that I used to know, 42 years old and died smoking crack cocaine. No! I wanna accomplish my dreams that I always had since I was a little girl, either a cosmetologist or a nurse. And so I'm going for my GED. I'm doing everything that I wanted to do but couldn't do it, but now I am. And I'm not gonna stop until I get it. I like the support and love that I'm getting in my recovery.

Many of the participants in PDC and SPD entered the treatment courts with little to no idea of their life goals. These data show that participants begin to develop stronger social bonds and commitment to conventional society as they progress through the program. Penny's determination to achieve these personal goals are extremely beneficial towards continued compliance in the program, ultimately leading to this respondent successfully completing the PDC. Furthermore, she rejects her previous identity and strives to distance herself from it. The goals of completing education and a prosocial career further engaged this respondent in conventional society.

The desire for social goals also appeared throughout the interviews. Children of participants are a source of commitment as well as attachment in SBT. Many participants' goals involved being a nurturing and stable parent to their children. In the

following quote, “Rachel” a participant from the SPD had the goal of becoming a mother and speaks to her commitment towards that goal:

INTERVIEWER: What are you most proud of, in what you’ve been able to accomplish in your goals?

RESPONDENT: That I’m clean and sober. That I’m clean and sober.

INTERVIEWER: That was the top priority, right?

RESPONDENT: Yes, that was the nail in the coffin. I’m just really grateful that I have days under my belt. I’m very grateful that my baby will be born with no drugs in his system, except for methadone of course (being in the program). I have to say I’m very grateful for the program. It’s a wonderful thing and you guys helped so much.

RESPONDENT: Yeah, I’m still in and out of housing. Right now, I’m still on the housing list. I’ve been on the housing list five years. I’m still on the waiting list. Ms. Sharon just checked on that for me. I’m still on the waiting list. I hope I’m moving up some which way. But I’m in the process of getting a room just basically throughout the pregnancy, by the end of the pregnancy I will have a one bedroom for my child, I promise. I’m determined. I insist. I demand. You know what I mean? I will have that for my child. I am very determined and motivated to do that. I definitely have the ambition to do that and I’m going to. This child is going to come home with me and I’m going to raise him and be a very good mother. The best mother I can be. So I’m very happy right now.

Rachel is particularly proud of maintaining sobriety in the program and this goal is directly related to her child. Aside from the program and herself, she views compliance with this condition of treatment as a necessary requirement to safely carry her child. The commitment to motherhood shaped her experience in the program and served as an additional motivator towards compliance and completion of the program. Several aspects of the treatment program and staff have directly strengthened Rachel's bonds of commitment. First, the program provided her with effective drug treatment, allowing her to reach her personal goal of sobriety for herself and her child. The treatment staff (Sharon) also provided support in Rachel's goal of obtaining housing by assisting her through the process and providing direction. Aside from commitment, this also promotes a strengthening of social attachment.

Some participants commit to the regulations of the treatment court in response to fear of negative outcomes. Generally, participants are deterred by a fear of the treatment court's punitive actions (incarceration, stricter supervision, removal from the program), or fear of "the streets." Several participants who were more experienced in prostitution stated that life for street-level sex workers had become increasingly dangerous. Many women had been physically/sexually assaulted while working and some mentioned disappearances of fellow prostitutes. The following quote comes from Penny of the PDC describing how deterrence kept her committed to the program:

It made a whole lot of sense because since I was under Dawn's Court, and me going to court every month, it was a couple of women that I knew that was under the same program from the streets. And at first when they seen me and I seen

them, we looking at each other and talking like we gonna do this thing. And I'm telling them, I don't wanna go back out there, so, you know, I'm mandated anyway so I have to do this. Because if I don't do this, this is the repercussions of me not. And do I wanna do that, go back? No. So they would say the same thing, well feel the same way I would feel, but as the months went on and I would go to court and see the consequences of messing up with Dawn Court from them made me like, 'Whoa. No. Uh umh.' I'm just gonna keep moving forward. I'm not testing the waters, ain't no making no mistakes, ain't no mistakes period for me.

That's not a option. I'm gonna come in this program and do what I gotta do.

In this situation, Penny describes seeing fellow participants face the consequences of noncompliance (unspecified). For context, treatment court cohorts often meet together in front of the judge for check-ins. These situations sometimes include the execution of sanctions, which are administered in the presence of the entire cohort. Penny was effectively discouraged by these sanctions and therefore remained committed towards compliance and completion of the program. When she mentions not wanting to go back "out there" she is referring to the streets. This serves as a secondary shield from recidivism and keeps her committed to her lifestyle change.

Lastly, some participants experienced commitment towards the program and/or their goals through a realization. As stated above, these recognitions generally occurred from a negative self-image, traumatic events, or a personal milestone (ie. Participant turned 40 years old). The initial reaction generally helps guide the participant into joining the treatment program and the continued reminder that they hit "rock bottom" keeps them

committed to the program requirements and/or completing the program. The following quote comes from Hannah of the PDC describing her realization moment:

Well, I lived here a year prior to my relapse. And I swallowed my pride, ego and called and said, 'I need help.' I mean I had a choice right then when they let me outta jail, 'Do I wanna stay clean or do I wanna go just do 1?' And 1 for me is 1 to 10 upstate, and I don't wanna do that no more. I want better for my life because I've already had a experience with, I can do it. I can be in prison and smoking cigarettes and I can either change or I can come out and try something new.

Most participants had several prior arrests and had been incarcerated numerous times.

There were no positive recollections involving instances of incarceration (especially jails). Hannah's realization moment occurred when she faced a possible sentence of 1-10 years in prison for an offense (unknown). The alternative to serving the sentence was successful completion of the treatment program. Hannah also showed a strong desire to change and improve upon her life. The realization, and possible fear of a life with continued hardship assisted her to stay committed to sobriety and the treatment program.

Involvement

Involvement, as a type of social bond, correlates with one's degree of participation in conventional society. Put plainly, the more prosocial activities a person is involved in, the less likely they are to commit crimes (Cullen et al. 2018), (Chriss, 2007). Involvement was amongst the least prevalent in the transcript data, occurring 37 times across all interviews. When this social bond did occur, it involved the participant starting

a new job, applying/receiving legitimate housing, and participating in conventional social activities (birthday parties, family reunions, etc.). For many of the respondents, these were first time events and marked a dramatic change in their lives. This may be the most important social bond for these participants when considering the impact it had on their lives. Involvement in conventional society gives the participants something to lose, which persuaded many to maintain prosocial lives post-program.

Financial stability was a common justification for engaging in prostitution. Many participants stated the money was quick and relatively easy to make. For participants who engaged in prostitution for several years/decades, many felt they did not have the occupational experience to secure a job. The treatment court/community partners often gave the participants resources and job trainings to increase their involvement in conventional society. This resulted in many participants securing a job a few months after successfully completing the program. Hannah of the PDC reflects on her experience securing a job:

So I put them in, numerous of them. Well, one called me. And, before I even had the interview, the general manager came up to me and said, “What’s your name?” And I said, “.....” So, when I got into the interview, the young lady that interviewed me said, “Oh they...they were impressed with you. They liked the way you showed confidence when you came in and everything.” And I think, “Oh well good, that’s great to hear.” ‘Cause I am in this job training readiness. So then...I interviewed and they told me, “Okay, well you’ll hear from us no later than this afternoon if you’re hired.” Well, they called me, and asked me to be at

an interview- I mean an orientation- yesterday at 3 o'clock. So I went and did that. But at 7:30 in the morning, I had a [Supermarket], um, interview.

Originally, Hannah was unsure how she would be able to support herself financially without engaging in prostitution. During her time in the program, she completed a job readiness program which created a possibility of a job. Hannah did receive a job offer from the supermarket and thus furthered her involvement in conventional society.

Assuming all participants act with rationale, Hannah now has a legal avenue of financial support and will be reluctant to engage in prostitution or drug use to keep her position.

Nearly every participant interviewed in the study did not have a permanent residence at the start of the program. Most participants were either homeless and staying at a shelter, or living with a family member (typically their mother). This presents a difficult situation because many participants lacked the knowledge of how to apply for residency. Furthermore, homeless shelters and family residencies were often located in the same neighborhoods the participants engaged in prostitution and fueled their substance use. Similarly to the previously mentioned job trainings, the treatment courts/community partners often assisted participants in finding affordable residencies when applicable. In the following quote, Veronica of the SPD describes her experience in finding housing:

RESPONDENT: And House helps me out with housing too afterwards.

INTERVIEWER: Right, there are some other connections there...

RESPONDENT: It's called [Housing Program]. The rent will be low-income, but it will be my own home. Yeah! I can deal with that.

This was Veronica's first time renting a home. As stated above, the resources provided by the court and community partners helped her find housing options. Although the residency was low-income housing, it was something the participant can afford given her circumstances. Veronica seemed proud to finally have a place of her own which strengthens the social bond of involvement. She now has something conventional and valuable; this may create a less appealing situation for criminal behavior out of fear of jeopardizing her residency. She later attributes these positive outcomes to the program noting, "Yes. It will turn your life around because this program is actually giving you a second chance."

Non-financial involvements also appeared in the interview transcripts. Similarly to the components of attachment and commitment, family appears in this principle. Social involvement generally consists of prosocial family/peer events such as birthday parties, family reunions, etc. These events replace previous antisocial leisure time, such as drug use. Social involvements have the added benefit of strengthening social attachments, generally with prosocial individuals. The following quote comes from Penny of the PDC describes her social involvements post-graduation:

I'm back spending time with my family and my nieces, my nephews, making it to the barbecues and the birthday parties. I ain't missing nothing; I ain't missing nothing. I'm loving it; I'm loving. I'm liking it. I like who I am today. I'm able to look in the mirror now, 'cause I wasn't before, and say, 'I like who I see,' you know, who I've becomes.

Spending time with family and attending family events is a strong social involvement that many participants were alien to. Many participants had severed previous jail and/or prison sentences before joining the program. These habitual incarcerations coupled with a life in the street limited the amount of social involvement these women experienced. Some participants mentioned missing major life events of their family members, such as graduations and weddings. As the participants successfully completed the program and engaged in prosocial lives afterward, social involvement increased, which may lead to decreased recidivism.

Occupation and housing are important social involvements that many treatment programs focus on. However, there are rarer social involvements that are seldom considered and perhaps many middle/upper class individuals take for granted. The following quote from Penny of the PDC obtained employment, taking a stake in conventional society. However, she also took part in a unique aspect of society not mentioned in any other interview:

I don't have no money for no tombstone, but I buried stuff right there to mark his grave. So that's gonna come soon to. I'm a work real hard to get him his tombstone. his headstone. So, yeah, I was kind of, I felt good. I really felt good.

In this quote, Penny is speaking about her son (cause of death unknown). Although this action can also fall under "commitment" in SBT, burial additions are a common aspect of conventional society. She felt a sense of joy and achievement by finally completing this task after several years. This pride may further strengthen her involvement in conventional society by furthering legal opportunities to accomplish other aspirations.

The last component of SBT is belief. This principle of social bond essentially addresses an individual's propensity to follow the rules of society (Cullen et al. 2018), (Chriss, 2007). If an individual holds a strong belief in the authority of conventional society and its laws, they are less likely to be involved in crime. Unfortunately, belief did not appear in the interview transcripts as frequently as the other components of SBT. There was only one instance of belief in the transcripts and was thus removed from the findings section. Most of the interview questions did not probe an individual's belief towards substance use and prostitution. The interview structure is likely the cause of belief's absence in the data.

CHAPTER THREE

Discussion

The findings of this project demonstrate the value of attachment, commitment, and involvement in the lives of prostitution court participants. Furthermore, in some cases, these components may be used to interpret participants' experiences in treatment. Attachment appeared most frequently in the data and mainly involved the participants' families. As stated previously, all respondents in these data were women and many were mothers. Attachment towards children was prevalent throughout the interview transcripts and served as a motivator towards compliance and program completion. Commitment and involvement were experienced through similar processes. Commitment consisted of participant goals which ranged from obtaining employment to improving relationships with family members. Involvement often occurred in the data when these goals were achieved, and the participant began taking stake in conventional society. These findings present several theoretical and practical implications for current and future prostitution diversion programs.

There are very few studies that analyze the perceptions of participants in prostitution diversion programs. Furthermore, there is no study that uses SBT to explain participants' perceptions and attitudes of their treatment programs. These processes have led to new conclusions with implications on the structure of prostitution diversion programs and the various treatment components. The findings of this project provide

insight on what specific aspects of the treatment program best motivate the respective participants. This implication holds tremendous value because the treatment court staff are unlikely to have shared experiences with the participants. Thus, staff rely on findings and best practices that may not probe participant viewpoints. Participant motivations towards treatment and sobriety may be mutual across future participants in these courts or members of other programs across the country.

Theoretical Implications

The findings support that attachment—one of the major components of SBT-- provides one of the most common, and perhaps most central motivators towards program compliance and completion. Nearly every participant emphasized the importance of social bonds with their families and treatment staff. Children, and the possibility of providing childcare, are particularly strong promoters of program-related success. The strength of social attachment to one's children did not frequently appear in the prostitution literature and is immensely important for practical implications (discussed later). When using SBT to explain these social attachment findings, participants appear to express positive attitudes when their prosocial bonds are strengthened, and consciously attribute these successes to the program. The diversion programs create major changes to the structure of these participants' lives. As their lives improve and they are reunited with prosocial family members after their delinquent pasts, many participants are reinforced to hold the program's prosocial values.

Likewise, the component of involvement in SBT also holds some implications for treatment of this population. When involvement was used to explain how participants

interpreted their experiences, many individuals expressed feelings of value towards the new stability in their lives. Similarly to attachment, participants associated this stability with the treatment court programs. As previously stated in the findings, involvement provided participants with something to lose if they continued engaging in criminal behavior. Per the data analysis, if participants are given something of value that links them to society in a positive way (respect from family/peers, a job, financial stability), their resistance towards criminal behavior may be increased. This is perhaps because they realize they could lose the positive connection if they engage in negative behaviors. Involvement in prosocial society theoretically discourages criminal behavior, with many participants deciding the lasting benefits of prosocial society outweigh the short-term pleasures of substance use.

The elements of attachment and involvement provide meaningful support in addressing participant viewpoints of the treatment program. These two components of SBT, as well as commitment, appear to motivate participants towards a prosocial life and may help decrease recidivism. This is especially important in the context of substance use, which is a primary motivation for engagement in prostitution. Incorporating these aspects of SBT into the treatment courts of street-level sex workers is likely to produce the desired goals of prostitution diversion programs.

Practical Implications

As previously stated, prostitution diversion programs typically consist of small cohorts with one presiding judge, a defense attorney, a prosecutor, a small treatment court staff of probation officers, and social workers. The structure of this environment

facilitates the formation of social bonds between participants and treatment staff. As discussed in the findings, many participants expressed feelings of social attachment towards their social workers/treatment counselors. However, there are more ways court staff can promote the strength of social bonds for diversion program participants. These alterations may work to further improve the outcomes for both treatment courts and their participants.

Most of the practical implications of this project provide suggestions on the composition of prostitution diversion programs and their treatment components. This information can potentially increase the completion rates of other prostitution courts and provide additional positive outcomes such as, sobriety, decreased recidivism, and increased rates of employment post-program. One major implication supported in both the literature and the findings is the pivotal role substance use has in street-level prostitution. As previously stated, substance dependence is often a catalyst at the start of prostitution and a consistent barrier of treatment. These findings suggest a clear reality; prostitution diversion programs must effectively treat substance abusing participants or recidivism is likely. Both the PDC and SPD involved drug testing within their respective programs, but treatment must be strengthened. As referenced by Murphy (2010) in their study of street-level sex workers, many of these women also experienced psychological trauma throughout their lives. It is plausible that these participants used illicit substances as coping mechanisms in response to parental neglect and physical/sexual assault. Therefore, aside from substance testing and recovery drugs (such as methadone), prostitution courts may benefit from psychological evaluations of all participants at the

start of the program. This increases the likelihood of identifying all substance-dependent participants, including those without a previous drug-related offense. Similarly to a risk-needs assessment, the participant can be referred to the necessary community treatment provider as a program requirement. This process can be strengthened further by periodically collecting participant viewpoints on the strengths and weaknesses of various treatment procedures in focus groups. This study should serve as an empirical reminder about the importance of collecting qualitative data from the population of interest.

The components of social attachment and involvement hold practical implications as well. As previously stated, attachment was one of the most common motivators for compliance in both the PDC and SPD. In practice, the treatment courts provided structure into the participants' lives, often leading to momentary sobriety and social commitment towards prosocial life. This subsequently improved the participant's self-image and their standing with their families and peers, and ultimately strengthened their social attachments. Prostitution diversion programs should take this information and purposefully apply the strengthening of social attachments into the program's structure. The social attachments between the participant and their respective families/children should be the primary focus for these program aspects. As covered in the findings, many participants in both courts were single mothers who were adamant about strengthening the social attachments with their children. The diversion courts could offer optional parenting classes for mothers in the program. This practice would increase participant interest in the treatment program and strengthen their likelihood of remaining in compliance with treatment standards. However, not every participant will have children

or prosocial family members to improve social bonds with. It is therefore imperative that each prostitution diversion program incorporate various social attachment exercises with the entire cohort. For example, treatment staff could facilitate prosocial activities (bowling, potlucks, etc.) on a quarterly basis to facilitate a sense of community within the treatment court cohort and increase each participant's prosocial network. These actions would provide participants with several motivators towards program completion and social support during potential periods of recidivism/relapse.

Finally, the component of involvement also provides practical implications to the structure of these courts. As previously stated, involvement is valuable insofar that it provides participants with something that allows them to enter prosocial society. It also acts as an indirect warning because the individual risks losing their "involvement" in society if they engage in delinquent behavior. Prostitution treatment courts can take these findings and create programs facilitating prosocial involvement in the court. For example, these courts could include a mandatory GED training for participants without a high school diploma and job training courses when participants are close to the conclusion of the program. These programs would give individuals an opportunity to participate in conventional society. This is imperative because prostitution was the primary occupation for most of the participants included in this study. Since many participants lack work experience, diversion programs should advertise social workers or other treatment staff as resources for questions and concerns about employment, housing, and education. The combination of these efforts will improve upon prostitution diversion programs by providing structural adjustments informed directly by the treatment population.

Limitations

Although this study covers new ground in the problem-solving court field, it is not without flaws. As previously mentioned, all data in this study were collected by Shdaimah, (2020). This puts me at a disadvantage because I was not present during these interviews and may have missed emotions, facial expressions, and other interactions that cannot be conveyed in the transcript. Since I did not collect these data, I am also at risk of interpreting these data in a specific way. I attempted to limit this risk of bias by incorporating the preliminary round of coding in which I gathered all possible themes that emerged from these data. Another limitation of these data are the inconsistencies of interview number between respondents. All interviews were voluntary so some respondents could only complete one or two sessions. To combat this, future studies can extend the data collection period or provide increased incentives for completing multiple interviews.

Conclusion

Prostitution diversion programs are amongst the most unique types of PSCs. This study adds empirical analysis to a largely unexplored body of literature. To review, I analyzed 20 interview transcripts from seven different prostitution court participants and identified how the components of SBT appear in participants' lives throughout the program. I also used these components to explain how participants experienced their time in the treatment. I found support for the components of attachment, commitment, and involvement throughout the interview transcripts. Participant attachment largely centered

around family, with a special emphasis on children. Both commitment and involvement included prosocial goals and activities included completing education, applying for housing, and securing employment, among others. These findings hold theoretical and practical implications on the structure and program components on prostitution diversion programs. Future research should collect a larger sample of participant interviews from a geographically diverse pool of prostitution courts and replicate the analysis of SBT on the participant program experience.

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BIOGRAPHY

Paul Xavier Houston II was raised in Bristow, VA and graduated from Patriot High School in 2016. He later attended Roanoke College, where he ran track and field and received a Bachelor's of Arts in Criminal Justice in 2020. Between 2020-2022 he was employed as a graduate teaching assistant at George Mason University. In August 2022, Paul completed his education and received his Master's of Arts in Criminology Law & Society. He now works as a research analyst for the National Center for State Courts and hopes to live by the beach.