

Through Darkness, Through Light: Narratives of Women Leaving the Sex Trade

by

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the transformational processes of women leaving the sex trade. It discerns what interpersonal and intrapersonal transitions foster a sense of personal expansion and transformation in leaving the sex trade.

The co-researchers consisted of four women who had left sex trade work. Phenomenology and narrative inquiry served as theoretical and methodological frameworks that guided the study. In addition, thematic analysis was utilized specifically to isolate metathemes and themes within the data. What was important to the co-researchers in their transformational processes was as complex and unique as their personal histories and experiences. However, overarching similarities emerged from the co-researchers narratives. The metathemes distinguished in the data were understanding history, self/identity, building relationships, sexuality, economic viability, and triggers.

Future considerations for further research include having a larger sample, representing male experiences of transformation, and interviewing co-researchers two years following the initial interview.

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To my soul friends, Kirsten, Stefan, Anil, and Cindy. I am so grateful for your existences, and that I have had the immense opportunity to experience all of you. You have changed my life, and moved me to search for and see between spaces. Each step I take carries each of you within me; you have been embodied and help me shape the world around me. This project could not have manifested into this layer of life without your summoning it.

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For my father, Glenn and his sense of humour, "aren't you done that thing yet?" that inadvertently propelled me to work, as well as co-mother Joanna's laughter and rebuttals in my defence. For my sweetheart brother and his support and encouragement.

To Coal and Spencer for paw prints on freshly printed sheets, crumpled and scratched articles, and distracting me when you sensed I needed to concentrate while sitting at the computer. I heard that you were displeased with my need to focus, and learned mindful patience and choice with both of you.

To the love of my life, Michael, for telling me that you believed in me, and were proud of me. For also taking care of a wide array of "tasks", and facilitating an environment that was conducive to work. To Scott and Erin for your conscientious concern about my progress.

To Sasha. My sweet kindred spirit, there are no words to describe how grateful I am for your beautiful existence. You have filled me many times with laughter and joy. I hope I reciprocated every moment of ineffable elation with you. I miss you immensely.

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My committee members who have offered so many philosophically compelling challenges and social paradoxes for me to ponder. I feel that I have been able to stretch beyond my expectations and dig a little deeper into the construction of my own personal reality. For Dr. Anne Marshall who provided a plethora of professional opportunities to share this work in, for her encouragement and constant availability, as well as her editing abilities; for Dr. Cecilia Benoit, for her experience in the field; her thoughtfulness, acceptance of difference, and wonderful questions; for Dr. Geoff Hett and his integral and systemic support.

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DEDICATION

To my soul friends
With whom light filtered darkness

To Sasha
Goddess of the Earth and Sea

I hereby grant the right to lend this thesis to the University of Victoria Library, and to make single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the Library of any other university, or similar institution, on its behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by me or a member of the University designated by me. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain by the University of Victoria shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Title of Thesis:

Through Darkness, Through Light: Narratives of women leaving the sex trade

Author:


Tamar Lynn Rozock-Allen

March 23, 2003

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

And within every beginning there dwells a magic, which shelters us, and helps us to live.

(Herman Hesse cited in Bollnow, 1987, p.34)

[P]erhaps I was struggling to find the reason for my sufferings, my slow dying. In a last violent protest against my death, I sensed my spirit piercing through the enveloping gloom.

I felt it transcend that hopeless, meaningless world, and from somewhere I heard a victorious "Yes" in answer to my question of the existence of an ultimate purpose. At that moment a light was lit in a distant farmhouse, which stood on the horizon as if painted there, in the midst of the miserable grey of a dawning morning in Bavaria. "*Et lux in tenebris lucet*" - and the light shineth in the darkness.

(Vicktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 1984, p.60)

"How do we know what we believe we know" (Watzlawick, 1984, p.9)? The issue of the sex trade has been historically examined from a problem-oriented perspective. The majority of the literature as well as research related to the sex trade reflects the correlates and consequences of sex trade work as a social and political problem. Major themes and outcomes such as antecedent risk factors, prevalence, health issues (drug/alcohol addictions, AIDS/HIV), and experiences in the sex trade (McInnes, 1998; Jiwani, 1999; Shaver, 1996; Brock 1998; McCarthy, 1997).

Research in this area has resulted in many legal reformations (Lowman, 1990), especially with regard to youth sexual exploitation. In addition, counsellors, social workers, and social program coordinators are beginning to understand the multidimensional challenges and requisites in leaving the sex trade, particularly with issues pertaining to the sexual exploitation of youth. These considerations mostly focus on family and peer relationships, education, and substance misuse (McInnes, 1998, Shaver,

1996; McCarthy, 1997). Research has conveyed many social, political, and psychological precursors and consequences; my desire was to explore women's transformational experiences after leaving sex work.

Impetus for the study

The impetus for this study evolved from conversations I had with a close friend who had worked in the sex trade. She shared how she was able to make meaning of many aspects of the trauma she endured in the sex trade, and how she has been able to re-form her past experiences to have value and meaning for her personal development and progression. She chose to enter a professional field where she could utilize her experiences in and knowledge of the sex trade to assist women and men with issues similar to what hers had been. However, she also spoke of challenges that followed her from her past years later. She exposed me to elements of thought and intrapersonal development I had never considered in regards to sex work. I grew curious as to how she made sense of her experiences, and what the process after leaving the sex trade had been like. I began this project wanting to explore transformational stories about women who had been sexually exploited as youth, meaning under the BC legal age of nineteen.

The literature illustrates how youth portrayed in the sex trade have been reconceptualized as being *sexually exploited* in social, political, and legal forums, which I believe was meant to shift public attention to the buyers of sex, and to the youths as being victimized by these buyers. I questioned what the differences may be between an eighteen versus twenty one year old that would delineate why one would be considered 'sexually exploited', and the other an autonomous agent acting of her own free will? Does the sex

trade worker of legal age have access to similar resources as the sexually exploited youth? These questions were important for me to hold as they informed me of my potential biases in developing the outline of the study.

The Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research was twofold. First, my intention was to articulate and reconstruct the stories of my co-researchers by discussing how they negotiated the challenges and triumphs related to leaving the sex trade. An in-depth understanding of this process may consequently serve to assist other women who desire to leave the sex trade (Lincoln, 1995). Second, through narrative inquiry and thematic analysis, I offer a reconstruction of the co-researcher's stories to provide a holistic perspective of their lives, and an analysis of meanings regarding their transformational experiences (Polkinghorne, 1989; van Manen, 1990).

In order to investigate these phenomena, a qualitative design was the most appropriate methodology as it acted to facilitate the exploration of meanings of as experienced by individuals in their natural context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Kvale, 1996)

Definition of Terms

I began this project using the term *being prostituted*. *Being prostituted* represented my own political and social resistance to being open to the possibility of women, of their own free will, choosing the sex trade as a "profession" [sic] When I first contemplated this study, I discarded any other term that ascribed women's presence in the sex trade. I was adamant in maintaining that entering the sex trade could not possibly be a matter of free

choice, rather, it was societal subjugation and denigration of women.

As I began my literature review search, I encountered numerous and varied perspectives (both male and female) regarding women's involvement and beliefs about *choice* in the sex trade. In response to such diverse opinions, I made a conscious effort to examine my need to be narrow in definition, the purpose my stance served, and who it was benefiting.

Since the inception of this project, my perspective about reasons why women enter the sex trade and who is responsible for their entry have shifted. Out of respect for several women who suggested that the term *being prostituted* disempowered their concepts of free will and choice, I use the term *women working in the sex trade*. It became clear that when stated in this way, their primary identification was as a woman, not an object *being prostituted*, or a *prostitute*. The *sex trade* represents purchasing sexual acts with money, shelter, commodities, sustenance, and promises of love, money, shelter, fame, and glamour. I use the word *healing* in the imperfect grammatical sense, meaning "denoting a (usually past) action in progress but not completed at the time in question" (The Canadian Oxford Dictionary, 1998, p. 708). Both terms are used concomitantly as active verbs with the intention that it will provide opportunities to access multidimensional cognitions, emotions, sense of embodiment and spirit, relatedness to the social world that are in the process of evolving.

Transition refers to events and processes in the co-researchers' lives that served as an impetus for transformation. *Transformation* means moments in time where individuals noticed a conscious shift or a difference in how they acted and interacted with their environment and an awareness of changes within themselves, however described.

Transformation reflects both interpersonal and intrapersonal processes in how they make meaning of their experiences. Further, it may include concrete moments such as near death experiences, or moments that are difficult to verbalize such as the sensation of standing in nature, holding a child, forgiving someone, or experiencing freedom. Both *transition* and *transformation* are used in the active sense, in order to honour the ongoing process of change and integration (Salston, 1994). There is also the possibility that both terms may overlap to some extent, and I discerned these moments both in the interviews, as well as in my analysis of the data.

In the sex trade means that an individual is active in the sex trade; *out of the sex trade* means that an individual has exited the sex trade (Farley & Barkan, 1998).

The term *co-researcher* reflects the inclusion of the women participants as instrumental in building the study to reflect the experience of holistic transformation. I saw them as having a central role in the development, analysis, and closing of the study.

Assumptions

I assumed that:

1. My co-researchers described their transformational process truthfully.
2. My co-researchers were able to articulate and disseminate in-depth descriptions of their experiences.
3. My co-researchers were committed to seeing the study to completion.
4. As a researcher, I was able to represent the lived-experiences of the co-researchers as accurately as possible.
5. In research investigating human phenomena, every meeting between individuals is

an intersubjective realm (Spinelli, 1989); all thoughts and emotions are subjectively based; objective reality exists in the dimension of concrete, physical events (Spinelli, 1989; Cottle & Klineberg, 1974).

6. That most of the co-researchers will have entered the sex trade as youth, meaning under the age of nineteen.

The exploration of women's experiences post sex trade work required the challenging examination of my personal value and belief system. For me, this process required examining my own political, social, and intrapersonal stance in this process. Reviewing the literature on the sex trade motivated introspection, and provided ample opportunity to gain an understanding of the multiple realities of women's experiences in the sex trade.

This chapter provides a summary of selected literature pertaining to the sex trade. The focus of the literature is often concentrated on historical factors that provide entry into the sex trade, as well as the experiences and risks of sex work. I searched for research that would reflect Canadian social, political, legal, and individual norms and values. I expected the majority of the present study's co-researchers to have entered the sex trade as youth. Therefore, the literature presented reflects both adult and youth sex work considerations in terms of (1) demographics – prevalence, age of entry, ethnic-cultural identity; (2) risk factors – historical experiences such as sexual, physical, and psychological abuse, homelessness, health issues, and drug and alcohol use, and (3) protective factors – such as prevention, availability of social programs, and advancements in the criminal code.

Recent research projects have also focused specifically on transition and leaving the sex trade (Benoit & Miller, 2001). Many individuals working in the sex trade experience repeated emotional, physical, sexual, and social abuse, therefore impacting the possibility and quality of leaving, reintegrating, adapting, and moving into meaningful co-existence with "mainstream society" (Benoit & Miller, 2001; Miller, 2002). After leaving the sex trade, individuals may have intimacy difficulties in relationships, as well as

CHAPTER TWO

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

To think is to confine yourself to a single thought till it stands still like a star in the world's sky.

-Martin Heidegger

Introduction

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intrapersonal discordance with regard to their experiences in the sex trade. Since workers in the sex trade are so highly stigmatized and marginalized, individuals who have exited have additional tensions pertaining to disclosure about their history, and risk further stigma, shame, and rejection by those they share their experiences with. (Carr, 1995; Millar, 2002)

The evolution of socially re-constructing definitions of “prostitution” emerged in the 1980’s. Both the Committee on Sexual Offences Against Children and Youth (the Badgley Committee, 1984), as well as the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution (the Fraser Committee, 1985), were instrumental in reconstructing societal opinions of child sexual exploitation as a victimless crime. In 1996, the First World Congress against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children redefined “child prostitution” as child sexual abuse, and recommended that perpetrators of child sexual exploitation be held accountable and face criminal prosecution. These consultations served as the impetus for the majority of the following Canadian literature which addressed the prevalence of sex trade work; possible risk factors, (such as homelessness, poverty, education and employment limitations, victimization, and exposure to drugs and violence), and protective factors, such as familial and social connections, access to training and employment, and a living in a stable environment.

The prevalence of sex trade work is difficult to determine for four reasons. First, many individuals enter as youth and the definition of “minor” is different throughout Canada. Statistics regarding prevalence depend on the number of convictions or deterrences. For example, Jiwani (1999) states, “In BC, the legal age of adulthood is 19, whereas in Ontario it is 16, and in other provinces, 18” (p.12). Further, the Youth Court

Survey only record youth aged twelve to seventeen years who are charged with prostitution or related activities, thereby eliminating any statistics on the prevalence of exploited children aged twelve and under, well as those who are eighteen years old. Second, most, if charged by police, are either diverted to various social agencies (Tremblay, 1998), lectured about the dangers of the sex trade and released, or returned home (Federal/Provincial and Territorial Working Group, 1998). Third, what the actual definition of child sexual exploitation varies. Here, there are discrepancies within the literature. For example, the Badgley Report (1984) required that in order to participate in the study, both males and females had to be twenty years old or less, performed a minimum of one sexual act in exchange for money, shelter, food, or anything considered of value to the youth. Other studies focused on youth regulated by pimps who demand the youth to work seven nights a week (McInnes, 1998; Madsen, 1996). Last, many studies focus on street prostitution, and exclude those involved in the less visible domains such as massage parlors, and escort services (Jiwani, 1999; Brock, 1998; Lowman, 1998; Jessome, 1996; Shaver, 1996; Webber, 1991; Gemme et al., 1989).

Therefore, the following figures regarding the prevalence of child and youth sexual exploitation should be understood from the definitions and methodological procedures used in various research studies and consultations. For example, Duchesne (1997) states that of the 7,646 people charged in 1995 with prostitution and related offenses, 255 were between twelve and seventeen years old. Further, 213 were female, and 42 were male. This figure equals three percent of the total population charged, which in fact is a low percentage. The Federal/Provincial and Territorial Working Group (1998) state that "information from the consultations appear to support the assumption that roughly 10 -

15% of prostitutes on the street are youth” (p.4). The Report of the Burnaby Task Force on the Sexual Exploitation and Prostitution of Children and Youth (1998) report that when the communication law is strictly enforced, sexually exploited youth consist of approximately 20% of those charged. However, Tremblay, (1998) states that of the 5,490 individuals charged with prostitution and related crimes, three percent of this figure consisted of charges against twelve to seventeen year olds.

Regardless of the inconsistency, most studies acknowledged that the volume of charges for sex trade work and related charges varies due to the difference police and political mandates and agendas across the provinces and territories (Tremblay, 1998; Federal/Provincial and Territorial Working Group, 1998; Lowman, 1998; Duschesne, 1997). For these reasons, the actual prevalence of those working in the sex trade is speculative at best.

There is little consensus regarding the age in which children and youth first experience sex trade work and related activities. Webber (1991) contends that many “streetworkers” are between thirteen and eighteen years old. Shaver (1998) states that the majority of sexually exploited individuals interviewed for the Justice Department were between sixteen and twenty years old. McInnes (1998) states children as young as eight years old were being recruited and sexually exploited. Nadon et al. (1998) found that the average age of “initial prostitution activity” was 14.1, with the age of entry ranging from ten to eighteen years old. The Federal/Provincial and Territorial Working Group add

Various studies and consultation with people involved in prostitution indicate that there are youth who turn their first trick as young as 6 years of age. Estimates of the average age of entry into the sex trade also varies: a Victoria survey and the British

Columbia consultations estimate age of entry between 14 and 15.5 years of age, however a survey of prostitutes in Vancouver found an average age of entry as 16.3 for females and 15.6 for males...(p.3).

These discrepancies are not particularly surprising, and may be attributed to different methodological procedures utilized in individual consultations and research (Jiwani, 1999).

There is no consensus as to the prevalence of race in the literature. However, studies such as Currie et al. (1995) found that in the Eastside/Strathcona area of Vancouver, Aboriginal peoples were predominant, whereas in other areas of Vancouver, they were not visible at all. Caputo, Weiler, and Kelly (1994) found that many sex workers in Saskatoon identified themselves as Aboriginal, whereas in Ottawa, most street youth identified themselves as Caucasian. In addition, Lowman (1986) states that many Aboriginal sex workers are sexually exploited at a younger age, and are more susceptible to being exploited by pimps (see also, Schissel & Fedec, 1999). Most studies, however, do not address the issue of the race. As Jiwani (1999) states, "while Canadian literature does not focus on sexual exploitation of marginalized girls, it is clear that Aboriginal girls and women tend to be the most vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation". (p.13) The Federal/Provincial and Territorial Working Group adds that issues pertaining to Aboriginal culture need to be considered when initiating reviews for change, as many have left their communities. They "...may feel doubly alienated because they may be both homeless and in a culture that is quite different from that in their home community" (p.2).

Risk Factors

The precipitating factors that expose women to the vulnerabilities of the sex trade are numerous. Much of the literature contends that sex trade workers were exposed to some form of intra-familial violence such as sexual, physical, emotional abuse, neglect, or rejection as children (Ministry of Children and Families - Measuring Our Success, 2000; Jiwani, 1999; McInnes, 1998; Lowman, 1998; Duchesne, 1997; Jessome, 1996; Shaver 1996; Webber, 1991; McGregor, 1991; Gemme et al, 1989). Jiwani (1999) states girls and boys who are sexually exploited and trafficked tend to come from homes where they have either witnessed and/or have experienced intra-familial violence, societal rejection, stigmatization, and marginalization. In addition, they have issues around self-esteem and addictions. Many of these youth and children are runaways or “throwaways” who turn to street prostitution as a way of survival (p.14).

The Federal/Provincial and Territorial Working Group suggests that there is a “...developmental pattern typical of those youth involved in prostitution: a history of family dysfunction (including substance abuse, violence and sexual abuse) which leads to youth running away from home...” (p.1). For example, Welsh et al. (1995) found that 86% of females and 50% of males in their Toronto study had histories of sexual abuse, whereas Kinnon et al., (1999:7) found that ninety-eight percent of sex trade workers had experienced some form of child abuse (as cited in Jiwani, 1999). Similarly, Shaver (1996) found that sixty-seven percent of females in Vancouver recollected that they were victims of family violence, and thirty-three were sexually abused. Shaver (1996) contends that more research must be done in order to determine whether the level of physical and sexual abuse of “working prostitutes” (p.4) is actually higher than the rest of the population.

However, there are several studies that challenge the presumption that intra-family violence, specifically sexual abuse, is indeed a causal factor in sex work entry. For example, the Badgley Committee (1984) concluded that the prevalence of sexual abuse among sex trade workers was not statistically higher than the general population. In addition, Nadon et al. (1998) compared the prevalence of childhood victimization between sex workers and “non-prostitutes” and found that “non-prostitutes” [sic] had similar rates of sexual abuse, higher rates of physical abuse, and higher levels of family dysfunction (defined as family “adaptability and cohesion” p.212). Brannigan & Gibbs Van Brunschot (1997) also indicated that the level of sexual abuse was not a significant factor. They suggest instead that children who have been sexually abused risk further exploitation because they lack familial and societal support for recovery, and may have emotional/psychological issues as a consequence of the trauma they experienced (see also Farley & Barkan, 1998).

Leaving home at a young age was represented to be a predominant risk factor for sex trade entry. The literature describes children and youth who (1) run away from home (or other institutions such as foster care or group homes) permanently, (2) leave and return home sporadically, (3) or are ostracized/rejected from their familial and societal resources (gay and lesbian youth often predominate this ‘category’) (Jiwani, 1999; McInnes, 1998; Federal/Provincial and Territorial Working Group, 1998; Brock, 1998; Cruikshank, 1998; Nadon et al., 1998; Duchesne, 1997; McCarthy, 1995, 1997; Currie et al., 1995; Savin-Williams, 1994; Webber, 1991).

Once on the streets, individuals are faced with pervading issues of homelessness, poverty, vulnerability to substance abuse, have limited education and employment skills,

and are at risk to become victims of violence. Lowman (1998) suggests "there is a tendency to generalize what we know about street prostitutes to all prostitutes, and to view street prostitution as a monolithic entity" (p.5).

As such, it is important to recognize that not all individuals are involved in sex trade work for money (McCarthy, 1997). Those that are may occasionally work in the sex trade in exchange for food, shelter, or other commodities out of absolute necessity (Benoit & Millar, 2001; Jiwani, 1999; Brock, 1998; Federal/Provincial and Territorial Working Group, 1998; Lowman, 1998; Duchesne, 1997; McCarthy, 1995). There is the reality however, that many sex workers are coerced or forced into the sex trade by pimps (McInnes, 1998; Duchesne, 1997; Webber, 1991). The Federal/Provincial and Territorial Working Group (1998) add that youth are becoming involved in other "prostitution-related offenses" (p.5) such as pimping and recruiting other individuals.

Individuals who are homeless or have run away from home face social and political obstacles in being autonomous (Brock, 1998; McCarthy, 1997; Webber, 1991). While living on the street (or in substandard housing), they face further obstacles in obtaining assistance from agencies. First, many are considered either too young or too old for available social programs. If they do meet a particular social program's criteria, they fear being returned home or placed in foster care (for youth), or offered assistance under the condition that they leave sex trade work (Suleman & McLarty, 1997; Benoit & Millar, 2001; Lowman, 1990). In addition, sex workers are often distrustful of those in positions of authority, thereby perpetuating the cycle of fear and disregard for "straight society". Consequently, many adamantly refuse to participate in social programs (Jiwani, 1999; Brock, 1998).

Second, many have limited education and employment skills that making it more difficult to find viable employment (Jiwani, 1999; Schissel & Fedec, 1999; Nadon et al. 1998; Brock, 1998; McInnes, 1998; McCarthy, 1997; Shaver, 1996; Webber, 1991). For example, Shaver (1996) found that in 1991, fifty percent of men and forty three percent of women sex workers in Montreal had not completed high school. McInnes (1998) states that children and youth who do return to school after being on the streets experience almost a hundred percent failure rate. Brock (1998) adds, "there are very few jobs for young people who lack skills and have no other means of financial support, and what jobs are available pay minimum wage "(p.133).

In regards to substance abuse, there is no consensus in the literature regarding whether or not it precedes sex trade work, or is a consequence of the sex trade (Jiwani, 1999; Schissel & Fedec, 1999; Nadon et al., 1998; Duchesne, 1997; Shaver, 1996). Nadon et al. (1998) found that there was no significant difference between youth in the sex trade and youth not in the sex trade rates of substance misuse. Shaver (1996) found that fifty percent of both men and women in the sex trade in the Atlantic provinces admit to drug use, whereas forty two percent living on the prairies claimed to have drug addictions.

Most of the research agrees that the experience of violence for those in the sex trade is common. Lowman & Fraser (1996) found that the incidence of violence experienced by street sex workers in Vancouver was disproportionate. Many described being sexually assaulted, tortured by their customers. Duchesne (1997) states that during the period of 1991 - 1995, sixty known females were murdered; seven of these murders included youth aged fifteen to seventeen years old. Of the sixty-three women murdered, fifty of these are believed to have been murdered by clients (p.1). Davis & Shaffer (1994) contend that girls

and women involved in the sex trade have a mortality rate that is forty times higher than the rest of Canada. In a cross-cultural comparison study, Schissel & Fedec (1999) found that 41.7 % of Aboriginals and 21.6% of Caucasian sex workers had been physically assaulted on the street. Also, both groups had experienced high levels of sexual assault in comparison to non-sex trade workers. In addition, children and youth who are run by pimps are often threatened and/or forced through violence to continue (McInnes, 1998; Lowman & Fraser, 1996; Lowman, 1998; Duchesne, 1997; Jessome, 1996; Webber, 1991).

Protective Factors

As the Federal/Provincial and Territorial Working Group (1998) indicate, early intervention may act as a preventative measure. Nadon et al. (1998) adds that early interventions may dissipate the long-term effects of familial victimization, thereby increasing the probability for "healthy psychological functioning" in at risk children and youth. In addition, early intervention may provide the opportunity for individuals to develop problem-solving skills in order to cope with living in dysfunctional families. McInnes (1998) claims that individuals, particularly youth leaving the sex trade, need to have three factors in place: (1) available resources and support systems, particularly emotional, financial, legal, health services, as well as community and interpersonal support, (2) the sense that they have internal worth such as self-efficacy, are lovable, have potential, and connection to society and a higher power, (3) the opportunity to develop interpersonal and practical skills, friendships, and opportunities for training and education. It is imperative to have viable supports and opportunities such as these in place when individuals' are going through the process of leaving the sex trade. Many are leaving their identity and social status within their peer group. Women leaving the sex trade may feel

completely disconnected from “straight society” and stigmatized (McInnes, 1998; Federal/Provincial and Territorial Working Group, 1998; Webber, 1991; Benoit & Millar, 2001; Millar 2002).

There are a number of available community programs for sex trade workers. Many are non-profit organizations operated on a volunteer basis, and offer basic health education, referrals or placements to detox centres, counselling, and educational resources. Examples of these organizations would include “Street Teams”, “Exit Community Outreach Program”, as well as the “Operation Go Home” (Andreef & Stone, 1997). Other services and resources in British Columbia include the “Provincial Prostitution Unit”, “FACES” (Fight Against Child Exploitation), “Children of the Street Society”, “PACE” (Prostitution Alternatives Counselling and Education), and “Purpose Reconnect” (Madsen & Moss, 1996). The Ministry for Children and Families in BC have developed a “youth agreement”, where high risk youth and the Ministry develop a plan of independence. Here, individuals are given supports such as counselling, drug rehabilitation, opportunities for higher education and financial assistance (Ministry of Children and Families, 1999). In addition, youth that have been charged with a minor first time offence are often referred to a program called “Alternative Measures” (Hendrick, 1998). The Federal/Provincial and Territorial Working Group suggest this program be “designed exclusively” for sexually exploited youth, and act as a “pre-charge” diversion to criminal proceedings. Thus, there would be the opportunity to address the special needs of these youth such as safe housing, food, clothing, education, and employment training. Though it may seem that there are numerous choices for individuals attempting to leave the sex trade, Jiwani (1999) challenges this notion by stating, “...without a structural transformation that effectively

addresses poverty, the sexualization of youth and children, intra-familial violence, and youth un[der]employment, such community efforts remain band-aid solutions” (p.13). In addition, Lowman (1998) suggests that many social programs have strategies that are conditional; sex trade workers are able to get assistance, but only based on the requirement that they are leaving the sex trade. PEERS (Prostitutes’ Empowerment, Education, and Resource Society) on the other hand, offers assistance for those still working and those trying to leave sex work. They play an advocacy role in areas such as education, housing, counselling, and health.

Based on the recommendations of to the Committee on Sexual Offences Against Children and Youth (the Badgley Committee, 1984) and the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution (the Fraser Committee, 1985), it was recommended that a “communicating law” replace the existing “soliciting law”, imposing stronger penalties for the customers (Lowman, 1998; Federal/Provincial and Territorial Working Group, 1998; Duchesne, 1997). In addition, two new federal offences came into effect January, 1988 in an effort to abolish child and youth sexual exploitation (Lowman, 1998; Duchesne, 1997; Brock, 1998; Wells, 1990). Section 212(2) states that it is a criminal offence to procure or live on the avails of a person under 18 years of age, and the maximum for this sentence has been increased from 10 years to 14 years. Section 212(4) explicitly prohibits communicating with anyone for the “purpose of obtaining for consideration, the sexual services of a person who is under the age of 18 years” (Provincial Prostitution Unit, 1999, p.1 in legislation section; see also Lowman, 1998; Duchesne, 1997). “Consideration” may include money, shelter, food, or other material or non-material items. British Columbia’s Child, Family and Community Service Act has also implemented provincial legislation to

protect sexually exploited youth and children. In sections 28 and 98, social workers now have the authority to obtain restraining orders against “johns”, pimps, and other individuals who are involved (Ministry for Children and Families, 1999). These changes also facilitate police officers’ ability to enforce the restraining orders (Provincial Prostitution Unit, 1999; Ministry for Children and Families, 1999). Despite the implementation of these laws, they are rarely enforced (Lowman, 1998; Brock, 1998; Duchesne, 1997; Federal/Provincial and Territorial Working Group; 1998). Lowman (1998) adds that, “1994 data for Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Saskatchewan, Yukon, and the North West Territories show that there were 57 charges in Quebec, 15 in Saskatchewan, and none in the other five jurisdictions” (p.9). In addition, of the six charges laid under section 212(4) over a seven year period, only two convictions were obtained. Officials who enforce these laws state that obtaining an actual conviction is difficult because individuals must testify against the defendant (Federal/Provincial and Territorial Working Group, 1998; Lowman & Fraser, 1996; Lowman, 1998). As well, these new offences do not protect those who work in the “off-street” market such as massage parlors and escort services (Brock, 1997; Lowman & Fraser, 1996; Lowman, 1998; Duchesne, 1997). In fact, Lowman (1998) states that Vancouver vice do not investigate such establishments unless a specific complaint is lodged against them. Lowman adds, “From 1989-1993 there was a total of 84 cases in which 115 people were charged.... 73 cases involved procuring and/or living on the avails charges. Thirty four percent of persons charged were accused of living on the avails of a youth, and fifty one percent of the accused for who we have this information (n=104) were charged with an offence relating to a youth” (p.12). With this information, we must question the impact

legislative measures have had in protecting sex workers, as this 'invisible market' has not been accurately assessed.

Transition and Transformation

As the research demonstrates, the sex trade is a complex issue. The literature pertaining to transition and transformation provide an avenue to explore the requisites present in the self and the environment that facilitate the possibility of leaving the sex trade.

Transitions in life are often disruptive (Capra, 1996; Wilber, 1983; Newman, 1994) and often propel individual life changes (Wood, 1995). When such transitions create a sense of chaos or disequilibrium for individuals, the challenge(s) posed by these transitions are often fertile ground for individual growth, transformation, and open the possibility for expanded consciousness through deconstructing and reconstructing identity (Lyddon, 1990; Newman, 1994). Transitions often serve as a catalyst for inner reflection, critical analysis of life circumstances, and motivation for alternative possibilities (Mezirow, 1994; Yamashita, 1999; Wood, 1995; Wade, 1998).

Intrapersonally, individuals are confronted with "critical choice points" regarding how they cope with transitions. These choice points offer opportunities to reflect upon the situation and/or intrapersonal conflict, and on how their current coping mechanisms either disempower them or individuals in their environment may be illuminated (Newman, 1994; Yamashita, 1999; Neill, 2002; Jaffe, 1985; Wade, 1998). If the anxiety produced is overwhelming, they may not choose to attend to the conflict until other elements in their lives offer stability and safety to do so (Wade, 1998; Newman, 1994). However, the "self"

desires to be whole, and the parts of the self that need attending will be pushed forward in order to be recognized (Woodman, 1985).

Antecedents in personal transformation include disorienting dilemmas that create higher levels of anxiety or stress within the individual (Newman, 1994; Wade, 1998; Jaffe, 1985). This heightened level of arousal may reveal a “problematic cognitive and affective meaning scheme[s] that conflicts with one’s self view and produces a painful, threatening and challenging opportunity for reflection and expansion of consciousness” (Wade, 1998, p.718). There is also the potential for significant, positive growth. The process of working through the dilemma[s] incubates the possibility of transformation.

Transformation includes recognition of life patterns, and awareness of the evolution and purpose of them

Woodman (1985) offers the metaphor of a chrysalis, a symbol of the soul, to describe the intrapersonal incubation and release needed in transformation: “Individuals who consciously accept the chrysalis... have accepted a life/death paradox, a paradox which returns in a different form at each new spiral of growth. If we accept this paradox, we are not torn to pieces by what seems to be intolerable contradiction. Birth is the death of the life we have known; death is the birth of the life we have yet to live “(p. 14).

Initiation rites and rituals assist in addressing these contradictions as they offer a way to let go what is no longer relevant (Herman, 1992). These processes benefit from having symbolic and ritualistic resources to construct meaning from these experiences.

Mythology is such a resource. Campbell (1968) states that through myths "symbolic expression is given to the unconscious desires, fears, and tensions that underlie the conscious patterns of human behavior," and connects us to "the deep forces that have

shaped man's [sic] destiny and must continue to determine both our private and our public lives" (p. 255-256). Personal and public definitions of self after leaving sex work may be co-constructed through symbolic re-representations of strengths, developments, and resiliency.

Summary

As the research demonstrates, a large number of women working in the sex trade have been victims of violence including emotional, psychological, physical, and/or sexual abuse. Many leave home to escape their intolerable family situations and turn to the streets, only to be confronted with societal, sexual, political, legal, and economical domains of exploitation. Most research portrays the sex trade from a problem oriented perspective, thus illustrating the social, familial, political, legal, and intrapersonal influences that serve as risk or protective factors in the sex trade. As such, change is focused in pressuring government to provide more funding for research, prevention, and intervention measures.

The available research has contributed to our understanding of the multidimensional issues in the sex trade; however, most has focused primarily on issues faced by individuals that are currently working in the sex trade. Very few studies have explored women's experiences post sex trade (Millar, 2002), nor their transformational processes that have facilitated high degrees of success. The present study addresses this gap. The specific research question addressed in this study is:

- 1.) What are the transformational processes for women after leaving the sex trade?

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

Passion draws us away from the communal existence of the center toward the isolation and individuation of the edge of life. It draws us toward birth and death, toward the gods, toward the demonic. In the scarce light of dawn and dusk, removed from customs and the anchorage in task, we wander alone, while confused by shadows and informed by visions. How different is life near the center, in the full light of day, shared by others, surrounded by what is intelligible, rooted in language, informed by custom, anchored in nearly self-evident tasks.

(Bernd Jager, Transformation of the passions, 1989, p. 222)

In this chapter, I describe the philosophical beliefs and specific research procedures that guide the qualitative direction followed in this study. This chapter discusses chosen theoretical tenets, order of events of the research process, transitions, and procedures, all of which follow qualitative research ideologies. A qualitative research approach offers avenues to describe meanings that individuals construct in response to events, how these meanings may possibly shift with experience, as well as the development of intrapersonal processes such as reflection and integration (van Manen, 1990).

The means of inquiry are what Tesch (1990) describes as both exploratory and descriptive. Exploration in this context will refer to particular metathemes and themes in and across the co-researcher's narratives, whereas description will refer to concrete behaviours, personal attitudes, historical events, and the anticipated future. Two theoretical frameworks phenomenology and narrative inquiry, guided the construction and evolution of method.

Phenomenology, as a mode of inquiry (van Manen, 1990), provided space for intersubjective relating and creativity, and demanded my personal rigorous reflection and introspection throughout the process and unfolding of the phenomenon, meaning

transformation. Phenomenology may be described as the study of lived-experience (Husserl, 1989; van Manen, 1990). It aims to heighten our conscious understanding of meanings posed in everyday living (Colaizzi, 1978; van Manen, 1990). It focuses on the essences of our experiences, and contains a reflexive dimension that develops our capacity to integrate the four existentials of our experiences; (1) spatiality, (2) corporeality, (3) temporality, and (4) relationality (van Manen, 1990, pp. 101-106).

(1) Spatiality (lived space) is concerned with the way we feel, think, and act. (2) Corporeality (lived body) refers to our bodily presence in the world and the ways in which an experience influences, or is influenced by our physical being. (3) Temporality (lived time) is our subjective experience of time as influenced by the situation we find ourselves in. This may refer to the way we live as children or in middle, or old age. It may also refer to dimensions of time, past, present, and future. (4) Relationality (lived other) is the relationship we maintain with others – interpersonal and communal, or within ourselves – intrapersonal.

In developing an outline for this study, I committed to following the guidelines suggested by Max van Manen (1989, p.39):

- a.) turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests me and commits me to the world;
- b.) investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
- c.) reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
- d.) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and re-writing.

As such, phenomenology provided three components; a framework to guide the exploration of transformation, principles of intersubjectivity which valued my process and

impact on the research, and an inclusive consideration of human experience meaning focusing on sensory, image, behavior, affect and motive aspects that evolve concomitantly with the social environment.

Using narrative inquiry provided considerable room for exploring the potential meanings of transformation within the co-researchers stories. Those embracing narrative inquiry seek to understand how people construct and make meaning of their lives from a coherent temporal perspective (Polkinghorne, 1988). Language and discourse are also important in the function and role of organizing individual's complex representations of experience, meaning as oneself and self in relation to others. As Polkinghorne (1988) describes

We achieve our personal identities and self-concept through the use of narrative configuration, and make our existence into a whole by understanding it as an expression of a single unfolding and developing story. We are in the middle of our stories and cannot be sure how they will end; we are constantly having to revise the plot as new events are added to our lives. Self, then, is not a static thing nor a substance, but a configuring of personal events into a historical unity which includes not only what one has been but also anticipations of what one will be (p.150).

Ethical Considerations

Approval for the study was obtained through the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Victoria. The co-researchers who participated in the study signed a consent form (Appendix A) that described the nature and content involved in the study. I obtained their signatures as a symbol that they understood and accepted how the

information they provided would be used. Their identities, as well as individuals they named in their interviews, were protected by using pseudonyms. For the same reasons, all demographic information was changed. The co-researchers were also informed that they were free to withdraw their participation at any time without explanation. If they chose to withdraw from the study, they were guaranteed that all information they had provided up to that point would be destroyed or returned to them.

I created a list of free public agencies and resources in each of co-researchers geographic locations. These lists were presented in three of the four interviews, as one participant stated she had a very strong support system and did not need it. In addition, I asked a peer counsellor if she would be willing to be available to speak with them, either via phone or in person depending on their location if they needed immediate support.

My Role as Researcher

As a researcher, I felt it was imperative to be as authentic and integral to both the subject matter and to my co-researchers. In order to maintain accountability, both to myself and the co-researchers, I wrote in-depth descriptions of my presuppositions and biases in journal form. I maintained internal validity by leaving an audit trail, meaning that I "...ke[pt] meticulous records of all sources of information used, using detailed transcripts, and taking field notes of all communications and reflective thinking activities during the research process" (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998, p.134). In addition, my co-researchers were given a written copy of the interview, and had the opportunity to clarify, edit, delete, and/or expand their information, activities meant to preserve representativeness of the data (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998). I kept a research journal that focused on the evolution of the research process. It included field notes, methodological

issues, personal dilemmas and questions, and insights and revelations. The research journal served as a tool to understand the network of research developments within a temporal context.

Inviting Participants

I created a “Letter of Invitation” (Appendix B) that stipulated my intentions, goals, and areas of possible inquiry. I gave several copies of the letter to a contact person to distribute to women who had worked in the sex trade. Before distributing the letter, I invited the contact person to review the possible areas of inquiry (listed in the data collection section) to determine if the inquiries were coherent and understandable. A suggestion the contact person made was to include an additional question that addressed possible triggers for returning to the sex trade, thus worded, “*What, if any, are their triggers in the now that evoke the sensation of wanting to return?*”

I expected that the co-researchers to have entered the sex trade before the legal age of nineteen. I believed that having a representation of stories by women who entered when they were youth would isolate potential developmental vulnerabilities, such as their cognitive processing capacities (as cited in Berk, 1993), ability to reflect (life experience), and sense of autonomy within their communities. However, only one co-researcher that participated had entered the sex trade before the age of nineteen. A fundamental criterion was that each co-researcher was to have been out of the sex trade for a minimum of one year. I reasoned that one year was sufficient time to reflect upon their cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral processes and developments, as well as have the opportunity to apply what they learned during this process into their lives. All four co-researchers far exceeded this time requirement, ranging from five to twelve years out of the sex trade.

Upon contacting me, both the co-researcher and I discussed our level of comfort of speaking to one another about the topic, their comfort level in sharing sensitive and in-depth descriptions of their experiences including attitudes, perceptions, sensations, images, behaviors, affect, and meaning (van Kaam, 1969). These were instrumental in forming rich and meaningful descriptions of what the process has been for the co-researchers since they have been out of the sex trade. We also discussed coming together for a second interview three to six months after the initial interview, to which all four co-researchers agreed.

Coming Together – Interviewing

Five women agreed to participate; however, one woman became ill during the first interview and had to withdraw. The information she did provide via email was returned to her and not included in any part of the study. Before I constructed my interview schedule, I envisioned particular areas of life that transformation could evolve in. These areas emerged from McInnes (1998).¹ The following schedule is a reflection of anticipated constructions of transformation:

Table 1: Probes

<p><u>Historical</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An overview of your experiences while in the sex trade. 2. How your process of transformation began. <p><u>Body Perception/Sexuality</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. What was your experience of your body?

¹ McInnes (1998) claims that for individuals, particularly youth exiting the sex trade, need to have three factors in place: (1) the availability of resources and support systems, particularly emotional, financial, legal, health, as well as dependable, consistent adults, (2) the sense that they have internal worth such as self-efficacy, are lovable, have potential, and connection to society and a higher power, (3) the opportunity to develop interpersonal and practical skills, friendships, and opportunities for training and education.

4. Has this experience shifted, changed, or stayed the same?

Relationships

5. How your thoughts and experiences of yourself and your relationships have shifted?

6. Have any perceptions or experiences of family, friendship, intimate partners shifted, if so, how?

Emotional/Psychological/Spiritual

7. Where are you at now emotionally, psychologically, spiritually?

8. Is this different than when you were in the sex trade?

9. If yes, how so? If not, why?

Triggers

10. What, if any, are your triggers in the now that evokes the sensation of wanting to return to the sex trade?

Future

11. What is your sense of what is possible for you now, and in the future?

Once these probes were formulated and the co-researchers agreed via telephone to participate, the next step was to arrange places and times to meet with one another. The co-researchers chose meeting places where they felt most comfortable, as well as the time to meet. The meetings places varied as some chose to be interviewed in their own homes, others were comfortable in more public spaces. Each interview also varied in duration. The shortest interview was two hours and the longest was three and a half hours. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed by me within two to four weeks of the interview.

During each interview, I utilized questions provided by Kvale (1996) which served as tools to clarify, expand, and uncover the meaning embedded in their stories. For example, I used introductory questions such as "Can you tell me more about...?", or "Could you describe for me...?" In addition, I utilized probing questions such as "Could you say more about..?", or specifying questions such as "What did you do when...?" Indirect questions such as "How do you believe others view this ...?" Direct questions such as "Have you ever...?" I also asked interpretative questions to further clarify and validate participants' experiences. These interpretative questions included questions such as "You then mean that...?", and, "Do you see any connection between...?" (Kvale, 1996, p. 133-135).

The use of these questions varied from interview to interview. Most of the questions I asked flowed naturally within the context of the conversation and tended to evoke deeper explanations and/or descriptions of the narratives I was inquiring about.

After each interview, I set aside half an hour to an hour to reflect and write about my responses, thoughts, inquiries, and topics of intrigue for future consideration that emerged from our conversations. These entries were instrumental for areas of inquiry. For example, in the first interview a co-researcher spoke of the importance of her relationship with a higher power, and how it kept her grounded and accountable to herself and others. This was an area I had not consciously thought about in the context of transformation, and writing about my observation encouraged me to inquire about this topic in the rest of the interviews. The content of the first interview also prompted me to keep a second journal. The primary purpose in keeping this journal was for my own intrapersonal processing regarding the women's stories. The content will not be shared.

Follow up Interviews

Follow up interviews were planned for three to six months after the initial interview took place. The intention was to re-connect; update the co-researchers regarding my progress; and project a date for the completion of the analysis. In addition, I was interested if telling their stories shifted their experiences and perceptions of their recollections of the past. I prepared two probes for follow-up:

1. What are your thoughts about the process of sharing your stories with me?
2. Since the first interview, have parts of your story shifted, changed, or stayed the same?

My hope was to have a face to face follow-up interview with each co-researcher. However, due to immense difficulty in coordinating travel and time between myself and the co-researchers, only two were able to be completed. Both did not take place until eight months after the initial interview. One follow-up interview was conducted over the telephone, and the second was obtained via email.

Interview Data

All interviews were transcribed by me. All of the interview data is stored in a secure file on my computer, which was equipped with a password known only to me. All printed transcripts are located in a locked cabinet in my home, and will be shredded after at the end of the successful completion of my Master's thesis. The audiotapes will be erased after the completion of this study.

In addition, the co-researchers were given a transcript of their interview within two to four weeks of the interview. Each co-researcher had the opportunity to clarify, delete, or expand upon any of the information in the transcript. Any changes they made to the

original transcript were typed into the computer, and another copy was provided for their verification. This process continued until they were satisfied that the document was representative of their experiences.

This verification was difficult to obtain in a time efficient manner, and this extensive, in-depth, cross checking of the transcripts was only obtained from two co-researchers. The two other co-researchers stated that the transcripts were representative via telephone, and did not request any transcript changes.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process for this project remained an emergent endeavor (Tesch, 1990). There were four phases of data analyses; (1) Familiarization, (2) Extracting meaning units, (3) Coding themes in individual transcripts, and (4) Coding metathemes across transcripts.

In addition, there were three levels of interpretation of the data. First, reading the co-researchers' individual composites provided illustrations of transformation within a singular framework. Second, metathemes and themes were overarching descriptions of what the elements of transformation were across transcripts. Third, these metathemes and themes were discussed in relation to existing literature pertaining to the sex trade, transition, and transformation.

Familiarization included reading the data in their entirety. I read and reread the transcripts with the intention to familiarize myself with the co-researcher's descriptions of life transitions, intrapersonal recollections of responses to the shifts, descriptions of interpersonal relationships, and descriptions of the lived present. My goal was to remain

Table 2: Extracting meaning units

Excerpt from Transcript	Proposed Meaning Units	Researcher's Comments
<p style="text-align: center;">140</p> <p>And <u>he would hurt me and hit me</u>, and</p> <p style="text-align: center;">141</p> <p>he would <u>take me to other pimps</u> houses, and they'd tell him, geez, you're stupid, <u>you give her body shots, not hit her in the face, she's your money, right?</u></p>	<p>140. physical abuse</p> <p>141. commodification</p>	<p>State of chaos – unpredictability in pimp's responses, experience of violence and treated as property.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">142</p> <p>So I started to really feel like an <u>animal right?</u> And I would sit there, and they would tell him how to run my life and how to manage me. I just wanted to get high and wanted to</p>	<p>142. dehumanization</p>	<p>Non existent as a human, rather, worth existed in her ability to make money for her pimp.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">143</p> <p>have fun, and <u>I so desperately wanted him to appreciate me</u></p>	<p>143. desire to be appreciated</p>	<p>Polar opposite – her hope for intimate appreciation, recognition. Did this hope keep her will resistant to being subjugated fully?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">144</p> <p><u>and to just sit by his side.</u> I wanted something that was impossible, right?</p>	<p>144. stay with him</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">145</p> <p>And <u>so I would try to please him</u>, and anyways, it came down to one day where I had had a date with this guy,</p>	<p>145. accommodation to others</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">146</p> <p><u>he gave me 500 dollars for just sitting with him and talking with him for two hours.</u> He gave me 500 dollars and he said to me,</p>	<p>146. money for conversation, not sex</p>	<p>Paying for conversation – did this shift her perception of her worth?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">147</p> <p><u>that guy you're with is really dangerous and if you ever need a place to go, you can come and stay here....</u></p>	<p>147. offer of shelter and help</p>	<p>Male recognition of her volatile situation – validated - evoked strength to leave? Provide new alternatives?</p>

The third phase consisted of coding the meaning units of all data into themes.

Themes may be defined as definitive categories, or common threads that run through the data as a whole (Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul, 1997). Coding the meaning units into themes was a process that "...linked all those data fragments to a particular idea or concept" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p.7).

As illustrated in Table 3, I created a table in Excel with four columns. The first column contained the original word, sentence fragment, or sentence that I had underlined in the documents in the first phase of familiarization. The second column contained the meaning units I had written on the right hand side of the page of the documents. The third column was for the themes that emerged from the meaning units, and the fourth was open for entering the larger metathemes that related to the themes. The fourth phase of coding metathemes was conducted by reading through the themes and understanding the context within the data that elicited a particular theme (Bogden & Bilken, 1998):

The final step involved re-reading the themes and metathemes to ensure that there were no duplicate or redundant codes. In order to cross-check the coherence of these themes and metathemes, a peer was invited to read the codes and provide feedback as to her understanding of each. Metathemes as defined by Ely et al. (1997) are "...major constructs that highlight overarching issues in a study which may be considered against extant literature and experience" (p.26).

The process of thematic analysis created a tension between the emergent, often spiraling patterns within the co-researcher stories, and the difficulty in describing these

Table 3: Example of Excel Chart

<u>Excerpt from data</u>	<u>Meaning Units</u>	<u>Themes</u>	<u>Metathemes</u>
<p>By doing that 232 <u>self-examination all the time,</u> <u>self-exploratory,</u> it's just continuous...</p>	232. Self examination	Meaning making	Self/Identity
<p>that's what I tell my 320 women eh, <u>recovery is about self discovery,</u> that's what it is</p>	320. Self-discovery		

The final step included re-reading the themes and metathemes to ensure that there were no duplicate or redundant codes. In order to cross check the coherence of these themes and metathemes, a peer volunteered to read the codes and provide feedback as to her understanding of each. Metathemes as defined by Ely et al., (1997) are "...major constructs that highlight overarching issues in a study which may be considered against extant literature and experience" (p.206).

The process of thematic analysis created a tension between the emergent, often spiraling patterns within the co-researchers stories, and the difficulty in describing these

patterns in a textually linear manner. This tension was mitigated by composing portraits of the co-researchers' life stories. In them, the reader may understand the layers and patterns of the four existentials of experience; spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and relationality (van Manen, 1989)², without fragmenting the content.

As such, chapter four provides the composite life stories of the four co-researchers, Aphrodite, Athena, Hestia and Artemis. The origin and significance of the use of Greek mythological goddesses as pseudonyms, and the interpretive meaning of each Goddess will be discussed.

The stories of the co-researchers provide an opportunity to deviate from the culturally anchored stereotypes that often encapsulates the role and identity of those who have worked in the sex trade. The process after leaving the sex trade is often complex, impacting interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions such as socioeconomic status, psychological and physical health, and sense of relatedness to the world (Borok & Miller, 2001; Herron, 1992).

The co-researchers' life narratives also provide an in-depth historical foundation for understanding the multi-dimensional components of the challenges and triumphs in their lives. The paradox in transformation is that individual evolution often consists of both/and rather than either/or elements of experience that can result in fragmentation of self and self

² Refer to Pp.24 of thesis

CHAPTER FOUR

CO- RESEARCHER COMPOSITES

Myth and Meaning

Myths serve as an allegorical process for self-understanding, resiliency building, and meaning-making that may facilitate inner-awareness and sense of connectedness with the social world (Wade, 1998; Campbell, 1988; Carlsen, 1988). They serve as symbolic containers that hold the positive and negative aspects evoked by events within the self. Characters in mythology may be depicted as universal archetypes, meaning, powerful inner patterns or forces that influence our emotions and behaviors (Bolen, 1984; Woodman, 1985). Jung “saw archetypes as patterns of instinctual behaviour that were contained in a collective unconscious. The collective unconscious is the part of the unconscious that is not individual but universal.... As pre-existent patterns, they influence how we behave and how we react to others ” (Bolen, 1984, p.15).

The stories of the co-researchers provide an opportunity to deviate from the culturally sanctioned stereotypes that often encapsulates the role and identity of those who have worked in the sex trade. The process after leaving the sex trade is often complex; impacting interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions such as socioeconomic status, psychological and physical health, and sense of relatedness to the world (Benoit & Millar, 2001; Herman, 1992).

The co-researchers’ life narratives also provide an in-depth historical foundation for understanding the multidimensional components of the challenges and triumphs in their lives. The paradox in transformation is that individual evolution often consists of both/and rather than either/or elements of experience that can result in fragmentation of self and self

in relation to the world. “[W]e must learn to live in a world of paradox, a world where two mutually exclusive views of reality may be held at the same time” (Woodman, 1985, p.51).

The descriptions of Greek goddesses is a literary device meant to honour the shadow side of human nature (Jung, 1951), and metaphorical symbols that emulate the strengths and resiliency evident in the co-researchers’ stories. I shared the archetypal representations with the co-researchers to determine if they felt the archetype was a good fit for them, to which they all agreed. In reading each composite, it is of interest to notice not only what is being said, but what is not being said, as well as sentences and paragraphs that leave you with more questions than answers. From a counselling perspective, these spaces are remarkable to note as they offer insight as to areas to be curious. All demographic information has been altered to protect the identity of the co-researchers.

Aphrodite Archetype Characteristics

Moore (1994) describes Aphrodite as a transformative Goddess. She has immense power for creative change, and tends to live in the moment. Her love of creation is bred out of intense passion for the subject matter, as we see with her conviction to bond mortals in intense relationships. She is the deity of perception, attuned to the power of observation, and serves to uncover the mysterious forces of love within mortals. She is able to perceive the soul as well as the material, and honors both as powerful forces for seeking love for

APHRODITE

Why Aphrodite?

Aphrodite spoke passionately about her life. Whether she was discussing the dark periods, or bright moments in her recovery, she appeared grave and authentic in her descriptions. In the beginning of the interview, she described herself as a woman who loved to dance, sing, garden, and create beautiful things, all enchanting qualities that reminded me instantly of Aphrodite. Additionally, she had a laugh that erupted from deep within and filled the room, just like the “Goddess of Love and Beauty...the laughter-loving Goddess” (Hamilton, 1942, p.32). During the interview I asked if there were any symbols in her life that were important to her. She responded by taking me into her living room to view Botticelli’s “Birth of Venus” on her wall. She told me that the painting is how she sees herself, emerging from the water, vulnerable, naked, and covering herself. She is able to feel the gentle winds caressing her, with her sweet angels guiding her, and she is nurtured, safe, and “standing”. This painting was her inspiration for moving forward and embracing all that was vibrant within her.

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all earth's creatures. Aphrodite is "the giver of life, death, and rebirth..." (Harris & Platzner, 1998, p. 99).

Aphrodite's Composite

Aphrodite was an only daughter and oldest of three children. Her parents married when they were quite young. Her father was not around much, but when he was, Aphrodite cherished his approval and love spending time with him until he would start drinking. Aphrodite worried frequently about her father and felt concerned for his welfare. At the age of fifteen or sixteen, Aphrodite's parents' divorced and her mother was the primary caretaker. She did not understand "why they did not love each other, why they were apart, and why they were so angry" with one another.

Her education at the time served multiple purposes. She enjoyed the structure, stability, and consistency of school, and describes herself as a "super high achiever". Her friends consisted of two groups, the "brainy ones" and friends whose families were not stable. She states that having these two polarized groups of friends emerged from feeling like she never fit in anywhere. In response to the dissolution of her parents' marriage, she began to associate more frequently with the friends who were not stable as she found they had more in common. She "took off" for awhile at the age of sixteen, and lived in squats.

During this time, she was introduced to a male who demonstrated romantic interest in her. She stated that the feeling was not reciprocal; rather, she didn't like him and thought that he "stank and was really disgusting". At this time, her friends taunted her about being a virgin, and told her that she needed to lose it, specifically with the male she did not like. Aphrodite was indignant and explained to them that she did not want to. However, the taunts from her friends continued. In a later encounter, the male who had

made advances toward her threw her down on the pavement while she was walking down the street with two girlfriends with another male friend. Her girlfriends were saying, “he likes you, he likes you”, while Aphrodite begged them to get him off of her. The male that was in their company finally pulled the male that attacked her off.

Aphrodite had a second fateful encounter with the same male. She and a female friend were walking to a cornerstore, and Aphrodite requested that her friend tell the male to leave her alone. On the way back from the cornerstore, they were confronted by the male who threw Aphrodite down and raped her. During the rape, she recalled hearing people hollering “slut, slut” from the house where the party was being held. She looked up at her friend and said, “help me”, but her friend walked away. She returned to the house and felt dizzy, disoriented, and was bleeding. She returned to the party, and drank heavily. She expressed hatred for the perpetrator, and was angry with her friends for abandoning her. Her sense was that people were looking at her like she was “disgusting”, and felt disbelief that no one helped her or cared about the act of violence committed against her. She soon called her mother to pick her up from the bus depot. She described feeling surprised that her mother did not notice something was wrong. At home, she took a bath and “just sat there”.

After the sexual assault, Aphrodite never “felt like sex was enjoyable at all”. She felt empty inside, and grieved the fact that it was not the beautiful experience that she had dreamed of. She felt “disgusting and disgusted”, nauseous, numb, hurting, and torn between wanting to protect herself and keeping her friends as they seemed to endorse the assault. Aphrodite began drinking frequently, like she was “trying to forget about it”, and explained that she was unable to have sex without being intoxicated because it was never

enjoyable. She recalled not being able to stay in relationships for very long, and never felt completely present when she was in them. She stated that her sexual behavior became promiscuous, as she would find herself in precarious situations where she began cycling through relationships, trying to forget one man with another.

Aphrodite began associating with her “brainy friends”. Three friends sat her down and confronted her about her drinking and promiscuity. They told her that she acted like a “slut” and wanted her to change. She became angry with their insensitivity, and felt misunderstood about what she was going through but could not voice it. Aphrodite went for a drive the same night of the confrontation with her female friends. She felt “sad and distraught”, and mixed up between her anger toward her friends for their insensitivity, and wanting to make changes in her life. She questioned who her friends were during this drive, and who she was.

At a stop light, two men in a black Mercedes pulled up beside her. They began to talk through their car windows, and Aphrodite remembered feeling soothed by their use of affirming statements. The males invited her to a party back at their place, and she accepted. During this time she was working three jobs and attending design and fashion school part time, and felt like she could barely make ends meet. Upon entering the condo, she immediately felt comfortable, “taken care of” and “good around them”. It was the first time that Aphrodite had experimented with cocaine, a drug which she described as “being way better than drinking” because she felt she had control over things, and the men at the party did not seem to want anything from her. The environment was filled with beautiful furniture, well dressed women and men, and was surrounded by expensive cars. She asked the male who invited her to the party how he attained all of his wealth, to which he gave a

nebulous answer, but added, "if you want all of this, let me know, and I will tell you".

Aphrodite went home and conscientiously thought about his offer.

She described feeling like she had been in another world with them; that she had been on a blissful holiday from her mundane life, and wanted to be a part of such beauty. She went back several days later, and stated that she wanted to know how to acquire his level of wealth. He told her what he did, and offered to get her "set up". In the beginning, the lifestyle appealed to her. The transformation in her life was instantaneous. She became accustomed to making large amounts of money in a short time frame, and felt like a "bigshot". She described herself as "looking really good" in the beginning, but felt like she was "actually dying inside".

She experienced being arrested after sometime, and stated how much shame she felt about what she did, and how she would create elaborate stories and lies in order to get out of charges, and subsequently, jail, so much so that she started losing perspective about what "truth and reality" was in her life. After some time, she made a transition "indoors" to work in massage parlours. This experience was quite different for her, as she was working beside women who were "not trying to recruit her, or steal her money". She had the opportunity to form connections with several women that she worked with. She stated, however, that the relationships could only progress so far because of trust issues. She began freebasing cocaine quite frequently and eventually was fired from the massage parlour.

She experienced extreme violence from her pimps that included torture, physical, sexual, and emotional assault, as well as humiliation, and degradation. Most of the men she worked for she had an intimate relationship with, and most would take the majority of

the money she earned. After a severe assault, a regular date propositioned her to live with him, and paid her pimp four thousand dollars for her to be able to leave him. He introduced her to heroine, which she describes as “something that killed every pain” she had. She came home one day and found his house completely empty, and ended up homeless. She started working again in an area that “wasn’t charging so much money”, and because of her drug habit, she found herself making just enough to “feed it”.

She became violent, and was on survival mode “all the time”, because she was experiencing so many violent encounters on the street. She spent three years “wandering the streets”, sleeping wherever she could. At one point, Aphrodite overdosed in her sleep, and was taken to the hospital. Previous to the overdose, she states that it never occurred to her to leave, and that the draw of “the life” held her captive. She spent six months in a recovery house, and during this time experienced severe depression and insomnia. She kept some of her regular dates, thought that she would be “doing a whole lot better if [she] was working”, and never imagined that she could do anything else.

After leaving the recovery house, she tried expanding her work skills, but she could not fathom working for eight hours a day for someone else. She felt she did not “fit in” at all, and that eventually, “it started all over again”, only this time, she could not be as violent as she was before due to her being able to imagine and feel “someone else’s pain”.

During this time, she had a boyfriend whom she described as being “patient”, did not demand her money, and was supportive of her “straightening out”. At one point, he broke up with her and told her that he would no longer enable her to do drugs. He stipulated that if she could “get out of the life” there would be a possibility of them getting back together again. She spent three days alone, homeless, and felt deep shame about

herself. During this time, she encountered a man who housed and fed her. He never made advances toward her, and told her that he was not “a date”, rather, he would help her get off of the streets if that is what she wanted, but he would not allow her to be high in the house. During her stay with him, they discussed topics including history and literature, and she felt validated as someone other than a sex trade worker. He told her how intelligent she was, which made a significant impact on her as “it was the first nice thing [she] had heard about herself in so long”. His words and their conversation evoked memories of whom she used to be before the sex trade, and she remembered how she left his house with a good sense about her self, and deeply committed to leaving sex work and entering recovery. She had her boyfriend at the time take her to the recovery house.

Aphrodite entered a recovery house, and again experienced severe depression and insomnia. She recalls feeling terrified of being around people, and was unsure about what was real in her life and what was not. The difference this time was that she *knew* that she did not want to be a “prostitute” anymore, “hopping into another car, another car, another car”, nor do drugs. For the first time, she “wanted to know what something good was all about”.

In recovery, she found that she “could not sit still” long enough to dialogue in-depth with people, and her concentration level was next to nil. However, she sensed that she was surrounded by loving, understanding people who understood exactly where she had been, and found solace in their kind words, inspirational stories, and unconditional hugs. She began reading inspirational books and found comfort in praying to God. She felt protected and accepted by him unconditionally, and stated that this is where the healing really began.

It became clear to her that she was staying in recovery when a female friend phoned her and offered to accompany her to an AA meeting.

Her friend came to the house and provided basic hygienic necessities such as deodorant, hairspray, clothes, and make-up. During their visit together, Aphrodite's friend read a passage that stated "God knows everything about you. He has counted every hair on your head, he loves you." She stated that this moment impacted her profoundly, and the power of the moment stayed with her for three or four days. She stayed at this recovery house for seven months.

While in the recovery house, she was struck by how respectful the men were. They treated her like a person and "never invaded [her] space". She recalls being comfortable, secure in her decision to stay in recovery with them, and safe being around them.

She noted as well that these changes may have been complemented by her own shift in perspective about men. She no longer viewed them as dollar signs, which had the simultaneous consequence of her feeling that she was beginning to respect herself. She spoke of how she still craved attention and validation from men, and experienced being respected by older males at the house. She described these males as having healthy boundaries and being able to positively affirm her without any sexual connotations. Her relationship with these men "taught [her] a whole new way of being in friendships with men."

In addition, she recalled how she was struck by their genuine interest and concern about her and her family. They would also share their perspectives, beliefs, and values with her, in contrast to her experience with males while she was in the sex trade. They were not concerned with her looks, and did not regard her as a "tool to get off on". In

contrast, she had difficulty associating and relating to men her age; she “just couldn’t go there”. Her first friendship with a male her age developed when she was seven months into recovery. This relationship gave her the opportunity to experiment with establishing boundaries, how to say no, and talking through difficulties. She described feeling guilty at first in rejecting his desire for an intimate relationship with her, and how feeling guilty dissolved during the evolution of the friendship.

She made female friends at the recovery house. They grew quite close to one another since they had the common bond of experience between them. They would practice “laughing” together, noticing how strange it felt to authentically smile. Aphrodite explained that her facial muscles were so unused to being used that her entire face hurt for several days as a result. Often, Aphrodite withdrew from her friends and would have to go to her room to “think about them” and journal about her process. She expressed how difficult it was for her to trust women, because she would think that they would betray her in some way, or “sleep with her boyfriend”. This fear stemmed from her experience with her dates, as they were “always somebody’s husband”. However, she expressed that once she is a friend to someone, she is a loyal friend for life. She has come to a point where she is able to express her concerns and/or fears with her friends, as well as different perspectives of a problem. She is able to verbalize her uncertainty about what is real, and what may be her projections of fear. She chooses people with similar values and principles as her.

She has been in three intimate relationships since she came into recovery, and has had the experience of both acceptance and rejection in regards to her past. However, she wonders about the degree of acceptance by one partner as she never met his parents

although they lived in the same city. She expressed how it was so important to her to “establish honest communication” right away with her partners. She feels that it is important for her to be accountable for how she is feeling, and likes to explain in detail to her partner what is going on for her.

She knows that talking about her experiences and process has been “healing” for her, and it is a way that she learns and grows. She finds that she has become quite investigative about the males intimacy principles before entering fully into the possibility of relationship. She will quiz them on their beliefs about multiple sex partners and fidelity, and explains that sex has become a lot more than just the act, rather, it has become something beautiful that she wants to experience with just one person. The doubt about her partner’s fidelity would “just wreck her”, so much so that it would affect the quality of the relationship. She stated that she wants to be able to just relax and enjoy the relationship a lot more, and is able to determine when the relationship is deteriorating, and where her responsibility lies in repairing it.

She frames her progression as “only getting better”. She was direct about her past with potential suitors, and offers complete honesty to them regarding what happened. She felt that her past was too much of a part of her identity, and felt that her partners had a right to know where she has come from.

Sex only became enjoyable after three years out of the sex trade. She stated that sex hurt her constantly, and that even though she would love someone, she never felt present, and waited for it to be over. Her body also began to “feel sensations” and she would feel nauseous after the act.

Now however, she feels that she has had the opportunity to explore her sexuality,

and feels that she is able to be fully present with her partner, but it took complete patience, understanding, and talking about it in order to move forward. She had the opportunity to explore her sexuality, and re-created the meaning that it has for her. She experienced a shift with a partner who she felt she could communicate openly with. She opened herself to experimentation, and learned to relax her mind and body. Her partner was instrumental in that he respected her wishes if she did not want to do something, and left all decisions about sex completely up to her. She felt she was beginning to open to the unknown, and began perceiving sex as a playground for her to explore. She states that she has had no "side effects" sexually of the sex trade since last year.

She expressed how she made her past meaningful by sharing her story of recovery with other women who are going through similar experiences as her. Recovery shaped her identity as she has been able to construct the experience to have utility, meaning, and purpose. She felt that in helping others she is able to not only to share her strengths, but to build them as well.

In being able to be open, honest, authentic, and in relation to an unconditional power, Aphrodite described how these have been able to reclaim feeling innocent, untainted, and pure, "like none of that really mattered". She finds beauty in the mundane, and relishes the fact that she is still able to experience "beautiful things". She feels strong in who she is and what she stands for, but does not see it as a process that has a definitive end point. She knows that she needs time alone to process day to day living, but knows when she needs to come out of solitude and engage with others again.

Aphrodite's career is extremely important to her. She is a seamstress and works in a plant with mostly men. She fears losing her job and having no means to support herself,

and has sought out other means of making an income “by finding other ways to support herself”. She has extreme anxiety about losing her job. The fear of losing her job feels claustrophobic at times, and if she lets get out of hand”, sends her into chaos. At times, she feels that her boundaries are a little “loose”, and does not catch herself in time to eliminate a male’s unwanted advances right at the beginning, and can go into “the place of feeling used, like a victim”.

Her hope for the future is to get to a place where she can work independently, be creative, and that “people will like [what she makes] and want it in their homes”. She would like to travel, a possibility that was out of her reach, but is now in view due to her eligibility for a pardon.

Athene: Archetype Characteristics

Athene is described as springing from Zeus’ forehead, full grown and in full armour (Hamilton, 1942, p.29). She was a powerful warrior and protector of the citizens of Athens, and encouraged them participate in great acts of bravery. She was a clever strategist who valued justice, thus the impetus for many of her victories (Harris & Plotner, 1998). She was considered the deity of “wisdom, reason, and prudence” (Hamilton, 1942, p. 30).

Athene’s Composite

Athene is thirty five years old, and an adoptive mother of a two year old girl. She has been in an intimate relationship with a male for approximately four months, who is actively involved with raising her daughter. Within the month the interview took place, she received final divorce papers between her and her husband of fifteen years. She is now the director of a non-profit recovery house. Athene was “in and out” of the sex trade for nine

ATHENE

Why Athene?

Athene had incredible positive energy. She spoke of her life candidly, with humour, and fervor. She spoke excitedly about her challenges and successes in life. She was “flashing-eyed”, a term that Hamilton (1942) uses to describe the mythological character. She spoke of her life in the sex trade in war-like terms, and appeared ready to confront any challenge that came across her path. Her history inspired her to assist those who were confronted with similar challenges, and she would do anything in her power to guide them on their path to recovery.

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Athene is thirty five years old, and an adoptive mother of a one year old girl. She has been in an intimate relationship with a male for approximately four months who is actively involved with raising her daughter. Within the month the interview took place, she received final divorce papers between her and her husband of fifteen years. She is now the director of a non-profit recovery house. Athene was “in and out” of the sex trade for nine

years, and has been out of the sex trade for nine years.

Athene grew up in an isolated rural area. She grew up with three siblings, one brother two years older, and two younger sisters. Her father was an alcoholic with a violent temper, and her mother was a “co-dependent Christian woman”. The children were homeschooled by their mother until the family moved to a larger rural community, and their father was employed by a local logging outfit. As such, Athene did not have the opportunity to interact with many children other than her siblings. The children did not have access to many outside material resources such as toys and games. As such, they became imaginative and creative together, often devising their own games that used natural resources. She recalled how she learned at an early age “not to talk about things”, mainly, her feelings about her father’s behavior when he was drunk. His violent outbursts, threats, and manipulative tactics taught her to be hyper vigilant, on-guard, and prepared for the unexpected.

Athene described having a “built-in survival kit”, one that would serve her in the years to come. She remembered approaching her mother after an incident where her father held a shotgun to his head, threatening to pull the trigger. Her mother’s response was, “ssh, don’t, it’s over, don’t think about it”. Her first experience in public school was traumatic. She was in a class with thirty other children and became the target of teasing. She described herself as being “fifty to sixty pounds overweight”, quite tall for her age, and dressed in attire that was “two sizes too small” for her. When children approached her, she would freeze and begin to stutter. Her perception was that she was somehow “different”, and felt that she “did not fit into society at all”. Her fear of school heightened so much so that she stopped attending.

At twelve years old, she began to steal her father's alcohol. She recalled how quickly her fear of people dissolved. Suddenly she could interact with others, fight, protect herself, and stand up to her father. During this time they fought continuously. Athene ended up being thrown into the drunk tank frequently as a result. Between the ages of twelve and thirteen, Athene began experiencing blackouts. She was isolated and alone much of the time, with the exception of one female friend. Athene and her father's physical fights resulted in Athene leaving home at the age of thirteen, being told by her mother not to return out of fear of the father's potential reaction. Athene was alone, with no friends or family available to house her.

She remembered "following her instincts" and "went where there were lights", a carnival that was in town for a few days. Athene was introduced to a few workers after the carnival was over, and told them that she was sixteen years old. She was hired as a game promoter, made "twenty-five cents on every dollar" she pulled in, and traveled with the carnival across Canada for the next three years. She began losing weight, and wore revealing clothes in order to attract the attention of men. She noticed how "the sleazier the clothes" she wore, the more money would come in. She recalled perceiving her sexuality as a form of power for what she desired, be it money or attention.

At the age of sixteen she met and moved in with a man "who was also an alcoholic". They stayed together for five years and planned to have children together, a decision that enabled her to quit drinking. At the age of seventeen, her mother offered her a job in another rural community managing a hotel. She described herself as being a workaholic during this time, an escape from the physical and mental abuse she was experiencing by her partner. She felt "completely worthless" throughout her relationship

and he became extremely jealous, often accusing her being unfaithful. In addition, they had difficulties conceiving, a problem that led to numerous surgeries and subsequent addiction to painkillers. She had ten surgeries by the time she was twenty-one. Athene left her partner after he assaulted her in her workplace, and lived with her mother in a different town. She "hustled pool" and became an entrepreneur for a year.

During this time, her doctors stopped prescribing her painkillers. She had a hysterectomy, a decision she "knew" that she did not need, but also knew that she would again have access to painkillers.

Three days after the operation, her doctors cut her off again. She was not aware that the symptoms she experienced were withdrawal symptoms from the narcotics. Shortly after her operation, she was introduced to heroine, a drug that "worked better than any painkiller" she ever had in her life. She began selling drugs, mostly heroine, and was constantly on the move to escape the police who were "constantly jacking" her up "for everything". She and her partner Kurt were arrested several times, once on a charge for murder which she was later exonerated for. In prison, she again experienced immense pain and asked to be taken to the hospital as she thought her appendix had burst. It was at the hospital that she discovered her pain was from narcotic withdrawal, a discovery that prompted her to want to "change her life".

After her release from prison, she reunited with Kurt. They were under surveillance by undercover police, which evoked extreme paranoia in both as they were selling drugs. In order to escape police scrutiny, they decide to head across Canada with two other friends. They soon ran out of money. The four devised a plan where the two women would pose as sex trade workers, take the johns back to their place, and the two

males would break in and rob the johns. After protesting the plan, Athene and her friend stood out in the street and were soon picked up by three males. Back at the john's house, both women soon realized that their partners were not going to save them. While Athene's friend disappeared with one male, the two other males dragged her downstairs and sexually and physically assaulted her over the course of several hours. A roommate came home, helped her escape, and took her to the hospital.

At the hospital, Athene had an ultrasound that determined she may lose both of her ovaries. She left town, and stayed with a friend for a week before she phoned him to tell him that she was not going to come back. That evening, Kurt found her in a bar, and attempted to shoot her twice before undercover cops restrained him. He was arrested for possession of a firearm that belonged to Athene and received eighteen months in prison. She "hung out in the street, with nowhere to go, and was lonely". She stole clothes to support her drug habit, and sold them to women who were sex trade workers. It was during this time that she "went out" and did sex trade work. Ashamed and unable to tell Kurt what she was doing, she stopped visiting him while he was in prison.

Later the same year, she and another man were charged with armed robbery. She was released on bail, and decided to go to the States with a female friend. At one point, she met a man who forced her at gunpoint to work the streets. She recalled how her pride would never allow her to work for someone else, and the first car that stopped, she jumped in and told the driver to "just go". She was dropped off in a different ethnic territory, and in time met a man who became her boyfriend. He kept her in a hotel and would come "fix" her with heroine three to four times a day. Several months later, he was arrested, and Athene went back out on the streets. She was arrested for having needles on her, and spent

three days in a county jail before being deported back to Canada because of the armed robbery charge.

Back in Canada, she received bail, and visited Kurt who was acquitted for the murder charge. Soon after, Kurt and Athene married, and the next few years both were in and out of jail. She described these times as “craziness” because of their addictions. It got to the point where she would “turn a trick, score drugs, come back and fix him”. She got to the point where she knew she wanted something different, but did not know how to get out of it. Her perception of “not fitting into society” was exacerbated by her memories of all that she had done, and become. The sex trade was no longer a source of power, rather, desperation. Athene developed pneumonia, and went to stay with her mother. She fell into a coma and was hospitalized. When she woke, she discovered that she had been in a coma for three days. The “first thing” that hits her is that she had been clean and survived, and asked the doctor if she could stay for a week and detox. She stayed in the hospital for ten days.

After her release, she met with Kurt to tell him that she was going to change her life, and that he was welcome to come with her. He stayed downtown, and Athene found employment on a fishing boat as a cook and deck hand. She described this experience as being “the most peaceful time” that she remembered in years. She worked for two men, a grandfather and grandson who took her “grouse and Kokanee fishing”. She remembered feeling pride about being able to cook, and about herself “for the first time in her life”, and felt like “everything was going to be ok”. She took the time to create elaborate meals, garnished with vegetables cut into different shapes. She remembered learning what an accident was, an event that had a tremendous impact on. The grandfather let her drive his

camper, and she had backed into another vehicle. She expected him to be furious with her, however, his response was, “we’ll just write a note and put it on the other guy’s car, you know, and when he seeks damages, he can just phone me”. His response was difficult to comprehend, as she was used to violent reactions from people in her past.

After the season was over, she returned to the city with “all this money”, and discovered that Kurt was in jail for robbing a bank. Her hope was to reconnect with him, detox him, and “live a wonderful life” together. The next three years were ravaged by heroine use, and Athene worked in the sex trade to support her habit. She felt she was “a complete failure”, and “did not care whether [she] lived or died”. She recalled a sense of surrender to drugs and life on the streets; “I am going to die an addict... I will never be able to do anything, it is not going to happen, there is no hope for me, I live in agony and despair”. She had “so many bad tricks” during this time, experiences that literally almost killed her. Each time she would return to the streets from the hospital, whether she was on crutches, blood soaked bandage wrapped around her head, bloody needle tracks, there was always “men picking [her] up like that”. No matter what condition she was in, she could still make money.

She described a time where she was held hostage for three days, beaten, raped, and tortured by a man. She managed to escape, and did not mention the incident to anyone. She went back to the streets, and described a time when she overdosed, an event that she described as being normative. The doctors strapped her down and gave her narkan, a drug that starts the breathing process by blocking all of the opiates in a person’s system. She detoxed over ten days, and planned to enter a recovery house. However, there was a waiting list of ten days which was too long for her, and she ended up moving between her

mother's house and the streets.

Her husband (whom she had not seen for five years) phoned her at her mother's house and invited her to a barbeque. She agreed to meet him and discovered that he had quit using. His intention in inviting her to the barbeque was to introduce her to several people who were instrumental in helping him quit. She left feeling alone, like she had "nobody, she had nothing".

Shortly after, she was notified that her brother overdosed and was in the hospital. The doctors were sure that he was not going to survive as his organs were shutting down and strongly encouraged family members to be prepared. Athene described her life at this time as being "completely unmanageable", and each time she tried to "get it together" by doing enough drugs to go to the hospital to see him, she would need more. The cycle worsened as she was unable to stop crying long enough to "pull tricks". She did not get to say goodbye to him, but managed to make it for his wake, a time where she felt "completely low" about herself, and unable to "talk or face" her family and friends. She met with a friend who provided her with dilaudids, a synthetic form of heroine most commonly given to cancer patients. For the next month she "can't function", even enough to work. She owed "every dealer in town", and was afraid one of them would kill her. She described "hitting bottom", and decided to go into a methadone program.

Shortly after providing three urine analyses required before entering a program, she received a call from her husband. He invited her to a "round up" at AA, and came to town to take her. He found her sick, unable to shower, and barely able to get up. He took her for "a fix", and they continued on to the AA meeting. She recognized several people at the meeting, and memories of her interactions with them came flooding back to her. Uncertain

of their reactions to her presence, she sat in trepidation, fearful of retaliation and demands for money from past debts and robberies. Their responses to her were so contradictory to her expectations that she thought they were “all insane”. They spoke of unconditional love, forgiveness, and connection with a higher power, concepts that betrayed the rules she learned on the streets. She stood on guard, but approached Kurt and asked if she may go into detox. She found a sponsor who “welcomed [her] into his home, did everything for [her], he cooked and cleaned for [her] for three days”.

During this time, several people from AA phoned her to see how she was doing, another act of kindness that evoked feelings of caution and distrust. On the third day she had a seizure while in the house by herself. Athene thought, “I’ve gotta go back downtown, I can’t do this, I have given it my best shot, I am going to die if I don’t get something in me, I am going to die”.

Unsure of where she was, she asked someone to direct her to the freeway where she was picked up by a man. This experience impacted her life tremendously as the first thing the driver said was, “some people need direction in their lives, you know if you think that you can’t do something by yourself, you can. If you have negative people in your life, get them out of your life, somebody there telling you yes you can do it, you keep those ones in”. It was here that she began to believe in angels again.

Instead of going to her “connections” house, she went to see her doctor and got a prescription for T3’s and valium which would stop the seizures. She returned to the recovery house and took her medication for seven days.

On the seventh day, she flushed the remaining pills down the toilet. The morning after was the first time in years that she was not sick, and was believed that “the bondage

was over” and that she “could make it”, with the help of God. She remembered listening to a song by Chris Kristofferson that gave her confidence that everything she had been through had a higher purpose. She knew that “everything in [her] had changed”, and surrendered to God’s will, whatever path it led her on. She woke experiencing a sense of newness, “like a little baby”, and felt a “happy high of freedom”. She utilized her newfound energy to clean the house, make supper, singing and smiling the entire time. She recalled how sore her face was, the once dormant muscles now fully utilized, she would massage her face before going to bed to ease the aching.

She told her husband that she wanted to enter treatment, a decision he resisted out of fear that she would leave him. She connected with a woman from AA who helped her, and she and her husband discussed the origins of his insecurities. She described how she felt she was rediscovering her husband. Three years of being apart, and both in recovery led to numerous challenges, but beauty as well. After six months of being in treatment, Athene relapsed. She felt emotionally and spiritually bankrupt, and felt that she had let God down. She contemplated suicide, but each time she decided that she was “going to do it”, a crisis would emerge where her assistance was needed. Several people detoxed at her house, and it was at that point that “God gave [her] another purpose”, she found something “meaningful in [her] life”. She decided that she would go downtown to pick people up and bring them back to her house to detox. Over the Christmas holidays, she had eleven people staying with her.

It was during this time that Athene trusted that God would take care of her. Little financial “miracles” would occur during times of strain that allowed her to continue with her work, although thoughts of “turning tricks” to buy furniture and food would cross her

mind. She stopped herself however, as she knew that for her, engaging in the sex trade again would necessitate the need for drugs “because [she] wouldn’t be able to live with the shame”. She helped detox approximately sixty people over the course of six years, a fact that she was unaware of until a reunion was organized, and she heard the attendees’ testimonies. She described how grateful she was to have a second chance in life, and that everything she went through had a purpose. She recalled seeing individuals she helped detox months, even years later, and bore witness to how their lives had “turned around”. Athene felt that sharing her story with others evoked a sense of hope during times of extreme hopelessness and shame. She started a counselling course, and for a year had the opportunity “to work on [her] own stuff”.

Athene battled with bulimia, an issue that stemmed from “being overweight in [her] childhood”, and her “fear of being rejected” because of her weight. She was employed at the time at a men’s recovery house, but dreamed of opening her own female recovery house.

While she was in school, her husband started relapsing. The day after Athene “took her four year cake”, her husband overdosed in their washroom. For the next three years, he became her priority. She opened a male recovery house, and found him employment hoping that these additions would help Kurt get back on his feet. She discovered that she lived in “active addiction”, even though she was not using drugs, and had become co-dependent, engaging in similar behaviors like her mother did when she was a child. She decided to leave him.

She entered another relationship that lasted for a year and a half, and ended the relationship when he relapsed. She opened a thirteen bed recovery house for women, a

feat that was not easy. She was confronted by neighborhood animosity and stigmatization, and addressed the concerns of the neighborhood by attending the council meetings. She understood their fears, and wanted to assure individuals that the house was not going to turn their neighborhood into a red light district. For the first time she felt that if she ever needed someone or something, "all [she] had to do was pick up the phone and someone would be there".

In her personal and professional life, she felt like an equal to the individuals around her. She felt she was "slowly accepted into society, and the individuals who new her from when she entered recovery to view her as a peer. A large "part of [her] healing was that people started to accept [her] for who [she] was". Athene built friendships with the women she worked with, relationships she historically avoided because "[she] wouldn't be able to play them, they would see right through it".

She contends with trust issues, and maintains solid walls frequently, but is learning to soften the edges and permeable. The impetus of this last transition was the adoption of her daughter, Iphigenia who was "the most incredible blessing ever", because Athene could not have children. She spoke of how much her daughter changed her life, and how meaningful her life has become. Currently, she is in a relationship with a man who is actively involved in raising her daughter, and she continues to run a recovery house for women. In total, Athene has been "out" for nine years.

HESTIA

Why Hestia

Hestia was one of the most peaceful, graceful, and eloquent individual's that I have met. Her descriptions of events evoked a sense of timeless wisdom that I was in awe of. She valued justice, equality, fairness, and respect, all qualities that she stated she integrated as values from her close relationship with her family. Hestia seemed grounded, devoted, warm, authentic, and generous in heart and spirit, all characteristics of the ancient Goddess. She spoke of life challenges in a way that reflected her desire to understand human behavior, the "why" of life's questions.

Hestia's Archetypal Characteristics

Hestia is one of the most ancient Goddesses in Greek mythology. Harris & Platzner (1998) describe her as "[a]n immortal virgin devoted exclusively to guarding the Olympian hearth and its life-sustaining fire, she represents the unmoving, fixed center of family life, both human and divine" (p.128). Her symbol was a circle, suggesting that everything life returns unto itself (Bolen, 1984). She was the keeper of the hearth that provided illumination and warmth for the citizens of Olympia, and a protector of women in childbirth, and children (Bolen, 1984).

Hestia's Composite

Hestia is thirty-seven years old. She works with at risk youth, and will be attending university in the fall to complete her doctoral degree in the social sciences. She has been in a relationship for four years, a commitment that has been challenging for her. She is excited about her career and educational aspirations, and hopes to get married, buy a house, and possibly have children. She had a family that was extremely supportive of her growing

up, and fostered her deep seated beliefs in fairness, equity, and justice. Hestia entered the sex trade at twenty-one. She has been out of the sex trade for nine years.

Hestia was the eldest of three siblings, one sister and one brother. Her family lived a middle class lifestyle, enabled by her father's hard work and ability to save money. Her mother spent the majority of Hestia's teenage years at home, but had a creative flare that inspired her to open her own flower store for a number of years. She described her father as "being the boss of the family", but "he was a great dad in many ways", and the children were still able to enjoy him and have fun with him. However, there were times when Hestia felt he was "domineering", especially in contrast to her mother who was "the one who was always trying to smooth things over, and be passive". She was quite close with her brother and sister, although she and her sister fought a lot because "they were so close in age". She and her siblings excelled academically, and Hestia felt confident with her abilities as a student, but felt that school was one of the few places where she did have high self esteem. She described herself as being insecure and relatively passive, especially when it came to "saying no to someone". She was sensitive to how individuals saw her, and wanted to be liked and accepted by her father and peers. She had "a lot of friends" growing up, and at sixteen, met her first serious boyfriend. She felt "really lucky that he was dating [her]" in the beginning, but "suspected that he had cheated on her a couple of times", and in retrospect, realized that he had not been respectful of her feelings, and could be controlling. They broke up approximately a year later, and he started to see an older woman. After some time, the couple broke up and Hestia started to receive phone calls from him. He lavished her with attention for the next couple of days, and invited her to accompany him to a party. At the party, the woman that he had been seeing showed up,

and he flirted with her and made physical advances toward her in front of Hestia. Hestia left the party hurt and furious. She went home and told her parents of the incident, to which they replied, “well we don’t think he is the best guy for you, you deserve someone better”. She continued to date but did not engage in another serious relationship until years later. After she completed high school, she went to university to become a teacher.

After two years, she decided that teaching was not for her, and applied to enter an exchange program. After rigorous interviews and group activities, she was selected to spend four months in Africa. She recalled the impact spending time immersed in a different culture made on her, and described it as being “an awesome, incredible experience”. She returned to Canada during the winter season, and experienced a modicum of reverse culture shock. She recalled her return being “hard for awhile” and felt “depressed”. Her sister had moved to a different province to attend college, and wanted Hestia to come and live with her. Hestia agreed, and after settling in to her new home and province, she found employment in a mall.

Entry Beginning

Hestia was “going along, doing her own thing” when she was invited to go out to a nightclub one weekend. Upon arrival, Hestia and a friend moved to the back of the club where it was not so crowded. She was struck by how many men were “hitting on [her]”, unaware that she was in a “live club”, meaning an active place to recruit women into the sex trade. She met Rodger who invited her to an after hours club. She felt contradictory emotions of being “intimidated and nervous around him” and yet “it was also kind of exciting too”. He phoned her several days later, and invited her to his brother’s home. She was impressed by “the beautiful furniture, art, and music” of the apartment, but when she

asked him what he did for a living, he responded with a nebulous "I am in business".

She recalled how she felt intrigued by his mysteriousness, as well as the glamorous lifestyle he portrayed. However, he was quite "aggressive in the way the he was going after [her]", and she wished that "she had the assertiveness and the self-esteem to tell him that he made her uncomfortable". They had sexual intercourse and Hestia remembered feeling that it "just didn't feel good for [her]", it was not love nor did it feel romantic. Shortly after, he disclosed to her that he was a pimp. Hestia was shocked and upset, and recalled his response as being apathetic. He stated that he was not the type of pimp to "hang out with square women", and thought that it was more respectful and equitable to only associate with "working women". This information exacerbated Hestia's fear of him and ability to say no to him.

Previous to meeting Rodger, Hestia was interested in a male who did not want a serious relationship, contradictory to what she wanted. Her calls to him went unanswered until it was too late. Hestia reflected on the possibility of how different her life may have been had he called before she dated Rodger. Rodger's possessiveness and temper became more apparent as their relationship evolved, but he would compromise the severity of the situation through what Hestia called the "seduction method" to recruit her, meaning that there were lots "of head games"; a combination of demonstrative love, affection, and care, as well as physical, psychological, emotional, and verbal abuse. Hestia described the abuse as being "very controlled", and as a "woman in an abusive relationship, [she] was scared, terrified, heartbroken... with the added dimension of... putting [herself] at risk every night". Her family did not know, and still do not know about her involvement in the sex trade, "as it would crush them", which distanced her from her regular support systems that

she had grown up with. She did not have a lot of “bad dates” as she had the ability to “talk [her] way out of things”, and was “always really nice”.

One night however, she was confronted with a potential life or death situation. The “date” that she was with sped down the highway with her in the vehicle, and nothing Hestia said seemed to phase or deter him from his intention. She remembered “looking out the car window, contemplating jumping out of the car... and thinking you know [Hestia], you are going to get killed if you do it, you will be killed”. Instead, she reached over and slammed her foot on the brake. After a physical struggle over her purse, she broke away from him after the strap broke. She ran to the highway and attempted to wave down oncoming traffic, but no one stopped for her. Furious, she went to a nearby motel and banged on the doors, and again, no one answered. She went into the motel lobby and asked the clerk if she could use the phone. He told her to use a payphone. She told him that she did not have any money, and he gave her a quarter.

After hearing of Hestia’s experience, Rodger was angry with her and blamed her for it. Upon reflection, Hestia thought that his response was probably out of fear of what could have happened to her, but at the time, the entire situation left her feeling “depressed and sad”. She described how she and other women working in the sex trade would deal with the violence and terror they dealt with by telling one another stories and laughing about it. It was a way to remain “really tough, be strong, really tough persona to survive out there, you had to act like it didn’t matter... because the trauma that you faced on a day to day basis and the horror of it would be too much....” Hestia described the common availability and use of illegal narcotics. She experimented with Rodger, and recalled how “he really opened up and would tell [her] all sorts of things about his childhood...so that

was a big part of the using for [her] was the closeness". She discontinued using after an incident occurred where her "brother needed [her], and basically [she] wasn't there for him". She was concerned for Rodger, however, as he "used" frequently. She left him for two days after walking in on him and friends freebasing cocaine, and commented to him that "these guys are giving you drugs and you think they are your friends but they really are not. If they cared about you they wouldn't do this, and I really think you need to go to drug and alcohol counseling". She and Rodger eventually moved to a province that proved to be financially lucrative. A year and a half earlier, Rodger had recruited another woman whom Hestia referred to as her "wife-in-law".

She recalled developing strictures of equity and fairness with Rodger regarding how much time he spent with each woman. Hestia and her wife-in-law worked briefly on the streets, but soon moved "indoors" and worked for escort agencies. She described making "a lot of money" during this time, being able to afford the maintenance of two apartments in different provinces, shopping, buying cars, and entertainment. Rodger had long since developed trust in Hestia "being solid", meaning that she would work without being forced, and bring home the entire sum of money she had earned. After some time, Rodger returned to the original province they moved from in order to "recruit" more women. While he was gone, Hestia attended a family gathering where she met Darren. Hestia informed him of her current status with Rodger and involvement in the sex trade. Darren had "been around all that kind of stuff" and disclosed that he "really liked" Hestia. They developed a relationship and Hestia was determined to leave Rodger. After four months, Rodger informed Hestia that he would be returning and asked her to pick him up from the airport in the morning. She agreed, but in the morning, she phoned him in tears

and told him that she could no longer “do it anymore”. His response swayed from understanding and wanting to talk with her about it, to rage and threats of violence and murder. She had informed her parents of the break up, and her mother sent her flowers with a note that said, “I know you’re doing the right thing, stay strong”.

Over the next month, Rodger persisted in wanting to see her. At variable times he would follow her, but mostly he phoned her with propositions of settling down, starting a family, and retiring from the sex trade. Every time he phoned, Hestia would “try to placate him”. She eventually went to meet with him to see if she still had feelings for him, but ensured that her roommate and partner knew where. After the meeting, she felt “really empty”, and knew in her mind that it was over. Hestia and her roommate placed an ad in the yellow pages and set up a private phone line to receive calls, and continued to work in the sex trade independently.

One evening, Hestia and Darren had an altercation with Rodger at a nightclub. Rodger was very angry that she was seeing someone, but even angrier that she would bring him to the nightclub where he was a regular. After Darren and Hestia left the bar, Rodger paged her and threatened her. He told her that he had a gun and was going to come to her house and kill her. Hestia told her roommate who also worked in the sex trade, and told Hestia to hide in the basement while she waited for him. When Rodger arrived, Hestia’s roommate told him that she did not want to speak with him. Rodger eventually left, and Hestia commented on how he respected her roommates “man”, and that if anything would have happened to her, it would have “started a war” which he would not want.

Hestia described that leaving Rodger was “a long, scary process”, and that having Darren made it easier for her to resist returning to him. Darren eventually moved in, and by

that time two other couples were living in the house. Hestia stated that this “was the best time ever of [her] working life because [they] were making money hands over fist, [they] could work when [they] felt like it, [they] looked out for each other, and square boyfriends that had tons of friends”.

During this time, Hestia’s roommate Katherine “wanted to stop working, as she always had a really hard time dealing with it”. She recalled how it was different for her in the way that she “never dissociated” while turning a trick, but could completely disengage her thoughts and bodily reactions from the act, and how “most times [she] never felt anything, and if [she] did feel anything it was irritation because they weren’t finishing fast enough”. With a trick there were rules, “you always used a condom”, and never kissed them, but the rules were reversed when with Rodger. She also mentioned the importance of having “different names” such as a “working name” and/or “live name”. “It was almost like you took on, you were someone different... you had a different persona, you were different than who you were”.

She described the dichotomy between the parts of her who came from a good home, university educated, versus the parts that was “aggressive, could fight, make tons of money, and was really sexual”. Katherine began her exit process and found a “square job”, and Hestia and her third roommate Donna “were very supportive of her”. Hestia recalled how Katherine paved the way for her to exit, as she had this fear that she would never be able to work a nine to five job because it was “just so far from where [she] was”. All three talked about how it was not “fun anymore”, and Hestia began college part-time. The move into a “mainstream lifestyle” was a bit unsettling as she was afraid that “people were going to find out” what she did.

School “was really exciting for [her], it was challenging and interesting”. She recalled reading Virginia Satir’s “New People Making” that “taught [her] a lot, and was a real eye opener for [her]”. Slowly, she started “taking less and less calls off the line, and eventually [she] just shut the line down” and saw her regulars. Hestia and Darren decided to terminate the relationship, and she moved in with a “square girl”, Marlene. She was taking more courses at school, and completed a practicum working at a youth shelter. The youth shelter offered her a full time job at the end of her practicum. After some hesitation, Hestia accepted the offer. She described living ninety-five percent in the straight life, but had one regular that “was more like a sugar daddy”.

She worked at the youth shelter for three years, and decided to move back to where her parents and siblings lived. She completely exited from any “of that lifestyle because it was so close to [her] family, and [she] never wanted them to know”. She attended University, and “put [her] effort into working a bunch of different jobs” all in her field of study. She remained single for five years, and because she had had time to “work all of her stuff out... she knew what she wanted and deserved”, the next relationship she committed to would be perfect. For the most part, she was fine with being alone, and even felt at one point, “why did I ever think that it was scary to be alone”? She recalled gaining weight during university, and the impact it had on her self esteem “because a lot of [her] self esteem c[ame] from the way [she] look[ed].”, and was not “meeting anyone”, which affected her self-esteem even more.

She moved to another province to attend University, and by this time, felt a bit lonely. She went out with friends one evening and met Nick who was “good looking, bright, educated, and had his own business”. She recalled how very soon into the

relationship, “red flags started” to go up for her. She described how he did “things that did not feel right for her”, and “didn’t like the way he talked to me sometimes, he got mad quickly”. He would receive “phone calls late at night”, and she “immediately thought ‘he’s cheating on me because that’s been my experience with men’”. However, she did not want to be paranoid, and gave him the benefit of the doubt.

Several weeks later, she discovered that her intuition was correct. She confronted him about her confirmed suspicions, and he vehemently denied it until she presented unquestioning evidence as to his guilt. She described her beliefs in honesty, equality, and fairness, and how these influenced her role in the relationship. His infidelity became a pattern over the next three years, and because of Nick’s behaviours, Hestia developed proficient investigative skills. She proposed to him several times to “just be honest with [her], and if [he] was honest with [her] and tell [her] the truth, maybe [they] could work it out and get beyond this”. Hestia came to realize that his affairs were a pattern; he had never been faithful in a relationship. She was caught between trying to understand his behaviors, mediate her own process in the situation, and incorporate her dreams of getting married, buying a house, and having children. She described having the biological time restraints of being thirty seven, and felt that “time is running out” to fulfill her desire to have children.

Upon reflection, Hestia was cognizant of how being in the sex trade is a “lifetime struggle for a lot of women” and for her in “[her] relationships with men”. She described how important it was to have “really good support systems through [her] women friends” throughout leaving the sex trade, as they supported her to return to university. A great accomplishment for her was attaining her degree. She was also the only person in her

family that was university educated which she felt very proud of. She described being “happy and rewarded by what [she] [has] done so far”, and wants to attain the next level of education. She is one of the few people in the city she lives that specializes in her area. She “has great friends, but there is this one piece, and it’s not just one tiny piece over here, it’s a big piece of [her] life that is dysfunctional”, and [she] knows that she deserves better. Nick had mentioned wanting to move back to his home country and Hestia commented on how this transition, even though it would be difficult, “it would be the least painful” and she “would be so much happier”.

Artemis Archetypal Characteristics

“Artemis is associated with the power of instinct, of nature, of consciousness, and is the guardian of women’s mysteries and preservation of the creative function of the maternal Goddess.” (Whitfield & Platner, 1998, pp. 99-101). Artemis is considered self-sufficient, independent of men, and protective of her interpersonal life. She was also known to assist women in childbirth, causing birth pain and discomfort either through “the birth of the baby or through ‘a kindly death’ from her arrows” (Borger, 1954, p. 47).

Artemis Composite

Hestia described her childhood as being “like a roller coaster”. She was raised by young parents, her mother was fifteen and her custodial father was eighteen by the time she was born. She did not know that the father that raised her was not her biological father

ARTEMIS

Why Artemis?

Artemis spoke philosophically about her journey. The course of her life had a purpose and discovering who she wanted to be in the journey was just as important as the journey itself. The manner in which she conveyed her story held similar passion to Aphrodite's. In the beginning of the interview, she described herself as a very private person. Out of all four co-researchers, she struck me to be the most stringent about her independence and anonymity, as well as the most protective of both. She shared her deep love for animals and the wilderness, often stating that in times of great sorrow she would retreat to the woods to gain a sense of balance. Thus, Artemis, the "Goddess of Wild Things" (Hamilton, 1942) immediately emerged as an archetype for her.

Artemis Archetypal Characteristics

"Artemis is associated with the power of instinct, of nature, or of unconscious drives often represented in animal form in dreams... and is the guardian of women's mysteries and perpetuates the creative function of the primeval Goddess..." (Harris & Platzner, 1998, pp. 99-101). Artemis is considered self-sufficient, independent of men, and protective of her intrapersonal life. She was also known to assist women in childbirth, easing their pain and discomfort either through ... "the birth of the baby or through 'a kindly death' from her arrows" (Bolen, 1984, p. 47).

Artemis' Composite

Artemis described her childhood as being "like a rollercoaster". She was raised by young parents, her mother was fifteen and her custodial father was eighteen by the time she was born. She did not know that the father that raised her was not her biological father

until she was eleven, a fact that she described as teaching her that “things are not always as they seem”. She described her mother as being an alcoholic that would frequently physically, emotionally, and verbally abuse her. Her mother broke three of her ribs, left arm, and fractured her skull, evidence enough to prompt authorities to place her in foster care on several different occasions.

At the age of five, her parents announced that they were “going to get a divorce”. She had a baby brother at the time, and her mother had a lover, all who sat on a couch at the time of the announcement. Artemis recalled the look of dejection on her father’s face as he sat alone in a chair, and felt compelled to choose him. For the next two years, Artemis and her father were nomadic. Her father was a “con-artist who constantly ripped people off”, and had psychological imbalances that drove the necessity for them to be on the run. To Artemis however, these frequent “moves in the middle of the night” were adventures. She never knew where they would end up, and felt “alive with excitement” and “lived in anticipation” of their next adventure.

Her father dated numerous women, and left her alone frequently sometimes for days to fend for herself, a factor that led her to become self-reliant. She described feeling like “someone had made a terrible mistake” in regards to her existence, and felt like she did not “fit into the world”. She spent most of her summers with her grandmother and grandfather, moments that were “so liberating and beautiful”. She learned how to garden, and explored lakes, beaches, and forests with them on their summer holidays. She “loved the predictability, stability, and structure” of her grandparents lives, and felt “extraordinarily special and wanted”, and could not remember “ever being yelled at and certainly never hit”. She lived with her step-mother, and described

Her father eventually met a woman with two male children, and they soon moved in together. Artemis recalled being “extremely jealous” of her father’s girlfriend Laurel, and her loss of status as an only child. She grew to love her step-family, and eventually held her step-mother in reverence even “though she was emotionally and physically abusive” at times. From the time she was three until she was eighteen, she endured sexual abuse by friends of her father, relatives, and acquaintances. She described how she grew up with the belief, because of the frequency in which the abuse happened that it was “something about [her]” that drove men to sexually abuse and rape her.

Until she was eighteen, she remembered feeling sorry for men, and believed that they were powerless to the whims of their deviances. At the age of twelve, she was raped by a man and attempted suicide by taking a bottle of pills; a fact that went undiscovered by physicians who conducted a laparotomy and discovered that she had severe pelvic inflammatory disease. Only Artemis and her best friend Dominique knew the truth about what happened. She felt extreme shame about not being a virgin, even though she “never really felt like one anyway”. She devised various ways to die, all “which perpetuated [her] cycle of depression”, and engaged in self-mutilation, behaviors that went unnoticed by the adults around her.

At the age of fourteen, her father and step-mother broke-up and she lived with her father in a basement suite. She was “barely passing in school”, and found more comfort in her social circle than the classroom where she was reminded of “how much of a failure [she] was”. She and her friends found solace in alcohol, a substance that evoked a “sense of control and ease in social situations” for her. During this time, her father ended up in jail for molesting one of her “troubled friends”. She lived with her step-mother, and described

this time as “very isolating and confusing”. Laurel and her father started seeing each other again after he got out of prison, a factor that resulted in Artemis’s immediate “disrespect, disgust, and sense of betrayal” for both parents. The family soon discovered after they got back together that Artemis’s father had sexual relations with a mentally handicapped woman, sixteen year old girl, and her favorite dog, Sam during one evening. Laurel again took him back.

A year later, her step-mother ended her relationship with Artemis’s father for good, and Artemis stayed with her. Several months after her father left, she and Laurel “were at constant odds with one another”. Laurel gave Artemis an ultimatum of “either live by my rules or leave”. Artemis packed a jean bag and at the age of fifteen, walked out the door. She stayed with various friends over the course of several months, but these options wore out. She moved in with two women, and soon after obtained employment at a licensed restaurant. She was soon evicted from her home, as she did not pay her portion of the damage deposit, and was soon fired from her job because her employers discovered that she was not the legal age. Artemis took what belongings she could, and began roaming the downtown streets. She recalled how it never occurred to her to phone her step-mom and ask if she could come home. She imagined that her decision to leave was a definitive decision, and mentioned how she did not believe that the consequences of her life would not have fared much better had she returned.

On the streets, she concealed her belongings under a bush in a park. She would try to stay awake during the evenings as she “felt safer sleeping during the day”. She remembered how she felt as if she had “homeless vulnerable girl” stamped on her forehead, as pimps seemed to be able “to spot her a mile away”. She never imagined that she would

“succumb to their ploys, but was tempted by their promises of money and love”. She spent many evenings in the library, and because she “felt guilty about not being in school”, read books about philosophy and psychology. She enjoyed the library as it offered respite from the “constant advances and manipulative tactics made by men”, and warmth in the midst of the winter months. She refused the advances; however, “hunger, frustration, desperation, and sense of futility” dissolved her will, and while walking downtown, accepted a proposition made by a man. She had no idea what to charge him, and made up a cost of forty dollars, which he agreed. In the end, he did not pay her, and left her stranded in a rural area. She described how each sex trade experience ended terribly.

She was raped several times, was in a car accident with a “john”, and held captive. She decided labeling herself as a sex trade worker was too dangerous. Instead, she went to nightclubs where it was commonplace for underage individuals to be admitted, and would “seek shelter, warmth, and a possible meal in exchange for sex”, even though her intentions were insidious. She spent nine months in total on the street.

When she was fourteen she had a sexual relationship with a man twenty years her senior. It was this man who offered to house and board her in exchange for housekeeping chores under the condition that she return to school. She accepted the offer, and spent the next three years in an intimate relationship with him. Her transition to school was difficult, even though she was academically successful. She recalled feeling stagnated and misunderstood by teachers who knew nothing of what she had been through. In addition, her relationship had become volatile. Her partner was a successful businessman, but in drunken rages, would become “extremely physically abusive”. She quit school to work with him, and during this time “became anorexic”, a factor that she attributed to her partner

teasing her about her weight. She recalled how being anorexic “evoked a sense of control” in her life as she felt “rooted and unwavering”. The relationship was terminated after she charged him with assault.

She found employment as a secretary for the next several years, and life was “pretty normal”. She described how she desperately wanted to be loved, and had ideations about “the perfect relationship”, but lived in terror of “being annihilated and overwhelmed” when in one. She stayed celibate until her next long term relationship that she described as being “even keel”, a welcome change from the chaos she was used to experiencing. She was laid off from her job as a secretary, and took two part time jobs to make ends meet. Her partner teased her about being a bartender, and told her that he would never marry someone who did not have higher aspirations in life. Even though she was hurt by the statement, it catapulted her into imagining different possibilities for herself.

After the end of her relationship with him, she sold all of her belongings and went on a trip into the States. Artemis met a male who persistently pursued her, and eventually began dating him. He introduced her to his family, and told her “many untruths” about himself, all of which she discovered through his family members. She realized that she may be in trouble when she told him that she decided that she was going back to Canada, and he pushed her against a wall. Afraid, she ran into the desert with him in pursuit. She spent an evening wandering, and figured that she had gotten lost, when she saw lights over a hill. She did not have any money on her, only cheques that she could not cash. She called a friend of hers in Canada, and he deposited money into her account so she could get back as soon as possible. She camped out at a friend of the males, who informed her that he had called the State troopers and placed a missing persons report. Desperate to leave, she asked

the friend if he would drive her back into Canada if she paid him, he agreed and they left for the border immediately.

Back in Canada, she stayed with a friend and looked for employment and applied to go to college. She had no luck with either prospects, and in desperation phoned her biological mother's ex-husband for advice. He lived in another province and told her that he would be delighted to move her out to stay with him so she could go to school. She remembered feeling overwhelmed by his kindness, and realized that it was the first time she ever asked any one for assistance instead of trying to manipulate them. She settled into her new home and reunited with her biological brother, a person she had not seen for over ten years. She found part-time employment at a restaurant, and was accepted into the local college.

Artemis loved being back in school, and ravished every course she took. She dated infrequently because of her busy schedule, although she felt lonely and wanted to be in a relationship. A year and a half into her studies, she was introduced to Thomas through a mutual friend, and the relationship developed quickly. Artemis felt he "was always on her side, and taught [her] to pursue goals because [she] didn't really know how to set out a plan, to see it into motion. He offered [her] structure, and the stability to reflect, room to breathe, and stretch [her] imagination and sense of what was possible for [her]". They moved in together after four months. He proposed to her a year into their relationship and she accepted. She recalled how it was after his proposal that issues started to arise.

Her sexual experiences were being affected by somatic memories and sensations, so much so that she began "dissociating" and eventually asked Thomas if they could "take a break from sex". He knew of her past, and was open to the request, but "three months

turned into six months, six months turned into a year". Thomas grew concerned, and started to doubt his own sexuality and desirability. He asked her to see a counselor so she could be "cured", a term that evoked resistance for her. After months of discussions and difficulties regarding their sexual intimacy, Artemis described how the relationship evolved into "endearing friendship". They "grew to flow together, and it was no longer the most prominent issue" in their relationship. She recalled how "comforting and secure" she felt with him, and became "asexual", an experience she felt allowed her to "integrate all of [her] experiences and discover who [she] really was".

The relationship ended when career opportunities in different countries arose, and they parted amicably. The couple co-existed together three years celibate and Artemis "never doubted his fidelity" during their relationship. After she moved away, she became aware of men looking at her, was a new and "at times unsettling" experience for her. She felt "irrationally objectified" by their stares and advances, and became self-conscious of her attire and "the way [she] carried [herself]". She described having "loose boundaries" and often resorted back to "old defense mechanisms" when in precarious situations with men. She was terrified of entering another relationship, and yet she was unsure of how to live alone. She grew to love her freedom, and developed an "incredible friendship" with a female colleague, Demeter and her husband, George. She described how her relationship with the couple taught her how to "work things out", and "stop running away" from confrontation. She never experienced such "unconditional regard" from a woman before, and grew to like her "own reflection in the social world" as a woman. She recalled how telling her entire life story to them was liberating for her in the sense that they found her remarkable and strong, attributes that she never thought about herself.

The most important factor was how non-judgmental they were of her “darkness”, and helped her embrace her past as useful and meaningful. She stated that she could count on one hand how many people knew her story, and did not want to tell many more because “it is too painful to relive in its entirety, to look back into the eyes of that child as an adult and see her sorrow and suffering over the course of nineteen years is overwhelming.” Moreover, she believed that she was lucky with the individuals she did share with, as many people are not as “conscious or accepting” as they were, and felt that she could not deal with scrutiny, ostracism, or judgment.

She commented on how nineteen to twenty six years of age were the most difficult, as her childhood and teenage years were her frame of reference for who she was and what the world was comprised of, but that the last five years were the most healing and freeing. Her friends moved back to their country of origin, and Artemis felt again that she was floundering to establish herself as an individual entity.

Six months after her friends’ departure, Artemis met a man who was recently divorced, and entered an “intense relationship” with him. She described their intimate life as “wonderful”, a progression that took time to develop. Both were extremely reserved in the beginning, but “an unspoken trust and respect for one another ha[d] evolved”. She continues to struggle with communication and voicing her grievances. She also contends with the urge to “end the relationship as soon a difficulty emerges”, but his patience and willingness to “go through whatever it is that she needs to go through” keeps her centered and wanting to try. They have been together for two years now and plan to marry next fall.

She described her father and his wife as being excellent “examples of perseverance and patience”, and tries to model her “relationship self” after them. Artemis is currently in

university, and is attaining her doctorate. She described her education as “one of the most profound experiences of [her] life, and has opened many doors that [she] would never have imagined possible”. Her hopes are to write books, travel the South Pacific, have children, and be surrounded “by lots of pets, gardens, environmental stimulation and experiential opportunities.”

Taty Har, 2000

The primary focus of this study was to ascertain and describe the ways that survival and transformation were experienced by women who worked in the sex trade and exited for a minimum of one year. Attributes that contribute to the make up of individual identity such as, personality, images, behavior, affect, and motivation were considered to be important in describing the transformational processes in connection with the four existential dimensions of experience: temporality, corporeality, singularity, and relatedness.

The metaphemes and themes that emerged from the interviews with the four co-researchers illustrated the process of transition and transformation. The rationale for the order of these metaphemes in the interviews is a reflection of how the co-researchers made sense of their evolution and transformational journey. Table 4 illustrated the six metaphemes, and sixteen themes that emerged from the data.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS

To transform is to go beyond current form. Transformation manifests as both an outcome and a process; it is the push and the pulse that drives self-organization and self-transcendence, a movement pushing simultaneously toward increasing unity and toward diversity... Transformation is a dialectic of expression and reception, contraction and expansion, self-separateness and union, autonomy and interconnection, intention and surrender, initiative and allowing, control and flow, structure and freedom.

- Toby Hart, 2000

The primary focus of this study was to ascertain and describe the transformational processes for women who worked in the sex trade and exited for a minimum of one year. Attributes that contribute to the make up of individual identity such as, sensory, images, behavior, affect, and motivation were considered to be imperative in describing the transformational processes in connection with the four existential dimensions of experience; temporality, corporeality, spatiality, and relationality.

The metathemes and themes that emerged from the interviews with the four co-researchers illustrate the process of transition and transformation. The rationale for the order of these materialized in the interviews. It is a reflection of how the co-researchers made sense of their evolution and transformational journey. Table 4 illustrated the six metathemes, and nineteen themes that emerged from the data:

Table 4: Metathemes and Themes

<p>1. Metatheme: Understanding history</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Family b. School/Peers c. Traumatic experiences <p>2. Metatheme: Self/Identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Theme: Growing roots c. Theme: Laughing/Sharing Humour d. Theme: Meaning making for present and future e. Theme: Spirituality <p>3. Metatheme: Building relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Theme: Social support b. Theme: Family connections c. Theme: Friendships d. Theme: Intimate relationships <p>4. Metatheme: Sexuality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Theme: Shift from dissociation to sensation b. Theme: Shift from object to subject c. Theme: Celibacy and metamorphosis of self <p>5. Metatheme: Economic Viability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Theme: Education b. Theme: Utilizing the past as a resource c. Theme: Overcoming obstacles <p>6. Metatheme: Triggers - Returning to the sex trade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Theme: Financial b. Theme: Emotional upheavals
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1. Metatheme: Understanding history

The co-researchers' narratives provided in-depth reflections about their childhood. These reflections covered family relationships, as well as experiences in school, and traumatic events, all of which affected the co-researchers sense of value and worth, self-esteem, and efficacy while growing up. These reflections indicated an attempt to understand the influences that preceded their entry into the sex trade. For all of them, it was a moment; varying intrapersonal vulnerabilities combined with antagonistic circumstances and individuals. However, it was similar intrapersonal vulnerabilities convergent with empowering individuals and circumstances that assisted them in leaving.

a. Theme: Family

The co-researchers spoke of their childhoods and the impact it had on their development. All of the co-researchers mentioned challenges with parental figures, but especially with regard to their fathers. The challenges ranged from experiencing extreme physical and psychological abuse to feeling inadequate because of high paternal expectations. Three of the co-researchers stated that their fathers were alcoholics and/or drug abusers. Aphrodite, Artemis, and Athene described feeling hypersensitive as children in their environment, and lived in high alert to signs of danger that required them to re-act quickly. As Athene described, each felt they had "a built in survival kit" to get them through volatile situations. Across narratives, their mothers were described in comparable terms; the person who tried to smooth things over, a placater or peacemaker, the solid one. With the exception of Artemis, each described having a stable relationship with their mother until they entered the sex trade. It was the mothers who attempted to stay in contact with their daughters during this time, and the parental figure that was present

before and after working in the sex trade. Individual overt responses to their home environments varied: Athene left home at the age of thirteen, Artemis at fifteen, Aphrodite lived sporadically in squats, and Hestia excelled, along with her siblings, in school.

Artemis, Aphrodite, and Athene rebelled against their family situations and devoted their adolescence to being accepted by their peer groups. They describe similar impact of their family lives on their identity development such as feeling uncertain and cautious, hypervigilant, insecure, unconfident, and unassertive. Each craved attention to different degrees to fill their sense of purpose and worth, and sought it in numerous avenues such as sports, scholastic achievement, friends, boyfriends, and teachers.

b. Theme: School/Peers

School for Athene was not a positive experience, as she was immediately ostracized from her classmates as being “different”. She became extremely self-conscious about her appearance and weight, and was isolated from the rest of her classmates through constant teasing. She says

I couldn't talk, I would stutter, you know, someone would try to talk to me and I would just start to stutter, and the kids would laugh, it...I became so, so aware of not being a normal kid, and I didn't fit in, that's when I stopped talking, and that was when I was afraid to go to school....

The lack of support and integration in her new surroundings perpetuated her sense of unworthiness, and she turned to alcohol and drugs as a method of coping. She described her experience of school as being traumatic, one that was never acknowledged nor resolved by teachers or other adults. She left home and school, and found employment with a traveling circus. This experience began to build her self esteem and sense of worth.

It was meaningful to her that she was earning an income, losing weight, and attracting the opposite sex. In contrast, Artemis, Aphrodite, and Hestia experienced high degrees of success in school. They shared similar sentiments of achievement and pride about their success in school, and how it assisted in building “parts” of their self esteem, but how they felt something was lacking in them. Hestia describes this dissonance

I did really well academically, and we all did. And that was good, I felt confident there, and I felt really confident with my courses and stuff, but ... I am a placater, I am like my mother, pleaser, placater, like I would rather make everybody happy, I've tried to get out of that and be more assertive in my life, but that has been a constant struggle for me

Their intrapersonal vulnerability of wanting to be loved and accepted affected their interpersonal choices and risk taking behaviours in both intimate relationships and friendships. For example, a suicide attempt for Artemis at the age of fourteen evolved after becoming aware that her boyfriend at the time wanted to date her because he heard that she was “easy”

That's why he was interested in me in the first place. And discovered that I wasn't... so I broke up with him because he thought I was a tramp. And tried to kill myself, I slit my wrists, I broke a mirror in my room and slit the broken piece across my wrists

Aphrodite adds

I was trying to forget one guy after with another guy, and I would find myself in these really weird situations, right, where it would happen all over again

c. Theme: Traumatic experiences

There were varying descriptions of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse by the co-researchers. Athene and Artemis described experiences of physical abuse in early childhood. Artemis was the only co-researcher that described long term sexual abuse by family members and friends. Aphrodite was raped at the age of sixteen. She was abandoned during the rape by a friend as well as other witnesses who encouraged the act by chanting from a balcony. Artemis was also raped at the age of twelve

This man ended up getting me drunk, he was nineteen and I was twelve, and raped me. It wasn't a violent rape, there was really nothing to resist, and I didn't put up a fight at all, so after this I ended up taking a bottle of aspirin

Artemis and Aphrodite expressed how important their virginity had been to them up until they were raped. Aphrodite speaks of her virginity in terms of innocence and beauty, "it wasn't beautiful like I had dreamed it to be", and how for Artemis, it was a gift, "I really thought that my virginity was the one gift I could give to someone because the rest of my life seemed so tainted". The rapes dissolved the meaning they ascribed to the innocence of their bodies and the possibility of sharing this piece of themselves with a special person.

For Artemis and Aphrodite, their sense of accomplishment and worth that school and positive friendships had evoked for them was compromised by having to cope with the aftermath of their traumatic experiences. They often coped in silence, but behaviors such as promiscuity, alcohol and drug misuse, and negative risk taking behaviours were overt indicators of internal pain and suffering often misunderstood by those around them.

I would just get high, like it was time for me to go... I had to go, I was

2. Metatheme: Self/Identity

The co-researchers' narratives provided rich descriptions of interconnected factors that facilitated shifts in their perceptions of "self" since leaving the sex trade. All of the women expressed a profound difference between their sense of themselves in the beginning of the sex trade compared to when they exited. Their sense of stability and social connections seemed to foster being able to see themselves in a different way other than a "sex trade worker". This process also supported the possibility of "imagining" themselves doing something meaningful (whatever that meant for them) in the future. Understanding their history was fundamental to their self-understanding. Reflection about the past, meaning, being able to understand how their identities were constructed in relation to familial, social, and scholastic situations, became important to the co-researchers. Growing roots, being able to laugh and share humour, making meaning, and spirituality emerged as being highly transformative in their sense of identity.

a. Theme: Growing roots

For various reasons, all four women experienced frequent shifts in residence while working in the sex trade. These shifts were primarily located within one province, but at times would extend across provinces, as well as into the United States. Reasons for these frequent moves included attempting to escape signs of impending chaos, debtors, pimps, or in search of more financially lucrative areas to work in. At times, moving provided opportunities for new beginnings, and hope was often at the forefront of such shifts. While working in the sex trade, Aphrodite and Artemis described having an impetuous need to leave their residences without any observable cause. Artemis states

I would just get itchy, like it was time for me to go... I had to go, I was

... constantly on the move....

Aphrodite describes similar feelings of needing to be on the move

...It's just time to go, I just moved around so much it was just so familiar to

me, or something would happen, like some little thing would happen, and I

would make a huge ordeal out of it in my head, and I would have to go, it's

just time to go.

Aphrodite, Artemis, and Athene expressed how important growing roots and taking pride in their residences were post sex trade work. Aphrodite depicts this in her description of her love for her home

It's really important to me to stay in the same place and take care of it,

instead of letting it just get run down, and oh, screw it, I'll just leave. Like

for my first two years, I always used to get this thing, I gotta move, I gotta

move, it's time to go, right, and I don't know why, I never knew why, I would

just get this urge to go

Artemis describes the importance of remaining in a stable environment and the need to maintain it

I am so tired of moving and love my home. It is so important, you know, for

me to stay in one place now, to make it beautiful and do the best with what

I've got. But I also have incredible fear about losing it all in an instant, it's

just happened so many times before....

b. Theme: Laughter/Sharing Humour

Aphrodite and Athene described how perpetually absent smiling and laughter was in their lives while working in the sex trade. In recovery, they began to familiarize themselves with externalizing expressions of joy and happiness by “practicing” various ways of laughing and smiling. They shared similar feelings of how foreign it was to them to feel their facial muscles working. Athene states

I had this smile thing on my face for a couple of months. And I couldn't get it off, the only, I would go to bed at night and I would rub my face because of these muscles, I hadn't used them and they were so sore, and oh man, god, my face is so sore.

Aphrodite described her first experience of authentically smiling after leaving the sex trade

I was afraid to smile, and I started to smile, and that was a really odd sensation, like I felt like I shouldn't be doing that, right? I felt good and it wasn't a fake one, it was a real one, and then I went oh gosh, I shouldn't smile, this isn't right. I started to laugh for the first time in years, you know, my spirit had been, had been very much dying in my, so I started to laugh and I discovered that I could laugh a lot of different ways. There were a lot of different things that I could laugh about, and a lot of different ways that I could laugh. Sometimes me and my girlfriends would sit around and just laugh in all these different ways just for the heck of it, right?

Hestia's experience of being able to stay connected to her sense of humour was expressed with other women working in the sex trade. It emerged as sardonic, but served as a survival mechanism that diffused the sense of isolation

You know it's funny, that's how we dealt with it, we would tell each other stories about how our man would beat us up and do those things, and we'd laugh, and now when I think about it, like because for one, you have to have this really tough, be really strong, really tough persona to survive out there.

You had to act like it didn't matter and you didn't care, because if you did, if you really started to think about it, and I only know this now, but if you really started to think about it, the trauma that you faced on a day to day basis, and the horror of it would be too much... You couldn't keep doing it

c. Theme: Meaning making of present and future

There is variance as to what has become meaningful in the co-researchers' lives. What is now meaningful was often in stark contrast to how they felt about life while in the sex trade. Each woman describes in her own way the desire to live fully, intentionally, consciously, and communally. Individual constructions of what is important to them, how they live their lives, and the community they are engaged with, offer comprehensive segue ways in being able to optimize their personal growth and healing. For the co-researchers, meaning making includes self-awareness/discovery, personal achievements (education/career/overcoming barriers), adopting a child, and feeling like a "normal person" became important. Artemis' self awareness facilitates her willingness to remain open to experiencing life fully

I am used to life spirals, it's an openness to what happens in life, to go with the flow, the waves, and accept whatever life brings me, right? If it brings me challenges, go through the challenges and not be so afraid of it, and not be so afraid of my reactions to it, because that's when I feel I shut

down a lot of inner resources that I could be drawing from, it's because of my own fear, or lack of understanding...and so to try to keep those channels open, I mean, it doesn't happen all the time, but, if I feel anger about something to feel it, and to grieve losses

Athene speaks about the importance of consistent self-examination, and the value of making mistakes

But doing that self-examination all the time, self-exploratory, it's just like continuous, and always tell my women eh, recovery is about self-discovery, that's what it is, self-discovery, and it's about seeing the problem, cleaning house, and helping others. And that's it. God, help others, help others. There's a balance in life, and yes, you are going to make mistakes along the way, but we can learn from those

Hestia shared great pride regarding her professional and educational achievements, as well as her future aspirations.

Getting my degree was a huge accomplishment. I want to into the [doctorate] program, and when I look toward the future and think about that piece, I am really excited and really happy and rewarded by what I have done so far and where I want to take my career, my education

Athene's life provides her with amalgamate meaning that give her inspiration, but the most instrumental and profound for her was the adoption of her eighteen month daughter

And I have her, and she is just like the most incredible blessing ever eh? I

mean I couldn't have kids eh, I chose not to have kids, I have this beautiful little girl in my life that is so incredible...look at her, I mean God has blessed me so incredibly

Meaning making for Aphrodite included being able to feel like a “normal person” and conquering her fear about being drawn back “into that life”, particularly after a trip to where she had once worked while in the sex trade

I sort of dreaded it, I didn't want to go, I would just see the horrors... and I am just going to be drawn back to that, and everybody is going to know what I used to do, like I thought that I had that stamped across my forehead, you know everybody is going to look at me like a whore, or something... I had phoned my mom to tell her that I was ok, so I was one the phone in the middle of the street, and people looked at me like I was normal. I felt normal and I was dressed nicely, wearing things that I liked, and not what some man wanted me to wear, and not what some man thought was sexy... I felt secure... and I said, mom, I'm ok...I felt so free to do whatever I am meant to do in this life, in this new life...I felt really good about myself, like an equal, not less than, not what I used to be and what I used to do

d. Theme: Spirituality

All of the co-researchers were exposed to varying religious beliefs, spirituality, and piousness in their families and extended families. However, it did not materialize as a dominant area for historical reflection for them. This metatheme was treated as being different from “self/identity” because each co-researcher described her connection with

spirituality as being “outside of herself”. Spirituality included having access to a “higher power” that was available for guidance and support. Having a connection to a force outside of themselves often provided a sense of inevitable order amidst chaos, thereby invoking a faith that events, circumstances, and interactions had a purpose or reason for occurring. Spirituality was also a source of unconditional regard and love, acts of divine intervention, and fostered a sense of meaning and purpose.

Belief in and engagement with spirituality emerged while Aphrodite and Athene were in the process of leaving sex work, and continues to be an important path to explore pertaining to individual growth, aspirations, and utilizing their experiences in the sex trade to assist others. Six months into recovery, Athene describes how “little miracles” and “angels” entered her life after she relapsed

I just thought, God please, please help me get downtown, I'm going to die, I just can't make it, and I believe another angel came around picked me up hitchhiking. I got into the car and the first thing he did was say, you know, some people need direction in their lives, you know if you think that you can't do something by yourself, you can, you can, you can, if you have negative people in your life, get them out of your life, if you have anybody getting you down, get them out of your life, somebody there telling you yes you can do it, yes you can do it, you keep those ones in

Aphrodite spoke of how reading books shifted her sense of possibility after she had left the sex trade

I couldn't read fiction anymore I found out, I had to read good things, like “The Greatest Gift in the World”, God's memorandum and God's talking to

you about, I know what this means, I know what has happened to you and I know who you are, you see counsel, and that you will have a good life, and all this really wonderful stuff, and comforting

Athene described how fundamental her spirituality was in choosing to dedicate her life to assist others in recovery while listening to a song

I just, I listened to this over and over, and all of a sudden it gave me a purpose, everything, it was like I am going to change, God does have a purpose for me, and I can tell other people what I have been through, and I can help them, and I knew I was useful, somehow I was useful right, and I bawled myself to sleep... I woke up, and I knew that everything in me had changed, I didn't realize that I had had a born again experience... I couldn't get this smile off my face... I get up in this happy high of freedom, and feeling like I am right with God....

Aphrodite spoke of how her sense of spirituality empowers her to take time for herself, and re-connect with her body

I like dancing, I like, that's when I feel, those are very spiritual times for me, that's when I spend time with God, and be his kid, his little girl... and I sing, I'll make up songs...

Artemis spoke of spirituality in terms of being connected to the earth and nature. She spoke of how believing in something larger than herself helps guide her

I believe that we are all here for a reason, just sometimes we need to experience the worst in order to experience the best. Everything on earth has patterns and cycles, and getting out there in nature and

experiencing those resonate give me a sense of God, or connection to something bigger than myself, I just need to trust in those and go with the flow

3. Metatheme: Building relationships

For all of the women, their relationships with family, friends, colleagues, co-workers, and lovers became fundamental to their transformation. Building relationships were often challenged by their previous experiences of being exploited and manipulated while working in the sex trade, and alterations in how they constructed their perceptions of other's motivations were necessary in moving forward and connecting with others. Often, this required "surrendering" themselves to the process, and "letting go" of defense mechanisms that no longer worked, as well as adapting new or altered coping strategies.

a. Theme: Social support

Consistent and reliable social support were imperative in the women's transformational processes post sex trade work. For all of the co-researchers, interpersonal relationships shifted from objectifying others, or seeing people as "marks", to developing mutually reciprocal ties to other individuals. Developments emerged such as witnessing others exit, providing necessities and amenities, surrendering self, positive communication, and unconditional and non-judgmental regard. Connections to a stable support system were often formed while she was leaving sex work. Hestia described how witnessing one of her close friends exit the sex trade as being the impetus for her believing that it was possible for her, as it challenged fears of living a "straight life" that emerged while she was with her pimp

So she started to exit, and so she went through that process, and we were there me and ____, and like we were really supportive of her. So it was like, the environment, it was the right time... And so we supported her, and then she got a square job, so she sort of paved the way for me and ____, because I had always had a fear, I remember when I was working and I was still with my man, thinking, ok, I will never be able to do that I will never be able to leave and go to school and get a regular job, and just get up at 6:30 in the morning to go to work 9-5. I'll never be able to do it... it was a long process

Aphrodite described how she knew she would not return to the sex trade after one of her friends came to visit her in the recovery house

I think the most major turning point for me, that I knew I was going to say was when my girlfriend, who was also a prostitute in recovery, phoned me up and asked me if I wanted some hairspray and some clothes, right, cuz I had nothing. She said I'll come over there, and make you up and we'll go to a meeting, and if you need deodorant and stuff like the... She really took care of the basics, and she read me this passage out of a book, and it said, God knows every, he has counted every hair on your head, he knows you, he loves you, oh god, it was just so powerful for me at that time...

Athene described how she needed to abandon herself to her sponsor and counsellor, as she felt she could not trust her judgment while leaving the sex trade. She needed to have individuals she trusted would be rational and provide safe guidance for her

I didn't trust my own thinking because my best thinking got me where I

was, so I had to trust her [her counsellor] to think for me, and eventually I could start thinking for myself. I could distinguish between a sane thought and insane thought, Like I still have insane thoughts, sometimes I'll be walking along and thing, Oh, a speedball would be nice to do, and then think, no it wouldn't! But I know that's an insane thought now, it doesn't turn into an obsession where I'm going and actually doing it, right?

Artemis and Aphrodite shared similar sentiments in regards to the effect of just being surrounded by “positive people” had on them, and how they wanted to model themselves after them. Artemis states

My entire culture changed, I was surrounded by people who believed in honesty, and who exemplified that in their daily lives. They were models, they believed in justice and would go that extra mile for people, for kids, and I learned what that looked like, and I wanted that in my own life. I wanted to be that kind of person. I felt at the time that I could really grow into myself, and that I would finally fit the skin I had been given

Aphrodite adds

I had a lot of people around me that were very spiritual, very loving, and who been the same places I had been, very understanding, they just talked at me constantly, positive things, positive things, positive things

Athene also described how her profound her experience of being accepted and respected unconditionally was for her

I found out that I was ok, they didn't judge me or anything, so I was

accepted in that way. Slowly got accepted into society, and then now, I am in a management position, I'm working with a licensing officer with regional health, I've got peers in the community that I've come to know, who know me from when I was first in the program to now. They are my peers instead of my counsellors, and like everything has completely changed, like the healing process was that people started to accept me for who I was. That's all I ever wanted, I wanted my dad to accept me, to love me, all I wanted was for people to just love me, not to judge me, and when that happened, it was wonderful.

b. Theme: Family connections

All co-researchers with the exception of Artemis had relationships with their families while working in the sex trade. The connections were often chaotic, and communication sporadic, but the co-researchers had at least one family member that provided unconditional love and regard for them. Aphrodite and Athene disclosed that their families knew about their work in the sex trade and heroin addictions. Aphrodite's connection to her mother was consistent, even when Aphrodite seemingly disappeared into the cracks, her mother found her. Athene described a similar connection with her mother, who was there for her through all of her trials while working in the sex trade

Ya, my mom has been there through everything, through absolutely

everything, she taught me how to love unconditionally. I mean,

everything I ever put her through, she's been there, if I went missing for a

few more days, like if I was downtown hooking or whatever, and I didn't

call her or something, she'd go down _____ looking for me. She'd go

through all the scungy bars and everything, and I 'd get a message, your mom is down here looking for you, and I'd be running over to her, mom you can't be here, like, this is dangerous, you gotta get out of here, meanwhile it's ok for me, right?

Hestia described her connection to her family as being consistently “close and strong”. It was her closeness to them that was the impetus for her to continue to live in a different province from her family in order to protect them from the knowledge that she was in the sex trade. She and her pimp/boyfriend maintained an intimate relationship that gave her life the image of normalcy, which in retrospect probably deterred her family of being suspicious about her partner and/or lifestyle. When she was considering leaving her pimp, she called her mother to tell her that she wanted to terminate the relationship. Her mother responded in a way that affirmed Hestia's decision

I phone my mom and told her that I was leaving him, and she sent me this bouquet of flowers that said, “I know you're doing the right thing, stay strong”

These familial threads connected the co-researchers to the possibility of reprieve from the streets, and offered emotional and financial support. Once the co-researchers exited from the sex trade, they were able to re-connect with their families and solidified their relationships in a way that was meaningful to them.

This is not to say that the process of reconnecting was not without its challenges. Aphrodite and Athene described having to make amends for often taking advantage (especially financially) of their families while in the sex trade. They described needing time to pass in order for their families to begin to trust them again, and needing to witness

overt behavioral changes within their children that indicated concrete shifts in identity and motivations. Aphrodite describes how being able to communicate honestly with her family has evolved these relationships since leaving the sex trade

My family is really important to me, being a sister, being a daughter, like I talk to my parents regularly, and I never did before in prostitution. I can joke around with them, and tell them parts of my life that they may not want to hear, but it's ok. I spend time with my mother, and talking about things that I never thought that I would talk about, and I can be honest... I let them be parents now too... I still have a ways to go with my father, my mom can react and we can mend it....

c. Theme: Friendships

Building relationships included overcoming challenges presented in developing and maintaining friendships with both females and males. The similarities of transformation between the sexes included being committed to the friendship, developing trust, and boundaries. Experiences of connecting with female friends were often paradoxical. Aphrodite, Athene, and Artemis all described how important their female friends were to them, but also described having to disengage from them when trust issues would emerge. Aphrodite and Athene described how they came to view and experience women as objects while in the sex trade, which affected their perceptions of female value and worth.

Aphrodite illustrates

I was taught at first they were means of income, and so I saw the women around me as a night off, like that's why I got her to be with my man, then

I could have time off, and be able to get more clothes, or I would be able to do more things...that's what I was taught to see it

She describes her current struggle of being able to trust her female friends because of her experiences of men cheating on their partners with her while she was in the sex trade

Like I still have trust problems today, five years later...I have problems trusting my female friends, cuz I think, oh they're going to betray me in some way, or they're going to sleep with men that I'm dating or whatever... I can let it go quicker now... but it still affects me and it's getting to be really grossly uncomfortable...and a large part of that is because I was always going out with somebody's husband, and then other times I wonder if it's my intuition telling me, like I always get confused

Athene describes a similar process of trust development with her female friends

I was afraid of women... I said I hated women...it wasn't until I started some of my healing that I started looking into it and seeing the denial. It was that I felt inadequate as a woman, and I feared them, that they would see right through me. Men I could play, women I wouldn't be able to, they would see it. It was when I went into treatment that I started to build relationships with women, now I work with women, I have many women friends. I still have a tendency to not quite let all walls down...I'm still a little guarded, right, like the trust is not complete... but I have many wonderful relationships with people, like I know today that if there was anything ever going on, all I would have to do is pick up the phone, somebody would be there

Even though each of the co-researchers expressed challenges in their friendships that were unique to each of them, they indicated a high level of commitment and loyalty to their friendships. Aphrodite explains

It is really meaningful to me to stay in the same friendships, to work through our differences... some of them are the most, what I perceive to be the most difficult challenges in my relationships, somehow I get worked out, it's worked through

Hestia describes her friendships with females as being the fundamental social and emotional support she needed to exit, continue and be successful in her education, and start a new job related to her education. Boundary development was an important development for the co-researchers in regard to their friendships with both females and males.

Aphrodite describes her experiences

My first male friend was at seven months, and I had to learn how to say no. I had to learn how to talk about things with him... I had to talk to him about particularly like I wasn't interested in having anything beyond a friendship with him...At first I felt guilt about it, but I had to tell somebody what I want

Male friendships offered the co-researchers the opportunity to be reflected back by men in a respectful manner instead of being reflected as a disposable possession. Their friendships with men often served as a catalyst in relating to themselves in a non-sexual way, and shifted their perceptions about men being "dollar signs" to them. They also learned how they wanted to be treated differently by men through observing "healthy" males relate to themselves, and to women around them. Aphrodite explains

In my recovery, I've had some men in my life that were really respectful towards me. They treated me really kindly, I can't express how respectful they were towards me, they treated me like a woman who was more than just, you know, a tool to get off on. But there was still a part of me that wanted that male companionship sort of thing, but I learned, I was taught by these men a whole new way of being. They would talk to me about really awesome stuff, and they were men who spoke from their hearts, like they wouldn't say oh, you look really sexy today...they wouldn't even say you looked good, they would be genuinely interested in how I was...They would talk about their beliefs, their values, and it was really amazing to me, they were genuinely concerned about me

Hestia illustrates further

I see how they think about women... the guys at work, when they say something I know there's integrity there. They do what they say. I know deep down they respect women, and deep down they would never not respect women.

d. Theme: Intimate relationships

All of the women described themselves as primarily heterosexual. In this context, intimate relationships are defined as being involved with an individual in an amorous union. Intimate relationships post sex trade work brought many challenges for the co-researchers. These challenges included; developing boundaries, trust, considerations of disclosure and judgment, experiencing commitment, and reciprocal emotional support. Just as with their female and male friends, developing boundaries and trust were evident

complexities. The process of developing boundaries and trust were not a one time transition, rather, needed to be revisited when conflicting situations would arise with their partners.

Artemis recalls how, even though her duration in the sex trade was short, the combination of the sexual abuse she experienced distorted her view of herself as anything other than a “sex object”. This cognitive distortion affected her sense of “personal space”, as she was so used to men invading it. She described a ten year period after leaving the sex trade where her sense of self as an individual with rights for bodily solitude slowly emerged, but not without having reprieve from sexual intimacy in her relationship with her partner. While in a five year relationship, she describes how she was finally able to “individuate” herself from the sense that she was a sexual manifestation of men’s unhealthy intrusions.

In my relationship, I started to be able to feel my body, and it became, I felt whole, and I felt layers starting to integrate. I felt protected because he was with me, I didn't have to worry about men hitting on me, and I got to close that part of me down, the one hypersensitive part that was aware of men's stares, and the piece of me that responded to them

For Aphrodite, needing to investigate potential partner’s beliefs about fidelity and monogamy became important before investing herself further

I still have issues with my partners, in every relationship I have been in, I have problems trusting them that they are only with me, and they want to be with me. And I have a huge problem with that, and when I'm looking at being in a relationship, when I go out on a date with a guy, I will

investigate that area of his life, like how do you, do you believe in having multiple sex partners, is that ok for you?

Artemis, Hestia, and Aphrodite described difficulties in disclosing their histories in the sex trade to their partners. Disclosure often brought feelings of shame, guilt, and devaluation of their worth as an intimate partner. Artemis stated that her experience in disclosing her past wounded her so deeply that she would never tell another partner. Hestia and Aphrodite described how partners would “throw” their pasts in their faces during heated arguments. Hestia recalls attempting to explain to her partner the difference between a trick and having sex during an argument

Like in my present relationship, when he was mad at me, and would say, oh, you've fucked all kinds of guys, and I'm like, no I never, because, it might have been a physical act, but it was never, it was just, most times I never felt anything, and if I did feel anything it was irritation because they weren't finishing fast enough, you know what I mean, just hurry the fuck up, and get off so I can take my money

Aphrodite describes a liberating moment when her partner expressed disdain about her past

It affected in a way that was really negative, and he was quite judgmental about it, and he really questioned whether he wanted to be with somebody that was like me, so he, the first person he called [about it], his wife used to be a prostitute...He said [Aphrodite] told me she was a prostitute at one time, and oh my god, and he said, oh really, you know my wife, she used to be too

Experiencing commitment was important to both Artemis and Aphrodite in their

intimate relationships, as “escape” had been a survival mechanism in moments of confrontation in their past. Artemis describes her dedication to seeing the conflicts that would arise in her relationships

So I started to experiment, and try to work things out, instead of run away, like with ____, we would be through circle after circle after circle, and I would stick with it, I would just stand in it and just feel the inclination to run, and believe me, it didn't work all the time, nor now, but I felt the difference. I trained myself to stay until it was complete, whatever that meant at the time, and I felt like that was a milestone that I stayed in the relationship and tried to work it out

Athene's experience of commitment was evident in her marriage. She describes how her husband offered her emotional support through her recovery, and stayed with her through her relapses. She recalls a moment where she doubted her worth to him

I go to a meeting...and ____ is there, he is supposed to be working, he gets up there and is sharing and he's talking about how God has graced him with these wonderful gifts, like his wife and the most important thing to him, and like he's balling when he's talking about how much he loves me, and how grateful he is that God has brought me into his life, and into recovery and I start balling and it's like, oh god, he loves me

Artemis describes how she was able to evolve with her partner's emotional support

I felt like there was someone on my side that would take my side, support me. He really wanted me to be successful, and taught me to pursue goals, because I didn't really know how to set out a plan, to see it into motion.

He offered structure and the stability to reflect, life with him was smooth and linear, not these extremes that offered only moments to think of how to escape better the next time, but room to breathe you know?

4. Metatheme: Sexuality

All of the co-researchers spoke at varying lengths about their evolving sense of themselves as a sexual entity. Their present conceptions of their sexuality were often contrasted with how they viewed themselves, and were treated by men while in the sex trade. “Turning a trick” had required each woman to demarcate their somatic experience of sex. In the sex trade, sex was a job, and their survival instincts kept them on guard in order to be able to react to the first sign of danger. They protected themselves from potential harm, and each woman developed an ability to “disconnect” themselves from the act of sex.

The co-researchers’ sense of their sexual experiences outside of work varied according to their life circumstances. Aphrodite, Athene, and Hestia had intimate relationships while working in the sex trade, and described sex as being different with their partners than when working. However, the quality of these relationships was also negatively impacted by physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual abuse. Hestia articulates her relationship succinctly, “you didn’t know if you were coming or going”.

The transformation of being able to enjoy and develop a “healthy” sense of their sexuality required having time to explore and re-create their “sexual selves”. For Artemis, this process took eight years, Athene, four years, Aphrodite, three years.

a. Theme: Shift from dissociation to sensation

After leaving the sex trade, Aphrodite and Artemis described how they were

initially “not present” in the act of sex. Over time, both women recalled how somatic sensations began to emerge during intercourse that were often painful and emotionally disorienting. Aphrodite states

At first I could feel, like sex hurt me , like it was so, like my body started to feel sensations right, and it hurt me a lot, like it hurt me physically, it was painful to do, and I wasn't present, I wasn't there, I was hoping that it would be over and done with, right?

Artemis was in a long term intimate relationship with a man whom she trusted and felt loved her unconditionally when similar reactions emerged

We were having sex one night, I had this flashback, not a particular incident but the smell was so familiar, and the shadow...it just disgusted me. After he was finished, I wanted to bark, I was so nauseated. I go into the bathroom and hang my head over the toilet, and this is in silence to, right? I don't tell him, but it keeps happening, and it gets worse, and finally I tell him, I can't have sex anymore

b. Theme: Shift from object to subject

For all of the co-researchers, transformation of sexuality was initiated in reciprocally authentic and communicative intimate relationships. Their partners may be described to have similar characteristics; being open, receptive, respectful, and concerned with the pleasing their partner, not only about pleasing themselves. These relationships, and the emergent sense of themselves as being separate from the sex trade, were the impetus of transforming the meaning sex had for them. It became important to be participants in the act, explore, have equal control in decision making, and let themselves

feel pleasure, but these qualities of exploration could not have emerged without trusting their partners intrinsically. Athene illustrates

The first four years of my sobriety it was working through that stuff, you know, so that sex wasn't work, because that's what it turns out to be. It's like I don't feel like doing it, I could do without it right? [W]e came to a place where we just accepted, well, we'll have it when we want to, and if we get the urge, we'll just let the person know and actually ask for my needs to be met. I had always pleased others right?

Interestingly, exploring their sexuality fully seemed to occur after ending relationships that had been present while in the process of leaving sex work. New beginnings facilitated fuller expressions of the co-researchers transforming identities. For Athene, entering a different relationship gave her the opportunity to utilize her new sense of individual rights and boundaries of her body as her own

I was too shy to do it with _____, even though we had been together all those years... I could share it with someone else. And now I can set boundaries around, and I don't have to feel like I have to have sex with a man when I'm not in a relationship, I can say no... where before I'd just do it. And even if I went out on a date, and I hadn't planned on being with this person...and they wanted sex, I'd just end up doing it anyways just cuz you know, I thought I owed them... you feel that way because it's the only thing you have to give

In addition to their relationships, there was an interpersonal process of being able to relate to and experience their bodies in a different way than they were accustomed to. For

Aphrodite, this emerged in a metaphorical sense which gave her a different language and image to view her body in. This evolution developed after seeing the “Vagina Monologues”, which she describes as being a “huge part of healing” for her

They had this little skit where they would talk to their vaginas, and they had special names for them. I thought it was so sweet, and there was a woman who was imitating a little girl and she says, “mines a snowflake”, and I was like, ya, that’s the way it is. I don’t know, that was just a really big part of my healing, they talked about enjoying things... That’s when I shifted in the way I saw my sexuality, and who I am as a partner, it isn’t the way I used to be, I don’t have to feel the way I used to feel

c. Theme: Celibacy and metamorphosis of self

Celibacy emerged as a time of incubation and individuation of self. Artemis was celibate while in a relationship for three years, Hestia experienced celibacy for three years, and Aphrodite for one year. They describe this experience as a time of personal development and integration of self. For Artemis, it became the pinnacle of her transformation of identity

I just got to a point where there was no question as to his motives, or whether or not he loved me. And we developed a groove, and moved in unison and yet I was still free. The word freedom, I mean, it’s interconnected with lots of things, but at that time it meant that I reclaimed myself, my body as my temple, it was actually mine, it was revered without sex with a man. And I can only say looking back, even with the ups and

downs, that was the most beautiful gift that anybody could have ever given me.

Hestia concentrated her efforts in school, employment, and professional development. Aphrodite describes her life during this time as “being full”, and how her fear of being alone has dissipated.

5. Metatheme: Economic viability

For all of the co-researchers, their history in the sex trade affected their subsequent education, career, and volunteer choices, as they all entered roles that required them to be of assistance to others. After leaving the sex trade, three co-researchers spoke of how they struggled with having to meet other people’s demands, being paid low wages, and learning new rules and expectations in “straight society”. Their education and work transitions paved the way for other viable opportunities that took them farther away from the role of being a sex trade worker. Over time, their experiences in education and “straight” employment became their frame of reference in regards to their work identity.

a. Theme: Education

After the sex trade, Artemis, Hestia, and Athene made the transition into academic environments which was extremely rewarding for them. Artemis states

Life took a different turn, I mean, it was really hard to concentrate at first, but what was different was, the year previous, life was so chaotic, whereas here I was on a schedule, I really liked the structure, having somewhere to go, and having time and things to do. I was completing things and had finished products, they were tangible and I became very involved in school

Athene found similar satisfaction in her training as an addictions counsellor, and

was given the opportunity to subsequently see a counsellor of her own, which she with found extremely beneficial with regards to her eating disorder. Hestia describes how her education led her to employment opportunities that were economically and personally rewarding

I think I did my practicum for two or three moths or something, and at the end of my practicum they offered me a job, and I can remember they offered me a full time job. I was like, I wasn't sure I was going to take it because it was a really scary prospect for me. And _____ is like, no, no, you should take it, you should take it, it's a really good opportunity and stuff... I had access to money, it was a good job, it was in the fiend that I liked. I was really good with the kids, they really like me and stuff. It was a tough job but it was really enjoyable, it was from three in the afternoon till eleven, so I didn't have to fight the get up early in the morning thing

b. Theme: Utilizing the past as a resource

Aphrodite and Athene were open with others about their histories in the sex trade. It was meaningful to them that they were able to utilize their experiences to help others in similar situations. Aphrodite worked in a volunteer capacity with women who were going into recovery.

It was a big part of my life, and I believe, and a lot of the things that I do, like in the way of helping others, and I talk about my recovery with others...It's definitely become useful, a useful part of my life. It's a dark shadowy spot, but it is not to be locked in a closet somewhere

Athene dedicated her life to helping individuals wanting to recover. She opened her home

as a recovery home, and over a six year period detoxed approximately sixty people. She has developed strong connections in the community that support her vision of recovery, and have assisted her in opening a large scale detox center. In sharing how fundamental her past has become in helping others, she states

I am so grateful that God has allowed me to have a second chance in life, and to show me that he has a purpose, that everything I ever went through, he turns it around, every bad trick I've had, I've run into women who have had bad tricks and I can share with them the same thing I went through. My feelings and all that, how that was, being left for dead, you know, and how, what that feels like. And know that's ok, and so the women, when they hear stuff that I've been through, right away they're like, oh, ok, she'll understand, so they open up right away

c. Theme: Overcoming obstacles

Two main challenges were expressed by Athene, Aphrodite, and Artemis; judgment by others, and the experience of sexual harassment/derogatory in the workplace. Each of these challenges facilitated the co-researchers to sense of values, integral self-worth, and strengths, but not without a price. Athene describes an experience of judgment during the inception of opening a thirteen bed recovery house, which could not have been turned around without the support of her community

[W]e go to move in and the school had called everybody up, the principal didn't even talk to us, got all the parents around and said, there's going to be condoms in the schoolyard, there's going to be needles in the schoolyard, there's going to be men coming around looking for prostitutes... they just

went running on fear and emotions...I am there to listen to their concerns, and to talk to them and this woman pipes up, where does she get her credentials from, robberies, prostitution... and it was like, just a flash from the past, and I thought, oh, no, and I couldn't say anything...there was a board meeting that night and I cancelled...this council meeting came on TV and they watched it, and they saw how they just attacked me, and they phoned me and said [Athene], we prayed for you, please don't stop, persevere through this, it's not from Jesus...we need you, it's because of that that we need you here, nobody else can do this, it's what we see in you that is our best asset. So I got this empowerment again

Aphrodite and Artemis experienced sexual harassment and sexually derogatory remarks from male colleagues that tested their ability to separate themselves personally from them, as well as to take a stand against them. Aphrodite describes initially feeling violated by and internalizing the offensive comments made by male colleagues, but how over time, the tension between confronting them and letting the comments go has shifted

[T]hey would make prostitute jokes, you know, like how men just joke around all day, and I took it very personally...and I encountered some sexual harassment right away from one of the workers, and I was really deeply devastated by it, and I was so afraid to say anything about it because I was afraid that I would lose my job, and it was really hard for me to discern at that time what was important and how to handle it...I don't internalize it, I don't take it personally anymore. I know that I don't have to tolerate it anymore

Artemis remembers numerous experiences of sexual harassment in the workplace, but describes being unable to discern the acts as such, she just felt very “uncomfortable”. Just as with Aphrodite, her fear of being fired for standing up for herself and extinguishing unwanted advances kept her from voicing the harassment. She states that the turning point for her was working in a pub

So many men would get drunk and start hitting on me, and in vulgar ways too. I couldn't believe that they would return night after night, and expect me to be nice to them. I got so sick of it that I started telling them off, and the consequences were that some of them then tried to get me fired, but I had a good boss at the time, but some of them stopped and treated me differently. I felt like I no longer had “I like gross vulgar pigs” written on my forehead

6. Metatheme: Triggers - Returning to the sex trade

All of the co-researchers stated that returning to the sex trade was not an option for them. However, moments in their lives evoked thoughts of “turning just one trick”, or “going back to that life”, usually out of desperation.

a. Theme: Financial

All four women expressed having experienced financial volatility post sex-trade work. Thoughts of sex trade work emerged in response to economic instability, but all of the women stated that even though they thought about it, they would not actually “do it”. Financially compromising situations were the main trigger which threatened their sense of security, and for Artemis and Aphrodite, evoked severe anxiety and panic.

Financial burdens, poverty, you know, I will find myself glancing over

the escort agencies, and the thought, I could make some real fast money and I wouldn't have to do it for long, just a couple of months to get me back on my feet... There have been times where I have had three dollars in the bank that had to last me for three more weeks and I think, I can't do this I can't do this anymore I give up... maybe I can just do it until my student loan is paid off.

Aphrodite described her dislike of being at the mercy of an employer and being paid low wages for arduous employment. She adds

Like when I am worried about my financial security I get wracked with those thoughts about going back, I go, why, why is this happening, why? It freaks me out

Athene and Hestia describe being used to having quick access to money, and the difficulty in being confronted with unexpected financial obligations. Hestia states

There's been times when I've thought about money and thinking, there's been occasionally times when I think, not that I will ever do it, but there have been times where, I am broke, if I could just go out and just you know, turn a trick or two, for example I had to pay out a lot of money to revenue Canada... and I thought, Christ, if I was working I could pay this off quickly

Athene describes how having someone to talk with about her thoughts helped her walk through her anxiety

I mean years, months were going by and I didn't have any money. I was sleeping on a mattress on the floor, I didn't have any furniture, rolling

cigarette butts out of an ashtray, thinking, I can't do this, I'm used to having money, so I thought, well, you know, maybe I can just go turn a trick and get some furniture... I just won't use drugs... I talked to my sponsor about it and found out that if I would go turn a trick well then I would have to go use dope because I wouldn't be able to live with the shame, this feeling, so it all made sense

b. Theme: Emotional upheavals

Unexpected events that were emotionally distressing also created thoughts about going back. Aphrodite experienced this when her boyfriend suddenly terminated their relationship

There was one time when I was in a committed relationship with one man and he, I couldn't see it coming, and he said, this isn't working out and I'm leaving you, and I just like in a heartbeat I was ready to, and I don't know why, it wouldn't have made anything better

These unforeseen situations often created panic and anxiety, and several co-researchers spoke of the sense of hopelessness these events created. Artemis describes

I would just feel like what's the point? Like I can't do this anymore, and just feel like giving up. Nothing made sense. It still happens sometimes you know, I hope to be through it completely someday but I still go into that place of despair when things come about that are out of my control.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to delineate transformational processes for women who have exited the sex trade. What emerged from the narratives was a complex,

comprehensive, and interconnected tapestry of influences. To say that one factor dominated another is not possible, rather, all were mutually influencing, in progress, and significant.

The following chapter will focus on summarizing the findings. In addition, follow-up interview results, strengths and limitations of the study, and implications for further research will be presented.

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of four women's transformation post sex trade work. The metaphors and themes captured the different elements of the co-researchers' transformation post sex trade work. The metaphors identified overarching similarities among the narratives: (1) understanding history, (2) self-identity, (3) building relationships, (4) sexuality, (5) economic viability, and (6) resilience. In this chapter, the metaphors will be explored in relation to the transition on the sex trade, as well as transformation.

Understanding history

Aphradite, Athena, and Hera entered the sex trade as adults, which is not typical, according to the literature presented in this study (Webber, 1951; Melrose, 1998; Naylor, et al., 1996; Federal, Provincial and Territorial Working Group, 1998). However, the co-researchers described events and circumstances in their childhood and adolescence that they believed facilitated their later entry as young adults, many over nineteen years old.

CHAPTER SIX

THE EXPRESSIONS OF TRANSFORMATION

I am not a mechanism, an assembly of various sections,
 And it is not because the mechanism is working wrongly,
 That I am ill.

I am ill because of wounds to the soul, to the deep emotional self
 And the wounds to the soul take a long, long time, only time can help
 And patience, and a certain difficult repentance
 Long, difficult repentance, realization of life's mistake, and the freeing oneself
 From the endless repetition of the mistake
 Which mankind at large has chosen to sanctify.

- D.H. Lawrence, "Healing"

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of four women's transformation post sex trade work. The metathemes and themes captured the different elements of the co-researchers' transformation post sex trade work. The metathemes identified overarching similarities among the narratives: (1) understanding history, (2) self/identity, (3) building relationships, (4) sexuality, (5) economic viability, and (6) triggers. In this chapter, the metathemes will be explored in relation to the literature on the sex trade, as well as transformation.

Understanding history

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Three co-researchers felt as if they “never fit it”, describing a sense of isolation, loss of self, and low self-esteem and sense of worth, leaving them vulnerable and without consistent boundaries to protect themselves (Herman, 1992). Athene and Artemis lived in intolerable family conditions, and left home at an early age without an extended social support system to help ensure their basic needs would be met. Such prolonged physical and psychological abuse jeopardized intrinsic needs to trust, be loved, love, and safety (Herman, 1992, McInnes, 1998).

For the co-researchers, the major element of transformation related understanding their historical experiences was being able to make connections between their sense of self and the events that unfolded around them. Understanding their vulnerabilities as children and youth was also a factor in being able to let go of shame and culpability for events that were beyond their control (Newman, 1994; Wade, 1998;Herman, 1992). Self-reflection was a catalyst for these intrapersonal developments, and served as an instrument of re-storying their beginnings in life in a language that was compassionate and sympathetic to their innocence. They identified strengths in themselves that assisted them in their survival, and acknowledged that these strengths could be developed further in supportive and encouraging environments.

Self/Identity

Patterns of behaviour in the co-researchers’ stories were illuminated through self-examination and reflection. The willingness to explore how they responded in a multitude of situations is similar to what Hart (2000) describes as the paradox of both struggle and transformation. Newman writes that reflecting on antecedents, present events, and individual reactions to those events, often poses a threat to the ego as fixed

structures of self begin to dissolve. "The transformation process begins at the 'critical choice point'" (Wade, 1998, p.718), and awareness that old ways of being are no longer working begin to facilitate experimentation with different ways of being.

Embodying changes in the self is enhanced when affirmed by the social climate surrounding the individual. The dissolution of past schemas may be experienced as a type of 'death' (Woodman, 1985; Tomm, 1995), Tomm (1995) states that "[w]hen death is understood as 'letting go', however, it loses its association with finality. As part of the cyclical regenerative process, death has a positive power of letting go of old ideas, patterns of behaviour which obstruct transformation into new ideas and actions" (p. 47).

These processes of 'letting go' are facilitated by reflection (Newman, 1994; Wade, 1998; Carlsen, 1998; Woodman, 1985) and this was indeed a similar sentiment shared by the co-researchers. Reflection and retrospection are forms of witnessing, and these processes enabled the co-researchers to determine how they could have done things differently, or made different choices that perhaps would have sent them on a different path. Such reflections required them to embrace being accountable for their part in the events that occurred in their lives. Being able to discern the function and role that certain destructive behaviours played in the past fostered a sense of compassion for themselves, and self-destructive behaviours became easier to shed as integral parts of their identity.

Their awareness of self in the present challenged historical messages of not belonging or fitting in, and facilitated the re-conceptualization of what was possible for them. Over time, imitation of other's behaviours became a transition phase into self-determination and autonomy. Using the metaphor of a "mirror", Tomm (1995) describes how this transformation arises, particularly with imitative perceptions of

themselves relation to men while working in the sex trade

The mirror is no longer used to reflect the cultural inscriptions that women often perceive through the eyes of men or their own male-identified eyes as they look into the mirror and imitate. Rather, the mirror can be used to see oneself as she is present to herself. It provides an opportunity for reflecting back one's imagination of new bodily expressions of internal creative energy.... Seeing themselves with new eyes allows them to listen to themselves with new ears. They can listen to new concepts rather than to the ill-fitting ones to which they used to accommodate themselves" (p. 314).

Building Relationships

The co-researchers' relationship experiences while in the sex trade were infused with trauma, some more than others. The impact of trauma resulted in a "felt incongruency" in three of the co-researchers' stories, meaning a severance between their internal processes and external actions. They described living in constant fear of being wounded or jeopardized. However, they did not feel they could react in situations where they experienced violence because they determined that these experiences were all part of being a sex trade worker. This seemed to create a dichotomy in the somatic and psychological confluence of themselves. Congruency between their external and internal selves emerged in relationships which demonstrated respect and valued them unconditionally. Such qualities serve as precursors for those whose trust has been compromised to begin to be able to trust themselves and others.

Connecting with individuals and groups that validated their anger, suffering, and desire for as Artemis describes, “something different” gave a sense of communion and personal significance. Connecting with individuals and groups that demonstrated compassion and experience with their struggles served to be invaluable in their personal transformations. As Herman (1992) states

The solidarity of a group provides the strongest antidote to traumatic experience. Trauma isolates; the group exalts her. Trauma dehumanized the victim [sic]; the group restores her humanity.... Repeatedly in the testimony of survivors there comes a moment when a sense of connection is restored by another person’s unaffected display of generosity. Something in herself that the victim believes to be irretrievably destroyed – faith, decency, courage – is reawakened by an example of common altruism. Mirrored in the actions of others, the survivor recognizes and reclaims a lost part of herself (p.216)

Their experiences of particular relationships with men and women were reciprocal and synergistic, instead of flat and instrumental which were common experiences while in the sex trade. Imitating behaviours learned with and from individuals (from simple behaviours i.e., laughing, to complex, i.e., assisting others in terminating their substance use) they came to respect after the sex trade provided repetitive practice in new ways of being. As Tomm (1995) states

Repeated practice leads to new understandings. New understandings lead to increased involvement, which supports the new interpretations. The consequence is that the practices become rational to those who do them

often enough.... The new experiences take on a significance that motivate the person having them to talk differently about them which gives them a coherence that they previously didn't have (p.296)

In addition to the violence and abuse they experienced, the co-researchers shared descriptions of language use by others (usually johns or pimps) that were similar in dehumanizing qualities.

Over time, the meaning of the language became internalized and reflected in the construction of their relationships, as well as in their concepts of themselves. Being in positive social climates provided affirmative and empowering references and construction of themselves and the world around them. Their interpersonal circles expanded and included different ways of being, communicating, and interacting. As Athene and Aphrodite shared their stories with individuals from AA, the meaning of their experiences shifted in relation to who they were emerging to be. As Rauch (1998) describes

Meaning evolves after a common ground of imagination and language is built in the overlap between two people dealing with the memory of an event... in whom the subject can inscribe his experience with the help of the other's words. By subjecting one's mental representations of memories...an altered horizon of imagination prepares the subject for a new historical experience, rather than constantly reliving a fixated past in the present. (pp.114-115)

The focus in their relationships was not on what they used to do, but what they were moving towards (Ricoeur, 1984).

Sexuality

In accordance with research findings, all four of the co-researchers experienced sexual and physical trauma while working in the sex trade (Duchesne, 1997; Davis & Shaver, 1994; McInnes, 1998; Lowman & Fraser, 1996; Lowman, 1998; Jessome, 1996; Webber, 1991; Herman, 1992). The violence they experienced was executed by customers as well as boyfriends and/or pimps. Sexual intercourse with customers was described as an “act”, something they were not engaged with beyond the transaction itself. More complex were their intimate relationships with their boyfriends and/or pimps. For Aphrodite and Hestia, it was intimacy, closeness, affection, and love they were seeking. Their partners would vacillate between extreme kindness and violent behavior, inducing the women to feel, as Hestia states, “like a battered wife”. These “intermittent rewards” kept them in the relationships with the hope that their partners would change and live up to their promises of reform (Herman, 1992) only to be physically and sexually assaulted again.

Sex for several of the co-researchers became enjoyable several years post sex work, and the evolution of their sexuality emerged with reprieve of sexual activity post sex trade work. During these times, two of the co-researchers describe how taking time for themselves enabled their bodies to grieve. The focus in their lives shifted to their own process of self-discovery and self-exploration. They were able to re-author chapters of their lives with the assistance of their support system, and experiment with different ways of being in an accepting environment that honoured their struggles.

Entering intimate relationships required a partner who would be understanding, patient, and compassionate. Such relationships assisted Aphrodite, Artemis, and Athene in being able to re-connect with their bodies and begin to revere them. Sexual intimacy

requires mutual self disclosure and intrinsic trust, that each is “able to let go of their defenses to experience freely the fullness of intimacy” (MacKnee, 2002, p.238).

Aphrodite, Athene, and Artemis described how their sexuality began to unfold in relationships where their vulnerability was respected and were never violated or shamed (MacKnee, 2002).

Contrary to their experiences in sex work where “individualistic demarcations of sexuality are truncated” (MacKnee, 2002, p.241) , their intimate relationships post sex work became extremely meaningful to them. As Aphrodite says, “it is more than just the act, it is something beautiful that I only want to share with one person”.

Economic Viability

The role of economics and its relation to career and educational endeavors emerged as imperative to transformation. The co-researchers described sex trade work as providing them with instant access to monetary benefits, whether it was money or interactions with a male who was willing to disperse money in the form of gifts and/or payment of bills. After gaining a sense of stability and permanence in their communities after the sex trade, creating and pursuing educational and/or vocational goals became possible, but the experience of poverty during these transitions were often triggers to reconvene sex trade work. As Tomm (1995) states, “[p]overty is concerned with short term survival ” (p.272). Pursuing temporally distant dreams were often compromised due to their disparate economic situations (this comment pertains to Athene, Aphrodite, and Artemis).

Their pursuits after sex trade work were primarily focused in the helping professions, although Aphrodite worked during the day in a factory. Athene and

Aphrodite openly utilized their experiences in the sex trade to assist others, whereas Artemis and Hestia were private and shared their stories with a particular few. It was imperative that their pursuits have meaning, provide opportunities to be creative, provide opportunities for autonomy.

Triggers

For the co-researchers, triggers preceding thoughts about returning to sex work were precipitated by disparate economical situations and/or unexpected and upsetting events. The contexts in which these situations arose evoked particular fears unique to each woman (Philips, 1995). At the time of each event, the co-researchers' sense of destabilization served as a catalyst to panic and anxiety (Philips, 1995). They feared losing what they had worked for, whether it was of a monetary or interpersonal nature. Transformation emerged in their recognition of their thought patterns (Newman, 1994), which each knew that if they followed through, would be self-destructive for them (Herman, 1992).

Artemis, Aphrodite, and Athene described processes of seeking alternative possibilities. For Athene, she knew that speaking about her thoughts with her sponsor would give her clarity. For Artemis and Aphrodite, they processed their thoughts on their own and experimented with different responses when confronted with similar situations. Over time, the reactions of panic and anxiety dissipated and thoughts of returning dissipated. The lives they had built were valued moreso than the temporary fix of monetary gain.

Follow Up Interviews

As noted earlier, follow up interviews were planned three to six months after the initial interview took place. Two co-researchers responded, one by telephone, and the other via email) to the questions about the process of sharing their stories with me, as well as if any parts of their stories had shifted, changed, or stayed the same.

The following is a co-researcher's perspective provided through email verbatim.

Her reflection about what emerged for her when she read her transcript included awareness of patterns, self-compassion, strengths, and perseverance:

To read the transcript felt very strange, it was weird to read about my life on paper. It was also strange to see it transcribed verbatim – I thought, do I really talk like that? It did not read like good English. I also felt guilty about the way I spoke about my dad. Reading and reflecting on the interview helped me to recognize/remind me of the patterns I repeat in my life. It is a pattern for me to sacrifice parts/times of my life. E.g.: When I was in the sex trade and also in my current relationship – I put that before my family. This helped keep them at a distance so they did not know what was going on – then I don't have to explain and they don't get hurt. But I end up hurting myself – I miss out on a lot (spending time with them, being there, etc). When I talked about my first boyfriend, I can see he set the pattern for me with men. He was not really respectful/considerate of my feelings. He gave me lots of attention and then took it away, he cheated on me. My friends and family always think I deserve better than the guys I get involved with because they don't treat me well.

I feel like I disappoint my friends/family or let them down with my relationship choices – but the one really getting hurt is myself. What really stood out for me was how my low self-esteem and lack of assertiveness contributed to my being recruited into the sex trade – I knew this before, but it really was apparent after reading this. Feelings of anger and disgust towards my pimp came up for me while reading this. Feelings that I had (or thought I had) long dealt with, feelings I thought I had put to rest, especially around sex with him for the first time. It made me realize I was so naïve, so innocent. The way my pimp talked to me, the verbal abuse, I had never been exposed to that before. It didn't happen in my family, with my friends. But it is strange how it became commonplace in my life when I got with him.

I realized that there was lots of trauma for me in my recruitment, and when I was in the sex trade. I realized that I tried to make sense of my life in small ways, in a world that is so horrific/traumatic that made no sense at all. It is similar to women who are in abusive relationships – but actually that's what it is, an abusive relationship and way more. The pattern of abuse in that relationship was so similar in many ways to the relationship I am in now.

It still terrifies me to think of one bad date I had, where I felt compelled to jump out

of the car. I thank God I didn't because I could have easily and probably would have been killed. Reading this just confirmed for me how incredibly strong and resistant I am. Not just because of the stuff I went through, but am still going through, and how far I have come. When I talked with you about my current relationship, some of the things you said to me gave me some realization/more insight into how I end/leave relationships. It made me feel better – it made me realize I leave long term relationships slowly, gradually. It helped me to not feel so bad about the fact that I have not been able to end the relationship I'm in. What's changed since the interview? [On pursuing a new career], told my partner I will be moving out into my own place at the end of [the month] and we have agreed to end the relationship. But I feel ready for this phase of my life.

Strengths of the Study

This study provides a collection of narratives that adds to our understanding of the transformational processes for a small number of women who have left the sex trade.

The use of narrative presents a comprehensive motif of the co-researchers' lives; their past, present, and future constructions of themselves in relation to the world around them. As these are cross life stories, patterns become discernable, as well as fragmented and disjointed pieces of the puzzle (Newman, 1994; Wade, 1998; Yamashita, 1999).

Paying attention to the patterns illuminate life-long strengths, threads that have kept them connected, external resources, and challenges that they presently contend with, or fear that they will in the future (Carlsen, 1988). The shifts and transitions in their lives are often scattered pieces throughout the interviews, but coherence was established in how I formed their stories as text.

Using Greek goddesses as metaphorical character avatars provided the co-researchers with a direct symbolic re-representation of themselves. The meaning that each goddess embodies forms a connection between ancient and contemporary strengths in women. It serves to provide an alternative way of perceiving oneself, as well as access to positively reinforcing semantics. Metaphors act to provide “meaningful stimuli which

[may be] incongruous with the individual's current ways of seeing him/herself or situation, [which] may necessitate structural changes in the person's personal reality system" (as cited in Lyddon, Clay, & Sparks, 2001, p.271). Metaphors assist in altering present conceptual frameworks, and foster the initiative to explore and adopt new possibilities (Lyddon, et al., 1995).

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations in this study. Because this was a qualitative study, the findings are not generalizable to all women post sex trade work from a positivistic perspective (van Manen, 1984; Anderson & Arsenault, 1998). However, there are commonalities within and across the co-researchers' stories of transformation that may be similar to other women's experiences.

Polkinghorne (1989) states that studying *consciousness* poses several challenges. First, consciousness itself is a multidimensional, ever changing "activity" affected by our everyday interactions with the world, and experience. In addition, it is "...several times removed from the actual flow of experience. For one thing, the act of reflecting - by researchers on their own or by subjects on their experience - effects a change in awareness". (p.45). As my co-researchers shared their stories, there may have been a sense of feeling distant from it, not in as in emotional distancing, but experienced time. To reconnect with the actual events, circumstances, and state of being in the time is impossible. Their stories are consistently mediated and re-constructed through their current lived experiences.

The time of the events (meaning where the co-researchers were developmentally, contextually, situationally, and environmentally) completely alters their re-collections and implicit memories regarding their healing and transformations. Rauch (1998) adds,

“reexperiencing or relating an event in the context of a dialogical relationship with another person changes the meaning and perceptions of that event” (p.113).

The co-researchers’ stories are also being reflected through my eyes. Interview methods, as I am using, require a dialogical meeting, sense of relatedness, trust, and inclusive connection that are subjective “...living experiences of the past whose meanings change with new or different interpretive contexts” (Rauch, 1998, p.112). Such a meeting between co-researcher and researcher will perhaps elicit and shift the original sense of transformation.

However, this shift may contain more reflective, perhaps lucid descriptions of these shifts due to temporal/spatial changes within the context of our reflexively dialogical relationship with one another. The limitation here is that the interpretation of the stories have been embodied and reflected within me in the form of semantic text, a purely subjective description of the co-researchers experience.

Last, this study focused on *women’s* histories and stories of transformation. I omitted the male experience of transformation in order to keep the data manageable.

Future Research

This narrative/thematic analysis of women who have exited the sex trade has produced considerations for future research. The study focused on women’s experiences in order to keep the data manageable; however, future research could focus specifically on males who have exited the sex trade. An interesting study would be a comparison of women’s and men’s experiences.

For the co-researchers, their future imaginings held significant importance in their lives. Their goals were the rudimentary material that sustained their sense of purpose,

direction, and meaning. An inquiry two years following the completion of this study in regards to how their future imaginings have unfolded would expand the essence of what has been transformational for them.

A third consideration is the number of co-researchers that are represented in this study. Phenomenological writers recommend small scale, in-depth interviews (Giorgi, 1985; van Manen, 1990) to facilitate understanding transformation as it relates to post sex trade work. A larger sample would provide additional data related to transformational experiences.

Implications for Counselling

The findings of this project illustrate the complexity in leaving the sex trade, and the necessity of having continuous resources and support systems available. Factors that assisted the co-researchers in leaving the sex trade did not end, rather, remained continuous and stable in the co-researchers' lives. The data presented illuminate particular commonalities of transformation, however, attention must be drawn to the elements of difference and uniqueness in the women's stories. The process of transformation was often illustrated through comparing and contrasting present life experiences with memories of the past. Comparing and contrasting experiences illuminates marked differences and the capacity for change; counsellors may draw attention to these differences.

Counsellors must be mindful that the commonalities within stories serve only as a starting point in the therapeutic relationship. These commonalities assist counsellors in ascertaining possible avenues to explore with the women. Every woman's story is unique and thus, the counselling process best serves her if tailored to meet her where she is at in her journey. In addition, the process of transformation is not linear nor two dimensional,

rather, it is long term, on going, multidimensional, and complex. The progression may be described as a spiral, in “which earlier issues are continually revisited on a higher level of integration” (Herman, 1992, p.156).

Supporters that were important in the co-researchers’ lives were said to demonstrate unconditional regard and support, and be affirming, non-judgmental, and authentic. Counsellors need to be aware of their own values and beliefs in regards to sex work, and ensure that they do not project these onto their client. Doing so has the potential to stagnate the client’s progress. Being able to transform elements of identity may be assisted if society ceases to reify the stigma attached to the role of being a sex worker.

Group settings are often instrumental for connecting with other women who have had similar life experiences. For example, women who have worked in the sex trade and/or with addictions have an understanding of the inter and intra personal processes and challenges involved in adapting and adjusting to a new environment and way of being. Groups also provide a forum for sharing difficulties, demonstrating accountability, celebrating successes, forming rituals and rites of passage, providing a sense of community, and sharing successful strategies or approaches to barriers and challenges.

However, group settings do not benefit all women. As two of the co-researchers shared, anonymity (with the exception of a few individuals close to them) provided the best avenue for personal progression. The reason(s) for remaining anonymous are important to understand, such as safety, fear of public hostility or judgment about worth, but respecting these reasons are even more important.

Counsellors may also aid the process of constructing meaning of life experiences (Carlsen, 1988). As described by the co-researchers, transitions in life often pose a threat

to one's sense of what Kegan (as cited in Carlsen, 1988, p. 32) describes as a "consolidated self". Making meaning of changes, grieving the loss of a solid sense of self, and creating new possibilities or alternatives for the self assist in rebuilding a sense of solidity. It is important for clients to have a sense of meaning and purpose, and doing so amalgamates strengths of character demonstrated in the past with hopes and desires for the future.

Summary

The transformational processes of the co-researchers were complex, multifaceted, intrapersonal, intrapersonal and interdependent. They described diverse contexts and processes that shifted their sense of self and facilitated continual progression and growth. Their development incorporated a waxing and waning of particular needs, desires, and challenges.

The research revealed the dynamic interplay between self and others, and how powerful motivation, connection, communication, and providing alternatives were in the co-researchers' lives. The research methodology of integrating narrative and thematic analysis provided an in-depth perspective into the co-researchers constructions of transformation. For them, self/identity, spirituality, building relationships, sexuality, economic viability, and potential triggers to re-enter the sex trade all emerged as commonalities of lived experience. To conclude, Aphrodite summarizes elements that provide optimal circumstances for growth

Well, I think a safe place, like a safe place to go, being around other women who have been through what she's been through, where some trust and truth can be established, cuz I know that when I left prostitution I had

so many lies running through my head it was just so indecipherable what was really happening and what was really the truth about everything, what was whatever. And I couldn't trust anybody, like talking to anybody, and having someone who is really good at establishing trust for someone who is getting out of that life, for myself I had to remove myself from the city that I was at, it was just too much to be there, and positive affirmations are really important. The ability to talk about anything that you can, that you want to relate to another human being.

Victoria, BC: Sponsored by Provincial Government, Education, Funded by BC Health Research Foundation, Capital Health District, and BC Centre of Excellence on Women's Health.

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Appendix A

LETTER OF INVITATION

Dear _____:

My name is Tamara Lynn Rozeck-Allen, and I am a Counselling Psychology student at the University of Victoria. I am creating a research study titled, "Through Darkness, through light: Transitions and Transformations of Women who have Exited the Sex Trade" I am sending you this letter of invitation, via a contact in the community who verbally expressed your possible interest in sharing your stories of healing and transformation. The purpose of this research is to educate other women and female adolescents who may want to, or are exiting the sex trade, as well as those employed to assist recovery such as counsellors, thus it is important that you believe that you have had a transformational experience since exiting the sex trade.

As a co-researcher, your reflections on your experiences, thoughts, imagery, emotions, perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors are instrumental in forming a rich and meaningful description of what the process has been for you since you have been out of the sex trade. I see the process of transformation as a continuous journey, one that brings many challenges, as well as gifts. Transformation means the moments in time where you noticed a shift or a difference in how you interacted with the world around you. To expand, these may include concrete moments such as near death experiences, or moments that are difficult to verbalize such as the sensation of standing in nature, holding a child, forgiving someone, or experiencing freedom. My hope is that together, we may flush out what has been important to you, without boundaries, in your transformational process, and the ways that you have made meaning of the experiences for yourself.

This study will require us to meet twice. The first meeting will consist of an in-depth unstructured interview that will last approximately one to two hours. Three months from the time of our first meeting, we will meet again in an interview setting. The second interview will not be as in-depth, and its purpose is to see how telling your story has impacted you. It will last approximately one hour, but may last up to two hours. If you choose to participate, we will arrange a time that is most convenient for you, and meet at a place that you feel most comfortable with. At the beginning of both interviews, we will go through a consent form together, which will require your signature as a symbol that you understand and accept how the information you provide will be used. Your confidentiality and anonymity will be protected by changing your name, and all geographic information that may be revealing.

If for any reason you feel either during or after our time together that you would like to speak with someone about your experiences that were evoked by the interview, I will provide you with a list of free public agencies and resources in your area that you may

access for counselling. In addition, a peer counsellor will be available, free of charge, if you need immediate assistance.

If at any time, for any reason, you wish not to continue with the interviews, you are free to do so. Please feel free to bring anything to the interview such as poetry, books, or art that are or have been symbolic for you in your journey, they are important. Our interview will be tape-recorded, as I will be transcribing them for my data analysis.

I will transcribe our interview tapes, and provide you with a copy within two to three weeks from the day of our interviews. Any changes that you feel are necessary, such as clarifying an idea, editing information, or expanding upon your thoughts, are most welcome and are imperative. All of the information you provide will be stored on my home computer, equipped with a password known only to me, and will be destroyed, upon request. You are also welcome to a final copy of our work together, and if you wish, I will go through the findings with you.

If you decide that would like to participate, please call me (collect) at: (250) 519-0460, or if you have access to email, my address is, trozeck@yahoo.com. If you have any questions or concerns, please also feel free to call my supervisor, Dr. Anne Marshall at: (250)721-7815.

Sincerely,

Tamara Rozeck-Allen

Appendix B

Prototype for a Complete Human Research Ethics Consent Form with reference to the Ethics Application Sections

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled *Through Darkness, through light: A Journey into the Lived-Experience of Healing and Transformation of Women who have been Prostituted*.

that is being conducted by Tamara Rozeck-Allen. Tamara Rozeck-Allen is a graduate student in the department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies at the University of Victoria and you may contact her if you have further questions by calling (250)519-0460.

As a graduate student, this research is part of the requirements for a degree in Counselling Psychology and it is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Anne Marshall. You may contact the supervisor at (250)721-7815.

The purpose of this research project is to discover the healing and transformation processes that women who have worked in the sex trade have gone through to get where they are in the present moment.

Research of this type is important because there is a limited amount of research pertaining to the multidimensional processes that women go through, and the complex challenges they face in order to begin healing from the experiences of being prostituted.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you (a) have identified yourself as having been prostituted and are now out, (b) claim to be able to speak clearly about the subject matter, (c) are interested in sharing your stories of healing and transformation for the purpose of educating counsellors, policy-makers, and sexually exploited youth and women who are wanting to exit the sex trade.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include being audiotaped in semi-structured interviews. I will come to the interviews with possible inquiries that include:

Historical

1. An overview of your experiences while in the sex trade.
2. How your process of transformation began.

Body Perception/Sexuality

3. What was your experience of your body.
4. Has this experience shifted, changed, or stayed the same?

Relationships

5. How your thoughts and experiences of yourself and your relationships have shifted?
6. Have any perceptions or experiences of family, friendship, intimate partners shifted, if

so, how?

Emotional/Psychological/Spiritual

7. Where are you at now emotionally, psychologically, spiritually?
8. Is this different than when you were in the sex trade?
9. If yes, how so? If not, why?

Triggers

10. What if any are your triggers in the now that evokes the sensation of wanting to return to the sex trade?

Future

11. What is your sense of what is possible for you now, and in the future?

In my "Letter of Invitation", I have specifically stated that you may refuse to answer any of these questions, and are welcome to discontinue the research project at any time. In addition, I will transcribe the interview tapes two to three weeks after the initial interview, provide you with a copy, as well as the opportunity to make any changes you feel necessary to the document such as clarifying an idea, editing information, or expanding your thoughts.

My expectations as a researcher is that you will provide truthful answers, and see this project as a collaborative effort. You are considered a co-researcher, meaning that the descriptions of your experiences are the essence of what makes this research study possible. The individual interviews will take approximately forty-five minutes to a maximum of two hours. You will be asked to review transcriptions of your interview for clarification, elucidation, or correction. This may take additional time that is at your discretion. Participation will occur at a place that is of your choosing.

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including the contribution of your time.

There are some potential risks to you by participating in this research and they include psychological and emotional challenges as you consider your history in being prostituted. Again, this process is voluntary in nature, which I have described in my "Letter of Invitation", as well as your option to cease participation at any time, and refuse to answer my questions or inquiries.

To prevent or to deal with these risks the following steps will be taken:

I will provide a list of public services and resources that provide counselling services (free of charge) in your area. This list will be given to you before the interview.

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include you may leave the research project with a sense of accomplishment, a clearer understanding and awareness of your strengths and resilience, as well as possibilities and directions for future aspirations and goals. Society will benefit as the outcomes of this research project will serve to expand our ways of assisting women and girls in or out of the sex trade. The state of knowledge will benefit, as there is no research that directly focuses on the healing and transformation

processes of women who have exited the sex trade.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be destroyed immediately after the ceased interview.

In terms of protecting your anonymity I will use different names for each co-researcher in the study, and all of the geographic information you provide will be changed in order to avoid possible identification. I will reiterate this verbally prior to engaging in the interviews.

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by I will storing the data in my computer at home that is equipped with a password only known to me. I will only share data with my supervisory committee for the purpose of clarifying, editing, and/or enhancing the quality and interpretation of my data.

Data from this study will be disposed after the completion of my thesis.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: to fulfill the requirements of the Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology. In addition, you may have a completed copy of my thesis if you wish, and I will also offer my time in order to go through it and answer any questions you have regarding it.

In addition to being able to contact the researcher [and, if applicable, the supervisor] at the above phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice President Research at the University of Victoria (250-721-7968).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Participant Signature

Date

A COPY OF THIS CONSENT WILL BE LEFT WITH YOU, AND A COPY WILL BE TAKEN BY THE RESEARCHER