

Leaving the Trade:
Exiting Experiences of Former Sex Workers

By

Alison Elaine Millar

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Dr. Cecilia Benoit, Supervisor (Department of Sociology)



Dr. Zheng Wu, Department Member (Department of Sociology)



Dr. Bonnie Leadbeater, Outside Member (Department of Psychology)



Dr. Eric Roth, External Examiner (Department of Anthropology)

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University of Victoria

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Supervisor: Dr. Cecilia Benoit

ABSTRACT

This study examines the dynamics of exiting a marginal occupational role by focusing on the experiences of former sex workers leaving the sex trade. Specifically, this thesis attempts to understand what personal characteristics, family background, work and contextual and health factors are most influential in terms of explaining why and how some individuals are able to make the transition out of the sex trade, where others are unable to do so. In doing so, this research also attempts to identify the major advantages and challenges that these individuals face both in attempting to leave and after finally exiting the sex trade.

This research used a combined design, employing both a questionnaire format and qualitative interview to gather and analyze data on a sample of fifty-four (N=54) exited sex workers in the Capital Regional District (CRD) of British Columbia. Drawing from a recently-completed study of sex workers in the region (Benoit and Millar, 2001), a sample of currently working respondents (N=147) were utilized as a comparison group (total N=201).

Findings from this study suggest that across some personal, family background, work and health factors there were notable differences between the situations of those currently working and those that had left the sex trade. However, the large number of similarities between the two groups suggests the difficulty associated with exiting the sex trade and the challenges former workers face afterwards. Future research should consider the course of exiting from the sex trade as an open-ended two-way process that may not necessarily have a terminal endpoint.

Dr. Cecilia Benoit, Supervisor (Department of Sociology)

Dr. Zheng Wu, Department Member (Department of Sociology)

Dr. Bonnie Leadbeater, Outside Member (Department of Psychology)

Dr. Eric Roth, External Examiner (Department of Anthropology)

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Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In Canadian society today, individuals occupy a number of social roles and do so simultaneously: mother and college professor, wife and friend. Behavioral expectations are associated with all social roles that we hold and it is in the course of these role behaviors that images of the self are formed. Not only are an individual's role set (Merton, 1957) or the repertoire of roles one occupies, a major determinant in the conception of self and self-identity, but also in turn influence how others view us. Not all social roles are equally as important or central to our self identity; some roles that we occupy matter more than others. For instance, when individuals are asked the question "Who are you", responses are frequently defined in terms of what one does for a living: "I'm a doctor"; "I'm a mother and housewife". Thus, occupation, often acting as a "master status", figures prominently into identity because it conveys a great deal about social background, education and income of the person. In short, the work role permeates into other aspects of a person's life.

The idea of discarding a social role is also not uncommon today. Indeed, most of us move in and out of a variety of social roles throughout our lifetimes. Despite this fact, little sociological research has concentrated on role exit process itself: what it means to leave one's social role behind, particularly one that has been central to one's identity. Exiting a social role must be viewed as a dynamic social process that takes place over time and through a variety of courses of action. When making a role transition, the individual is confronted not only with the loss of a way of life and particular identity, but at the same time must also learn a new set of role expectations (Ebaugh, 1984). In entering into a new social role, the individual struggles not only to create a new identity, which must take into account the previously occupied social role, but must also deal with society's reaction to their previously occupied social status (Ebaugh, 1984). One's past affiliation with a role often has large influence over one's present and future identities:

The salience and meaning of an ex-role derive not so much from what one is currently doing but rather from the expectations and social obligations that went with one's previous behavior and lifestyle (Ebaugh, 1984, 169).

It follows then that leaving behind a social role central to one's identity, such as an occupational role, may be especially difficult to accomplish. The transition out of a career can mean a loss of what has been an individual's focus for much of their lives, the primary source of their identity (Drahota and Eitzen, 1998). However, even less research has directed attention towards those exiting from a socially stigmatized or illegal role such as that of the drug addict or sex trade worker. Little is known how this kind of role exit may differ from that of "legitimate" occupational role changes. On the one hand for instance, those leaving stigmatized/illegal roles or occupations that are frowned upon by "mainstream" society are making a change that is socially encouraged, suggesting there may be an ease in exiting such roles. On the other hand, some research indicates that individuals may in fact have a very difficult time of leaving behind deviant roles and identities. For instance, in his study on recovering heroin addicts, Biernacki notes the process for overcoming addiction "is very difficult to complete" (1986, xi). Anderson's and Bondi's work on the same subject as well suggests exiting to be a long and difficult process for recovering addicts in which vacillation back and forth is common (1998). Similarly, findings from a recent study of sex trade workers in the Capital Regional District of British Columbia (Benoit and Millar, 2001) highlighted the difficulty in making the role transition out the trade: 70.6% of respondents interviewed had made prior attempts to exit at least once over their careers, with more than half having attempted to leave three or more times.

What is it then that might make exiting from a stigmatized role such as that of the sex trade worker, difficult to accomplish? In considering this, one must look at how the sex industry is conceptualized and treated within contemporary Canadian society. While sex work takes place amidst a myriad of activities and venues ranging from expensive escort agencies and massage parlors, to strip bars and street work, regardless of occupational location, this activity is typically viewed as a deviant deed or act (seldom as work per se), which takes place in the margins of society, operating outside the formal economy. The sex trade is widely viewed in a negative light, as a "nuisance" as a social "problem", one to be "solved" through criminal sanctions. As such, it is treated as an illegitimate occupation and those who exchange sex for money or other extrinsic benefits are afforded neither the rights nor the responsibilities that are typically associated with

legitimate employment in Canada. Hidden from public view and isolated from mainstream/conventional social ties, those in the sex trade are effectively rendered invisible as workers.

Sexual relations in Canadian society have long been socially constructed as personal and private matters between two consenting adults, which are said to be based on emotional desire, affection and sometimes love. Not regulated by the ideology of the market place, sexual acts are not typically viewed as commodities to be purchased or sold (Davidson, 1995). As such, the sale of sexual services, particularly by women, offends traditional Christian values and moral ideals of monogamy, fidelity and chastity (Brock, 1998). Under this social construction, the sex trade is viewed in an offensive light; it is seen as "dirty", both morally and physically. Furthermore, this moral blame tends to be transferred to those who exchange sex acts for payment. The legal and social labeling of outcast status often permeates in all aspects of the sex worker's life.

Dealing with societal reactions and the negative images typically held of occupational roles labeled "deviant" means that the process of role exit may be especially problematic in comparison to those role exits that are more socially institutionalized (for instance, Drahotá's and Eitzen's (1998) retiring professional athletes). For many involved in the sex trade, for example, the stigma and legal penalties associated with the selling of sexual services effectively ensures that the occupational role and the self identity associated with it, are difficult to discard. Research suggests that due to the nature and status of sex work in Canadian society, dealing with the lingering impact of their previous role identification may be particularly challenging for the former sex worker:

Women working in prostitution become prostitutes in the eyes of others; that is, publicly, they are more identified with their work than are people in other jobs (Brock, 1998, 11).

There may be numerous factors which may mediate an individual's entry into sex work, and likewise, their ability or their desire to stop. Previous research suggests that the reasons that motivate a sex worker to initiate selling sex in the first place are often the same as those that reduce a sex worker's ability to leave the trade (Benoit and Millar, 2001). However, while many make numerous ill-attempts to break out of the life and

leave the sex trade behind, others emerge “successful”, at least to the extent that they are able to follow through with the decision to leave and exit the trade for a relatively long duration. What is it then that enables certain individuals to permanently make a role transition out of the sex trade whereas others are unable to do so? Additionally, how are exited sex worker’s situations changed (positively or negatively) by leaving behind their work role in the sex trade?

1. Purpose of This Study

This thesis aims to fill the gap in the sociological literature on role exit, particularly with regard to stigmatized work roles. It focuses on those individuals who have accomplished the task of exiting the sex trade. In doing so, this study attempts to understand the dynamics of the exiting process by examining experiences of former sex trade workers in one medium-sized Canadian metropolitan area- the Capital Regional District (CRD) of British Columbia (BC).

The central goal of this research then is to discern those factors which best explain why some individuals are able to permanently leave the sex trade behind. In doing so, this study will uncover the factors that are most influential in assisting as well as impeding the exit. In addition, drawing from a previous study of sex trade workers in the CRD (Benoit and Millar, 2001), a sample of those currently active in the sex trade will be utilized as a comparison group throughout this study in order examine what, if anything, differentiates those that have retired from the sex trade from those still employed. This thesis attempts to answer the following research questions:

- What personal characteristics, family background, work-related activities, and contextual and health-related factors are most influential in terms of explaining why certain individuals are able to make the transition out of the sex trade, where others are unable to/decide not to do so?
- What are the major advantages and challenges that these individuals face both in attempting to leave and after finally making the transition?

Focusing on the experiences of exited sex workers, a central concern of this study is in conducting research that is of relevance to the needs of the sex worker community.

As Pyett notes regarding the responsibility of the researcher within community-based research: “researchers have a responsibility to give back to the communities we research— not only by sharing our findings and validating their experiences, but also, through collaboration, by increasing the skills and the confidence of people with whom we are researching” (1998, 374). This research was conducted in collaboration with PEERS (Prostitutes Empowerment and Education Resource Society), a non-profit community outreach organization staffed mainly by former sex workers, community activists and volunteers.

2. Definitions

Before examining the relevant theoretical and empirical literature on role exiting and the sex trade, it may be useful to clarify the important concepts which inform this research. Defining clear and concise terms is important because it indicates to the reader how a particular phenomenon has been conceptualized in the work at hand and communicates the direction of the research.

Sex Work and Sex Worker

This research is informed by an understanding of activity in the sex trade as an occupation, as a form of work. Thus, this research considers exiting the sex trade as an occupational or work role change. Although not commonly conceptualized as an occupational category, sex as work is often compared with other low-status, low skill service jobs (Lewis and Maticka-Tyndale, 1999a). The term “sex worker” then is adopted as opposed to “prostitute”, which stigmatizes by invoking stereotypical images of a defiled individual who debases herself for economic gain (Shrage, 1994). Accurate analyses of sex work, its social status and how it is organized within contemporary society needs to keep in mind the diverse manifestations that comprise the world of prostitution. While the exchange of sex for money or kind is a necessary part of it, sex work takes place amidst a multitude of activities (from prostitution to escort to stripping, etc.) and relationships (for instance, working for one’s self versus employed or managed by another) each of which is socially constructed and structured by issues of gender, race

and class (Phoenix, 1995). Thus, in conceptualizing a definition of sex work, this research adopts a point of view similar to that expressed by Alexander:

I have come to see that prostitution is many things, and cannot be viewed from only one point of view...In any case, prostitution, by definition is the exchange of sexual services for money. Some prostitution is forced, and forced prostitution is clearly rape combined with kidnapping and perhaps brainwashing. At the other end of the spectrum, there are women who make a clear decision to work as prostitutes, a few because they enjoy sex and have no qualms about enjoying sex as work (1987, 15-16).

Viewed in this light, the sex trade is comparable to forms of service work that are found within high income countries such as Canada involving a bundle of tasks, which for a fee are done directly to please the recipient of the service (customer/client), or indirectly to fulfill the expectations of an employer (manager/boss) overseeing the delivery of the services rendered.

Exited Sex Worker

The exiting of a role that is central to one's identity is a process that takes place over time; very rarely does it occur as the result of a single sudden decision (Ebaugh, 1988). There is no exact timeline which specifies what constitutes an "exited" sex worker. For the purposes of this research project, former sex workers are defined as those individuals who have been out of the sex trade for a minimum of at least two years. It is believed that those who have been out of the trade for two years would have permanently exited that way of life. At the time this research was conducted, discussion with consultants at PEERS revealed that a two-year period is a time frame they followed when hiring ex-sex workers for employment positions within their organization. Furthermore, the majority of subjects interviewed for Mansson and Hedin's 1999 qualitative study on women who had left prostitution had been out of the sex trade for more than three years. However a small number of their respondents had left the sex trade less than two years previously and were not regarded as fully exited. Regarding this group, Mansson and Hedin note that these former sex workers "had yet to make a complete break and were still winding up the process" (1999, 70).

3. Organization of Thesis

This thesis has been divided into eight chapters. This chapter has provided an introduction to the research topic, and significance of the sociological concept of role exit, as well as a brief overview of the social dynamics of the sex trade. Chapter two moves into an in-depth review of the theoretical and empirical literature role exiting the sex trade. This chapter considers what it means to exit a role and leave behind this line of work. Following this, chapter three takes a closer look at the dynamics of the sex trade in the literature as it relates to exiting. Chapter four then presents a model of exiting the sex trade and outlines the research process, describing the methodologies utilized within this study. Chapter five provides an introduction to the research findings and presents the demographics of the sample before moving into a discussion of family background and working conditions while in the sex trade. Research findings are further presented in chapter six in which the health and well-being of exited sex workers is examined. Chapter seven concludes the research findings with a discussion of exiting the sex trade and the central challenges exited sex workers face. The final chapter will provide a summary of the research findings and discussion on the situations of exited respondents in relation to that of the sociological literature. Following, a bibliography and additional appendices are included.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature: Role Exit and Sex Work

While leaving social roles is commonplace for many people in Canada and other high income countries today, most of the sociological literature has focused traditionally on how individuals are socialized from one role to another, with an emphasis on entrance into a new role and the subsequent changes in role expectations and status shifts. As a consequence, very little research has dealt with the exit dimension of role change, and in particular, what it means to not only exit from a role central to one's identity, but also to establish a new identity after a major role change. This chapter provides an overview of theories on role transition/exiting before moving on to the literature on breaking away from the sex trade and long term consequences of sex trade involvement.

1. Role Exit Theory

Although the concept of role exit has received little scholarly attention, the works of Blau (1973), followed by Ebaugh (1984, 1988) are important to the conceptualization of role exit as a general social process. Theorizing on role exit, both scholars have focused on the general social processes involved regardless of specific circumstances and situations, thus concentrating on the many similarities that make it possible to talk of a process of *role transition*. Blau's early study on role leaving in reference to old age and widowhood, was the first to introduce the idea of "role exit" as a social process: "role exit occurs whenever any stable pattern of interaction and shared activities between two or more persons ceases. 'Loss', 'separation', 'departure', and 'ending' are terms that signify exit from a social role" (1973, 210). Blau's work further points out the important effect role changes can have on one's self-identity. For Blau, with each significant role change an individual experiences, there are alterations in self-concept, mood, in one's self identity:

Personal identity is not merely the sum of roles played but also the self-image formed while performing them. Identity evolves, to some degree, with each role change; self-integrity is jeopardized at every role exit and at every role entrance (1973, 211-212).

Blau's analysis of role changes in relation to old age is important for showing that role exits, as well as role entrances, are closely related to self identity since the roles an individual performs are incorporated into one's self-definition. As such, each time the individual enters or exits a role that is central to this self-definition, identity is threatened.

Helen Rose Ebaugh's work is a more recent contribution to the literature on role exit. Ebaugh, who exited from her role as a Catholic nun in the 1970s and ultimately became a sociologist, researched the process that nuns go through when they decide to abandon their vows (1984). In the course of interviewing ex-nuns, Ebaugh became aware that there were significant similarities in their exiting experiences, characterized by "stages" or sequences of events (1984). Later she studied a variety of other role changes, including occupational role exits as well as those people who had exited highly stigmatized roles such as ex-convicts, ex-alcoholics and ex-sex workers. Although Ebaugh identified a number of properties of the role exit process that influence the nature and consequence of the exit, she was able to formulate a general theory of role exit as a social process. She argued that despite significant differences, her process model is generalizable across different role exits. Ebaugh notes: "Regardless of the types of roles being departed, there are underlying similarities and variables that make role exit unique and definable as a social process" (1988, 2).

Ebaugh's stage model of "becoming an ex" provides a conceptual framework for understanding the experiences of exiters in leaving behind a major social role. For Ebaugh, role exit is, conceptualized as "the process of disengagement from a role that is central to one's self-identity and the reestablishment of an identity in a new role that takes into account one's ex-role" (1988, 1). Role exit is conceptualized as a sociologically unique social process involving disengagement, disidentification, and resocialization into a new role. In removing oneself from the social expectations of a certain role, an individual is simultaneously disengaging from the people and the social relations involved with the previous status. In dissociating with the values, expectations, social relations and lifestyle of a particular role, individuals eventually stop associating

their self-identity with the role being exited. Simultaneous to disengaging and disidentifying with a certain role, individuals are learning and being socialized into a new one. Fundamental to the exiting process is how the previously role impacts upon the new identity of the individual. With the exit of a role the person retains “leftovers” of the previous role as past identification lingers on. Successfully establishing a new role involves merging aspects of the past identity with that of the new. Challenges arise when society will not give up an individual’s previous identity, and they continue to be regarded on the basis of who they used to be. As such, exes must continually deal with the images society holds of these previous roles.

Ebaugh’s framework for role exit consists of four consecutive stages and provides a useful tool for conceptualizing the actions and experiences involved in leaving behind a role as well as establishing one anew. An initial stage of *First Doubts* arise as an individual begins to question their commitment to an existing role. Conscious feelings of dissatisfaction, doubt regarding the role and its expectations come into the fore.

After experiencing doubts, the individual begins to *Seek Alternatives*. Although seeking out and evaluating alternatives may be deliberate or spontaneous process, may also be evidenced by conscious cueing (behavior signifying discontent within the current role), shifting reference groups (anticipatory socialization in which the individual begins to identify with the values and norms associated with a new role), and finally role rehearsal. As such, there comes a point in process when the individual makes a definitive decision, usually the resultant of some *Turning Point*, whether or not to exit. Regarding this third stage, Ebaugh notes, “A turning point is an event that mobilizes and focuses awareness that old lines of action are complete, have failed, have been disrupted, or are no longer personally satisfying and provides individuals with the opportunity to do something different with there lives” (1988, 123).

The final stage of *creating the ex-role* occurs when the individual has broken free of their previously held role and begins the process of creating a new identity. Establishing oneself in a new role involves struggling to become psychologically disentangled from the previous role. Ebaugh’s description of this final stage clarifies what distinguishes role exit from other theories on role transition:

The ex-role constitutes a unique sociological phenomena in that the expectations, norms, and identities associated with it do not so much consist in what one is currently doing but rather stem from expectations, social obligations, and norms related to one's previous role. In a very real sense, the process of becoming an ex involves tension between one's past, present, and future. One's previous role identification has to be taken into account and incorporated into a future identity" (1988, 149).

In addition to dealing with "role residual" as portions of the previous identity linger on, there are other factors an individual must address in completing the role exit process. These include: the presentation of self in terms of the new identity; dealing with societal reactions and how they are viewed by others; intimacies; changing social networks; and, relating to both former group members as well as to other exes.

Ebaugh's model on a general social process of role exit provides a useful framework for understanding the processes involved in leaving a role by creating an ex-role. It is Ebaugh's claim that there are numerous similarities in the process of role leaving and the reestablishment of identity after a major role change, and therefore, such a model should be applicable to all role exits. Several studies have in fact examined the applicability of Ebaugh's general model of role exit to specific types of role departures. For instance, Drahotka and Eitzen utilize such a model to understand the exit process of professional athletes (1998). Regarding Ebaugh's role exit theory, the authors conclude that such a model is extremely useful in understanding the exiting experiences of former professional athletes, but that several modifications are needed in order to fit the unique case of the ex-athlete. Among other things, Drahotka and Eitzen note that, "The characteristic that Ebaugh did not identify in Stage 4, but that appears to be crucial in explaining the unique adjustments that athletes face as they experience role exit is the "addiction" and subsequent "withdrawal" from being a part of the game" (1998, 274).

Other researchers have also tested the applicability of Ebaugh's role exit theory to stigmatized roles such as ex-drug addicts (Anderson and Bondi, 1998) and those who have exited criminal careers (Brown, 1996). While the authors of these two studies also found Ebaugh's model to be a useful framework for analyzing role exits from stigmatized roles, they suggest the need for modification to her general exit theory in order to fit their individual case studies. For instance, Brown suggests that the reestablishment of an

identity in a new role may not necessarily be individually initiated as is depicted in Ebaugh's model as the individual "seeks alternatives" by voluntarily explores other roles (1996). He notes how many of those exiting criminal careers are compelled or even forced into therapy, and as such, "their alternatives are prescribed through their resocialization into a new identity" (1996, 446). Exploring gender and race variations in the process of exiting a "drug-addict role", Anderson and Bondi's research challenges existing role exit models in two major ways. First, in terms of gender and racial differences, the exiting experiences of ex-addicts often did not conform to Ebaugh's stage model. The authors found that many respondents, especially Black females, did not report the occurrence of epiphanic moment or "turning point" in the process of exiting from drug addiction. Rather the authors suggest the need to consider such factors as gender socialization, cultural diversity and the history of race relations in order to accurately depict the particular role exit process of drug addicts. Second, in challenging role exit models, Anderson and Bondi note, "we found that the often implicit assumptions that such models make about the sequencing and linearity of processes in everyday life are problematic" (1998, 170). The drug addict's exit process is characterized by frequent relapse. Thus, rather than an orderly flow between seeking out alternatives and leaving the role, many drug addicts will long vacillate between drug use and abstinence for long periods before exiting, if they are able to do so at all.

In sum, by linking the patterns and experiences of individuals leaving major roles, Ebaugh's role exit model provides a useful framework for understanding a general theory of exit behavior and role change. Findings from other research, however, have suggested the need for modifications to Ebaugh's model. Studies have found that a general model of role exit to be inadequate at depicting the unique and specific characteristics of particular roles. Thus, while Ebaugh's model provides a useful starting point, it remains to be seen how accurately it applies to the sex trade and to the exiting experiences of former sex workers, the group that are the focus of this thesis. Specifically, are their properties of the sex worker role that make leaving the sex trade a process that significantly differs from other occupational role exits? In order to answer this question, a closer look needs to be taken of former sex workers and their experiences in both exiting the trade as well as the life situations they face afterwards. The following section

turns now to the literature on those who have left the sex trade in an attempt to describe and analyze the course of individuals' break with sex work.

2. Leaving the Sex Trade

While much research has been conducted on the sex trade in general (although mainly focusing on the most visible aspect of the trade, street prostitution), very few researchers have sought to examine how and why individuals finally decide to leave and the long-term consequences sex trade work may have upon those who have left.

Although systemic literature on former sex workers is lacking, one notable exception is Swedish social workers Mansson and Hedin's 1999 qualitative study of 23 women leaving the sex trade. From a socio-psychological research orientation, the authors focus on the agents and factors of individual change (i.e. individual turning points, exit behaviors) in order to describe why and how the women studied eventually left the sex trade. Mansson and Hedin present what they term an integrated "exit model" for individuals leaving the sex trade, which combines: (1) material and structural resources, including employment, housing, education and welfare benefits; (2) situational factors, including "turning points" such as eye-opening, traumatic, or positive life events; (3) interpersonal relationships, including the role of the individual's social networks during the process of change; and, (4) individual factors, such as internal drives and abilities, which influence an individual's exit course. While Mansson and Hedin note the interplay between various influencing factors, they argue that an individual's success in leaving the sex trade is significantly dependent upon available driving forces and resources, most importantly personal capabilities, adaptation and coping strategies (1999). Thus, for Mansson and Hedin, the exit process is to a significant extent self-dependent. The authors conclude that two general patterns characterize exit from sex work, namely, *stagnation* and *development*: "For some women, the break with prostitution has been a social dead end, and for others it has meant a new and better life" (1999, 75).

While few other scholars have specifically studied those who have permanently left the sex trade, some research has suggested the importance of exiting by noting the

complexity and difficulty that can be associated with such a process. For instance, in a study conducted by the Committee for Sexually Exploited Youth in the CRD, one sex worker who was interviewed for the project noted that, "The temptation to go back to trading sexual favors is there as relationships are difficult afterwards and there are little things that are hard to forget" (1997, 37). Similarly, Benoit and Millar's study uncovered similar findings (2001). In discussing why they had returned to the sex trade after an attempt to exit, respondents talked about the difficulty associated with leaving the lifestyle behind and the lures or "pulls" of working in the industry, in which money was the main motivating factor. Another recent study on the sex trade in Victoria also highlighted a number of obstacles impeding sex workers from leaving the sex trade. These include: lack of job skills, safe housing, adequate drug and alcohol services and counseling and social support (Carter and Walton, 2000).

For most individuals, the sex trade is not viewed as a lifetime career and some research has suggested that most workers are likely to remain in the sex trade for only a short period of time (Potterat et al. 1990). Other research however, indicates otherwise. Benoit and Millar (2001) found that the majority of their respondents could be considered "long-term" workers, having worked in the trade for five years or more. Similarly, as research conducted on the street trade in Winnipeg found, "[the] women seem to want out of their occupation at some point in time but see little support available to them in the community" (Elizabeth Fry Society, 1985, 8). Hoigard and Finstad likewise note regarding hopes for the future amongst the street sex workers they interviewed: "To save up a lot of money and then give up prostitution and live a normal middle class life is not a dream that is widely shared among the women. It is too unrealistic" (1987, 117).

For many individuals leaving the sex trade then, very few viable options outside the trade may be available, thus presenting a significant barrier to exiting permanently. Diana (1985) found that for many of the street workers he interviewed, there was a sense of futility with their current situation in the sex trade, a feeling of "what else can I do?". Such findings reveal that for many, the sex trade offers economic advantages that are not easily attainable in other forms of work. Further, such findings suggest the need to consider social and context-related factors such as financial need and social support as important within the exiting process.

3. Impact of Sex Work

Not only can leaving the identity and way of life behind be a difficult and often lengthy process, but some research has also alluded to the challenges former sex workers face after leaving and the long-term impact the sex trade can potentially have on the individual. For sex workers leaving “the life”, the period following exiting the role may be very difficult. Mansson and Hedin (1999) identify a number of significant life challenges individuals face following their break with sex work including, but not limited to, confronting and deal with one’s experiences in the sex trade, confronting the reactions of others and dealing with intimate and close relationships afterwards.

These findings are corroborated by some research on those currently working in the sex trade, which has demonstrated the long-term impact sex work can have on private relationships, and sexuality. It is the need to maintain emotional distance from work in the sex trade that creates an estrangement between self and feeling. As Vanwesenbeeck notes, “It seems that a certain skill in splitting off feelings (“switching over”) is a precondition to keep on doing it. This is because of its intrusive nature and the heavy emotional burden that comes with it” (1994, 107). Thus, some scholars suggest that this “estrangement” often has significant consequences for the individual sex worker. For example, European researchers McKeganey and Barnard (1996) and Hoigard and Finstad (1986) discuss the elaborate defense mechanisms or “distancing strategies” employed by sex workers in order to protect themselves from being damaged by the work they do. McKeganey and Barnard found that many of the sex workers they interviewed in Glasgow reported the need to use various “separation rituals” after work, such as changing clothes, using drugs and other relaxation techniques in order to create distance from their work roles (1996). They note that while these activities may not be unlike the kinds of things many other workers employ to leave work behind at the end of the day, “in the case of prostitution, however, they hold a special significance in serving to limit the impact of the women’s work on their sense of self and family life” (1996, 85). Sex workers also make use of various distancing strategies within their commercial sex encounters with clients. In addition to the use of condoms as a physical and

psychological barrier between worker and client, for many sex workers, the maintenance of distance involves “turning off” feelings and refusing the possibility of sexual pleasure or enjoyment of sex with clients (McKeganey and Barnard, 1996; Hoigard and Finstad, 1986). Thus, in order to protect their private lives, relations with customers are kept impersonal and the commercial sex encounter remains strictly an economic transaction. Many other sex workers, not unlike other service workers, impersonalize the client-customer exchange by making use of surface acting, such as “pretending” to care for client (Hochschild, 1983). Sex workers also may refuse to perform certain sexual services, such as restricting kissing or oral sex for only non-commercial contact (McKeganey and Barnard, 1996).

As this research suggests, sex work may entail the “management of a stigmatized identity”, often involving the need to maintain a strict separation between work and private life. Yet McKeganey and Barnard suggest that despite efforts otherwise, the likelihood of a spill over between work and private lives is high, indicating that the divorce from the prostitute identity is not always complete (1996). As the authors state: “The degree to which the women were actually successful in retaining an absolute distinction should perhaps be seen more as an ideal than a reality” (McKeganey and Barnard, 1996, 83). Similarly Hoigard and Finstad (1986), in their discussion of “life after prostitution”, focus on the long-term, destructive effects of sex work in relation to the defensive strategies workers develop to maintain distinction between work and their private lives. These authors suggest that while these distancing strategies provide important defense mechanisms while working in the trade, they do not provide adequate long-term protection for the former worker in terms of sexuality and emotional health. This “delayed damage” may be seen in a diminished self-esteem, an inability to enjoy sex, and a deep-seeded bitterness and self-contempt towards men (Hoigard and Finstad, 1986; Mansson and Hedin, 1999).

In addition to having significant consequences for one’s sexuality, research has also suggested the consequent impact sex work has on individual’s private life and relationships. For instance, in discussing their socialization experiences, many of the exotic dancers Lewis (1998) interviewed discuss how unprepared they were for the negative impact dancing has had on their personal lives and private relationships.

Similarly, McKeganey and Barnard note, “The trading of sex for money can have direct repercussions for the private lives of women, particularly in their private sexual relationships with others” (1996, 82). The difficulty of developing a relationship may be due to the nature of sex work (i.e. a work situation that requires working long hours, often at night and continually interacting and servicing customers who workers often find unattractive or repulsive). According to these researchers, a similar problem has to do with the reactions of private partners to sex work. Because sex work undermines commonly held notions of sexual exclusivity in relationships, private partners often find it very difficult to accept the fact of what their partner does for a living. As McKeganey and Barnard found, “for many of the women’s partners the fact of prostitution had an undermining effect, causing resentment, jealousy, anger and sexual frustration” (1996, 95).

Other research however suggests that depending on the particular individual, sex work may not necessarily be damaging or difficult to leave behind. Dutch sociologist Ine Vanwesenbeeck’s work does not conceptualize all sex work as inherently damaging and destructive (1994). Although not explicitly dealing with exiting, her study sought to answer the question, “What are the conditions that make one woman have an enjoyable career in prostitution and another be ‘destroyed’ by it?” (1994, 1). In her study of 200 current and former sex workers, Vanwesenbeeck (1994) identifies three different groups of workers in terms of the effects prostitution has had on the individual. The first group, making up about a quarter of those interviewed, fared well as sex workers and exhibited average or better than average overall health in comparison to a control group who had no experience in the sex trade. A second, more heterogeneous group, made up half the sample. Although they held a somewhat “professional” attitude towards sex work, they were found to have poorer than average health. The final quarter of the sample consisted of sex workers who held negative attitudes towards prostitution, were heavily traumatized and exhibited extremely poor overall physical and psychological health in comparison to the non-sex worker group. Thus, while Vanwesenbeeck concludes, “prostitutes as a group, fare less well than other women” in the general population, she qualifies this by stating: “these findings do not imply that all prostitutes are not faring well. Large differences were found regarding well-being between the women studied” (1994, 108).

According to Vanwesenbeeck, then, it is the interplay of certain crucial interpersonal and structural factors that produce negative and unhealthy experiences in the sex trade. Based on her analysis, Vanwesenbeeck identifies five critical factors which influence how a sex worker fares in the trade in terms of overall health and job satisfaction (1994). First, childhood experiences seem to play a crucial role in determining how healthy/happy and individual is within the sex trade. Vanwesenbeeck talks about a “cycle of victimization” as significantly influencing one’s well-being in the sex trade: “childhood trauma makes victimization in private life more likely and victimization in private life is related to victimization on the job” (1994, 108). A history of having been victimized prior to entering the sex trade seems to determine to a large extent one’s experiences in the trade. Second, differing levels of financial need (whether because of differing responsibilities for household incomes or drug dependencies) also differentiate the levels of well-being among sex workers. Third, working conditions in the sex trade were found to significantly influence both levels of job satisfaction as well as overall health. For instance, Vanwesenbeeck suggests that those working in “unorganized” settings (on-street, at home, windows) as opposed to in more organized locations (agencies, clubs) on average, served more customers and earned less money per client, and as a result, tended to suffer more job insecurity, more stressful working conditions, and experience more violence by clients. Fourth, individual survival and internal coping strategies as well influence how well one fares within the sex trade. Last, the level of control enjoyed by the sex worker and her relations with clients (as well as others such as the presence or absence of a pimp), can have a significant impact upon experiences in the trade and subsequently, overall health with regards to condom use and risky sexual behavior.

4. Summary

Although a general social theory on role exit is a useful starting point from which to examine what it means to negotiate a major role change and deal with a past identity, it remains to be seen whether there are certain factors unique to the sex worker role that distinguish exiting from the sex trade. Although systemic research on individual’s break with sex work and their situation afterwards is lacking, some research on those currently

working has suggested the very real possibility of such a line of work having a significant impact on the individual in the long run. For some researchers, the destructive effect is due to the nature of sex work itself. As Hoigard and Findstad note, “Prostitution tears feelings out of the women’s bodies. The necessary emotional coldness from the public prostituted ‘self’ spreads and takes possession of large portions of the private ‘self’” (1987, 114).

Other research has suggested, however, the negative impact experienced by some sex workers has less to do with sex work per se, but rather depends upon the interplay of specific structural, economic, interpersonal and individual factors. As Vanwesenbeeck (1994) has shown, it is the interaction between these crucial factors which, in the end, determine how well or how poorly individuals fare in the sex trade and in their life situations after exiting. As such, what factors may hinder or assist the exiting process and what, if any, may be the long-term health and other consequences of sex work for the exited individual remains a pertinent question to be answered by this research.

In order to take a closer look at how individual characteristics, family and background factors, health and well-being, and work and context-related factors impact those working in and leaving the sex trade, the following chapter presents a review of the relevant research literature on the sex industry.

Chapter 3: Review of Theoretical and Empirical Literature on the Sex Trade

To analyze prostitution unavoidably raises both the ongoing specter of gendered oppression in patriarchal societies and our often-schizophrenic- part-acknowledged, part tabooed- passions about sex: in combination, the two may evoke highly ambivalent and disconcerting sets of reactions.

- Lynn Chancer, 1993

This chapter provides an overview of the two bodies of literature that permeates research on the sex trade. Much of the empirical research on the sex trade is informed by a social work/social problem orientation. Viewed as socially problematic and inherently exploitative for the individual, research within this orientation is concerned mainly with the personal characteristics and family backgrounds factors that influence entry into the trade, as well as the numerous social and health risks and consequences associated with sex work. Other research coming from a sex trade as work perspective takes the view that sex work is an occupation not unlike many other jobs and should be investigated as such. Shifting attention away from the individual, focus is directed towards the level of larger contextual factors- the wider economic, legal, and social forces- which operate to produce variability and impact individual experience within the sex trade. In doing so, research from this second perspective emphasizes the heterogeneity of the sex industry and those who work within it.

While neither of these two perspectives found within the sociological literature on the sex trade are mutually exclusive or exhaustive, they differ significantly in terms of orientation and focus of research. As such, both make important contributions to an understanding of the personal and social realities of sex trade workers, and of sex work within contemporary Canadian society. Consideration of research findings from both perspectives highlights a range of factors that may potentially impact upon the work situations and experiences of those working in and trying to leave the trade.

1. Personal Characteristics and Entry into the Sex Trade

Much research on the sex trade has focused on what it is that motivates a person (typically, a female) to take part in what is socially viewed as an extremely deviant activity. Focusing on the individual actor rather than the act itself, such research often pathologizes sex workers as victims, viewing them as psychologically scarred. In attempting to describe the “psycho-social profile” of sex workers, focus is directed towards personal biographies and background characteristics as responsible for motivating individuals to enter into and work in the sex trade.

While the possible antecedents into sex trade activity are numerous and complex, previous research reports that the common causes and motivating factors contributing to an individual’s entry into the sex trade include the following: history of trauma, including sexual and physical abuse, coupled with a lack of family and social support (Silbert and Pines, 1981; 1982a); parental absence or neglect (Bagley and Young, 1987); low self-esteem and isolation (Silbert and Pines, 1982a; 1982b); runaway/homelessness (Nadon et al. 1998; Committee for Sexually Exploited Youth in the CDR, 1997; Earls and David, 1990); and drug and/or alcohol addiction (Green et al. 1993; de Graaf et al. 1995). From this view, an individual’s entrance into the sex trade is typically conceptualized as “a cycle of victimization”, characterized by a disturbed and chaotic early family environment. Bagley and Young’s study typifies this characterization:

The model of entry to prostitution which has emerged from this study is something as follows. Family disruption and family violence undermine children’s capacity to avoid prevalent sexual and physical assaults. Sexually abused children act out in various ways; physically abused children react by running. Children who have been both physically and sexually abused are doubly at risk. On the streets these traumatized children have little psychological strength to resist the predators who lead them into drug and prostitution subcultures. The girl who finally tries prostitution is one who is already degraded and demoralized, in a state of psychological bondage, with grossly diminished self-confidence (1990, 23).

Viewed from this light, entrance into sex work is seen to be motivated much more by an attempt to avoid or escape a negative situation, than by an attraction to the work itself (Silbert and Pines, 1982a). As such, the decision to enter into the sex trade is typically seen as a non-choice: “the majority of teenage prostitutes can hardly be said to

exercise free choice in choosing this particular ‘profession’” (Bagley and Young, 1987, 10). In short, the sex trade is often viewed as a survival strategy for many individuals who find themselves within very difficult life circumstances; the decision to trade sex for money or in kind becomes an undesirable means to a necessary end.

2. Health and Well-being

Research from a “sex trade as social problem perspective” has similarly sought to demonstrate the enormous physical, sexual, emotional and mental health toll working within such a marginalized and stigmatized setting tends to have on the individual involved. The health and well-being of sex workers has mainly been addressed in terms of individual pathology, and as such, is investigated as an explanation of involvement in the sex trade (Vanwesenbeeck, 1994). It has been reported that poor social factors in addition to a high-risk lifestyle, in which drug abuse is often prevalent, greatly increase the health risks associated with sex work. Thus, this line of research directs attention to and emphasizes the wide range of social and health pathologies that are associated with the sex trade. Four related health problems are commonly highlighted within this perspective.

a. The Sex Trade and Sexual Health

Within a social problem perspective, discussion on the public health risks and impact of sex work has largely been directed towards sexual health matters. In particular, much attention has been given to the public health risks associated with the sex trade, particularly in regard to the potential for the spread of HIV/AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). While current research on the seroprevalence rates amongst sex workers in Europe and North America has shown that HIV infection in the population of non-drug using sex workers is low (McKeganey and Barnard, 1992; Scambler et al. 1990), such findings cannot be interpreted to mean that sex workers are not at risk. It is argued that the type of sex work engaged in, as well as the kind and frequency of sexual services provided to clients is likely to influence risk practices (Jackson et al. 1992; Jackson and Highcrest, 1996). For instance, research has shown that

injection drug users who support their habit by selling sex, particularly those who share needles or syringes, are at substantial risk of not only contracting the HIV/AIDS virus, but also for other blood-borne sexually transmitted infections such as Hepatitis B (Campbell, 1991; de Graaf et al. 1995; Pyett et al. 1996).

In addition to increased risk with injection drug use, the use of condoms is considered the primary factor influencing the transmission of sexual transmitted infections. While much research has shown a high degree of regularity of condom use in sex worker/client contacts (Day and Ward, 1997; Weeks et al. 1998), several factors can influence the frequency and consistency of condom usage within the commercial sexual exchange. Research has shown that an increased risk of HIV infection is associated with: condom failure, either unintentional or when deliberately broken by clients (McKeganey and Barnard, 1992; Scambler et al. 1990); condom non-use with “regular” clients (Vanwesenbeeck et al. 1993; Jackson and Highcrest, 1996); when financial need is acute (Jackson et al. 1992; Scambler et al. 1990); and, in situations in which condom may be beyond a worker’s control, such as with violent customers or third party abuse (Barnard, 1993). Thus, sex workers may find themselves in situations in which they are relatively powerless to insist upon condom use and may be unable to negotiate safer sex. As McKeganey and Barnard found, there were times during their field research when it was clear that unprotected sex had been forcibly imposed upon the female street workers. As well, it has been reported that concurrent infections or a history of sexually transmitted infections further increases one’s susceptibility to HIV infection (Weiner, 1996, Campbell, 1991).

Sex workers are not only at potential risk of infection through commercial sexual encounters, but may also be at risk of contracting HIV through their private relationships. Despite a high degree of regularity of condom use in sex worker/client contacts, unsafe sexual practices have been found to be more common with private partners (Pyett et al. 1996; Campbell, 1991; Green et al. 1993). For instance, of the 68 street sex workers McKeganey and Barnard (1992) interviewed, only two women reported to consistently using condoms with their private partners. Explanations for the high rates of non-condom use with private partners are well documented and relate primarily to the need of sex worker’s to differentiate their work from their private lives (Pyett, et al. 1996). It is

suggested that the desire for such a separation stems from a need to protect one's personal identity and private life from the stigma associated with sex work. As Jackson and Highcrest note,

For many prostitutes, the use of condoms at work create a separation between themselves and the client. Condoms represent both a physical and a psychological barrier, and therefore, when having sexual relations with a husband or lover, there is a need to remove the barrier in order to forge a bond of intimacy (1996, 157).

Similar to many others in intimate relationships, sex workers may not view their sexual relations with private partners as possible sources of HIV infection from which they need to protect themselves. As trust is established and the intimate relationship progresses, the use of condoms becomes less likely, and other, less obtrusive forms of birth, which do not protect against sexually transmitted infections are often chosen, control such as the Pill. In this sense, sex workers do not deviate significantly from heterosexual relationships within the general population (McKeganey and Barnard, 1992). Nonetheless, as much research has shown, it is condom non-use with lovers and relationship partners, particularly if they are injection drug users themselves (Green et al. 1993), that may present the greatest risk of sexually-transmitted infection.

In addition to risk of HIV, researchers have also argued that sex trade activity increases the propensity of other STIs and related sexual health problems, including higher incidences of cervical cancer and hysterectomies compared to those in the general population (Weeks et al. 1998; Ward et al. 1993; Elizabeth Fry Society, 1985). For instance, 32% of street prostitutes in London reported ever having a sexually transmitted infection (Gossop et al. 1995), while slightly less, 20% of brothel workers in Australia reported to having had an STI at some point in their career (Pyett et al. 1996). As well, higher incidences of sexually transmitted infections have been reported among male, transsexual and transvestite sex workers (Ward and Day, 1997).

b. The Sex Trade and Emotional Health

A key area of neglect within research on the sex trade has been the issue of mental or emotional health and well-being. Most research on the health risks and dangers associated with sex work has been limited in focus to sexual health matters and in doing

so, has ignored the mental and emotional health of workers. Some researchers have, however, drawn attention to psychological and emotional problems as additional health hazards posed by sex work (Farley and Barkan, 1998; Carr, 1995, Benoit and Millar, 2001). For instance, a study conducted by the Committee for Sexually Exploited Youth in the CRD on street-involved youth found that a range of psychological conditions were common, including frequent bouts of depression, Attention Deficit Disorder, eating disorders and Schizophrenia (1997). Previous research has also highlighted an association between history of abuse, the sex trade and poor mental health (Bagley and Young, 1987, Benoit and Millar, 2001). For instance, Benoit and Millar's findings indicate that the poor mental health statuses and low levels of self-esteem exhibited by respondents were related not only to being marginalized and stigmatized as workers, but also were also associated with early childhood experiences that included frequent household change, abuse and neglect (2001). Similarly, emphasizing the effect working within the sex trade has on mental health, Farley and Barkan (1998), report that 68% of the sex workers they interviewed met criteria for a clinical diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. They conclude that the severity of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder experienced by sex workers was significantly associated with childhood sexual and physical assault, rape and other sexual or physical assault while working in the sex trade (Farley and Barkan, 1998). Similarly, Vanwesenbeek (1994) as well has found that dissociation in people working as sex workers to be significantly related to both experience of childhood violence and violence incurred in the sex trade. Such findings indicate that the health needs of sex workers extend far beyond sexual and other physical health matters.

c. Violence and Health

Many studies focusing on the inherent risks associated with sex work have discussed the link between violence and the sex trade and highlight certain commonalities between the position of the female sex worker and that of women in general within Canadian society. Researchers contend that sexual and/or physical violence, as well as safety concerns, further introduces potential health hazards to individuals working within the sex trade. Studies report that the occupational “dangers” sex workers potentially have

to deal with are widespread, ranging from robbery and fraud to harassment to emotional and verbal abuse to physical and sexual assault including rape and even murder.

Research findings have shown that tricks (clients) are most often the persons responsible for incidences of victimization and harassment against sex workers (Lowman and Fraser, 1995; McKeganey and Barnard, 1996). For instance, 98% of street workers interviewed in the Vancouver Downtown Eastside/Strathcona Community reported that they had been victims of violence as a result of a "bad date" with a client (Currie, 1995).

While clients are the primary perpetrators of this violence, sex workers may also experience victimization at the hands of boyfriends/partners, pimps and other sex workers, the police and even the general public. For instance, recalling experiences of emotional and verbal abuse, one sex worker recalled being "threatened in public a lot humiliated on a daily basis. Just standing on the street- people have something against prostitutes" (Committee for Sexually Exploited Youth in the CRD, 1997, 9). Sex workers are also unlikely to report incidences of violence committed against them to the police. Many sex workers do not trust the police and feel that they would get little help from them (Miller, 1993a). As well, many sex workers have reported being harassed and victimized by the police themselves. As one notes, "As if I'd report a bad date to the police...the bad date was a cop" (Quoted in Currie, 1995, 37). Put another way, the criminalization of sex work often alienates sex workers from the protective service of the police, thus providing sex workers with little recourse under the law when they are victimized.

The threat of violence as a hazard of one's job is dependent upon the conditions under which one works and therefore is not uniform throughout the trade. It has consistently been found that, due to the conditions under which they work, in most cases alone at night and hidden from public view, street workers are at greater risk to violence and physical injury than those located in the off-street trade (Lowman and Fraser, 1995; Farley and Barkan, 1998; McKeganey and Barnard, 1996). In their examination of the incidence of violence against those in the sex trade in Vancouver, Lowman and Fraser (1995) found that a much larger proportion of street respondents compared to off-street reported that they had at one point in their careers been robbed, sexually assaulted, beaten, strangled, or kidnapped. McKeganey and Barnard, in their 1996 ethnographic

study of street prostitution in Glasgow, likewise noted that on-the-job violence was considered commonplace, a normal part of the trade by those interviewed. The commonality of victimization amongst those working the streets has prompted some scholars to conclude that, “[d]espite the plethora of media attention which has been focused on prostitution as a result of concerns over the spread of HIV, the greatest risk to the health of such women...comes not from a deadly virus but from the violent actions of many of their clients” (McKeganey and Barnard, 1996, 3).

d. Drug and Alcohol Use

Much research has concentrated on the link between drug and alcohol abuse and the sex trade, and the associated health risks involved. Illicit drug and/or heavy alcohol use has also been described as commonplace amongst certain groups of sex workers, particularly those working on the streets (Miller, 1995; Pyett et al. 1996; McKeganey and Barnard, 1996). For example, Currie (1995) found that 94% of on-street sex workers interviewed in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside/Strathcona community reported using illicit drugs or alcohol within the last six months. Similarly, McKeganey and Barnard (1996) estimate that in the first year of their study, 72% of the street-involved women they had contact with were injection drug users, with the proportion rising to 75% in the second year of the study. On the other hand, Pyett’s study of individuals working in an off-street venue (legalized brothel), found that only 27% reported ever injecting drugs (1996). This suggests the importance of taking into account variability within the sex trade when discerning the impact drug use and abuse has on workers’ health.

Illicit drug use has been found to have an enormous impact on the working lives and health of many on-street sex workers. While substance use and abuse has a direct impact on physical health and well-being, this research suggests that drug and alcohol use can also indirectly impact sex workers who are more likely to engage in riskier sex practices. Illicit drug use has been found to influence the likelihood of condom use (de Graaf et al. 1995; Weeks et al. 1998), increase sex workers’ vulnerability to financial or physical coercion (McKeganey and Barnard, 1996; Vanwesenbeek, 1994), and increase the likelihood of HIV infection with needle sharing and other risky drug-related behaviors (Gossop et al. 1995). In terms of direct effects on physical health, Carr notes

that the main presenting health problems of a sample of on-street sex workers accessing a drop-in center in Amsterdam were drug related and that “prostitute-related conditions” were seen as secondary to these (1995). As well, Green et al. found that injection-related pathologies were the main reasons for sex workers’ attendance at a drop-in health centre in Glasgow where they were interviewed (1993).

3. Working Experiences in the Sex Trade

Drawing from premises of the Prostitutes’ Rights Movement, a small, distinctive body of research has emerged, which shifts attention away from a reliance on an individualistic, social problem approach to the sex trade by instead focusing on the actual social contact that embeds the sex trade. Adopting a vocabulary of work, the sex trade from this second perspective is viewed as an occupation, as “a business transaction: there must be a buyer and a seller, a commodity offered and a contracted price” (Scambler et al. 1990, 261). St. James and Alexander’s conception of sex work is similar:

A rather profound misconception that people have about prostitution is that it is ‘sex for sale’, or that a prostitute is selling her body. In reality, a prostitute is being paid for her time and skill, the price being rather dependent on both variables. To make a great distinction between being paid for an hour’s sexual services, or an hour’s typing, or an hour’s acting on a stage is to make a distinction that is not there (quoted in Jenness, 1990, 405).

From a “sex trade as work perspective” then, sex work is a way to make a living not unlike many other service jobs. For example, Brock (1998) demonstrates how the organization of sex work is in essence, very similar to other kinds of work situations women, particularly working class women find themselves with:

Prostitution is not so different from other jobs that women do in a social formation where race, class and gender, rather than individual choice and initiative, are the primary determinants of the kind of work one does” (13).

As a form of service work, sex work has both benefits and disadvantages, some features of which are shared with other service occupations (hairdresser, waitress, secretary, nurse, midwife, etc.), and other features that are likely to be unique to the sex trade itself.

a. Variability and Hierarchy of Sex Work

The sex trade takes place amidst a multitude of relationships and activities, ranging from expensive escort agencies, private brothels and independent sex work, to massage parlors, saunas and street work, each of which is structured by issues of gender, race and class (Day and Ward, 1997; Phoenix, 1995). Accurate analyses of how the sex trade is organized within contemporary society need to keep in mind the diverse manifestations that comprise the world of prostitution:

Issues of power and politics, as expressed in the lives of prostitute women, cannot be fully appreciated or understood until they are examined in their full diversity, multiplicity and complexity” (Phoenix, 1995, 65).

While many researchers and the public at large continue to view the sex trade as a social problem and sex workers as universally sexually-exploited, other research indicates that the sex trade is far more variable and complex. The volatility and heterogeneity of the sex trade itself, with its unpredictability and frequent changes in work locations, legal regulation, autonomy and rewards, therefore make it impossible to talk of sex work as a unified phenomena or as single body of experiences. In recognizing the highly variable nature of the sex work, attention to the social location of sex trade activities, as well as overall status of sex work within a particular geographic area/province/country becomes paramount:

Sex workers all perform erotic labor, but their accounts of that experience vary dramatically from the “happy hooker” to the “sex worker survivor”. The source of those differences may lie less in the “nature” of erotic labor than in the social location of the worker performing it and the conditions under which the work takes place (Chapkis, 1997, 98).

Much research has emphasized the importance of considering how differences in the social organization and working conditions within the sex trade operate to shape the individual experiences of sex workers. Research suggests that the sex trade is highly stratified along venue lines. While it has been estimated that on-street workers in any major centre across North America represent roughly only 20% of the total population of sex workers (Campbell, 1991; Jackson and Highcrest, 1996), there nevertheless seems to be an inverse relationship between public visibility of the sex work and its social status (Lowman, 1991).

Within the social hierarchy of the sex trade, street workers represent the lowest stratum of the trade. The actual working conditions of on-street workers have been found to be less grim than the stereotype suggests. For instance, in a review of recent field studies conducted on street prostitution in Canada, Shaver (1993) found that many street workers were independent, indicating that one of the most negative aspects of the street trade, the presence and influence of pimps, may be exaggerated. Nonetheless, street workers are significantly more likely to be under the control of pimps and as such, are more disadvantaged than other sex workers (Boritch, 1997). Due to the locations in which the on-street trade is conducted (for example, sometimes taking place in customer's cars, motel rooms, or even public places), on-street workers are thought to be subjected to more negative working conditions (Barnard, 1993). Studies have consistently shown that because of their public visibility, those working on the street face more harassment, violence (at the hands of "johns", police or the general public), are more vulnerable to arrest and, therefore, are more likely to be burdened with a criminal record (Lowman, 1991; Shaver, 1993).

Occupying a relatively higher social status are those sex workers working in indoor venues such as massage parlors or escort agencies, whose work largely remains hidden from public view. Indoor workers are less likely to be identified as sex workers by others and as a result are able to maintain a more respectable public image. While data on indoor sex workers is limited, it is believed that the rights of indoor workers are more extensive than are their counterparts working in the more visible street trade. Some scholars suggest that indoor workers are generally able to command higher fees than street workers, and thus receive higher payment for their work (Boritch, 1997). As well, sex workers located in escort agencies or other indoor venues, are thought to be less vulnerable to arrest and victimization, and enjoy safer, more stable work conditions (Lowman and Fraser, 1995; Pyett and Warr, 1997; Jackson et al. 1992; Lewis and Maticka-Tyndale, 1999a). However, many sex workers are unable to meet the higher standards associated with the indoor trade. As Lowman and Fraser note, "for most of the women at the low price end of the street trade (a large proportion of whom are also involved in injection drug use) there are no viable off-street venues" (1995, 132). Thus, while it is common for sex workers to move between various venues and work

occupations within the sex trade, higher status forms such as escort work, may be restricted for some individuals.

Emphasizing the variable nature of sex work, some researchers further emphasize how other factors such as class, race/ethnicity and length of time in the trade may distinguish individual choice in the sex trade. For instance in the United States, Black sex workers often receive less status than white workers (Chapkis, 1997), while a similar situation has been reported for Aboriginal sex workers in Canada (Brock, 1998). Thus, social status and ethnicity can significantly influence the choices a worker has: “Class position not only influences a worker’s ability to screen out undesirable clients and refuse dangerous services, but also determines the ease with which a women will be able to transition out of sex work into other forms of employment” (Chapkis, 1997, 100). Those working in more privileged positions within the sex trade are often able to capitalize on their time in the sex trade in order to save money and get out, while those who are most socially and economically marginal are unlikely to be unable to.

Current research on the sex trade in the CRD suggests that a large proportion of sex workers are independently employed (Benoit and Millar, 2001). Although not a homogenous group, self-employed sex workers, often working out of their own homes are able to exercise a great deal of control over the details of their work such as price of labor, their net earnings, pace of work, choice of clientele and sex activities they perform (Benoit and Millar, 2001). Thus, those working independently out of their own home are often able to retain more control over the details of their work than many other workers in “straight jobs”. In general, because they tend to cater to clients who are better off, and often specialize in more diverse sexual requirements (for example, domination), these sex workers are often able to command substantial fees and therefore earn significantly more than other groups of sex workers (Davidson, 1995; 1998). Many build up a regular clientele, which provides a more steady and reliable source of income than is associated with other forms of sex work. As well, in terms of safety and health, the self-employed sex worker is at less risk of violence and victimization (at the hands of clients and the police), and because they are able to exercise a great deal of control over the details of transactions with clients, are also less vulnerable than either on-street or escort and massage parlor workers in terms of risk of sexually transmitted infections (Davidson,

1995). Summarizing the more lucrative conditions enjoyed by “Desiree” a self-employed sex worker, Davidson notes:

Unlike the majority of workers, Desiree has chosen, designed and owns the physical environment she works in. She plans and controls all aspects of her business; where and how to advertise, who to employ and what tasks to assign them, the pricing system, what services are and are not on offer, the hours and days of business (1995, 5).

b. Conditions of Work

Individual experience and the way sex work is carried out may be significantly affected by conditions of work and workplace. From a sex trade as work perspective, working conditions, and the control one has over these, are viewed as important determinants of worker’s experiences and well-being within the sex trade (for instance see Chapkis, 1997; Brock, 1998; Benoit and Millar, 2001). Indeed, while having been applied mainly to conventional mainstream work situations, theories from the sociology of work have long stressed the importance of control in the workplace and the effect working conditions have in shaping the degree of work satisfaction as well as workers’ health and well-being. Research has shown that work situations without the opportunity for freedom in decision making, are less satisfying and have a negative impact on workers’ psychological, as well as physical health (Karasek, 1989). Worker autonomy and control over the conditions of work have similarly been discussed within job situations found within the service industry (Hochschild, 1983; Leidner, 1993). Arlie Hochschild’s research on the work of airline flight attendants shows how the growth of the service sector and the increasing importance placed on “emotional labor” as a job requirement has resulted in a loss of autonomy over workers’ own feelings, and indeed, over their very self-identity. The “estrangement of self” from the work role is aggravated by a lack of control over the conditions of work. Hochschild notes that the negative consequences of emotional labor could largely be mediated “if workers could feel a greater sense of control over the conditions of their work lives” (1983, 187).

Applied to a marginal work setting such as that found within the sex trade, work experiences can be radically transformed when a sex workers’ control over their labor is relinquished to a third party (i.e. pimp, madam, agency manager). By entering into an

employment relation with a third party, a sex worker relinquishes control over her own rate of work, price of labor, choice of clientele and often control over the very activities she will perform. In terms of pimping, the continuum of power that exists may range from a boyfriend or girlfriend “managing” his/her partner’s sex trade activity, to pimping as a form of street hustling and entrepreneurial pimping, to the most exploitative and coercive end of the spectrum, including “debt bondage” found in parts of Thailand and India. Davidson (1998) notes that in considering the relationship between power and third parties, one must take into account the kind of relationship which exists, mode of exploitation or surplus extraction, and mode of securing the sex worker’s compliance.

The employment status of an indoor sex worker is related to the establishment’s organizational structure and its policies with regards to how it manages the collection and distribution of its workers’ earnings. While on average there is decreased risk of client violence and police and public harassment due to the fact that the work is being conducted in less publicly visible but also less isolated environments, some research suggests that indoor workers may also be limited in terms of control over work conditions (Benoit and Millar, 2001). For instance, agency or parlor management may impose policies which also limit a worker’s ability to select clients and to negotiate what activities will be performed and for what fee (Phoniex, 1995). Independent, self-employed sex workers, while free from the restrictive policies of management-controlled sex work, and the personalistic or coercive power of pimps, may face a different set of challenges in maintaining control over their work. Conditions of work may further be dependent upon social and demographic factors such as age, gender, and other personal characteristics (Chapkis, 1997; Davidson, 1998).

With regard to gender, while female sex workers continue to far outnumber males, a 1989 headcount of street workers revealed that in Calgary 18% were male, in Toronto 25% were, and in Halifax the figure was as high as 33% (Shaver, 1993). Usually portrayed as a “female crime” (Lowman, 1991), most research has largely overlooked male involvement in the sex trade, and in doing so, has all but ignored differences between the experiences of male and female sex workers. Recent research has noted the importance of considering how gender differences as well may in fact shape the social location of sex work (Weinberg et al., 2000). Because the sex trade offers sex workers,

especially females, a large pool of “johns” (clients/customers), nearly all of whom are males, women in the sex trade have an opportunity to make more money than counterparts in many other service jobs. On the other hand, however, as Weinberg et al note, the costs associated with such work are more pronounced for female sex workers, who typically suffer greater stigma and loss of social status as sex workers, are arrested more often, and are more prone to occupational hazards (2000). Female sex workers are more at risk on the job, reporting more assaults and are more likely to be robbed by their clients than their male counterparts (Shaver, 1993). In contrast, male sex workers are reported to be rarely pimped, and are much less likely to be the victim of a “bad date”. Thus, while very little research has been conducted on this topic, some have concluded then that “the differences between female and male prostitutes regarding job hazards and earning power suggest that most of the undesirable aspects of prostitution are linked to broader social problems rather than the commercialization of sex” (Shaver, 1993, 167).

4. Societal and Contextual Factors

Some researchers have begun to move away from a reliance on the individual actor as the unit of analysis, which has until recently characterized much of the literature on the sex trade. These researchers emphasize the importance of how social, political, legal and economic forces within contemporary Canadian society operate to shape individual experiences. Davidson’s examination of the sex trade in Britain and sex tourism in Thailand, Cuba and Jamaica provides an extensive analysis of the dynamics of power within the sex trade (1998). The author argues against simplistic explanations of the sex trade, suggesting instead that it involves a complex set of relationships predicated upon the existence of very particular set of social, economic and power relations. Similarly, utilizing a political economy focus in their study on the escort trade in Windsor, Ontario, Lewis and Maticka-Tyndale (1999a) demonstrate how individual choices and actions within the sex trade (particularly risk practices) are circumscribed by various economic, social and legal institutions within society, such as the criminal justice system, family and the community.

As Benoit (2000) notes, despite gains made in women’s participation within the labor force, significant barriers remain (especially with regards to sex segregation and

gendered wage disparity), which continue to perpetuate the socioeconomic inequality of women in Canada. Relative to men, women continue to earn less, have more limited economic options and hold less powerful positions than do men in the labor force. Men's continued economic and social dominance over women provides a main condition for the maintenance of an institution in which sexual services are largely provide by women for the benefit of men: "The sale of sexual services becomes an option for women in a society that endorses sexual bargaining and offers women limited, undervalued employment options" (Shaver, 1993, 165). Due to the absence of employment opportunities that provide a livable wage for individuals with little experience and education, particularly women, the sex trade represents a viable choice for many.

In short, the "choices" individuals make to engage in sex work must be contextualized. For instance, Alexander draws distinction between being forced (for example by a third party such as a pimp) and choice based on the economic realities one faces:

Most people who work for compensation do so because they need the money- for themselves, for their children. In any society, people make decisions about work based on some kind of evaluation of the options open to them. And most people choose what they perceive to be the best-paying job for their skills (1987,199).

While sex workers' earnings vary considerably depending on a number of factors, in most cases the economic rewards of sex work far exceed those available to women engaged in other forms of low status, low skill service occupations (Scambler et al. 1990; Davidson, 1998). Consequently, economic need has consistently been identified as a primary motivation for entry into the sex trade (Brock, 1998; Hoigard and Findstad, 1986; Chapkis, 1997, Benoit and Millar, 2001). While economic motivation may vary considerably from those burdened with the high costs of a drug addiction to those supporting themselves and their children, for many the sex trade provides the means to pay for necessities in their lives. A number of studies have indicated that a high proportion of women in the sex trade work to support homes and children (Benoit and Millar, 2001; Weiner, 1996). The reasons why sex work remains an attractive option for many are evident. Other low skill, low status service jobs available often require long work hours on a fixed schedule, and frequently do not pay enough to meet the needs of an

individual, let alone a family. On a similar note, Lowman describes the choices available to what he terms a “typical street prostitute”, usually entering the sex trade early, somewhere between the ages of thirteen and nineteen:

Most prostitutes have little education and, by virtue of belonging to the age group with the highest unemployment rate, are only marginally employable. They are not eligible for welfare assistance, until the age of 19 and have not usually been trained in the skills of independent business (1991, 125).

In short, structural factors such as inequalities in job opportunities and earning power continue to make the sex trade the best of a limited number of choices for some individuals, particularly women.

Once in the trade, economic factors can further impact the choices and actions of sex workers in terms of how work is conducted as well as risk-taking behavior. As Jackson and Highcrest note, “Societal forces, and in particular economic forces, can influence a women’s decision to enter sex work, and once working as a prostitute can effect the use of condoms” (1996, 153). Clients offering greater financial rewards for unprotected sex have been reported by many sex workers (Jackson et al. 1992; McKeganey and Barnard, 1992). The temptation to accept economic inducements for unprotected sex may be greater for those working to support a drug addiction, or those under economic duress (for example, health problems or increases in arrests, which reduce an individual’s ability to work). For those with a drug addiction, the unpleasantness of withdrawal symptoms may act as an incentive to agree to client requests for unprotected sex. Dutch sex workers interviewed in the Netherlands that reported not consistently using a condom in their commercial encounters were found to be under the highest financial pressure, to have worked the highest number of hours and were more likely to be drug users (Vanwesenbeeck et al. 1993). As Lewis and Maticka-Tyndale conclude, the economic realities facing some sex workers “provide the impetus to do whatever it takes to maximize their income, regardless of its implications for their own health or well-being” (1999a, 9).

Addressing the construction of the sex trade as socially problematic, some researchers as well as feminist theorists have noted that many of the so-called “problems” attributed to sex work are largely the result of a social image which sees the sex worker

as “sexual deviant” and “social outcast”. This image is reinforced and reproduced by legal and regulatory institutions: “the laws against prostitution, and the stigma imposed on sex work, keep all women from determining their own sexuality” (Alexander, 1987, 184). Perhaps more than anything else, sex work is seen as offensive to traditional Christian values and ideals of monogamy, fidelity and chastity for women. Social and legal regulatory forces enforce the stigmatized identity of the sex worker (Brock, 1998). With the institutionalization of a sexual double standard, it is the act of selling sex that is seen as morally reprehensible, not the act of buying it. In other words, it is the sex worker, typically portrayed as female, rather than the male client, who is treated as the source of the “problem”. As Brock notes, “women working in prostitution become prostitutes in the eyes of others, that is, publicly they are more identified with their work than are people in other jobs” (1998, 11). Boritch (1997, 90) put it this way:

For a woman, involvement in prostitution defines her as a person, while the man or “john” or “trick” who frequents prostitutes is not perceived as essentially different from other men or as defined by the purchase of sex. Whatever else she may be, a woman who sells her body is first and foremost, and at all times, a prostitute.

Sex workers are undoubtedly aware of their outcast status, which in turn has consequences for the individual. According to Goffman: “the standards [s]he has incorporated from the wider society equip him to be intimately alive to what others see as his failing, inevitably causing him [her], if only for moments, to agree that [s]he does indeed fall short of what [s]he really ought to be. Shame becomes a central possibility...” (1963, 7). Dealing with societal reactions towards sex work necessarily entails the management of a stigmatized identity.

As well as having consequences for the sex worker’s own personal identity, social stigma and marginalization may also impact upon sex worker health and well-being. Social constraints “serve to drive the sex trade ‘underground’, rendering it difficult to assess the health care needs and provide adequate services for a population which is hard to reach” (Carr, 1995, 210). A public image that defines sex workers as “deviants”, or “criminals” blinds many to the violence and victimization committed against them. Pheterson and others have contended that there is a persistent view held by many that by selling sexual services, a sex worker indiscriminately consents to have sex with anyone,

perpetuating a belief that a sex worker can not be violated, or is somehow responsible if she has been (1987; 1993; Barry, 1995). Thus, public persecution makes sex workers wary of not only the police and regulatory bodies but health and social service providers as well. Research has shown that this manifests itself both in a reluctance to report those who commit crimes against them to the police as well as cautiousness in informing providers about their work and accessing pertinent health care services (Lowman, 1991; Benoit and Millar, 2001).

The law and regulatory framework which deal with the sale of sexual services differ substantially from those found in other job situations. Stigmatized and treated as a semi-illegal/illegitimate occupation, structural barriers prevent sex workers from being afforded the same rights, benefits or responsibilities as normal workers (Lewis and Maticka-Tyndale, 1999a). Because they have no legal status as workers, sex workers are not protected by labor codes and therefore, are not eligible for benefits enjoyed by most workers, such as sick leave, health insurance, social security, or worker's compensation. Even when employed within a formalized setting such as an escort agency or massage parlor, workers are not protected by labor laws dealing with working conditions and remain vulnerable to management exploitation (Phoenix, 1995).

There are three main classes of Federal law in Canada dealing with the sex trade: (1) procuring and living off the avails of prostitution; (2) bawdy house offenses; and (3) communicating in a public place for the purpose of buying or selling sexual services. While selling sex is not illegal in itself, the combined effect of prostitution-related offenses means that it is virtually impossible for an sex worker to work without breaking the law (Lowman, 1991). As Boritch notes, "the ambivalence of a law that criminalizes prostitution-related activities, but not prostitution itself, reflects long standing differences in how the problem of prostitution is construed and, consequently, what is deemed to be the appropriate legal response" (1997, 98). Further, because of the legal ambiguity surrounding prostitution laws, regulatory bodies have wide discretion in terms of how the laws are to be interpreted and subsequently enforced. As Lowman notes, "the law contains within it the power to be mobilized against prostitution- whether at the behest of the police or some other lobby group able to influence law enforcement activity- no matter where it occurs" (1991, 124). Common is the belief that sees sex workers are

somehow more culpable and blame-worthy than are their customers. As such, regulatory strategies are much more likely to concentrate on women who sell sex, rather than on their male customers. This is because of a commonly held view that most customers are “square johns who would not otherwise fall afoul with the law, while prostitutes are members of a criminal underclass whose lifestyle involves various types of law breaking” (Lowman, 1990, 63-4). Consequently, as it is legally constructed and enforced, the sex trade remains a female-dominated “crime”.

Much research has sought to demonstrate the discriminatory nature of prostitution laws and the impact their enforcement has on individuals, particularly women who engage in sex work for a living. A look at Canadian Crime statistics further illustrates how prostitution is portrayed as a female crime. For every year between 1974 and 1991, the proportion of women charged with a prostitution-related offense is significantly greater than the proportion of men charged (Shaver, 1993). Not only are male clients underrepresented in those charged, but male sex workers and pimps are also significantly less likely to be charged, and thus burdened with a criminal record (Boritch, 1997). Even with the enactment of the “communicating law” in 1985, an attempt by the Canadian legal system to equally criminalize the activities of customers as well as sex workers, enforcement patterns remain sexist in character (Lowman, 1990). The discriminatory nature of prostitution laws is not only evident at the level of enforcement, but is also visible within decision-making stages of the criminal justice system with sentencing patterns. As Boritch summarizes, “Prostitutes are more likely than their male customers to be charged, be convicted, to end up with criminal records, and to receive more severe sentences” (1997, 123).

In addition to affecting women more negatively than men, law-enforcement patterns are also discriminatory in that they concentrate almost exclusively on the most public manifestation of the sex trade- the street trade because enforcement efforts have largely been designed to keep public visibility to a minimum. As Lowman notes, “police action against exploiters of prostitutes in the form of living off the avails and procuring charges is relatively minimal when compared to the effort devoted to the street trade” (1991, 120). A look at Canadian crime statistics further shows how the street trade makes up the vast majority of prostitution related offenses- in 1992, police charges laid

against street workers represented 95% of all prostitution-related offenses (Boritch, 1997). Overall then, law enforcement and prosecution patterns indicate that the sex trade remains predominantly a female crime, while control of the on-street trade and female street workers remain the primary concern of regulatory agencies. Treatment of the sex trade as a law enforcement “problem” serves to not only illegitimate the sex trade as a form of work, but also shapes and reinforces the negative public image of sex workers.

5. Summary

In concluding this chapter, it is evident that both orientations guiding research on the sex trade discussed above provide valuable insight into the individual and social realities of sex work and the factors influencing workers. From a social problem perspective, a concentration on the problems and risks associated with sex work provides a picture of sex workers, as a marginalized group dealing with numerous physical, emotional and mental healthcare problems. Other research has shown however, that the actual experiences of sex workers are often much more variable and a host of social, legal and economic factors must be considered. For exited sex workers then, research informed by a social problem perspective would imply that these individuals are likely to have come from abusive family backgrounds, and to have experienced numerous health and other problems. In contrast, a work perspective would suggest that exited sex workers are likely to be extremely heterogeneous, that their individual experiences and health situations are more variable.

While these two orientations make important contributions to and understanding of the dynamics of sex work, both are almost entirely informed by data collected on currently active sex workers. Because very little research on the sex trade has been conducted on those who have permanently left the trade for a substantial period of time, a central question remains as to the explanatory power of either perspective in terms of describing the actual experiences and factors affecting exited sex workers. My own research on exited sex workers described in the following chapters examines this central research question.

Chapter 4: Process of Research

This chapter outlines the process of research utilized in order to examine the exiting experiences of former sex workers. First, I identify the central questions this research seeks to address and outline a model of exiting the sex trade. Drawing on findings from the previously reviewed research on role exit and the sex trade, I then put forth a set of research hypotheses premised on this model. This is followed by a discussion on the process of conducting research on the sex trade and the unique methodological challenges it poses and my use of a “collaborative” model of research. Subsequent to this, I describe the development of the research instrument and my use of qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection. The last section of this chapter deals with the interview process itself, including how study participants were located and selected, the interview schedule and ethical considerations.

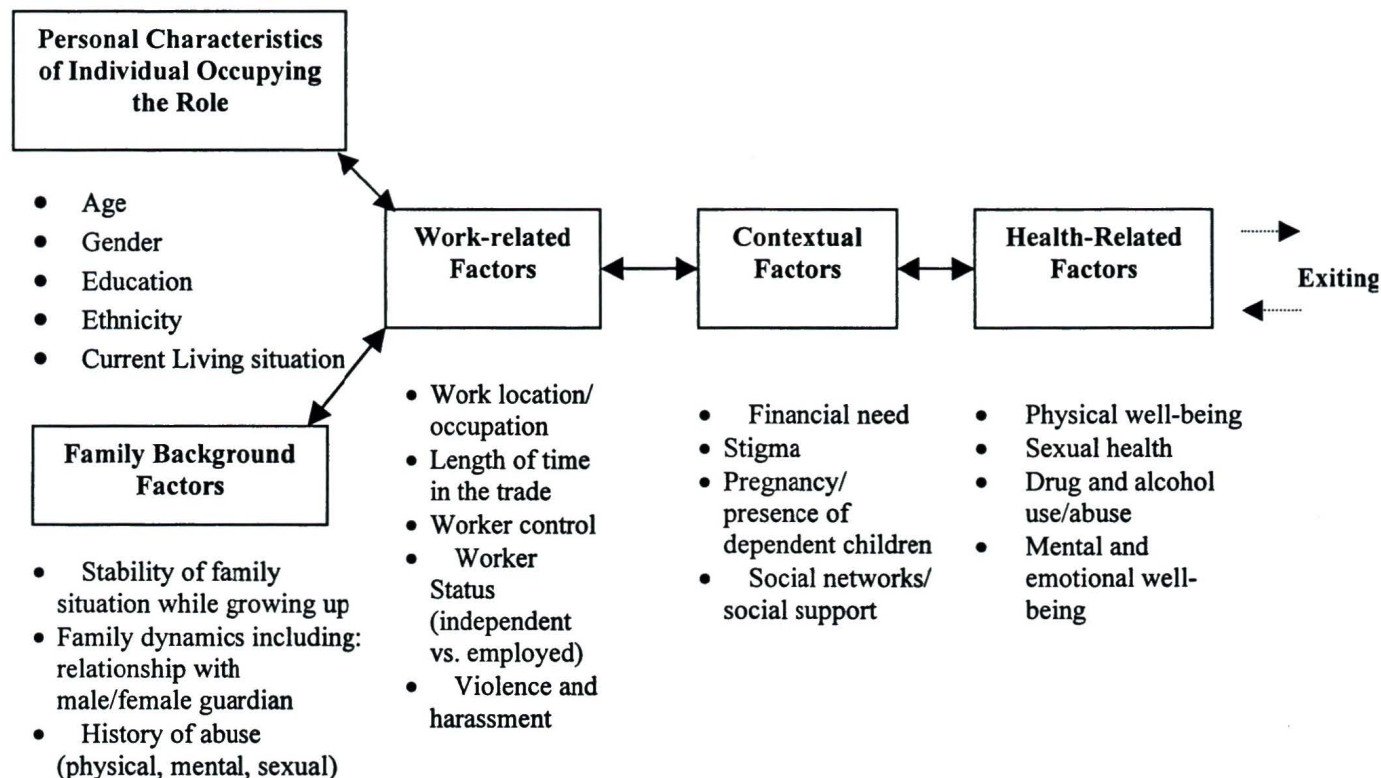
1. Research Questions

By focusing on former sex workers, this study examines the dynamics of the exiting process in attempting to answer the following questions:

1. *What are the determining factors that best explain why and how some individuals are able to accomplish the task of exiting the sex trade and what are the barriers or factors that hinder the process?*
2. *What if any, are the personal, economic and health outcomes for the individual of leaving the sex trade?*

In attempting to answer these central research questions, I hope to further discern what it is that differentiates those that have retired from those still involved in sex trade activity. Based on findings discussed in the previously reviewed literature, I put forth a multifactorial theoretical model for exiting the sex trade. Shown in Figure 1, literature on role exit and the sex trade suggests the need to consider a range of personal, work-related, contextual and health-related factors in a model of exiting. Through such a model, I hope to inform the reader about what makes role exit possible and what hinders it, even when individuals desire to leave and move on.

Figure 1: Factors in Exiting the Sex Trade



In this study, exiting the sex trade is seen as reciprocally related to the context and the personal characteristics, previous childhood and adolescent experiences, health and well-being (previous and current) and work experiences while in the trade. Research findings discussed in the previous chapters suggest that, in general, individuals working in the sex trade are likely to be overwhelmingly female, come from backgrounds punctuated by neglect and/or abuse, to enter the industry at an early age and often under negative circumstances, to be vulnerable to a host of health problems and to have few options outside the sex trade. Following from this, I hypothesize that those sex workers who are able to “make it out” of this occupation share the following characteristics; they are:

- Older at the time of interview than their counterparts still in the sex trade.
- More likely to have entered the sex trade in adulthood.

- More likely to be disproportionately male and heterosexual in sexual orientation compared with those who have not managed to exit.
- More likely to have held a “square job” in addition to their job in the sex trade.
- Better educated and have more skills training than those still working.
- Have more employment options available to them, and thus, be more financially secure.
- More stable in terms of their current living situations.
- Less likely to be scarred by negative childhood experiences, including physical, emotional and sexual abuse while growing up.
- More likely to have grown up in a stable family situation, and thus, less likely to have experienced family disruption in their childhood/teens.
- More likely to have worked independently while in the sex trade and thus better able to have exercised control over the conditions of their work.
- Less likely to have suffered the effects of stigmatization and marginalization while in the trade.
- More likely to have social ties and access to support outside the sex trade.
- Less dependent upon addictive substances.
- Healthier, physically and mentally/emotionally than their counterparts who have not exited the role.

This research is an important piece of a larger whole. I have adopted a similar means of finding potential respondents and method of data collection as was utilized by Benoit and Millar (2001) in their academic-community research project focusing on the working conditions and health concerns of sex workers in the CRD. In this larger project a total of 147 interviews were conducted with active sex workers, the majority of whom were currently working in off-street venues (although a portion of those working on-street were also included in the sample).

By focusing on a different sub-set of the sex worker population, those who have exited the sex trade, my research contributed to this larger project, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the sex trade and sex workers in CRD. In examining the experiences of former sex workers, a central question asked throughout

has been how the situations of exited respondents compare (both positively and negatively) with those respondents still active in the trade. Further, by examining what, if any key factors set exited respondents apart from their currently working counterparts, this research also addressed the division within the research literature on the sex trade.

2. Conducting Research on the Sex Trade

Research on the sex trade poses unique methodological challenges. To begin with, there are no reliable estimates of populations of former sex workers. Thus, as some scholars have observed, a truly representative sample of a difficult-to-reach, specialized population, such as current or former sex workers, is perhaps impossible to realistically obtain (Bagley and Young, 1987; Pyett et al. 1996). Samples of those working in the sex trade have usually relied on populations of women attending STI/specialized health clinics (Green, et al. 1993; Carr, 1995), or women incarcerated (Miller, 1993a; 1995) or those exclusively working on the street. However, samples of sex trade workers attending health care clinics may have more health problems than the general sex trade population, while those in jails are more likely to be street workers since they are visible and more likely to be apprehended. These sampling problems bias much of the research conducted on the sex trade. Further, as Lewis and Maticka-Tyndale (1999b, 1) note, challenges in conducting research within a hard-to-reach population “go beyond those of population identification and sampling to issues that cut to the very epistemological and axiological foundations on which a research methodology is built”. For those that have been marginalized, there is a certain level of mistrust of those seen as representing the mainstream, including the academic community. With research viewed skeptically by the study population, there is often very little incentive for participation; the study population is typically left wondering “What’s in it for us”? As such, imperative to conducting research with a largely hidden and hard-to-reach population such as former sex workers is the need to employ a model of research that can mediate, if not completely overcome, these unique methodological hurdles.

In their discussion of the difficulties associated with conducting research on the sex trade, Lewis and Maticka-Tyndale (1999b) describe three models of research that are

commonly employed: the Classic Model, Partnership/Collaborative Model, and Sex Worker as Researcher Model. According to these authors, most research on the sex trade has largely relied upon a classical design, in which the research is driven solely by the needs and goals of the researcher(s). Despite the benefits of often being more simple and less time consuming due to the fact that the researcher retains complete control over the research process and end results, this methodological approach can sometimes foster mistrust and resentment when subjects feel they have little or no say over how research is done within their communities. Organizations and researchers representing marginalized groups such as Aboriginal people and sex workers have begun to call into question the legitimacy and appropriateness of this traditional model of research on the sex trade (Kingsley and Mark, 2000; Lewis and Maticka-Tyndale, 1999b; Benoit and Millar, 2001). This has resulted in a trend towards adopting more participatory methods of research including the “Collaborative” or “Sex Worker as Researcher” models. In some cases, sex workers and researchers have formed partnerships in the research process, which grant sex workers varying degrees of involvement in how the research gets accomplished within their communities. The following section highlights underlying principles that premise participatory research, which inform the collaborative approach that was undertaken in this thesis.

3. Participatory Research

A participatory model of research encompasses objectives of challenging inequality and involving and empowering marginal people (Reason, 1998). Maguire’s work (1987), which is exemplar of a feminist participatory research model combines three crucial activities: investigation, education, and action. By adopting a more collaborative approach to research, a participatory model rejects the notion of the research as detached from those that are researched. The research relationship is reciprocal rather than hierarchical; those being studied are actively involved in making decisions regarding the research. By loosening the boundaries between researcher and researched, those being studied are given substantial involvement in the research, with participants actively making decisions within the research process (Reinharz, 1992).

Furthermore, within a participatory model, there is a recognition that “drawing on the active participation and collective knowledge of community members will produce more valid descriptions and explanations” (Cancian, 1992, 633). The varied and different contributions to the research process brought by both researcher and those being researched are equally valued. Writing at a time of profound social polarization (i.e. between Whites and Blacks, men and women), Merton’s 1972 essay on Insiders and Outsiders and their differential claims to knowledge and truth proves insightful on this point. Merton argues against monopolistic claims of privileged access to knowledge, both in terms of total “insiderism” (you have to be one in order to understand one), as well as the converse imposed by an “outsider” doctrine which holds that only one who is outside the group can present an objective perspective, unprejudiced by in-group membership. Instead, Merton argues that both Insider and Outsider perspectives make distinctive contributions to social knowledge. He argues that a fuller understanding is only achieved with the convergence or “intellectual interchange” of viewpoints, through the mutual acceptance of ideas and the development of perspectives that overlap and compliment one another:

When the perspectives of each group are taken seriously enough to be carefully examined rather than rejected out of hand, there can develop trade offs between the distinctive strengths and weaknesses of Insider and Outsider perspectives that enlarge the chances for a sound and relevant understanding of social life” (1972, 40).

Researchers, with their formal training, academic resources and formal skills in conducting research, as well as those from the researched community, with their “lifeworld” knowledge gained through personal acquaintance and lived experience bring distinctive yet invaluable perspectives to the research process. In sum, a collaborative research model with active participation by those being researched, presents a holistic and pluralist view because it draws not only from the credential-based, formal knowledge of the researcher, but from the introspective experiential knowledge possessed by those being studied as well.

4. Exited Sex Workers: A Collaborative Research Model

My own research on the sex industry adopted a collaborative approach, in which sex workers have had substantial involvement throughout the research process. Among other reasons, my interest and involvement in research on exited sex workers arose from the concerns and needs of sex workers themselves. Concerns raised by PEERS (Prostitutes Empowerment and Education Resource Society) revealed that research on the exiting process was a critical area of interest for them. As a not-for-profit organization representing current and exited sex workers in the CRD, PEERS plays a variety of roles in the local community including advocacy, outreach, education (of the public and sex workers), and provision of specific programs and services. This research project was of great interest to PEERS because a central aim of their organization is education and awareness. It represented an opportunity to identify ways to make service and program delivery more effective and accessible to meet the needs of this population.

Due to the sensitive nature of the research reported here, the issue of how former sex workers would respond to those interviewing them was of particular concern. As Oakley notes, “the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer to interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship” (1981, 41). In this research, ex-sex workers were hired and trained to take the role of research assistant, which involved contacting potential respondents, conducting interviews, data entry and transcription of the tape-recorded interviews. In total, four former sex workers who had previously been trained to conduct interviews, enter data and transcribe for the larger PEERS research project mentioned above, were hired to continue working with this project as research assistants. The central benefit of this strategy was that these individuals already had extensive experience with interviewing and were already familiar with the interview format. Further, all had already received training in interview techniques, research ethics and practice with interview equipment under the direction of my supervisor (Benoit) and a part-time community coordinator.

Others conducting research on the sex trade have noted the value of utilizing “indigenous interviewers”, individuals that are representative of the target population

(Silbert and Pines, 1981, 1982a; Plumridge et al. 1997; Pyett and Warr, 1997; Consultation for Sexually Exploited Youth in the CRD, 1997). Such individuals tend to have privileged access to the prospective population. Due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter, as well as a corresponding general lack of trust for those representing the “straight world”, ex-sex workers are much more likely to be able to establish a critical relationship of trust with potential respondents. Further, it is likely that those interviewed will be more comfortable with the interview process itself and more willing to openly talk about their experiences in the sex trade with someone who understands “the life”. Also, as former sex workers themselves, their credibility, as well as their knowledge of the language and lifestyle, can be invaluable to this type of community-based research. Lastly, this research methodology has the added benefit of providing the interviewers with the opportunity to learn a marketable skill and earn a modest income for a short time period. One researcher hired for the project put it this way:

I can tell you another thing that's been very empowering is just being paid a good wage. So often people go in the sex trade and go back because of the money. You don't have any other skills or an education that you can fall back on. You know, \$7/hour if you're lucky. So it's good to be earning good money.

There is no doubt in my mind that utilizing “indigenous interviews” was the best method, and quite probably the only possible way to achieve the research’s objectives. As an academic researcher, an “outsider”, I feel very strongly that I would not have been able to gain access to, and get former sex workers to open up to me and talk freely and candidly about their experiences in the trade. A comment from one of the indigenous researchers highlights this point:

I think that one of the best parts of [the project] was that the people were interviewed by their peers, so to speak. I think that's really important and I think that helped to bring the people out more. Cuz I know if I was recently a sex trader, or just two years in, and there was somebody who had no idea of what it was like standing on the street corner and looking at me with a little bit of suspicion, and thinking why isn't someone like that in a job. Yeah, I liked the peer aspect of it.

Relying on “indigenous interviews”, however, also has inevitable drawbacks and presents certain challenges. Because those hired had little formal experience in conducting research, a considerable amount of time was required in order to train the interviewers in

interview techniques. Even with extensive training over a three-month period, the interviews still lacked many methodological skills acquired in graduate school. There was the possibility, for example, that the interviewers would not have the same sense of commitment to the rigors of conducting social research (for instance, the need to maintain confidentiality). As well, because I was relying on two different individuals to conduct the interviews, variation in interviewer style and presentation introduced further potential problems in regard reliability and interviewer bias. Particular care and effort was thus required on my part and that of my supervisor in order to make sure that similar procedures were carried out by all team members, that the coding was accurate and that transcriptions were done properly.

Because there was no single researcher gathering and coding the data, one drawback I found particularly challenging was the lack of control over the interviews and a feeling of isolation from the data set because I had not conducted the interviews myself. In order to address this drawback, I introduced several checks during the research process. All interviews were tape-recorded in their entirety (i.e. both closed and open-ended components). This allowed me not only to go back and periodically spot-check the interviews and listen to the way they were conducted, but also to “connect” with the data by listening to it myself. As well, in conducting the interviews, the interviewers were bound to a pre-determined set of questions in both the questionnaire as well as the long-answer portion, which reduced the possibility of observer error that could be problematic had I used a more interpretive interview format. At the outset, it was made explicit that all research assistants hired were bound to the terms established by the University Ethics Committee in the same manner as myself as an academic researcher and my supervisor overseeing the major project. With a personal stake in the research as partners, it was insisted upon by both PEERS and the former sex workers hired to conduct the interviews that protecting participants from harm took precedence over everything else.

Another potential concern was the negative impact the project might potentially have on the experiential research assistants themselves. As former sex workers, it was possible that they may have experienced similar problems relating to the sex trade as those described by the participants. Indeed one of the research assistants commented: “the atmosphere of the stories [were sometimes] just really depressing. Just their stories,

their individual stories, you know... [I]t brought me back there.” Ongoing moral support was made available and paid time was set aside for researcher debriefing after particularly stressful interviews. This gave the research assistants a unique opportunity to talk through their feelings with their colleagues, which they all found extremely beneficial. As one of them put it: “I think that working in a team is very effective if something’s upsetting to you or it triggers up a memory because you have someone to bounce [it] off [and] you can talk about it”.

In addition to being potentially stressful work due to the particular subject matter, the research assistants’ tasks were not equally attractive. In particular, data entry and transcription was seen as time consuming and monotonous work. One of the researchers commented that:

Sometimes just the sheer boredom of doing the same thing over and over again [was difficult]. You maybe mention points once or twice during the interview, but when you’re 15 questions down and you’re talking about the same thing only using different words, it gets a bit tiresome after a while.

a. Advantages of Collaborative Research

There are numerous advantages of conducting community-oriented research and of working alongside a sex worker organization. One central benefit of working alongside PEERS and representatives from the sex trade was the direct link it provides between researcher and the study population, helping to facilitate access to an ordinarily hard to reach population (Pyett, 1996; 1998; Lewis & Maticka-Tyndale, 1999b). In addition to facilitating access, because it is a collaborative effort, such a model of research provides valuable learning opportunities and benefits for all those who are involved. For myself as a researcher, working within the community has provided me with an invaluable opportunity to learn more about individuals who work in the sex industry and about conducting research with a hard to reach, marginalized population. Further, with PEERS as research partners, I have gained an “insider view” of the sex trade, what the “shared culture”, the values, codes of behavior and social identity mean for those who have actually experience it. Thus, a partnership with PEERS has provided invaluable input into all aspects of the research project--from initiation, to design and interviewing, to interpretation and dissemination of findings.

In terms of benefits for and organization such as PEERS and community researchers, as well as study participants, involvement offered an opportunity to participate in a project directly related to issues that are important to them, to “have their side of the story represented”, as Pyett notes (1998, 370). For current and former sex workers, the opportunity to have their “voice” heard was the first time in their lives that anyone showed a genuine interest in their experiences as sex workers, something that in other circumstances would have caused them to feel marginalized and stigmatized. Thus, a central advantage of this methodology was the relevance of the research to the needs of the sex worker community. One community researcher was extremely excited about the potential for the research to have a positive impact on the not only the sex worker community, but the general public as well:

It's pretty exciting getting this much information about, like, one population. Now that I've finished I want everyone to know, like I want everyone to know about the reality of the sex trade and how damaging it is and how society make it's okay on one level and on the other, it totally makes it an issue. So I'm hoping that this information will open some peoples' eyes.

There are also numerous benefits for a community organization like PEERS. As Pyett notes regarding the responsibility of the researcher within community-based research: “researchers have a responsibility to give back to the communities we research— not only by sharing our findings and validating their experiences, but also, through collaboration, by increasing the skills and the confidence of people with whom we are researching” (1998, 374). In initiating a research project pertinent to the needs of their organization, PEERS lacked the formal knowledge and skills necessary both to frame the research problem in its social context, as well as carry out the research in a methodologically rigorous manner. As well, former sex workers as “sex worker researchers” had an opportunity to gain valuable work experience. The research assistants have acquired important analytical, computer and writing skills that are transferable to other job settings. Talking about what she had gained from her involvement in the research project, one research assistant noted that it taught: “me a work ethic. All those years before, I kind of did my own thing whenever I wanted to.” Most importantly, having some legitimate “straight” work experience to enter on their resume has provided

future employment possibilities: “this project has led to a few other employment, I’ve applied to other projects”, as one noted.

b. Limitations of Collaborative Research

Academic-community collaborations also have some potential drawbacks. In altering role relationships between researcher and researched, some social researchers have criticized feminist participatory research because it seems to undermine traditional “scientific” standards or objectivity. However, although a participatory method combines action and research, and rejects a notion of value-free research, researchers have not rejected “scientific standards” in their research. Rather, as Cancian (1992) notes, such a methodology “strengthens scientific standards. It suggests ways of improving the quality of evidence and generating more vigorous debate among researchers of diverse backgrounds” (1992, 630).

Nonetheless, in utilizing more of a collaborative research model, working alongside a sex worker organization does introduce several challenges. Establishing a relationship between an organization representing the needs of sex workers and the academic community, as well as balancing the needs of all involved in the research process can make carrying out participatory research difficult. Moreover, collaborative research involves the need for different groups to work together, often with different, even competing needs, such a method can require considerably more time than traditional methods. Working in a partnership necessarily entails learning new skills and adopting a new view towards conducting research. This required the delicate balancing of both the needs of myself as a researcher, trying to complete the requirements for my Master’s thesis, and carry out the research in a methodological manner, as well as those of PEERS.

As an organization which advocates for and serves the needs of currently active and former sex workers, PEERS represents a definite stance towards sex work. As a researcher, while I needed to make sure their perspective was represented, I also needed to make sure that it didn’t bias the research, by discounting other ways of looking at the sex trade. Thus, close contact and collaboration between individuals from vast different backgrounds inevitably raises points of tension and disagreement that need to be worked through. However, as Lewis and Maticka-Tyndale note, research that is based on

partnerships with representatives of study population, “are most successful when they are built on already existing relationships” (1999b, 15). Thus, because a relationship has already been established with PEERS and sex worker representatives who aided in the interview process through the larger community health project (Benoit and Millar, 2001), I was able to be able to build on this rapport and trust.

In sum, I believe that this research venture between university and community groups was in most respects, a success. This opinion was shared by the community members, with one research assistant noting that the project was:

Excellent, totally excellent. It just shows that everybody’s not stuffy and everybody doesn’t just fall under society’s rules. A few years ago, I just never would have thought, you know, it just never would have occurred to me actually somebody from the university, like a professor, you know, cuz you just think of those people, that’s their end of town, you know, they just don’t come over here to our end of town, but yeah, I think it’s totally cool.

5. Method of Data Collection

This study utilized a combined design to gather and analyze data on exited sex workers in the Capital Health Region (CHR) of Victoria. Because very little systemic research has been conducted on how and why individuals exit from the sex trade, an interview format combining both qualitative as well as more quantifiable methods, provided the best opportunity to comprehensively explore the main issues involved in exiting, without placing undue constraints upon the responses of subjects. Thus, the interview schedule was broken into two parts: a more qualitative section featuring open-ended questions and the structured survey.

Although the qualitative portion featured a number of predetermined open-ended questions centered round specific topics, the experiential interviewers, with their knowledge of the sex worker lifestyle, had the freedom to digress and probe beyond the answers to the prepared questions. As Miller and Glassner (1997) note, such an approach is valued for its ability to generate data that provides an authentic glimpse into people’s real experiences, as individuals themselves understand them. Taking into consideration that the interviews contained questions of a personal and sensitive nature, a face-to-face open-ended format provided respondents with considerable freedom to answer as they

wished to, allowing them to disclose, or not disclose information, as they themselves saw fit.

At the same time, the interview schedule also included questions of a more quantifiable nature. According to Davidson and Layder note, “surveys can play a vital role in confirming more qualitative research, in highlighting gaps in knowledge or issues that require further investigation, and in revealing broader patterns that might be missed if researchers relied solely upon qualitative methods” (1994, 115). Because a survey method allows the researcher to gather information on a larger scale, employing a questionnaire design in combination with the qualitative interview schedule, allowed me to compare back to research participants still active in the sex trade (Benoit and Millar, 2001) as well as set the exiting experiences of former sex workers within a broader context. The questionnaire portion of the interview contains quantifiable questions regarding the background and family histories of respondents, circumstances which led to their entrance into the sex trade, their experiences while working within this line of work, their exiting strategies, and their current living situation and health status.

The values of combining methods or “triangulation” are argued by many, including feminist researchers (Kelly et al. 1994; Davidson and Layder, 1994; Reinharz; 1992). Combining methods allows the researcher to discover the possibilities and overcome the limitations of each. As Critcher et al. suggest, “in assessing the relative contributions of qualitative and quantitative methods, it soon becomes apparent that each has the potential to compensate for the weaknesses of the other” (1999, 82). Insights obtained from the qualitative portion of the interview schedule therefore added texture and detail to the quantitative data. Because each method reveals a slightly different view of the same symbolic reality, combining different “views” helped to reveal a more substantial picture of the lives of former sex workers. Further, by utilizing both quantifiable as well as qualitative interview tools, there was an increased likelihood of obtaining scientific credibility and research utility. It is hoped that, as Neuman (1997) notes, triangulating in-depth, semi-structured interviews with close ended-ended survey questions improved measurement and provided a more detailed and descriptively rich picture of the exiting experiences of former sex trade workers in the CRD.

a. Locating and Recruiting Participants

As noted above, because very little is known of the demographic profile of those who have formerly worked in the sex trade, it was impossible to meet the requirements of representative sampling. Thus, locating an initial core of participants and gaining their trust is an important task in the early stages of research. However, research relating to the sex trade poses unique methodological challenges, particularly with regards to accessing and gaining agreement for participation (Lewis and Maticka-Tyndale, 1999b). Locating exited sex workers is especially difficult because, having finally left the trade, they may not want to be identified, nor desire to revisit these experiences. Furthermore, experiences in the sex trade may be a part of a past they are guarded about, particularly if it is not something they openly share with others. However, as already noted, a crucial reason for the viability of this research was that it is built on an established partnership with PEERS. Entry into the community was greatly facilitated by the assistants who, as representatives of the target population, could “vouch” for the trustworthiness of researcher and the project, what Lewis and Maticka-Tyndale term a “snowballing of trust” (1999b). Word of mouth and PEERS contacts were the main methods used for identifying and generating exited sex worker contacts. Various methods of advertisement were also used to further increase participation. Ads were posted throughout the CRD in local agencies that provide services to current and former sex workers (such as AIDS Vancouver Island, at Sandy Merriman House), at Camosun College and University of Victoria, as well as in Monday Magazine and the Times Columnist at various times points during the data collection period.

Research on those who have formerly worked in the sex trade was carried out in the CRD from August to November, 2000. Initially, a series of five pilot interviews were conducted. This was done in order to test the closed- and open-ended portions of the interview schedule. A second goal of piloting the interview schedule was to provide the research assistants with practice in interviewing exited sex workers (they were already accustomed to the interview format and conducting interviews with currently active sex workers). All interviews were arranged by the interviewers and carried out in a place of the contact’s choosing. The location of the interviews was an important factor due to the sensitive nature of the interview and for the obvious reason of maintaining

confidentiality. Most often, interviews were carried out in a safe and quiet room rented by PEERS. This space provided a private location where interviewees could talk openly without distraction.

In total, fifty-four (N=54) interviews were conducted with individuals who had been out of the trade for a minimum of two years. Interviews stopped at this point due to saturation of exited contacts. Due to time and money limitations, as well as the need to keep the research project manageable, only twenty-five of the respondents completed the long-answer portion of the interview. All interviews in their entirety were tape recorded, with the long answer portion of the interviews transcribed verbatim the hired research assistants who had been trained in transcribing techniques.

b. The Interviews

A central reason for the success of my research on exited sex workers was due in large part to the commitment, support and partnership established with sex trade representatives from PEERS. All levels of the research process involved collaboration between PEERS and myself. In the developmental stages of the research project, PEERS representatives were instrumental in negotiating the agenda and direction that the research would take. In developing the interview format, input from PEERS was instrumental in working through exiting issues that were thought crucial to examine. PEERS and the research assistants were also able to provide valuable input on what questions were important and on appropriate wording in order to capture individuals' own experiences in exiting the sex trade.

Because very little systemic research has been conducted on how and why individuals' exit from the sex trade, it is through the qualitative portion of the interview that I have been able to focus on the dynamics of the exiting process and the experiences of former sex workers. Ebaugh's role exit theory (1988) discussed above provided a useful starting point from which to examine the processes involved in departing from the sex worker role and in creating the "ex-sex worker" social identity. In order to help participants recall back to this earlier period in their lives and to recount their exiting experiences, the interview schedule started off broadly by asking participants to describe their life and family background prior to entering the sex trade. Following this, questions

included attempts at exiting and motivating factors that persuade sex workers to leave; “turning points” within the exiting process; long term physical, mental and other adaptations/maladaptations; and current health service needs of exited sex workers. The interview closed with a question soliciting participant’s comment on the study and feelings regarding the interview process (See Appendix A). Thus, the qualitative interview has allowed me to examine the therapeutic value of the research process for the participants. As Kelly et al. note, researchers “benefit from information from participants about precisely how, and in what ways, participation did or did not benefit them. [Researchers] would then be in a much stronger position to develop appropriate conceptions of what kinds of empowerment are possible through research” (1994, 37).

As noted above, the survey portion of the interview was used due to a desire to obtain data on a larger scale and on a wider variety of issues than would have been possible with only the in-depth questions. Given the sensitive nature of much of the subject matter, a special effort needed to be given to developing an instrument that would be responsive to the needs of study participants. Thus, refinement of the quantitative portion was also a collaborative effort, involving a number of revisions until all parties were satisfied.

The first portion of the questionnaire dealt with demographic and background information: (1) demographic variables (including gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, education, etc.); and (2) family background (including, living situation while growing up, relationships and experiences with mother and father/guardians, experiences of abuse and neglect, etc.). Following these initial sets of questions, the survey led to questions on experiences in the sex trade: entrance into the trade, attempts to leave, types of sex work/venues worked in, relative control over work situation and benefits and drawbacks of sex work. The questionnaire next addressed health issues, including experiences of violence/victimization while working in the trade; substance use and abuse; physical and sexual health; emotional and mental health; and use of birth control. The questionnaire closed with questions on personal relationships and social support systems (See Appendix A).

6. Ethical Considerations

A proposal for research on those who have formally worked in the sex trade was examined and approved by the University of Victoria Human Ethics Committee prior to contact with potential respondents. Conducting research with marginalized populations, such as current or former sex workers, raised unique ethical requirements, and extra precautions were necessary in order to protect them from further victimization and stigmatization (Lewis and Matika-Tyndale, 1999b). Due to the sensitive and personal nature of the research, it was therefore imperative that ethical considerations are given top priority. Paramount was ensuring the confidentiality of study participants. In order to do so, only research assistants hired to conduct and transcribe the interviews had contact with potential respondents. Records of any names or other identifying information were promptly destroyed from the contact sheets by the hired interviewers after contact was made with the potential respondents. Thus, I had no contact with respondents in any way. In order to further ensure confidentiality, reference to any kind of identifying information was also removed from the questionnaires and interview transcripts by the research assistants. Throughout the course of the study, all collected data were securely kept in a locked location that only myself and the other members of the research team (including the interviewers and transcribers, my supervisor and project coordinator) had access to. Further, all completed questionnaires and taped interviews were subsequently destroyed.

At the beginning of each interview, interviewers were instructed to explain in general the nature and purpose of the research project to respondents both verbally and in written form. All respondents were asked to sign a "letter of informed consent" (See Appendix B) before the interview commenced, ensuring that they fully understood that their participation was completely voluntary and that they could choose to not answer any question they wished, or stop the interview at any time. Due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter covered within the interviews, there was also the potential that asking former sex workers to recount their past experiences could bring back or uncover some emotionally difficult memories. Within the interviewer/interview relationship, Bergen (1993) advocates a relationship of "conscious partiality", in which the researcher is able to identify with the participant based on personal interaction and understanding, and the

treatment of those being studied as subjects with real feelings and emotions, and not just as receptors of information. It is believed that having “experiential” interviewers who could relate to former sex workers’ experiences was extremely beneficial in dealing with the potentially sensitive subject matter. As well, respondents were referred to a counselor made available by PEERS, if they felt the need to talk to someone further. This service was provided free of charge.

7. Limitations of this Research

There are several limitations associated with this research on exited sex workers. Being a largely hidden and hard-to-reach population, it is virtually impossible to obtain a representative sample of sex workers. In addition, while numbers of currently working sex workers can be estimated, there is no way of discerning the actual number of *former* sex workers in the CRD. Thus, due to the need to rely on a purposive, non-random sample, a key limitation of this research on exited sex trade workers is its lack of generalizability beyond the study population. I therefore cannot state with certainty that findings based on this research are representative of former sex workers in the rest of Canada, or British Columbia, or even the Victoria region itself. On the other hand, a sample size of 54 (and comparable with a larger subset of 147 currently active respondents) of a largely hidden and marginalized population is significant in that it sheds light on, and provides individuals who otherwise may not have the opportunity to tell their story and have their voices heard.

Following the approach taken by the larger project (Benoit and Millar, 2001) and due to the potential difficulty in recruiting study participants, I made the decision of offering an honorarium as an incentive for participation. While the validity of self-reporting remains problematic with regards to accuracy of recall (Pyett et al. 1996), this may especially be the case when honorariums are offered, particularly with regards to the honesty of responses. Thus, offering an honorarium raises a concern of validity. While it provided a small amount of money for those who may be in need, the honorarium raised concerns of whether or not individuals were participating because they truly wanted their voices heard or because they were in need of money. I believe that the major inducement to participate in this study was altruistic. Most respondents

appreciated the opportunity to “tell their stories” and to help provide a more realistic picture of sex work and life of those who have exited, one that challenges the existing negative social constructions of sex workers. In fact, some of the participants were so appreciative of PEERS for conducting the research that they decided to donate their honorarium to the organization to help further its outreach and educational activities. As well, because they are representative of the target population and are intimately knowledgeable about the local sex industry, those hired to conduct the interviews acted as an additional check against dishonest participants.

8. Summary

Due to the hidden nature of sex work, populations of sex workers, including former sex workers, have traditionally been defined as hard-to-reach (Matika-Tyndale and Lewis, 1999b). As such, studying exited sex workers poses methodological challenges in terms of accessing study participants and overcoming a long-standing distrust for those seen as representing the mainstream, including academic researchers. However, a community-university partnership which combines both traditional research methods as well as participatory principles such as integrating action, sharing and experiential knowledge provides a unique way to overcome these methodological hurdles. Moving to more collaborative methods and developing relationships with sex workers and sex worker organizations shows that it is possible to develop relationships of trust where traditionally there have been distrust and suspicion. Thus, a central reason for the viability and success of this research on exited sex workers was due in large part to the collaborative input and partnership established with sex worker representatives from PEERS. In recognizing the value of “lifeworld” knowledge gained through experience, as well as formal academic ways of knowing, collaborative research, such as the one conducted for this thesis, embraces a holistic and pluralistic way of knowing. As Lewis and Maticka-Tyndale conclude, “By bringing community members onto projects, researchers facilitate access and trust, increase the knowledge base of the research team and the learning opportunities for study participants, researchers, and sex workers alike”

(1999b, 19). The following chapters in this thesis move on to the results of this collaborative research partnership.

Chapter 5: Research Findings: A Profile of Former Sex Workers in the CRD

This chapter presents selected descriptive information on respondents' demographic characteristics, backgrounds, living situations while growing up, circumstances leading to entry into the sex trade, and work situations while in the sex industry. Throughout, the responses of exited respondents are compared with data gathered on those currently working in the sex trade in order to assess similarities and differences between these two groups in regard to these various dimensions (Benoit and Millar, 2001).

1. Selected Descriptive Information

In total, fifty-four exited sex workers completed the close-ended portion of the research instrument and 25 of them filled out the open-ended section. This was compared with 147 currently working respondents (Benoit and Millar, 2001), bringing the total sample size to 201. Exited respondents who were interviewed had been out of the trade anywhere between two to twenty-six years. The average length of time that the research group had left the sex trade was 7 years. In terms of demographics, there were both differences and similarities found between the respondents interviewed in and out of the trade.

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

| | Female | Male | Male to Female |
|---|---------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Currently Working Respondents (N= 147) | 78.9% (116) | 18.4% (27) | 2.7% (4) |
| Exited Respondents (N= 54) | 81.5% (44) | 16.7% (9) | 1.9% (1) |

As Table 1 shows, reflecting the gendered nature of sex work, the majority of currently working as well as exited respondents interviewed were female, although a substantial

number of both groups were males: 18.4% for the currently active and 16.7% of respondents for the exited group. As well, five respondents (four currently working and one exited) classified themselves as transgendered (male to female). There was a slight difference in terms of the age between samples; on average, exited respondents were 5 years older than their currently working counterparts. However, the range in age varied greatly for both samples: 17 years to 53 years old for exited respondents; 18 years to 60 years old for currently active respondents, with a median age of 32 years for the entire sample. The vast majority of respondents were born in Canada. Just over a tenth of currently working and exited respondents were born abroad, originally from the United States, United Kingdom and Europe, or Central/South America. However, those respondents who had been born outside Canada, may be classified as long-term residents, having been in Canada for an average of 29.6 years (ranging from 13 to 50 years). Furthermore, both groups of respondents had been living in the CRD on average for over a decade and thus, neither can be viewed as transitory.

In terms of ethnicity, for both samples, relatively few participants indicated that they fit the Employment Equity Act definition of a visible minority (persons, other than Aboriginal people who are “non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour”). Across the entire sample, only 6.5% of respondents indicated that they were a visible minority- a figure that is slightly lower than the distribution of visible minorities in Victoria in 1996 (7.0%) (Statistics Canada 2001a). Largely absent within the literature is any discussion of Native Canadians in the sex trade and as a result, they tend to be underrepresented within research on the sex trade (Lowman and Fraser, 1995). However, at 17.7% just under a fifth of currently working respondents interviewed were Native Canadian (measured as status and non-status Indians, Metis and Inuit People), a much larger number than that found within Victoria as a whole- 2% in 1996 (Statistics Canada, 2001b). In comparison, only 7.4% of the former sex workers indicated that they were of Native descent. This might suggest that Aboriginals may have a greater difficulty in exiting the sex trade. One reason that leaving the sex trade may be especially difficult for Aboriginal Canadians, especially women, is that they are doubly disadvantaged, that is, they face discrimination based on their gender as well as their racial heritage. Previous research on Aboriginals involved in the sex trade supports this view:

In the face of poverty, racism, institutionalized oppression, physical and sexual abuse, family violence, alcoholism and cultural shame, Aboriginal children and youth who are commercially sexually exploited experience increasing fragmentation of their individual identities and a profound personal disempowerment (Kingsley and Mark 2000, 17)

Exited and currently working respondents also stand slightly apart in terms of sexual orientation: a little over half of those still active classified themselves as heterosexual, whereas 70.4% of former sex workers did so. Those currently working in the trade were more likely to classify their sexual orientation as bisexual, and slightly more likely as homosexual. One reason for this may be that due to the nature of sex work; perhaps certain conditions support same-sex and bi-sexual relationships. On the other hand, perhaps homosexual and bisexual orientations are pulls that draw particular individuals to sex work (Elias et al. 1998). More research is needed on this topic before definitive conclusions can be drawn however.

Despite research which suggests that due to their work, sex workers often confront difficulties in developing and sustaining long-term relationships (McKeganey and Barnard, 1996, Hoigard and Finstad, 1986, Lewis, 1998), currently active sex workers in the sample were just as likely to be in a relationship than their exited counterparts. At the time of interview the majority of both currently working as well as exited respondents had a current (opposite or same sex) partner/lover. In terms of quality and longevity, both groups' private relationships were comparable. Only three of those currently working rated the quality of their current relationship very poorly, characterizing it as abusive, while none of the exited respondents did so.

Of the 160 female current or former sex workers sampled, the vast majority had been pregnant at least once at some point in their life. Only three former and twelve current sex workers, 7.5% of the total sample said that they had never been pregnant. Moreover, of the 92.5% of current and former sex workers who indicated ever having been pregnant, the average was 3.19 times per person. Additionally, as Table 2 shows, those respondents that reported ever having an abortion was significantly higher than the general population. While in 1995, the therapeutic abortion rate was 10.3 per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44 (Statistics Canada, 2000), well over half of the 160 women sampled in this study reported having had one or more abortions.

Table 2: Female Respondents Who Reported Ever Having an Abortion and Miscarriage

| | Abortion | Miscarriage |
|---|-----------------|--------------------|
| Currently Working Respondents N= 114 | 50.0% (57) | 42.2% (49) |
| Exited Respondents N= 44 | 59.9% (26) | 43.2% (19) |

As Table 2 further shows, there were very little differences between current and exited respondents in terms of numbers of abortions and miscarriage. A large number of female respondents had had at least one abortion, with as many as five for exited sex workers and six for those currently working. As well, just under half of female respondents had had at least one miscarriage, up to a maximum of four for the exited respondents and ten for current workers.

In total then, the majority of both currently working and exited sex respondents sampled had children. Of the 160 female respondents, 68.7% indicated that they had given birth to at least one child. Where the two samples differed dramatically was in the whereabouts of their children. Due to the criminalized nature of sex work in Canada, being an active sex worker makes an individual vulnerable to not only the loss of social services, but also to the removal of children and termination of parental rights. It is not surprising then that only a small proportion of the sex workers sampled were currently caring for their children. Only 18.4% of currently working participants said they were presently looking after dependent children, whereas 42.6% of formerly working respondents indicated that they had adult children. Nonetheless, for those that indicated having at least one child, the whereabouts of the children varied greatly for both former and currently working respondents. While a large number (35.0%) of exited respondents' children were adults over the age of 18, only 16.7% of those currently active in the trade were. Of those who had children under the age of 18, for 35.5% of the working

respondents, their children were living with neither biological parent, whereas 17.5% of exited participants' children were. Only 7.5% of former and 5.6% of current active respondents indicated that their child was currently living with both biological parents. At the same time, a large number (25.0% of former and 24.4% of current sex workers) of respondents were single mothers, which is slightly higher than that found within the general population where 19% of all families with children are female-headed, lone parent families (Statistics Canada, 2000). In sum, a distinct difference is evident between the two samples: the children of those currently working in the trade are less likely to be living with either of their biological parents, and more likely to be in the custody of foster or adoptive parents or other relatives. In contrast, exited respondents' children tended to be older and already living on their own. Specific questions were not asked regarding respondents' adult children or their living situation.

In terms of their educational background, as indicated by Table 3, current and former sex workers were virtually identical.

Table 3: Educational Attainment of Respondents

| | Less than high school | Some high school | Completed high school | Some post-secondary |
|--|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Currently Working Respondents (N=147) | 27.2% (40) | 33.3% (49) | 39.5% (58) | 27.9% (41) |
| Exited Respondents (N=53) | 28.3% (15) | 34.0% (18) | 37.7% (20) | 31.5% (16) |

For both samples, the median level of education completed was grade 10. As Table 3 shows, well over half of the sample had not completed high school, with just over a quarter reported less than a high school education. In terms of educational attainment, currently working and retired respondents differ dramatically from the general population. In 1996, for example, only 16% of Canadian women aged 20-24 and 19% of women aged 25-44 had not completed high school (Statistics Canada, 2000). Furthermore, few exited respondents had returned to complete or further their education or training. In fact, only 13% indicated that they were currently in school and 16.7% were receiving other types of training, whereas the corresponding proportions for currently working respondents were 15.0% and 12.9% respectively, indicating that leaving the sex trade has not prompted respondents to return for more schooling.

For the portion of the sample who were currently working, most had been employed for pay outside the sex trade at some point in time. However, for the large majority of these respondents, the sex trade was currently their only means of income. Only 15.6% of respondents working in the sex trade were currently working in another “square” job in which they received a salary or wage and paid taxes on their income generated. It is not surprising that having left the sex trade, more exited respondents were working in square jobs. However, well over half (57.4%) of exited respondents indicated that they were unemployed at the time of interview. Thus, in comparison with their currently working counterparts, exited respondents were much less likely to be earning money. This holds true for the general female Canadian population as a whole. In 1999, 55% of all women and 67% of all men held jobs (Statistics Canada, 2000), while only 40.9% of female and 44.4% of male exited sex workers interviewed were currently employed. While some of the exited respondents who were unemployed were financially dependent upon a partner/spouse, a large number said that they survived by other means. Many exited respondents indicated that they relied on social assistance or disability pension, often because of health-related problems. As one respondent noted: “I was working, but right now because of my health, I had to give up that job, so I’m on welfare at the moment”. Another exited respondent said she relies on social assistance because she felt she could not handle employment right now:

Pretty much its just welfare...I think I’m not going to let myself worry about a job or anything for a while. I don’t want to put too much pressure on myself because I don’t want to crumble again. So I basically just survive on what I have and other peoples’ support.

This suggests that one of the motivating factors for leaving the trade may in fact be ill-health rather than a lack of viable choices or options outside the trade. This will be further explored in the following chapter.

Another visible difference between currently working and exited respondents was their current living situations (see Table 4).

Table 4: Stability of Respondents' Current Living Situation

| | Currently Working Respondents N=147 | Exited Respondents N=54 |
|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Stable (rent/own house or apartment, live at home) | 70.7% (104) | 94.4% (51) |
| Relatively Unstable (hotel/Motel) | 3.4% (5) | 3.7% (2) |
| Unstable (squat, hostel, shelter, bath house, trick pad or on the street) | 25.9% (38) | 1.9% (1) |

Virtually all former sex workers interviewed had a stable living situation, with 5.6% of exited respondents indicating that they owned their own home. In total, 94.4% of exited respondents were living in stable living situations (rent/own their own home, or apartment or were still living at home). Only three respondents' living situations were less than stable: 2 were living in a hotel/motel, and one reported living in a shelter or transition house. As well, on average, exited respondents tended to pay slightly more for their rent, \$482 per month as compared with \$430 for respondents currently working in the trade.

In contrast, the living situations of those currently working in the sex trade were much more variable, from a small number of respondents who owned their own home, to those who had no permanent residence and were homeless. As Table 4 shows, a substantial number of actively working respondents were living in less than stable situations. Not surprisingly, instability in living situation was concentrated amongst those working on the street: 58.1% of currently working respondents living in unstable abodes were street workers. Relatively unstable, a small number were also currently living in either a hotel or motel on a full-time basis at the time of interview. Furthermore, over a quarter of currently active sex workers sampled reported living in very unstable conditions, either relying on the services of a shelter/transition house or hostel, living in a squat, bath house or trick pad, living with a trick, or living on the street. Those respondents living in unstable conditions often reported living in multiple abodes, moving around frequently from place to place.

A lack of stable and permanent residence has numerous consequences. Not only are individuals ineligible for social assistance without a fixed address, but in terms of

health, not having stable accommodation is associated with irregular eating and poor diet.

As one individual describes:

I usually use resource centers that I can go to like Streetlink and Sandy Merriman... I use food banks, I use all the food banks in town. I use the soup kitchens that are open to the public. I also visit friends that invite me over for dinner. Or they tell me it's okay to come over and eat and stuff like that. That way I do survive.

2. Background Information

The following section looks at current and retired respondents' earlier lives, including their family situations while growing up and the circumstances leading up to their entrance into the sex trade.

a. Family Background and Early Childhood Experiences

For a large number of both currently working and exited respondents, their childhood and earlier life while growing up was characterized by instability, with frequent changes in their family structure. Close to 40% of currently working and exited respondents had experienced four or more changes in their family structure by the time they had reached 18 years of age. In contrast, less than one fifth of both samples reported living in a single stable situation while growing up. Moreover, the average age at which currently working and exited respondents first began living without a legal guardian for both groups was 16 years. In fact, 11% of the overall sample living on their own before they were 14 years old.

In short, most family environments of respondents were characterized by frequent disruption, in which they were obliged to "fend for themselves" at an early age. Taking a closer look at the family history of both groups, Table 5a and 5b present a summary of each group of respondents' childhood family structures while growing up.

Table 5a: Family Structure of Currently Working Respondents While Growing Up, N=147

| Family Situation | Age | | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | Age 1 | Age 5 | Age 10 | Age 15 | Age 18 |
| Both Biological Parents | 67.8% (99) | 41.5% (61) | 32.0% (47) | 16.6% (24) | 11.0% (16) |
| Mother Only | 14.4% (21) | 22.4% (33) | 19.7% (29) | 12.4% (18) | 7.5% (11) |
| Father Only | 0.7% (1) | 2.0% (3) | 4.8% (7) | 5.5% (8) | 5.5% (8) |
| Adoptive Parent | 6.2% (9) | 10.9% (16) | 8.2% (12) | 5.5% (8) | 1.4% (2) |
| On One's Own | 0.7% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 2.0% (3) | 17.3% (25) | 61.7% (90) |
| Formal Care* | 6.2% (9) | 7.5% (11) | 10.9% (16) | 26.2% (39) | 8.3% (12) |

* Formal Care includes: Foster parents, group home, child welfare, and combined formal care.

Table 5b: Family Structure of Exited Respondents While Growing Up, N=54

| Family Situation | Age | | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | Age 1 | Age 5 | Age 10 | Age 15 | Age 18 |
| Both Biological Parents | 75.9% (41) | 55.6% (30) | 40.7% (22) | 31.5% (17) | 11.1% (6) |
| Mother Only | 3.7% (2) | 11.1% (6) | 18.5% (10) | 1.9% (1) | 1.9% (1) |
| Father Only | 0.0% (0) | 5.6% (3) | 3.7% (2) | 1.9% (1) | 1.9% (1) |
| Adoptive Parent | 7.4% (4) | 14.8% (8) | 18.5% (10) | 11.1% (6) | 7.4% (4) |
| On One's Own | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 26.0% (14) | 70.6% (36) |
| Formal Care* | 7.4% (4) | 5.6% (3) | 7.4% (4) | 18.5% (10) | 5.6% (3) |

* Formal Care includes: Foster parents, group home, child welfare, and combined formal care.

As both these tables show, a similar family history emerges for both sample groups. While the majority of respondents were living with both biological parents at the time of their birth (67.8% for those currently working and 75.9% for exited), by the time they reached age five, far less of both sample groups were still living in a conventional household with both their parents. This number continues to decline throughout respondents' childhood and teenage years. In contrast, the number of respondents living with neither biological parent (in formal care, with other relatives, adoptive parents or on one's own) steadily rises. As Table 5a and 5b also show, a large number of respondents in both groups had at some point in their lives, been wards of the state, living in foster care or group homes/institutions. For instance, by the age of 15, 26.2% of currently active and slightly less (18.6%) exited respondents were living in foster care.

Of the respondents who did have a male guardian while growing up, the majority of both former and currently working respondents indicated that he had been employed outside the home: 87.5% of exited and 91.1% of currently working respondents' male

guardians were gainfully employed. Although slightly less, a substantial number of respondents also had female guardians (mother, stepmother, etc.) who worked outside the home: 67.9% for exited and 61.3% for currently working respondents.

In addition to respondents' early life being characterized by relatively poor family functioning, instability and frequent disruption, the majority of both current and exited respondents came from homes marked by a difficult childhood which was punctuated by frequent abuse. For instance, one ex-sex working respondent recalled, "I was in a very abusive family, in and out of homes, foster homes, treatment centres and all sorts of shit" (173, p. 3). A respondent currently working in the trade also described a similar negative home environment while growing up: "I was abused a lot when I was a little kid. I was in and out of foster care". Overall, few respondents experienced a childhood free from abuse; only 13.0% of exited and 10.9% currently working respondents reported no physical, mental or sexual abuse while growing up. Rather, as Table 6 shows, most of those interviewed reported enduring multiple forms throughout their childhood and adolescent years.

Table 6: Overall Abuse Endured by Respondents

| | Currently Working Respondents N=147 | Exited Respondents N=54 |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| None | 10.9% (16) | 13.0% (7) |
| Physical Abuse Only | 5.4% (8) | 3.7% (2) |
| Emotional Abuse Only | 7.5% (11) | 3.7% (2) |
| Sexual Abuse Only | 8.8% (13) | 13.0% (7) |
| Physical and Emotional Abuse | 25.2% (37) | 27.8% (15) |
| Physical and Sexual Abuse | 2.0% (3) | 1.9% (1) |
| Emotional and Sexual Abuse | 2.7% (4) | 5.6% (3) |
| All three forms of abuse | 37.4% (55) | 37.4% (17) |

For a large number of both groups of respondents then, abusive events were clearly a common occurrence in their childhood. As one respondent's comments clearly show, abuse was even considered a "normal" part of growing up:

Interviewer: *What was your life like before you began working in the sex trade?*

Respondent: Normal.

Interviewer: *Normal...?*

Respondent: There was some abuse but, but you can expect that when you're a child.

In terms of victimization endured while growing up, well over half of both current and exited respondents interviewed had experienced physical abused by a male guardian. Amongst both groups of respondents, running away from home at an early age was a common way to escape intolerable family situations. Thinking back to his childhood, one respondent recalled, "I had an abusive stepfather and he beat the hell out of us pretty bad. That's one of the reasons I left home early". Talking about her father, an exited respondent recalled a similarly situation of abuse, "He was in the military and fought in the Vietnam War and he was really abusive towards the both of us [respondent and her mother]".

Respondents' experiences of physical abuse were not restricted to male guardians, however. Almost an equal number of respondents, 44.2% of the exited and 49.3% of those currently working, reported being abused by their female guardian while growing up. An exited respondent recalled, "Growing up, it was hell. My mom and my dad fought a lot when I was growing up. My mom beat me a lot when I was little". Similarly, for a currently working participant, the abuse she endured by her mother had been so bad that "social services had to take me away before she killed me".

Abuse was not limited to physical beatings. A number of current and exited respondents also described emotionally and neglectful living situations. While growing up, one recalled that she was "left alone for days at a time", while another recalled that her mother had "got drunk, dropped us off somewhere at someone's house we didn't know and would forget about us for a week". For many currently active and exited respondents then, the presence of a loving guardian was simply not there: "[I had a] very dysfunctional family- no closeness, lack of communication, lack of parental guidance and I basically raised myself". Similarly, another recalled, "[they] ignored me when I needed my parents the most". Additionally, a significant number of both sample groups also reported enduring mental abuse and emotional trauma while growing up. Over half of both exited and currently active respondents had been emotionally abused by their father. Emotionally abusive experiences were not restricted to the father figure:

My dad wasn't present at most times, I think the only reason for that was the fact that he was working most of the time. The majority of the time was spent with my mother who was very abusive emotionally, psychologically".

The data report that respondents' female guardians were just as emotionally abusive as their male counterparts, with just under half of all of those sampled reporting frequent emotional torture while growing up at the hands of their mothers.

A substantial number of exited and currently working respondents were also sexually abused in childhood or during their youth: 52.8% of exited respondents were victims of incest/sexual abuse, while the figure was 51.0% for those currently working in the trade. Although comparative data within the general population is poor because the majority of abuse in families goes unreported to the authorities (Women's Health Bureau, 1999), this finding is significantly larger than previous research findings on the incidence of childhood sexual abuse within the general BC population (for instance, see McCreary Centre Society, 2001).

In an overwhelming number of the cases, the perpetrator of the childhood sexual abuse was a male guardian/relative. Additionally, of those who reported sexual abuse while growing up, 23.5% had been exploited by multiple abusers. Of those who had been victimized, the sexual abuse tended to be characterized by frequent occurrence and of long duration, rather one-time event. This was particularly the case for exited respondents, with 40% reporting that their victimization had been "ongoing", whereas 27.4% of currently working respondents did so.

Although most respondents experienced a difficult childhood characterized a negative home environment in which abuse was commonplace, a few (11.4% of the overall sample) did report experiencing no abuse while growing up and many described positive childhood experiences as well. For instance one retired sex worker stated:

I was never abused by my family, sexually. I went to school every morning, my mother went to work, my father went to work. Basically your run of the mill family with nothing too out of the ordinary.

Across the samples, 65.7% of current and 78.4% of exited respondents reported that their mother frequently cuddled them when they were hurt or feeling down, whereas 46.0% and 36.1% respectively indicated that their father likewise did so. While positive comments were fewer, some respondents spoke of positive experiences during their childhood. Thus, while high proportions of currently active and exited respondents had experienced sexual, physical and/or emotional abuse as children, as some previous

research has also noted, it must be remembered that childhood abuse, like other contributing factors, is neither a necessary nor sufficient antecedent to the sex trade (Alexander, 1987).

b. Entry into the Sex Trade

Contrary to some research which suggests that those entering the sex trade tend to do so at a very young age (Silbert and Pines, 1982a), the median age at the time of initial sex trade activity for both current and exited respondents was that of a young adult-- 18 years and ranged from 10 to 49 years for exited and 9 to 58 years for those currently active. Both groups spoke of the same six main motivating factors as leading to their entrance into the sex trade. These are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Circumstances to Entering the Trade

| | Currently Working Respondents N=146 | Exited Respondents N=54 |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Enticement | 35.4% (52) | 31.5% (17) |
| Economic Duress | 30.6% (45) | 22.2% (12) |
| Drugs and Alcohol | 17.0% (25) | 18.5% (10) |
| Forced Involvement | 10.2% (15) | 18.5% (10) |
| Runaway | 3.4% (5) | 5.6% (3) |
| Other | 2.7% (4) | 3.7% (2) |

The predominant reason given as motivating both currently working and exited respondents' entry was the enticement of opportunity and lure of quick, "easy money". These respondents mentioned reasons such as: "easy money, it was the ease of doing it", and "it came to me, I got offers", and "an opportunity presented itself- good money". For some respondents, the enticement of the sex trade was about a curiosity, as one respondent commented: "My life before I started working in the sex trade? I was just going to school and I was extremely curious about prostitution. I don't know where I got the curiosity from".

For a large number of other respondents however, entrance into the sex trade was rather motivated by basic financial survival: "raising kids on welfare alone and needing money", or "I lost my job and needed money to pay bills, needed money to pay my rent". Thus, many felt that they had little alternatives to entering the sex trade; due to their economic duress, respondents saw no other way to support themselves and spoke of

having no other options. In fact, at 30.6%, currently working respondents were slightly more likely to have been motivated to enter due to financial need in comparison to their exited counterparts in which 22.2% reported doing so. For instance, one currently working respondent said: “I was always broke. I didn’t have any ways that I knew to support myself...So I almost felt like I had to turn to it because it was my only way of supporting myself”. For some, then, the sex trade was seen as the best of a severely limited set of options as another's comments further illustrate: “I was doing it to survive. I was doing it to pay my rent and put food on the table”.

Beyond basic financial survival, involvement with illicit drugs played a role in a similar number of both groups’ entrance. The sex trade was a lucrative way to finance a growing drug and/or alcohol addiction. One exited respondent recalled, “I was getting into heroin and that’s why I ended up getting into it”.

Table 7 further shows that slightly more currently working respondents described their entry as forced involvement, either at the hands of a pimp or other individual: “[I was] sold to a pimp”, or “my mother brought home a date and told me I should do it”; or it was directly related to a prior history or experience of abuse/victimization: “I was raped”, “[to escape] the abuse at home”. Experiences of abuse was judged by some respondents to be a significant factor in becoming a sex worker, as one respondent described:

My life right before I began working in the sex trade...I was raped by four guys, I quit going to church, quit school and moved out. I just shut down completely to everyone and there were basically no emotions at all. I was just very promiscuous and would be with anybody that wanted me. I was living on my own and I did a few different jobs, but I started thinking, ‘gee, why work so hard when I’m having sex with anybody and everybody, why not get paid for it’? So that’s why I decided to go check it out one night.

For a remaining small number of exited and currently working participants, running away from home and feelings of isolation, among other circumstances, prompted their entry into the trade. In running away at an early age, respondents often found themselves alone, on the street with few resources to turn to: “I was a runaway and was traveling and I needed shelter and food”. The isolation and feeling of aloneness, as well as lack of positive social supports often started at a very young age. For instance, one respondent discussed how her negative home life and becoming pregnant at an early age

prompted her to leave home: “My parents would fight a lot and my dad used to come sleep with us...I was pregnant when I was fourteen. I quit school and left home at fourteen. I was very rebellious and angry at fourteen”.

3. Conditions of Work

This section considers the work experiences of current and former sex workers, by looking at how sex workers’ working lives are organized and shaped, and the conditions of work faced by those working in the sex trade.

For most individuals, the sex trade is not typically viewed as an ideal career, but rather as something they are in at present for one reason or another, and plan to get out of in the future. Some research has suggested that most individuals are likely to remain in the sex trade for only a short period of time, in the neighborhood of four to five years for those characterized as “long-term” prostitutes (Potterat et al. 1990). In terms of the current and exited sex workers sampled for this study however, for most, their activity in the sex trade was not temporary. Of the current and exited sex workers sampled, only 23.6% had worked in the sex trade for two years or less. The majority were “long-term” workers, with 65.8% of those currently working and 58.0% of exited respondents having worked in the sex trade for five years or more. In fact, 11.8% of those currently active in the sex trade had been involved for twenty years or more (the corresponding figure for exited respondents was somewhat less at 4.0%). Furthermore, as Table 8 shows, for most exited and currently active respondents, their involvement in the sex trade was a full-time job.

Table 8: Reported Frequency of Sex Trade Work

| | Currently Working Respondents N=146 | Exited Respondents N=54 |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Infrequent | 15.1% (22) | 13.0% (7) |
| Part-time | 43.2% (63) | 37.0% (20) |
| Most of the time/full-time | 41.8% (61) | 50.0% (27) |

Findings suggest that the sex trade encompasses a broad range of workplace situations and locations beyond the stereotypical street trade. Both current and exited respondents interviewed had worked in a wide variety of sex trade occupations and

locations from street work, to massage, escort and stripping, to domination/ submission, movies and phone sex. Further, respondents' work situations within the sex trade were not static. In fact, across their sex trade careers, there was a great deal of mobility, with respondents moving back and forth between different venues: 37.8% of those currently active had worked in two different venues, while 35.1% had worked in at least three different venues across their careers. Due to the length of time they had been absent from the trade, exited respondents were only asked about the last venue in which they had worked. As such, data on sex trade location worked across their careers is not available for this group. However, one currently working respondent recalled: "I started off working in the night club. I worked on the street. I went back and worked in an escort agency and from an escort agency I went out on my own". Further, the notion of a sex trade hierarchy amongst work locations did not seem to be reflected in the experiences of currently active and exited respondents interviewed here. Rather, mobility across venues over time was just as likely as progression from on-street into off-street locations. As one exited respondent put it:

After I left the massage parlor, I went back to street stuff again... Then when I was older and I started working for an escort agency, it wasn't too bad, it was okay. I preferred it when I got my own clients and then I didn't have to go through her. I had my regular clients and I got to know them and I could just see three or four of them a week if I wanted to. If I got slow, then I'd go back to the agency again and get some more. So I kind of did it that way, I worked both.

Moreover, working in two different venues at the same time was not unusual. One exited respondent recalled: "[I was working] both on the street and off the street. Both stripping and in the sex trade".

At the time of the survey, 61.2% of respondents were working, or in the case of formerly active respondents, the last venue in which they worked, at an indoor venue while 38.9% were currently or had been working outdoors (in the street trade). Table 9 presents the work situations those currently active in the trade were presently working within as well as the last venue former sex workers had worked within.

Table 9: Work Situations in the Sex Trade

| | Currently Working Respondents (Main/Current Venue) N=145 | Exited Respondents (Last Venue Worked) N=54 |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| Agency | 30.3% (44) | 14.8% (8) |
| On-Street | 30.3% (44) | 38.9% (21) |
| Hotel/Motel | 4.1% (6) | 11.1% (6) |
| Bar/Strip Club/Peep Shows | 6.9% (10) | 16.7% (9) |
| Home | 27.6% (40) | 9.3% (5) |
| Massage Parlor | 0.7% (1) | 9.3% (5) |

As this table shows, in comparison to the current work location of those presently working, fewer exited respondents listed working out of their homes or as escorts as the venue in which they had last worked in the sex trade. Rather, when compared to their currently working counterparts, more exited respondents had been working in indoor venues such as strip clubs or bars or outdoors on the street.

a. Control Over Conditions of Work

Occupational research has stressed the importance of control in the workplace and the effect working conditions have in shaping the degree of work satisfaction and how this in turn, can affect psychological and physical health (Karasek, 1989). Although job satisfaction and control is important for all workers, for those working within marginalized work situations, control over the conditions of work may be especially important. The social construction of sex work and its criminalization leaves sex workers particularly vulnerable. Sex workers must attempt to maintain control over their work relations with customers as well as with pimps/managers/madams. As one currently active respondent commented: “Unless you have some control over the working conditions, you lose more and more of yourself”. Another respondent stated:

Without control over your working conditions, then you can get into some pretty ugly situations that you don’t want to be in. If you have control then you have choice over where you go and who you see.

Similarly, another respondent said: “When you don’t have control that’s when you’re not safe. If you have no control then you’re in trouble”.

Social relations and the conditions of workplace within the sex trade vary widely. Moreover, the degree of autonomy sex workers are able to retain over the work situation is dependent on a range of factors (Benoit and Millar, 2001). To begin with, work situations within the sex trade vary significantly depending on the particular venue one is working within. One respondent commented: "I worked at an escort agency and I worked at home. I worked the streets, and my goodness, It's a different ball game!". Most research on the sex trade concentrates on the most visible aspects of the industry-- the street trade-- and in doing so, largely overlooks the variability in working conditions found within the trade overall. What little research has been done suggests that on-street sex workers are more disadvantaged than are those working in less visible, indoor locations (Lowman, 1991; Boritch, 1997).

In addition to differences in terms of work location, we can further note a distinction between independent, self-employed sex workers and those that are controlled or employed by a third party such as a pimp, madam or agency manager/owner. Most of the currently active and exited respondents reported that they were or had been in control of their work activities when working in the trade. However, 13.7% of those currently involved in the sex trade and 16.0% of exited respondents said that a third party, either a pimp, madam/boss/owner, or a sex trade partner, presently or formerly had controlled their sex trade activities. One respondent's comments illustrate the difference in work experiences between working for a pimp and as an independent:

When I was under a pimp or with a pimp the working conditions sucked...He was always really crabby when I was with tricks. When I was on my own I was fine I was in a nicer hotel I had it clean all the time.

Working in an escort agency under the direction another person or persons was similar to the situation described above. One former ex-sex working respondent recalled: "Before I worked for other people...There is I believe, a big difference. When you work for somebody else, you are only one number in a row". Thus, factors can constrain sex workers' autonomy and ability to make choices regarding their work. As Davidson notes, "prostitution as a social practice is embedded in a particular set of social relations which produce a series of variable and interlocking constraints upon action" (1998, 18).

In order to take a closer look at variation between groups in working conditions within the sex trade, respondents were asked a number of questions regarding their control over key dimensions of their current or former occupations, including: control over take-home earnings, control over pace of work, and control over work activities performed. In terms of exited and currently working respondents' experiences over dimensions of control in the workplace, there was very little difference between the two groups. In considering the ability to retain control over one's earnings, 62.2% of exited respondents and 61.2% of those still active in the sex trade indicated that they had full or a lot of control over the money they earned from their sex trade activities. Exited and currently working respondents likewise reported little difference over the amount control over the pace of their current or former work situation: 68.6% of exited and 65.3% retained full control over the number of clients they "serviced" per work shift. Lastly, in terms of ability to negotiate the terms and limits of the commercial sexual exchange with a client, the majority of both exited and currently working also indicated that they had full control over whether or not the exchange included sexual intercourse.

4. Summary

This chapter has looked at personal characteristics; family background and structure while growing up; circumstances to entering the trade; and, work situations while in the sex industry. In attempting to discern what differentiates those that have exited the trade from those who have not left, data reported here reveal some differences as well as many similarities between the two groups. Some findings confirm while others refute what was predicted based on previous research findings on factors affecting the exit (see Figure 1).

Some minor differences were noted between the two groups in terms of age, sexuality, and Aboriginal status. The slight age difference between currently working and exited respondents confirms a prediction that those that had made the transition out of the trade would be older than those that had not managed to do so. On the other hand, the similarity between the two groups in terms of age of entry into the sex trade was not what was expected. In regard to current living conditions, the differences between the two groups was more pronounced. As would have been expected, those still working in the

trade were substantially less stable in terms of their living situations when compared to respondents who had made the transition out of the trade.

Across other key descriptive characteristics, however, those who managed to exit the sex trade were virtually indistinguishable from their peers still involved in the sex industry. For instance, the majority of both samples were disproportionately female. Males were not any more likely to be represented in those that had exited the sex trade. Similarly, in terms of background factors, findings show that the early family situations of exited respondents differed little from their currently working counterparts. Contrary to what I had predicted, those who managed to exit the trade were not any less likely to be affected by early childhood trauma, including experiences of physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Moreover, both groups discussed the same precipitating factors leading to their entry in the sex trade. Lastly, the responses of both currently working and exited respondents indicate that work situations in the industry were varied in terms of location and activity. Although slight differences were observed in terms of venue respondents were working in, or in the case of formerly active respondents, the last venue in which they worked, both samples describe similar experiences while working in the sex trade. Thus, contrary to what was expected, exited respondents further do not stand out in terms of experiences while working in the sex trade.

What remains to be examined is if the sex trade has left a lasting impression on the lives of former sex workers. The next chapter considers how the current physical, sexual and emotional health and well-being of exited respondents compares to those still in the trade.

Chapter 6: Research Findings: Sex Workers and Health

Past research on the sex trade has sought to demonstrate the enormous social, and mental and physical health toll working in the sex trade can potentially have on the individual. This research has shown that, associated with sex work, are numerous potential health risks in terms of STI's, including HIV and other sexual health problems, physical health problems including those associated with drug and/or alcohol abuse, and mental and emotional trauma caused by violence in the trade. Other research findings however, suggest that the negative association between sex work and impact on health is less clear cut (Vanwesenbeek, 1994 Matika-Tyndale and Lewis, 1999a; Benoit and Millar, 2001). One question of this research is whether working in the sex trade has left a lasting impact on the health of former sex workers.

In seeking to answer this question, examination of the health status of a particular population requires more than a measure of the presence or absence of disease. Rather, an understanding of the health of sex workers entails moving beyond physical health indicators to include consideration of general well being, defined by Statistics Canada as including "those physical, mental and social attributes that permit the individual to cope successfully with challenges to health and functioning" (2000, 47). This chapter compares the health situation of current and former sex workers and, whenever possible, that of the general population on a range of mental, sexual and physical health indicators.

1. Sex Work and Sexual Health

The most important sexual health practice considered to have a vital bearing on the transmission of HIV and other STIs is regular condom use. Recent studies of the risk practices of sex workers have consistently found high rates of regular condom use with clients (Ward and Day, 1997; McKeganey and Barnard, 1996). Findings from this research support this claim; the vast majority of respondents currently working in the sex trade reported being extremely conscientious regarding regular condom use and other safety precautions within their commercial exchanges with clients. Thus, an interesting

picture emerges in terms of high-risk sexual behavior when looking at the commercial sexual encounters of sex workers and the sexual behavior of the general population. While well over ninety percent of sex workers reported regular condom use for penetrative sex with their clients, 16% of Canadian men and women aged 18-59 reported not using a condom the last time they had sexual relations with a private partner of less than twelve months (Statistics Canada, 2000).

When exited respondents were asked about their condom use for penetrative sex with clients during the time they were working in the trade an interesting finding emerges. Significantly less of the exited respondents (60.4%) reported that they had “always” used barriers for this sexual activity. One reason this may be so is evidenced by the reasons these exited respondents who had not always used condoms while working gave: 17.6% said it was because they weren’t an issue when they had been working in the trade. As Table 10 shows however, currently working respondents’ condom use with clients was also largely dependent upon the specific type of sex trade activity they were engaged in.

Table 10: Sex Trade Activity and Percent of Respondents Who Reported Always Using a Condom

| | Hand-job N=141 | Blow-job N=141 | Vaginal Sex N=132 | Anal Sex N=75 |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Currently Working Respondents | 43.3% (61) | 83.0% (117) | 90.9% (120) | 94.7% (71) |

Although nearly all of those currently working in the trade reported always using protection for high-risk sexual activities such as vaginal and anal sex, for other sexual activities condom usage was not as common. The typical explanation for the non-use of condoms centered round the particular activity they were performing. A large number of respondents said that for certain sexual activities, such as hand-jobs (and in some instances, blow jobs), they didn’t feel protection was necessary. Despite the small amount of risk for certain kinds of infections that remain even with non-penetrative sexual activities, respondents said: “I don’t think you can catch anything from hand-jobs”, “It’s just oral sex, I just don’t feel its necessary”, and, “I have no nicks or cuts on my fingers, I am cautious”.

For the sample of currently active sex workers interviewed, the regularity of reported condom use with clients was matched by their reported non-use within the context of their private relations with lovers/spouses. For instance, of those involved in a current relationship, only 28.4% reported using condoms during sexual relations. Furthermore, once out of the trade, individuals are even less likely to use protection: only three exited respondents reported that they were currently using condoms in their sexual relations with private partners. Similar to those currently working in the trade, being in a long-term monogamous relationship was the central reason for this. Also important, both current and former sex workers reported that they felt both their partners and they were “clean” and had been tested. In this sense then, current and former respondents differ little from those in the general population engaged in sexual relations with private partners.

a. HIV Infection

Across the samples, prevalence of AIDS was minute; only seven respondents overall (3.5%) reported that they were HIV positive. Of the seven respondents, five (3.4%) were currently working in the sex trade while two (3.7%) had exited. Differing from the general population where far fewer women than men are diagnosed with AIDS, five of the HIV positive respondents were female and two were male. Only one currently working respondent said she might have become infected as a result of her sex trade activities. Of the six remaining respondents self-reporting a positive HIV status, all were or had been injection drug-users while working in the sex trade. One currently working respondent who was also an injection drug user believed she had become infected through sex with a private partner. Thus, consistent with other research findings (Alexander, 1987a; Campbell, 1991; Jackson and Highcrest, 1996), those most at risk of HIV infection are those who either use or have a history of injection drug use, or who were sexually involved with high-risk nonpaying partners (i.e. partners who are themselves illicit drug users). Findings here suggest that injection drug use rather than sexual practice is the main risk of infection and thus, the fact that one worked or had in the past, in the sex seems to have little bearing on one’s HIV status.

b. Other Sexually Transmitted Infections

While HIV infection was low among current and exited sex workers, respondents did report other sexual health problems, including other STIs, of which some could potentially have serious implications, particularly for women who are more likely to suffer long-term health problems after contracting an STIs (MacDonald and Brunham, 1997). Well over half of the overall sample reported ever having an STI while being a sex worker. In fact exited respondents were slightly more likely to report ever having an STI: 64.8% versus 50.3% for currently working respondents. The individual STIs and the proportion of respondents who reported a history are shown in Table 11 for each group.

Table 11: Self-Reported History of STIs Contracted While Working in the Sex Trade

| | Currently Working Respondents N=147 | Exited Respondents N=54 |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Gonorrhea | 29.9% (44) | 44.4% (24) |
| Chlamydia | 36.7% (54) | 35.2% (19) |
| Syphilis | 17.7% (26) | 37.0% (20) |
| HPV (genital warts) | 17.7% (26) | 31.5% (17) |
| Pubic Lice (crabs) | 24.5% (36) | 25.9% (14) |
| Herpes | 7.6% (11) | 16.7% (9) |
| Other STD | 21.8% (32) | 29.6% (16) |

As Table 11 illustrates, the reported incidence of STI infection for active and formerly working respondents are significantly higher than that found within the general population. The overall rate in 1998 for both sexes per 100,000 population for Gonococcal, Chlamydia and Syphilis infections was, 16.4, 128.8, and 0.5 respectively (Health Canada, 2000). Moreover, as Table 11 further shows, higher rates of these STIs were reported by exited respondents in comparison to those currently working in the sex trade. This discrepancy between the two groups of respondents is most pronounced for Syphilis, which left untreated, can spread to other parts of the body and in women can be passed on to an unborn child with severe consequences (BC Ministry of Health, 1998).

Of the notifiable STIs, Chlamydia, the most commonly diagnosed STI, along with Gonorrhea and Syphilis are treatable with antibiotics, making regular testing imperative for early detection and diagnosis. Left untreated however, Gonorrhea and Chlamydia can

manifest as pelvic inflammatory disease, spreading from the vagina to the uterus, fallopian tubes and ovaries (MacDonald and Brunham, 1997). The long-term consequences of untreated PID can be severe: it is estimated that one in four will experience reproductive complications such as ectopic pregnancy, long-term fertility damage, recurrent infections or tuboovarian abscess (MacDonald and Brunham, 1997). These long-term consequences were evidenced by a small number of both groups of respondents. Similar proportions of exited respondents (4.5%) and those currently working (4.6%), had been diagnosed with PID and a number of respondents as well reported impaired fertility. Several respondents commented on this long-term damage noting, "I don't think I can have children- I'm not sure. They've told me that I couldn't. I've had two miscarriages", and "I was told that I would never be able to have a baby". Also significant is the fact that, of those respondents that reported acquiring an STI at some point in their careers, the majority these respondents (51.4% of exited and 60.8% of currently working) had a history of multiple infections. Previous research has found that concurrent sexually transmitted infections may further increase one's susceptibility to HIV infection (Scambler et al. 1990).

While condom use is successful in hindering the transmission of most STIs, they do not provide complete protection against sexually transmitted viral infections such as Human Papillomaviruses (HPV), caused by genital warts and Herpes, which were also reported by a smaller portion number of respondents (See Table 11). 3.7% of exited and slightly more (6.1%) of respondents presently working reported having cervical cancer. Correspondingly, the incidence rate for cervical cancer in the general population is significantly less at 8.3 per 100,000 women (Statistics Canada, 2000). In terms of the Herpes virus, as Table 11 shows, the self-reported infection rate amongst exited respondents was much higher than that of currently working respondents. These findings are particularly troublesome because, although manageable, neither HPV nor Herpes are curable. As well HPV, has can potentially lead to serious sexual health problems such as cancer of the uterine cervix, of which rates have been found to be higher for sex workers (Lytwyn and Sacks, 1997). One respondent commented on this association: "Well, before I was in the sex trade I had no problems with my pap smears. After working for six months I had problems with my Pap smear coming up with pre-cancer cells".

c. Other Sexual Health Problems

In addition to sexually transmitted diseases, both current sex workers and those who had exited the trade reported other sexual health problems. Respondents reported additional problems ranging from recurrent bladder and other infections, to problems with sexual intercourse. For instance one currently working sex worker said: “I never had a bladder infection before and now I’ve gotten two”. Another respondent was concerned about the long-term effect recurrent bladder infections could potentially have: “the bladder infections and stuff maybe creating scar tissue and me maybe not being able to have kids. That’s my main health concern”. Also serious, one exited respondent felt that sexual health problems related to her previous work had effected her ability to have sex. She said: “Physically sex was painful for me, it has been for quiet a few years because I [had] fibroids”.

2. Physical Health Issues

Most research looking at the health of sex workers tend to concentrate mainly on sexual health, and in doing so largely ignore other problems that may impact upon the well-being of those who have worked in the sex trade. However, in addition to sexual health problems, it was clear that those surveyed had a number of other crucial medical needs. Furthermore, as Table 12 illustrates, former participants were just as likely, and in some cases more likely, to suffer from other physical health problems.

Table 12: Self-Reported Presence of Physical Health Problems

| | Eating Disorder | Sleeping Disorder | Migraine Headaches | Chronic Fatigue Syndrome |
|--|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Currently Working Respondents N=147 | 10.2% (15) | 32.7% (48) | 27.9% (41) | 8.2% (12) |
| Exited Respondents N=54 | 18.5% (10) | 46.3% (25) | 25.9% (14) | 25.9% (14) |

Contrary to what one might expect, for a number of exited respondents even though they had left the trade, their sex trade involvement has continued to have a number of physical health consequences, including problems sleeping, migraine

headaches and chronic fatigue. In fact, as Table 12 shows, exited respondents were slightly more likely to have a sleeping disorder condition present and just as likely as their currently working counterparts to be suffering from migraines. For instance, one exited respondent said, “I’ve got a sleeping disorder...so that’s a major problem”. Currently active and exited respondents alike talked of sex work as physically and emotionally draining work. Similar to other women employed full-time, many of those currently working in the trade were also juggling unpaid work activities such as household work, child care, etc. with their “careers” in the trade. For instance, when asked if working in the sex trade had effected her overall health, one respondent replied: “As far as being burnt out, yes...you just have so much to deal with. When you’re dealing with motherhood, it’s a job in itself too”. Among other conditions, chronic fatigue was common, especially for exited respondents who were three times more likely to be suffering from the condition when compared to currently working respondents. One exited respondent commented :

I guess I have a lot of health issues right now but in terms of trying to figure out what the problem is... like Chronic Fatigue or depression or memory loss all that kind of stuff.

3. Emotional and Mental Health

The sex trade involves the sale of services that are vastly different from most business transactions. Unlike legitimate work situations, sex work entails the use of the body and the sharing of an intimate part of one’s self in a manner that have traditionally been reserved for private relations with another whom one has intimate feelings for. Whether or not they feel this way themselves, central is how sex workers manage to emotionally and mentally separate their contacts with clients from those with private partners. A key strategy employed by current and former sex workers interviewed here for dealing with sex work involved maintaining a distinction of work life from private life while working in the trade. One currently respondent put it this way: “I consider myself two people so when I’m at work I’m one person and when I’m at home I’m...”. Similarly, an exited respondent noted that maintaining emotional distance from clients had been necessary while working in order to protect one’s sense of private self: “It’s

pretty private stuff that people (clients) divulge. I had to mentally become someone else”.

From the responses of both current and former respondents however, it is evident that the creation and maintenance of such a separation was not always an easy task. In describing the kind of person it takes to maintain such a separation, one exited respondent noted that you need to keep an “open mind and be strong, if you are strong you can get out there and turn it on and turn it off, like that’s your job, remember that its your job”. On a similar note, a currently working respondent described the complexity and difficulty of this task: “it’s a heavy thing mentally to deal with and live with. You have to be prepared to shut down, close off parts of your self and not every body can do that”. However, “shutting down” can have negative consequence; for some, sex work had very clearly taken its toll emotionally and mentally. For instance, one respondent’s comments echoed the sentiments of many:

Mentally, emotionally it effects everything. You...you become that person and it seeps into the rest of your life. If you are going to be in the sex trade you got to have the skills to separate the business from home and there's no way of knowing how to do that.

In terms of mental health indicators, over half of those sampled indicated that they had at some point received treatment for a mental health problem. Moreover 51.7% of currently working and 48.1% of exited reported that they were presently dealing with depression. Mental health was clearly a huge issue for many of those currently working in the trade: 16.9% indicated that they currently had a mental health condition, as compared with 7% of females and 8% of males aged 12 and over in the general population who met the criteria for having had an episode of depression in the previous year (1996-1997 data, Statistics Canada, 2000). One respondent said: “My main health concerns are finding mental stability. I guess you could say getting rid of depression and everything else like that”. When compared with those still involved in the trade, it is clear that mental illness still remain amongst those respondents who had left the trade. In fact, 27.8% of exited respondents reported that they were battling mental illnesses. One exited sex worker who had been out of the trade for twenty-five years describes the mental health toll working in the sex trade has had on her: “I think that one of the things that people really need to realize is the long term after effects emotionally speaking. I

was in the sex trade twenty-five years ago and I spent the last twenty years in hell because of it". As this table shows, for some, the mental and emotional impact is long-term.

Mental and emotional issues were manifested in a number of problems for both currently working and former respondents. Table 13 presents mental health problems respondents reported currently experiencing.

Table 13: Self-Reported Presence of Mental Health Conditions

| | Depression | Anxiety/Panic Attacks | Self-harm/Slashing | Attempted Suicide |
|--|------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Currently Working Respondents N=147 | 51.7% (76) | 42.2% (62) | 6.8% (10) | 12.2% (18) |
| Exited Respondents N=54 | 48.1% (26) | 51.9% (28) | 3.7% (2) | 5.6% (3) |

Although other factors could have contributed to respondents' poor mental condition (for example, history of abuse), from the qualitative responses of both current and former participants in this study, it is evident that a large part of mental health problems experience by respondents was due to the extremely negative way in which the sex trade is looked down upon in our society. The illegalities and stigmatized nature of the sex work have a negative impact on self-image and how respondents feel about themselves. For some, the negative view of others combined with their own morals regarding trading sex for money, had left a heavy burden of guilt and shame, and even self disgust:

Most of the time I just locked myself in my room for a couple of days. I say to myself "why did I do that." I'd be calling myself down quite a bit and it would really bother me that I done it.

Unhappy with themselves, its not surprising then, that depression and self-destructive habits such a suicidal thoughts and self-harm were present amongst a small number of currently working and slightly fewer of those who had exited the trade as shown in Table 16. One respondent said: "I've been suicidal for the past twenty months". Moreover, as Table 16 also shows, leaving the trade seemed to do little to improve one's mental condition or feelings about oneself. Exited respondents were just as likely to experience depression, and more likely to have problems with anxiety or suffer from panic attacks. As well, some of the retired respondents still reported self-destructive habits, some

severely:

I don't want to commit suicide but there are some times that I want to hurt myself. I think that comes a lot from other people hurting me. I feel that somehow if I beat them to it I'm taking that chance away from. Whatever enjoyment they get out of, I've taken it away from them. I've gotten back in control over it. I've got some emotional concerns about myself.

4. Drug and Alcohol Use

Drug and/or alcohol abuse is frequently mentioned as one of the many concomitant problems associated with the sex trade. Some research has demonstrated the association between working in the sex trade and drug and/or alcohol abuse, as well as the corresponding impact it has on the working lives of sex workers and their health (McKeganey and Barnard, 1996; De Graaf et al. 1995; Gossop et al. 1995). For a large number of both current and exited sex workers in this study, drug and alcohol usage did play a significant part in their working lives. For many, part in parcel of the sex trade was a drug habit, as illustrated by the comments of one respondent: "The sex trade and the drug use, I kind of put them together. The drug use was the reason I went into the sex trade pretty much. It was kind of why I stayed in it I guess". Similarly, regarding the connection between sex work and drug abuse, another respondent explains:

It is an explosive chain reaction. Nine times out of ten sex trade also involves the drug industry so if your starting one or the other you are probably ultimately going to do the other.

As discussed earlier, for 18.5% of exited and 17.1% of currently working respondents, drug addiction contributed to their entry into the sex trade: "what I was mostly in it for was so I could go out and get high... I was doing this [trading sex] to feed my drug habit". Still for others, it was their work in the sex trade that further intensified the alcohol and/or drug use: "working in the sex trade has somewhat exasperated my addictions", as one respondent commented. Thus, whether they had turned to drugs and alcohol because of the burdens of their work, or were drawn into sex work in order to support a habit, amongst respondents of this study, substance use was common while working in the sex trade.

Excessive alcohol and/or illicit drug use can potentially lead to a number of

serious social and health-related problems. The impact of drugs and alcohol on the working lives of sex workers is evidenced by the situations faced by respondents still working in the trade. Amongst currently working respondents, drug and alcohol addiction was a persistent challenge in their working lives. Well over half of those currently working (57.8%) had at some point received treatment for a substance abuse problem. Clearly, however, currently working respondents did not want to continue to abuse drugs. Most (62.6%) felt that it was important to try and reduce their alcohol and/or drug usage.

Alcohol was the most common substance used by the currently working respondents; close to three-quarters of sex workers reported regular or weekly consumption of alcohol. In this sense, sex trade workers were not any more likely to be regular alcohol consumers than those in the general population, where according to 1993 General Social Survey data, 74.4% of Canadians aged 15 and older reported drinking over the last 12 months, averaging 4.4 drinks per week (Single et al. 1994). However, while reported less frequently, a large number of respondents were illicit drug users. Close to half the sample of currently active sex workers had sniffed, shot (injected), smoked, skin popped or swallowed cocaine or crack in the last six months. Additionally, of the 35.9% who had used heroin over the previous six months, the majority reported heavy use, injecting more than once a day. Furthermore, many were polydrug users, mostly using cocaine/crack and heroin in combinations with other drugs such as methadone, marijuana, speed, and crystal meth. In total, substance users spent on average \$78.91 per day for their habits with 24.7% of the sample estimating that they spent \$100 or more every day for their substance(s) of choice.

Drug and/or alcohol use can provide an escapist outlet for sex workers coping with difficult work situations which are often extremely stressful and dangerous. For instance, sex workers from a Netherlands study emphasized the functional effects of drug and alcohol use: it allowed them to forget or escape the negative aspects of their work and it facilitated client interaction by allowing them to overcome physical aversions to clients (De Graaf et al. 1995). Currently working and exited sex workers interviewed for this study reported similar reasons for their current and prior alcohol and drug use. Some respondents noted that using drugs and alcohol was a way to cope with demanding and

difficult work situations. One respondent commented, “The hours that they’re working and the strain on them. The possibility of drug and alcohol abuse is very common”. Similarly, another respondent explained that many sex workers, working extremely long hours, relied on drugs in order to stay functional: “I know some of the girls ended up snorting up coke because they had to work until 6 o’clock in the morning and shit like that”. For others, substance use was a way to escape reality and forget about work. Drug use was a way for one exited respondent to avoid dealing with sex work and the effect it had on her: “Part of my sex trade was my drug use thing. The drug use was a numbing thing so I didn’t deal with it, I was just numb”.

18.8% of exited respondents indicated that leaving the trade came part in parcel with a decision to as well overcome a drug and/or alcohol dependency. As one exited respondent noted, “I had a drug overdose and that was when I decided I needed to leave the sex trade or it was going to kill me- drugs were going to kill me”. However, leaving the trade did not necessarily mean that problems with alcohol and drug addictions always disappeared. After exiting the trade, a quarter of respondents mentioned that problems with drug and/or alcohol continued to plague their lives. For purposes of comparison with those currently involved in the sex trade, Table 14 presents the self-reported illicit drug use frequencies for both sample groups over the last six months.

Table 14: Kind of Drug Used Over Last 6 Months By Respondents

| | Crack/Cocaine | Heroin | Crystal Meth./Speed |
|--|----------------------|---------------|----------------------------|
| Currently Working Respondents N=147 | 47.6% (70) | 36.6% (53) | 8.8% (13) |
| Exited Respondents N=54 | 20.5% (11) | 16.6% (9) | 1.9% (1) |
| TOTAL N=201 | 40.3% (81) | 30.8% (62) | 6.9% (14) |

As this table shows, while hard drug use was considerably less frequent than those currently working in the trade, a sizable minority of exited respondents still reported regular crack/cocaine and heroin use. However, while 37.3% of exited respondents had used crack/cocaine or heroin at least monthly over the past six months, their frequency of use was far less than that of the currently working respondents. The exited respondents were less likely to heavily use hard drugs (i.e. on a weekly or daily basis). Moreover,

fewer exited respondents were polydrug users in comparison to their currently working counterparts.

a. Drug Use and Health Implications

Drug use, particularly injection drug use is associated with a number of serious health risks. Research has shown that accompanying illicit drug use is an increased likelihood to engage not only in risky drug-related behaviors, in particular needle or syringe sharing, but risky sexual practices as well. The findings of this and other research show that drug using sex workers are more susceptible to economic incentives for non-condom use, especially if there the financial pressure and desire for drugs is great (Barnard, 1993; McKeganey and Barnard, 1992; Gossop et al. 1995). For instance, according to a small number of both currently working and exited respondents, drug use at times influenced their risk practices while they were working in the trade. While reported condom use with clients was virtually universal during intercourse, accepting offers of financial reward for unsafe sex was reported by a small number of respondents. Exited respondents noted: “clients would pay extra” and “they usually paid me more not to use one”, while one currently working respondent explained:

When I use... I needed... I didn't care safe or not. I just wanted the money.
When you are in the addiction you just need the money and...that's the way it worked for me.

A couple currently working respondents using illicit drugs also spoke of the unpleasantness of withdrawal symptoms, of being “dope sick”, which perhaps further increases one's susceptibility to financial coercion.

Research has shown that injection drug use also represents a substantial risk for a range of physical health problems, including, but not limited to HIV infection and other blood-borne sexually transmitted diseases such as Hepatitis B and C (Campbell, 1991; de Graaf et al. 1995; Pyett et al. 1996, Stajduhar et al., 2001). For instance, a recent study on illicit drug use in the CHR found that just over half of drug using respondents were Hepatitis C positive, 25% self-identified themselves as HIV positive, and well over half had experienced infections, abscesses and other blood borne diseases related to their injection drug use (Stajduhar et al., 2001).

Likewise, both respondents currently working in the trade as well as those that had exited reported significant health problems related to their drug use. In terms of blood-borne infections, a large number of respondents reported the presence of a Hepatitis infection, which is shown in Table 15.

Table 15: Currently Working and Exited Respondents with Self-Reported Hepatitis Condition

| | Currently Working Respondents N=146 | Exited Respondents N=54 |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Hepatitis A | 0.7% (1) | 1.9% (1) |
| Hepatitis B | 7.5% (11) | 9.3% (5) |
| Hepatitis C | 32.7% (48) | 35.2% (19) |

While Hepatitis A and B infection rates were quite low, a large number of both currently working as well as exited respondents self-reported that they had tested positive for the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) infection, which many outreach workers now consider as the “new epidemic” (Kingsley and Mark, 2000). Although no respondents specifically talked of needle and/or syringe sharing, as a blood-borne infection, HCV is primarily transmitted through injection drug use. Health Canada estimates that injection drug use, with needle sharing being a primary factor, accounts for upwards of 70% of all prevalent HCV infections (1999). Because risk of HCV infection through therapeutic blood exposure or sexual contact currently is very low (Health Canada, 1999), it can be assumed that respondents came in contact with the infection through their drug habits. This is supported by other research findings. A cross-Canada survey of alcohol and other legal and illegal drug use found that 41% of injection drug users reported to having shared needles at some point in their lives (Health Canada, 1995).

Although most newly acquired HCV infections are clinically silent, the majority (85%) will become chronic, causing long-term liver complications such as cirrhosis, liver cancer, and liver failure, resulting in death (Health Canada, 1999). Not surprisingly then, those with HCV currently working in the sex trade were concerned about the long-term impact on their health. For instance, when asked whether working in the sex trade had affected her overall health one sex worker responded: “Oh ya its affected me because I’ve...because along with working in the trade I used dope and I contracted Hep. C” and

she talked about worrying “if I’m going to die because of my Hep C”.

As Table 15 shows, exited respondents’ current health problems related to their past or present drug use mirrored those described by currently working respondents. A similar number of the exited respondents were dealing with Hepatitis infections, indicating that drug abuse has long-term effects. Indeed, many of the exited sex workers connected their present health concerns with their drug use and not their sex work per se. When asked what impact sex work had had on their overall health, many of the exited respondents spoke of HCV as their primary concern: “Well, I have Hep. C- I’m pretty concerned about that”; or, “I’ve got some physical problems and I can tell that the Hep. C is affecting me”. In addition to chronic health problems related to HCV, several respondents also mentioned other physical maladies which brought about by their drug use. For instance one exited respondent explained how her drug use while working had affected her: “physically because of my addiction and my overdose. I’ve lost the hearing in my right ear and the feeling in my right arm”.

5. Safety and Violence

The health risks associated with sex work need also to consider occupational hazards posed by the potential for violence and victimization within the commercial sex exchange. Sex workers are left vulnerable not only because of the highly stigmatized nature of the work they do, but also, because of the illegalities associated with the selling of sex for money. They may have little recourse under the law for protection from exploitation and victimization. According to respondents, while most commercial sexual encounters between client and worker proceed in a straightforward manner, the potential for violence is ever present while working in the trade. They all agreed the "occupational hazards" associated with sex work are more serious than that of "legitimate" occupations in which workers at least have access to minimum government-imposed rights and protections. Many respondents spoke of the potential for sexual and other physical violence as inherent risks of sex work: “Of course its not an easy job, and you don’t know what you’re walking into”. Both those currently working as well as exited said that conditions of work in the sex trade involved fear for their personal safety every time they

went out and turned a trick. Echoing the responses of many, one currently working respondent said:

Safety concerns are basically every time you hop into a car, are you going to be walking home or crawling home. Or even coming home at all.

Similarly, another sex worker described the potential risks: of speedy curbside negotiations:

[Its] not really a good environment because there are girls that get burned [robbed], they murder them and they rape them. My best friend died from that.

Practically all of the individuals interviewed for this study had been confronted with experiences of violence and victimization on at least one occasion whilst working in the trade. Table 16 presents the varied kind of victimization both currently working and exited respondents were faced to deal with while working in the sex trade. Indeed, for both respondents currently working in the sex trade as well as their exited counterparts, the potential for violence, was often mentioned as the worst thing about working in the sex trade.

Table 16: Reported Kinds of Victimization Experienced While Working in the Sex Trade by Respondents

| | Physical Abuse | Emotional Torture | Sexual Abuse/Rape | Verbal Abuse/Belittling |
|--|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Currently Working Respondents N=147 | 32.0% (47) | 34.7% (51) | 12.2% (18) | 40.8% (60) |
| Exited Respondents N=54 | 35.2% (19) | 38.9% (21) | 25.9% (14) | 42.6% (23) |

A small number of currently working as well as exited respondents recalled times when they had been forced or coerced by clients into having unprotected sex. Further, violence as a result of “bad dates” was common and for many, were not one time occurrences, but rather occurred with frequency. Even male sex workers were vulnerable. One male respondent stated for example that, “Ya, I’ve been stabbed three times from a John on separate occasions”. Similarly, another respondent went into great detail the violence she had experienced across her career:

I almost got killed a few times by being picked up by the wrong people. One time

I was running down (street name) in a coat, no shoes, and no clothes under my coat. It was because this one person who was going to kill me if I didn't perform sex acts on him all night. He had a cast on his arm. Casts are good weapons. Another time I went with three guys and they were going to pay me in cocaine. That's what I was addicted to at the time was cocaine. I went with them and one of them had me tied up naked in his room. I couldn't get out of his room. I begged to go to the washroom and escaped... Both times a taxi driver saved my life.

Experiences of violence while working were not limited to bad dates. A number of respondents also reported having experienced various forms of abuse by pimps, managers or madams, the police, as well as the general public over the course of their careers. For the small number of respondents who were or had been working for a third party, conditions were especially unfavorable; "when I was working under a pimp or with a pimp, the working conditions sucked", as one exited respondent recalled. Further, these relations were exploitative and very often abusive. One exited respondent recalled her situation with a pimp:

He was so abusive and so obnoxious...and here I was doing everything possible I can to make his life absolutely great. He's got his booze and he's got his drugs, he's got his money, a place to sleep and food.

Not only does the illegality turning tricks in locations which serve to increase the risk of violence, such as cars and hidden or isolated areas, but it also alienates them from the protective services of the police, because as sex workers, their criminal status makes it extremely difficult to turn to the authorities for help. It is not surprising then that only a few of those interviewed said that they had reported violent incidences or turned to the police for help. Rather, most made comments such as, "Are you kidding?! I never call the police, that's the last thing you do"; or, "The police, I mean my god, I don't think they care about us". Many felt that because they were sex workers, they would get little help from the police, that their complaints would not be taken seriously. As one respondent commented:

There are just some things that you got to do on your own. You can't actually go to the police and say, "Yea, I was providing services for this guy and he beat the shit out of me." Cops are going to look at you and say, "That's nice, have a nice day".

Amongst many, there exists the impression that because of the work that they do,

sex workers are somehow responsible for the victimization perpetrated against them (Barnard, 1993). Those interviewed here also commented on this harmful perception and how it affected their work. One respondent's comments provide an example: "He was forcing me, and I went to the police and told them what he did. They said "Oh well, you're a prostitute you should be enjoying this". Further, harassment and abuse at the hands of the police was also reported by a small number. Such incidents further impinged on sex workers' willingness to turn to the police or other authorities for help.

Due to the negative stigma associated with sex work, sex workers are often treated as second class citizens. Respondents felt that in the eyes of the public, they were viewed as "dirty" and immoral and were treated accordingly. The negative stigma of being labeled a "common prostitute" or "whore" further accentuates the vulnerability of sex workers to violence and victimization. Thus, in addition to the victimization by clients, pimps and madams and the police, sex workers also may face harassment and even abuse from strangers and the general public. One exited respondent recalls the shame in having to endure such harassment:

Even just standing on the streets when I did stand on the street. There were a couple of people that would just pull up just to ask you how much you charge just to mock you. Have you ever heard of somebody pitching pennies? I knew people that did that... So there was a lot of negativity and it did affect me. I was worried about being judged by people. I have to admit that other people's opinion does affect me.

Additionally, many exited respondents felt that they continued to be stigmatized and judged according to their former occupation, which is discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

a. Violence and Impact on Health

While most discussion on the health risks associated with sex work has largely centered round the potential threat from the spread of HIV and other STI's, the commonality in occurrence of experiences with violence while working in the sex trade indicates the greater threat posed by the violent actions of clients, pimps and even strangers. Furthermore, from the responses of both current and former sex workers, it is evident that the lack of adequate protection from violence and victimization while working had lasting effects.

Working under conditions in which threats to personal safety was commonplace had a range of physical as well as mental health consequences for respondents in this study. The physical injuries incurred while working in the sex trade were often serious in nature. In fact, as Table 17 shows, a significant number of both currently working and exited respondents had experienced injuries serious enough to warrant seeking some form of medical treatment.

Table 17: Kind of Medical Attention Sought by Respondents for Injuries Incurred While Working in the Sex Trade

| | Hospitalization | Doctor's Office | Health Care Worker |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Currently Working Respondents N=147 | 33.3% (49) | 31.3% (46) | 26.5% (39) |
| Exited Respondents N=54 | 44.4% (24) | 31.5% (17) | 18.5% (10) |

Overall, both groups of respondents reported a wide range of physical injuries, ranging from broken bones and stitches, to concussions, to the even more serious, such as: “beaten, almost lost my eye- two month stay”, “examined after being raped”, and “ripped rectum three times”. Not surprisingly then, when exited respondents were asked what impact working in the sex trade had had on their health, many responses were related to the violence they had endured. One said: “Getting beaten up, landing with your knees on concrete, physically my back is screwed now. Emotionally...I don't know emotionally right now...”. Similarly, another respondents' main health concerns were: “just my physical health- I've been tired, beaten and just exhausted”.

Beyond the physical bumps and scars, the emotional and mental impact of the violence experienced was also evident. Many respondents reported serious mental health problems directly related to the violence and other trauma they had experienced while working. For instance, 31.3% of currently working respondents and 33.3% of exited reported suffering from flashbacks, or re-experiencing the trauma(s) they had endured while working in the trade. Thus, the long-term mental impact of the violence experienced while working in the sex trade is evident. One retired respondent noted:

Emotionally? Ya, it's scaring. It's something that you'll never forget no matter how hard you try but I think of when I was working and any thing I've ever gone through in life I think of as a lesson its some thing that's made me who I am today. I'm more street-wise, I'm more aware of the streets, I know what to look

for.

6. Sex Work and Impact on Health

The commercial sexual encounter, the occupational hazards posed by excessive drug use, and the often times violent and unsafe working conditions, clearly has an impact on the lives of some respondents in and out of the sex trade. Nonetheless, not all described being adversely impacted by working in the sex trade. In fact, when asked whether working in the sex trade had affected their overall health, 19.7% of currently working and 22.2% of exited respondents indicated that it hadn't. One exited respondent said, "no, it hasn't really affected me in any way". In contrast to the negative impact described by many, a small number of current as well as former respondents even indicated that they felt that working in the sex trade had improved their health. One currently working respondent noted: "it's actually made me healthier because I'm more careful now and more aware. So I actually get sick less now than I used to". Additionally, a small number of respondents who indicated that their health had not been negatively affected by their work in the sex trade said sex work had had a positive impact on their emotional and mental well-being, noting: "Emotionally I feel that I've grown stronger from it".

Negative experiences working in the sex trade were far from universal. In looking back, some exited respondents talked of enjoying their work and experiences in the sex trade. Indeed, for some the benefits afforded by working in the sex trade far out weighted the negatives described by most. One said:

I actually was quite happy with my life at that time because my job was easy, good money and I only worked when I had to. I had no one telling me what to do, when to do it or how to do it.

Some exited respondents valued what they had learnt from their experiences while working in the sex trade and felt they were better persons because of it. When asked what they would go back change about their lives if they could, a large number of respondents said that they would change nothing because their experiences had made them the persons they were today. For instance, one talked of the positive experiences and "life lessons" she had come away with:

I did have a good time and I enjoyed the experiences that I had because the experiences that I had in the sex trade totally correlated with every day to day life that I do now.... I learned a lot working in the sex trade. I learned a lot about people and I learned a lot about dealing with difficult people. I learned how to stay alive and I learned to look up to myself, for myself to stay alive.

7. Summary

This chapter has attempted to discern whether working in the sex trade has had a long lasting impact on the health of those who have exited the sex trade. Specifically, do exited respondents fair better in terms of health and well-being when compared to those who have not managed to exit this line of work?

Exited respondents differed from their currently working counterparts on some health variables, most notably in terms of frequency of illicit drug use. While exited respondents were significantly less likely to report having used illicit drugs over the last 6 months, a sizable number were still using cocaine and heroine. Moreover, although using less, exited respondents were just as likely to report long-term negative health outcomes (for example, the presence of a Hepatitis C condition) as a result of their drug use.

Across most key health factors, very little differences can be seen in the health situations described by current and former sex workers. Across physical, sexual and mental health indicators, the current health situations of exited sex respondents closely mirrored that of those still working in the trade. In fact, contrary to what was expected, in terms of current sexual health situation with regard to STIs, exited sex workers do not fair better than those still in the trade. Similarly, with regard to physical health problems such as eating and sleeping disorders and presence of chronic fatigue condition, exited respondents were worse off. Again, rather than being better off mentally and emotionally than those still working in the trade, exited respondents were just as likely to suffer from depression and anxiety attacks and only slightly less likely to report self-destructive behavior.

As the current health situations of exited respondents reveals then, leaving the sex trade in many cases has done little to remedy a number of physical, sexual and mental health. The fact that across some health indicators, exited sex workers are actually

worse off than their counterparts still working in the trade, suggests ill-health as an important factor affecting the exiting process. What explains then how is it that a number of exited respondents could come away from the sex trade virtually unscathed whereas others reported multiple consequences in terms of physical, sexual and emotional damage? Additionally, how is it that some not only cope with these difficult life experiences, but are able to grow and develop further in the process? In seeking answers to these questions, we turn now to the exiting experiences and current life situations of former sex workers in this study.

Chapter 7: Becoming an “Ex”

As the previous chapters have shown, a number of distinctions have been found between the situations of those currently working and those that have left the trade when personal characteristics, family background and health factors are considered. While there were a few notable differences found between the two groups, there were also a surprisingly large number of similarities. Leaving the sex trade, a transition most people would view favorably and see as a positive life change, in many regards, seems to have made little difference for the individuals involved in regard to their overall circumstances, when compared with those still involved in the sex trade. For the exited respondents in this study then, why has leaving the sex trade, what is seen as a socially desirable role exit, not brought about a general improvement in their social-economic and health situations? In considering why this may be so, the following chapter looks beyond the personal characteristics, family background, work-related and health factors of exited respondents. This chapter examines factors in the exit process and the barriers that exist to leaving, as well as the central life challenges ex-sex workers face upon leaving the sex trade behind.

1. Exiting the Sex Trade

Previous research suggests that for most individuals involved in trading sex for a living, the work is not seen as life-long career, but rather as something they are in for one reason or another and plan to get out of in the near future (Potterat et al, 1990; Elizabeth Fry Society, 1985). However, for the majority of individuals sampled for this study, the pathway to another career was neither a swift nor smooth process. Of currently working respondents, nearly three-quarters had tried to quit the sex industry at least one time previously. Even for exited respondents, 61.1% had made at least one previous attempt before exiting for good. For most of those who had managed to finally exit, then, the process of attempting to leave behind the trade involved periodic relapses back into sex trade activity. “Exited respondents had made on average 5.8 prior attempts before successfully making the break from sex work.” Currently working respondents who had

made prior attempts to leave the trade had done so an average of 7.4 times. In fact, some respondents had tried exiting, only to once again resume trading sex so many times that they were unable to give an exact number when asked how many times they had previously tried to quit.

Of those respondents who had made previous attempts to leave the sex trade, their reasons for doing so were numerous and varied. These reasons are presented for the two groups in Table 18.

Table 18: Respondents' Reasons for Quitting the Sex Trade

| | Currently Working Respondents N=109 | Exited Respondents N=32 |
|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Feelings of dirtiness, shame, loss of self worth | 10.1% (11) | 9.4% (3) |
| Sickness/Health-related problems, injuries incurred while working | 6.4% (7) | 6.3% (2) |
| Aging/Got too old | 0.0% (0) | 6.3% (2) |
| Pressure from others to quit (family, significant others, etc.) | 11.9% (13) | 3.1% (1) |
| Need a change | 15.6% (17) | 12.5% (4) |
| Burnt out, stress of the job | 22.9% (25) | 15.6% (5) |
| Quit using drugs/alcohol | 15.6% (17) | 18.8% (6) |
| Got a "straight" job | 7.3% (8) | 6.3% (2) |
| To go back to school | 4.6% (5) | 3.1% (1) |
| Pregnancy/kids | 4.1% (6) | 18.8% (6) |

While there were slight differences between the two groups, a predominant reason given for leaving the sex trade was a feeling of finally reaching a point at which sex work became too much for the individual to bear. Not unlike the stress endured in many other job situations, in deciding to exit sex work, 22.9% of currently working in comparison to slightly less exited respondents (15.6%) talked about reaching a point at which they had become completely burnt out and could no longer handle working in the sex trade; many talked of becoming disgusted by sex work. One exited respondent put it this way: "I just got really sick of it and couldn't do it any more. I was sick of it, disgusted". Similarly, others said, "I found I just couldn't do it anymore", and "I was sick and tired of it", and "I just couldn't handle the stress no more".

As Table 18 also shows, for a number of others (slightly more exited compared with currently working respondents), deciding to leave the sex trade came part in parcel with a decision to as well overcome an alcohol and/or drug dependency. As one formerly

working respondent noted, “I had a drug overdose and that was when I decided I needed to leave the sex trade or it was going to kill me- drugs were going to kill me”. Upon deciding to quit drugs, these respondents found that they no longer needed the “fast money” to support their habit and, as such, they no longer need the sex trade. One respondent said that she had left the industry because: “I didn’t need the money- I had stopped using drugs”.

For a number of others, the process of leaving did not come about by way of a crucial event or due to a clearly informed decision, but rather was less dramatic: “the decision was more gradual. Get out and return to yourself. You did it, forget about it,...chalk it up as experience”, as one commented. For a similar number of currently working and exited respondents (15.6% and 12.5% respectively), leaving the trade was motivated by a need for a change or desire to be doing something different or better with their lives. As one respondent notes:

When I left the trade, it was just like a time for a change. I didn’t have any emotional awakenings or anything like that. It was just time to do something else.

For those that simply left because they “needed a change”, or “needed a new way to live”, or “just wanting something new”, the exiting process was often more prolonged as respondents gradually eased out of the lifestyle. One former sex worker described his exit:

I started turning down more tricks and with regulars started making reasons why I couldn’t see them. Some of them I actually told them I was getting out of the business and suggested two of the best, who I thought, were the best in business and who I thought of as friends. I slowed down a lot and then moved.

Other reasons for wanting to get out of the sex trade, including: pressure or support from family members/significant others, not liking how sex work made them feel about themselves, due to health reasons, securing gainful employment in a “legitimate” occupation or going back to school, and getting pregnant and having children. In fact, as Table 18 shows, the presence of children or a pregnancy and aging/feeling too old to working in the trade were much more significant pushes to leaving the sex trade for exited respondents than for those currently active who had previously tried to leave. In contrast, of those currently working who had made previous attempts in the past to quit,

pressure from significant others to get out was a stronger motivator than for exited respondents.

Despite the plethora of reasons given for giving up sex work, recidivism was high. For the 74.1% of currently working respondents who had made previous attempts to exit, the “pulls” or lures of sex work far exceeded those factors pushing them out. The following section considers these “pull” factors and takes a closer look at the challenges those who had managed to exit faced upon leaving.

a. Barriers to Exiting

“Everybody has problems and I just dealt with quite a few. I deal with them in stages a little bit at a time, little stepping stones. You step on a whole bunch of little stones and finally you get to the other side of that creek, you’ll get there eventually. You can’t just jump in the water and start walking across, you never know if there’s a deep hole. You might fall in”.

- Former Sex Worker on the difficulties of exiting.

In discussing why, once again they had returned to the sex trade after making an attempt to exit, respondents talked about two central issues: a) the difficulty associated with leaving the lifestyle, and b) the lures or “pulls” of sex work. Concerning the lures of the sex trade, one currently working respondent put it this way: “I’m trying to make a fresh start again. I’ve tried it a couple of times and every time I just fall back into a rut. Hopefully this time I’ll make it out”. Recalling the difficulties in her own exiting experiences, an exited sex worker said, “I don’t know, getting out of the sex trade was hard work”. Currently working and exited respondents who had made more than one exiting attempts mentioned a variety of reasons for once again returning to the sex trade after they had quit, which are presented in Table 19.

Table 19: Respondents’ Reasons for Returning to the Sex Trade

| | Currently Working Respondents N=106 | Exited Respondents N=33 |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Money/Economic Circumstances | 65.1% (69) | 66.7% (22) |
| Addiction to Drugs | 23.6% (25) | 21.2% (7) |
| Attractions of the job | 2.8% (3) | 0.0% (0) |
| Own Boss/Control over Work | 1.9% (2) | 3.0% (1) |
| Other Circumstances | 6.6% (7) | 9.1% (3) |

As Table 19 shows, for both currently working as well as exited respondents who had made previous attempts to leave and then gone back, money was the central motivating factor for their return. Once again, this was the predominant reason given for entering into the sex trade in the first instance. When asked why they had returned to trading sex, an overwhelming majority of both groups mentioned their economic circumstances in conjunction with the lure of quick, “easy money” that the sex trade offers. For those in financial need, trading sex for money was talked of as being a way-often the only way- to remedy this situation. Regarding why she once again resumed trading sex after quitting, one exited respondent put it like this: “I needed money. It always had to do with the money”. With a limited education and little job experience, the sex trade for many offers financial benefits that are simply unattainable outside the trade. As one respondent noted:

I first worked a couple months as a house cleaner, scrubbing floors and toilets to survive and make money and afford an apartment. From that amount, I couldn't survive...I started work[ing] in an escort agency”.

For those faced with trying to support a family, the financial payoffs of sex work are particularly tempting: “It's hard to stop because I'm so used to the money. I'm so used to being there for my children to give money to them...it seems to take control of you”. Even for those who had exited the sex trade for two years or more, the lure of “easy money” was something they continued to struggle with as a temptation to go back. Financial problems brought back the urge to go back to the trade and turn “just one trick”. For instance, having been out of the trade for a while, one respondent noted, “I still always think about it, though, if I'm broke and I need the money- how easy it would be to go and make a few hundred dollars or more”. Another exited respondent put it this way:

I would not go back but I still think about it and it's still tempting because where else are you going to make that kind of money that quick and not have to pay any taxes?

For a similar number of currently working and exited respondents (23.6% and 21.2% respectively), the financial need prompting their re-entry was fueled by a

continuing drug dependency. For those still dealing with a drug problem, then, the need to support their habit was a significant barrier preventing them from a permanent exit. One respondent mentioned the “escalation of addiction and need for fast money”, and another, “because of addictions at that time, because of cocaine”, as prompting their re-entry.

For still a smaller number of respondents other circumstances were instrumental in motivating their return. Some discussed a lack of support or the negative influences of others as inhibiting them from making a clean break. As one respondent stated, “I didn’t have the social support so I didn’t have other people I could go to say, ‘how do I get a job’?, ‘I want out of this’, ‘I’m having a rough day’, or whatever. I felt entirely alone”. Another respondent recalled how people in her life had attempted to dissuade her from leaving by trying to entrap her into staying: “My pimp just wouldn’t let me go. He would just not let me go...I don’t think that he was very happy and he was going to make my life miserable”. In addition to a lack of social ties and support, a number of respondents mentioned the presence of a criminal record as a significant barrier to exiting the trade permanently. The presence of a criminal record severely limits one’s employment opportunities once out of the trade, as the comments of one respondent illustrate:

I’ve gone...went and handed like seventy-five resumes out and got two calls. When I went for the interviews they asked me if I had a criminal record, right there I was finished. I got depressed, I got sad then I went home and I picked up the phone. I phoned one of my regulars and did what I know how to do.

The “pulls” or lure of sex work, such as independence, having control over one’s work situation, and the financial benefits it offers, prompted a remaining few to return to their former occupation. Once outside the trade, some respondents noted that they missed the “independence” or “returned for the reasons I like it (the power) and the money”. Others, similar to many other service jobs (Leidner, 1993), talked of missing the intrinsic feeling of belonging or of making the “client” happy: “[I missed the] company and comfort”.

b. Facilitators to Exiting

While the barriers preventing many from quitting the sex trade were numerous, exited respondents did discuss forms of support and services that were helpful to their exiting course as well as what they felt needed to be in place before a sex worker could make a clean break from the role. In the long-answer portion of the interview, exited respondents talked about the importance of having a strong social network in place upon exiting and the need to have someone to turn to whom they could trust. As one respondent described, “I think the most important thing was to have somebody basically understand and not shame me about what I had done and where I had been”. Such support was especially important when one felt the “pull” to go back to trading sex:

I had support...mostly my counselors and somebody that I could trust to talk to and not go around blabbing to people. So I had support, I had lots of support as a matter of fact. If I feel myself trying to go back that way, then I'll talk to somebody, it helps.

Additionally, the support and understanding of family members played a large role in some exited respondents' exit process from the sex trade. One respondent noted, “my mom was really supportive and my sister...they gave me whatever I needed. I was still on my own but they helped me out a lot”. The presence of children were similarly a driving force stopping some from returning to the sex trade: “Its almost like if I wouldn't have had my daughter- that almost seemed to be the thing that kept me grounded. I would probably still be there, I probably wouldn't be here now, been alive now”.

Based on respondents' qualitative responses, having a significant other in their life who, rather than being coercive, was supportive, seemed to be what many exited respondents needed to make a permanent change in their lifestyle. For one respondent, having a partner who accepted her for who she was and did not judge her for their involvement in the sex trade was crucial:

I can only talk for myself but I believe that a lot of sex trade workers would like to leave it and would stop when there is the support from a person you can really trust. A person that really believes in you and a person that doesn't talk on a daily basis about your past. They would just let the past be the past.

In addition to the support of close friends and family members, some of the exited respondents also elaborated in the open-ended portion of the interview on the social and

other services they accessed upon leaving the trade, which of these services were helpful, as well as those that were not. Upon making the decision to leave the trade, seeking out services specifically geared towards “ex sex workers” was particularly important. What many sought out after leaving was a place they could go to where others would understand the specific needs of an exiting sex worker, whether it was just having someone to talk to or accessing specific resources. One respondent’s comments echo the sentiments of many of the exited sex workers: “I think the biggest thing is support from people that have been in the sex trade and left the sex trade to be able to help them out”. Respondents also talked positively about the support they received from street nurses and outreach services. One respondent put it like this: “the outreach workers supported what I was doing...They’re the ones that gave me the final kick in the ass to go”. For various reasons, those working in the sex trade are often suspicious of those representing the mainstream. Accessible outreach services and other programs provided by individuals who themselves are experiential (that is have prior experience in the sex trade) and knowledgeable about the varied needs of sex workers leaving the trade, are considered by many exited respondents as vital. One exited respondent elaborated on this:

All the people working at the Needle Exchange helped me quite a lot. They offered a lot of counseling and crisis support...So I found a lot of support through them. There were really good people and they were constantly...when I had any problems that I talked with them about, they were always trying to find something to help me out”.

While some respondents found the support and understanding of others and accessing particular services beneficial upon leaving the trade, there were a small number of exited respondents who talked of making the transition out of the trade solely on their own. In fact, for a number of both currently working and exited respondents, their involvement in the sex trade was not something they disclosed with anyone; their activity in the sex trade was kept completely hidden from family and even close friends. For instance, 62.3% of exited respondents had not told their mothers and 69.8% had not told their fathers about their sex trade involvement. The corresponding figures for those still involved in the trade were similar: of currently working respondents’ mothers and fathers, 62.1% and 73.2% respectively were unaware of their daughter’s or son’s current involvement in the sex trade. The stigma attached to selling sex was often the central

reason for hiding one's involvement: "A lot of my friends think that I work in a factory. They don't know what I do and I'm afraid to tell them because I feel that I would be shunned". As well, many respondents were so used to looking after themselves and being on their own that they did not know how to reach out to others for support. Upon leaving the trade, these respondents talked of feeling socially isolated, as one exited sex worker comments regarding his experience:

When I was in that world, there was only me. I didn't want anybody else that I knew knowing what I was doing. They couldn't do anything because nobody knew anything about it.

Other exited respondents had similar comments: "I didn't access any services", and "There's really no one that actually helped me...I just did it, there wasn't really anyone who knew about that part of my life".

2. Situations after Leaving the Sex Trade

As comments from the exiting respondents have shown, the process of permanently leaving behind the work role was very difficult to accomplish. Nor did the challenges exiting sex workers faced "magically" disappear as soon as they had left the role behind. Regarding the structural barriers which often make exiting difficult, Weiner notes "because of social stigma and financial factors, it is extremely difficult for prostitutes to leave the business and find and hold legitimate jobs" (1996, 98). Findings from this research likewise suggest that for many individuals, exiting the sex trade did not necessarily represent a solely positive life change or an increase in standard of living. Exited respondents talked of four main challenges they faced after their break from the sex trade, which are explored below.

a. Leaving the Sex Worker Role and Lifestyle Behind

For many of the exited sex workers interviewed, leaving this line of work involved decreasing their involvement with the lifestyle and with individuals associated with the sex trade; for most, this dissociation was not easy. Because the sex worker identity had been a central part of their lives, and typically, for a prolonged period of

time, giving up the way of life associated with sex work was especially difficult. Not surprisingly, many talked of initially missing the trade after they had left:

At first, I almost missed it because I was in control and it was my money. When I first stopped, there was definitely... It was almost like a feeling that I was missing something. Something had completely disappeared out of my life.

Leaving the sex worker role behind also involved significant changes to one's existing social network. Many respondents spoke of their difficulties in decreasing their association with others still involved in the sex trade. In exiting and leaving the lifestyle and normative expectations associated with the sex trade behind, many found that they no longer held the same things in common with or could relate to other sex trade workers. For instance, one respondent recalled how her exiting affected her friendships with those still in the trade:

Now that I'm not in the trade, I'm not good enough for them. I don't know if they feel that I'm not good enough or they're too good and I don't really care either. I do notice the big difference because my friends that are in it can say 'I'll buy this or I'll buy that', or 'Let's go and do this or lets go and do that'. For me now, I'm not into that".

Another respondent described how, in deciding to exit the sex trade and quit using drugs, she lost a lot of friends in the process, which in turn, made the breakaway more difficult:

With the drugs it seemed like I lost a lot of friends. Because I didn't have so much to share or to offer anymore. It seemed like a lot of people I realised were not real friends. They were just there to use what I had at the time. That was difficult because in a way I value friends.

For exited respondents, another main challenge they faced after exiting was not a difficulty in leaving meaningful relationships behind, but rather a difficulty in cutting off contact with those perceived to be a negative influence. A number of respondents that took part in the qualitative interview commented on the need to maintain distance from others still working in the sex trade. One formerly working respondent said: "I try to avoid them now because they are working and their lifestyle. I said 'that's your lifestyle and I want to stay away from it". Often, breaking off contact with other sex workers and those associated with the sex trade was crucial in order to avoid the temptation to return

to the sex trade. One respondent recounted how she was continually tempted by a friend to go back to the sex trade:

She has propositioned me a few times. She wanted me to do a photo shoot with her. She phoned me and said there's X amount of dollars waiting for you and I need another girl...It's hard as hell for me to say no...It will cause my decline, I know that so I wouldn't do it but I find it hard to say no to the money still...so ya, I keep my distance with her.

b. Confronting and Working Through Experiences in the Sex Trade

A reoccurring theme that emerged from the exited respondents' descriptions of their experiences following their breakaway was the strong emotional reactions and personal challenges they confronted. For many respondents, leaving the trade opened the fore for them to confront negative memories and what they had experienced while working. As one respondent's comments show, this often entailed flashbacks, "remembering certain things that you just don't want to remember". More often than not these negative memories involved dealing with the abuse or victimization experienced while working in the trade, and perhaps before entering the trade. For instance, one exited respondent said that the main challenges she was still dealing with were, "Emotional stuff that I have to deal with like emotional abuse and sexual abuse, working and everything all in one". Another similarly noted the difficulty in confronting, "all the issues that I carry- the sex issues the abuse issues, just all the issues that come along with the sex trade [and] still have an impact my life". Moreover, experiences of abuse and victimization went further back than the sex trade for some individuals. Leaving the sex trade behind, a number of exited respondents were still haunted by past experiences of their childhood that had yet to be confronted or dealt with. One respondent noted, "A lot of it reflects to childhood I think. A lot of it, and it hasn't gotten dealt with".

Negative feelings about one's self and depression were noted by respondents most strongly in the period initially following the breakaway. Low self-esteem and a self-concept in flux was a challenge many of the exited respondents described. Often this negative self image was directly related to what the individual had endured while working in the sex trade: "Because of all the damage that was done to me, it has caused the anxiety and the stress and the low self esteem- all of those things". Eventually, the initial emotional reactions subsided and respondents began a process of trying to work

through their personal feelings. For some respondents, this process involved trying to understand why their lives had worked out as they had and how they had reached this point in their lives. For one respondent, working through personal feelings involved:

Coming to terms with myself ... I guess you wouldn't call it a difficulty but I mean the reasons why I went that way and why I came back... just trying to understand or self reflect, if that is what you want to call it.

Although the exit from the sex trade is seen as socially desirable, there is still stigma attached to the role previously held by the former sex worker. Upon leaving the sex trade and reentering mainstream society, many respondents described being confronted by feelings of shame and regret. One respondent put it this way: "It affects you. Sometimes you wish that you never did it. You done it and you don't ever want people to find out". Another respondent felt a need to keep her previous identity as a sex worker hidden: "I have to keep it confidential. That's a real challenge I find and I've blown it a few times. People have found out and I really felt ashamed of it". Similarly, another respondent's comments reflect the longevity of the stigma surrounding sex work:

It's always going to be there and you're always going to be looked at a little different. People may say that they respect you and they care for you, and that they care for you and it's okay, but deep down there's going to be that little voice going "oh man, that's what you used to do" I don't care who it is. It's always going to be there in the back of their mind.

From the responses of these exited respondents, it was clear that stigma, manifested in a fear of exposure and having their past used against them, was not unwarranted. For instance, one exited respondent elaborated in detail on how the negative stigma of her past involvement in the sex trade is continually used against her by her ex husband:

When I got involved with my partner, I told him what I used to do, even though it was like three or four years previously to meeting him. I just told him that there's something that he needed to know about my past and I would rather him hear it from me than someone else. I believed that I was doing the right thing by being honest with him. Well, twenty years worth of whenever we have an argument or a cross word, he would throw it right back in my face. He would say "You're nothing but a fucking whore". It was the one thing that he could use against me. Then after we had children, the threat was to tell the kids what I did.

c. Negotiating and Establishing New and Intimate Relationships

Within the sex trade business, transactions and social relations between worker and client are based on negotiations for sexual services. Upon leaving the sex trade and reentering mainstream society, individuals must adapt to new roles and learn how to relate to others outside the sex trade community. However, leaving behind the sexual dynamics of the sex trade was difficult for many. For instance, one respondent found that a major challenge was: "Having a relationship with people that weren't based on drugs or sex. That was huge". Another respondent talked of still seeing others as potential Johns:

I still look at people in the way of thinking, "Oh this is a john". I still use some of that sexual energy to get stuff in terms of jobs, etc. I still really haven't recovered from that sexual dynamic part. Like using it to get something. So that's a challenge.

Relating to others outside the sex trade also brings issues of trust and intimacy to the foreground. As one exited respondent stated: "I am not a cold person. I just don't feel... I think it is because I will not allow myself to get close to anyone". When asked whether or not they feel that they can talk openly with others about their past in the sex trade, the majority of former sex workers interviewed for the long answer portion of the survey said that it was not something they shared openly with others. However, many found having to hide such a large part of their past, of who they used to be extremely difficult. For instance one respondent said:

It's not something that I feel that I can talk about it with too many people and it's a big part of who I am. I've been in the sex industry for as long as I can remember... To have to shut a door on that and not be able to talk about it is really tough.

According to respondents, difficulties with issues of trust were especially the case when establishing and negotiating intimate relationships. Many worried about opening up to a significant other for fear of being judged about their past. For instance, one respondent described the difficulties in establishing boundaries of trust within a new relationship:

I got into a long-term relationship and I didn't know whether to tell him about my past or not. Feeling weird about when people... starting to know somebody in a relationship and getting to know their history and whether to say anything or not.

Within their intimate relationships, respondents worried about opening up about their past for fear of being judged or looked upon negatively. One respondent put it this way: "I don't want to tell current boyfriends or relationships about it. Right way they're going to think 'yuck, how many other people have had sex with my girlfriend' ".

Exited respondents' prior experiences as sex workers continued to have an impact on their sexuality and how they relate to intimates. One respondent noted that working in the sex trade continued to effect "how I view men and what I think of them". Upon exiting some respondents talked of needing a "rest period" from sex and intimate relationships; they no longer felt interested in sex. One said, "It doesn't appeal to me anymore. If somebody tries to pick me up it makes me angry". Such findings are consistent with previous research which has shown that a disinterest in sex and bitterness and contempt for men is not uncommon amongst female sex workers and those that had recently left the trade (Lewis, 1998; Mansson and Hedin, 1999).

Although the majority of exited respondents, like their currently working counterparts, were involved in private relationships at the time of interview, a number of those interviewed talked of difficulties in sustaining and maintaining intimate relations with others. Having experienced a great deal of instability both in their family situations growing up, as well as upon entering the trade, this pattern often continued in their relationships after exiting. For instance, one respondent noted:

It's been so many years and yet I have been married a couple of times since then. But I know I have a problem with relationships or maintaining them but whatever.

Another respondent also commented on the difficulty in maintaining a normal relationship: "Physically it's hard for me to have a normal relationship with my partner".

How does one's past experiences working in the sex trade impact upon one's sexuality and sexual relations with intimates? According to Hoigard and Finstad, "part of the price paid for prostitution is the destruction of the women's sex life" (1986, 107). Whether or not this is in fact the case, many exited respondents did feel that sex work had had a negative impact upon their sexual relationships. For instance, some talked of now being unable to enjoy sex: "Even if I have a boyfriend, I find it...it physically, I don't enjoy it. Now I can't, I don't get any satisfaction out of it". Similarly, another respondent commented that she continues to find sexual relationships outside the sex trade difficult:

Emotionally ya, it's still really hard for me to go to bed with a man, any man, and not fake it. It's just because that is what I used to do make them happy at all costs. So that sort of fucked up my sex life.

However, it must be remembered that many individuals who have never been involved in the sex trade as well report disappointment within their sex life; intimacy problems are not exclusive to exited sex workers. Nonetheless, according to Mansson and Hedin, "the ability to develop a positive attitude towards sexuality in the long run is related to healing the wounds that have resulted from both the long-term exploitation and from the defensive screening of bodily experiences of lust which are inherent in prostitution" (1999, 72).

d. Adapting to a New Life Outside the Trade

Making this transition is often difficult as individuals move out of a lifestyle familiar to them and into one in which most have found very little acceptance. This was due, to a considerable extent, to the general lifestyle respondents maintained while in the trade. Activity in the sex trade was often at the expense of commitments and involvement in conventional aspects of life. It is not surprising, then, that having been totally immersed in this marginalized lifestyle, respondents found it difficult to make the transition out. Mansson and Hedin's comments characterize the difficulties associated with this transition back into mainstream, "straight" society: "They have left the familiar world of prostitution but still not entered a new world to which they feel a sense of connection and belonging" (1999, 72). Because the way of living in the sex trade is completely different, from the hours one works, to the way business transactions are carried out, to one's social relations in general, everything can be a challenge when attempting to adapt to a life outside the trade again. Echoing sentiments expressed by many of the exited respondents, one described a feeling of being completely overwhelmed:

Everything was a challenge, everything from learning how to pay bills to interacting with society to managing money to controlling my anger to try not to use drugs to being a mom to- everything was a challenge.

For exiting individuals, leaving the sex trade entails not only adapting to a new lifestyle and identity, but more often than not, to a new financial and living situation as well. For the exited sex workers interviewed here, leaving the sex trade entailed a significant decrease in disposable income. Comparing reported yearly incomes grossed in the last twelve months of their sex trade careers with what exited respondents were currently making reveals that their financial situation had changed dramatically. The median annual income for current active respondents as well as that of exited participants prior to leaving the trade was \$18,000. However in having left the trade, the median earnings per annum for those exited respondents employed in a square job amounted to \$11,446. In comparison with the general population, former sex workers' incomes are substantially less: in 1997, British Columbians' average incomes were just over \$21,000 for women and \$33,214 for men. However, it must be remembered that in the qualitative portion of the interview, a number of exited respondents mentioned their reliance on social assistance or disability pension.

A central difficulty for most is finding legitimate employment that can offer the same financial pay-offs that sex work can is simply unattainable. As already noted, many respondents found giving up the money, a main "pull" of sex work, extremely difficult. Adapting to a substantial pay cut and giving up the financial benefits associated with sex work was a central challenge former sex workers faced afterwards. For instance, regarding leaving the sex trade, one respondent noted: "financially it was devastating because I always had money before and now I don't". Thus, for the majority of exited sex workers interviewed, leaving the sex trade had a significant, often negative, effect on their living situation. One respondent put it this way: "financially I find it a lot harder now to make ends meet". Another respondent recalls how she was confronted with basic survival: "I was scared of not having any money...Not knowing where my next meal was going to come from".

A central benefit of sex work is the quick financial pay-off. A sex worker needs only to go out and "turn a trick" in order to have "easy money" at her/his disposal. One of the main difficulties then, beyond finding steady and stable employment, is learning to adjust to a conventional pay-period and how to budget money to last through the month. Comparing her current financial situation to what she was used to in the sex trade, one

respondent commented: “I’m living from pay check to pay check... It’s not daily money, it’s not a pay check every day”. Learning how to budget and make money last was particularly challenging:

I had to start keeping a budget... before here I was making two grand a week. Suddenly I was living on welfare or the occasional hooking. I had to start thinking about how I was spending this money.

Adapting to a new financial situation also entailed making significant changes in how money was now spent. With working in the sex trade, many respondents had become accustomed to spending their money freely, knowing that they could go out and turn another trick when once again they fell short of money. A central difficulty discussed by exited respondents was making a change their spending habits. One respondent describes in detail what this adjustment process entailed:

I realized that I couldn’t spend the way I used to. I can’t go out and get that outfit that I see just because I can. I’ve got to save for a month. I’ll have to postpone a bill payment so that I can get it. There were changes.

As noted in chapter 5, most sex workers have little formal educational and marketable occupational skills. For exited respondents, finding legitimate, gainful employment proved to be extremely difficult. When asked what the main difficulties she encountered after leaving, one exited sex worker replied: “Finding work, that’s a big one”. As Table 20 illustrates, even after being out of the sex trade for at least two years, the majority of the exited sex workers interviewed were not currently employed.

Table 20: Current Work Status of Exited Respondents

| | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Employed for salary or wage | 23 | 42.6 |
| Not currently employed | 31 | 57.4 |
| TOTAL | 54 | 100.0 |

Of the exited respondents interviewed, the majority made ends meet by relying on social assistance or a disability pension¹. As one respondent noted, “Right now, its just

¹ It must be noted, however, that because specific questions regarding unemployment status were not asked in the questionnaire, it is impossible to say if there were more exited respondents on disability/social

surviving off of what welfare gives me and making the best out of that money”. Yet, relying on governmental social assistance barely allowed for survival: “Disability [pension]...that pays my...it keeps a roof over my head and stuff. It only leaves me \$98 a month to live on”. After exiting the sex trade, some respondents found that they were unemployable; they were suffering from significant physical or mental health problems or were too burnt out from what they had endured in the sex trade and perhaps earlier in their lives. For instance one respondent describes how, upon leaving the sex trade, she simply couldn’t handle conventional work:

I was on EI and temporary disability ... I didn’t go back to work. I just kind of for six months or a year however long it was, I just felt like I couldn’t. I just didn’t have the energy inside.

For another, working simply wasn’t possible due to health-related problems: “I was working, but right now because of my health I had to give up that job, so I’m on welfare at the moment”. While many respondents were relying on social assistance for financial support, this situation was clearly not something they liked; given a legitimate opportunity they would want to earn for themselves:

Right now I’m not doing anything, but I am not going to be a welfare mom. I am not going to sit around on my butt and do nothing. I’m just not that type of person. I really do want to do something with my life.

Furthermore, of the less than half of the exited sample that was currently working, many spoke of having trouble adapting to conventional work situations and norms. Working in the sex trade, respondents were used to working on a less formalized basis (for instance, without the presence of a formal work contract). Similarly then, a number of exited respondents that were currently employed were working on a casual basis. These respondents worked when they could find employment, doing odd jobs here and there. One respondent said: “I work wherever I can. Last week I was picking corn. A month ago I was working in a restaurant. I just do whatever I can. Last year I was shovelling snow”. Thus, for a large number of those exited respondents who were employed, their current work situations represented little economic improvement.

assistance as compared to currently working respondents, or in reference to the general population for that matter. Although this was an oversight when the research instrument was designed, it was nonetheless picked up on in the respondents’ qualitative responses.

Further, often they found little enjoyment with what they were currently doing: “cleaning the toilets- its terrible leaning over them. I’m doing work for pay that’s about the only thing”, as one respondent commented on her current job. This perhaps highlights the need to remember that mainstream low-level service and other work can also be physically draining and unrewarding.

Chapter 8: Discussion and Conclusion

This research has sought to capture exited respondents' views on working in the sex trade and their experiences with attempting to leave this way of life behind. The literature on role exit suggests that the exiting of certain social roles may be more difficult to than others to accomplish. This is particularly true for work roles that are central to one's identity (Ebaugh, 1988). Likewise, a small body of research provides evidence that individuals involved in illegal or stigmatized roles and occupations may have a very difficult time leaving behind these identities and moving on (Beirnacki, 1986; Anderson and Bondi, 1998). This situation is evident in the case of sex workers. Findings from this research lend further support to this small body of research. Exited respondents made on average 5.8 previous attempts to leave the sex trade before exiting for at least 2 years or more. Over half of those currently working in the trade had made ill-fated attempts to exit. Further, exited respondents, even after being out of the industry for some time, continued to contend with issues associated with leaving their previous work role and accompanying lifestyle behind and working through what they had experienced in the trade.

In considering what differentiates exited respondents from their currently working counterparts, a range of factors were looked at including: personal characteristics of the individual, family and background factors, work- and context-related factors, and health and wellbeing. A model of factors affecting the exiting process was put forward and based on previous findings in the literature, a number of hypothesis were made. The following section discusses each of these in light of the research findings.

1. Discussion: The Process of Exiting the Sex Trade

Prior research on the sex trade has focused on a particular "psycho-social profile" of sex workers, suggesting that there are particular characteristics that help explain how and why some individuals "end up" working in the sex trade. This previous research would suggest that particular descriptive characteristics, family background and work factors would set those who had managed to exit the sex trade apart from those still

engaged in sex trade activity. As predicted at the onset of this thesis, there were some differences worthy of note between currently working and exited respondents. As expected, those who had “made it out” of the sex trade were older than those who had not managed to exit. On average, exited respondents were 5 years older than their working counterparts. Thus, as suggested by Lowman (1991), younger sex workers, particularly those in their teens who are ineligible for welfare assistance, are particularly lacking in options outside the trade. Limited education and “legitimate” work experience present a significant barriers to exiting, especially for younger sex workers.

Also as predicted, stability of housing situations represents another notable difference found between exited and currently working respondents. While overall the living situation of respondents was far less secure than that of the metropolitan area and the general population, this was especially the case for those currently working in the trade. A sizable minority (nearly one quarter) of current workers interviewed resided in relatively unstable or very unstable living situations, highlighting the instability and marginal status of those in the sex trade and the subsequent difficulty workers may have in finding stable housing given their occupation. However, it may also be that being removed from the sex trade remedies this situation.

One other slight difference in personal characteristics can be found between the two groups. Respondents who had exited the trade were more likely to identify themselves as heterosexual (70.4%) compared to those working in the industry (just over 50%). This finding corroborates my research predictions and Lewis’ conclusion that due to the nature of sex work, certain conditions seem to support same-sex and bi-sexual personal relationships (1998). However, on the other hand, it may be that homosexuality, bi-sexuality and transgender orientations are “pulls” that draw particular individuals to the industry. More research is needed on this topic before any definitive conclusions can be made.

While exited and currently working respondents’ reasons for entering the trade were similar, slight differences were found in their relative importance for each group. Similar to previous research findings (Brock, 1998; Hoigard and Finstad, 1986; Chapkis, 1997), economic need was identified as a primary antecedent for currently working respondents’ entry into the sex trade. While money was an important reason for exited

respondents as well, they were slightly more likely to say the enticement of opportunity or curiosity motivated their entry in the initial instance. This finding further corroborates that for those in economic duress, the sex trade represents an attractive and perhaps only option, one in which the financial rewards far exceed those available in other forms of low status service work (Davidson, 1998).

Once in the trade, while working experiences described by currently working and exited respondents were similar, slight differences were found in terms of work location. As has been suggested, a public image that negatively defines sex workers as “deviants” or “criminals” is most commonly associated with the most visible aspect of the sex industry, the street trade (Pheterson, 1987). However, contrary to what was predicted, exited respondents were not any less likely to have last worked in this less visible and thus, less stigmatizing venue. In fact, compared to those currently working, exited respondents were more likely to have last worked on the street prior to their exit. It has been suggested that not only does stigmatization impact identity, but it can also affect the health and well-being of sex workers (Carr, 1995). As explored below, the relative visibility of exited respondents while they were in the trade and the stigmatization associated with this may help to explain the ill health reported by these respondents.

While there were these few notable differences, across many personal and background factors, those that had managed to exit were indistinguishable from those who had not made the transition out of the sex trade. The similarity in gender, age of entry into the trade, ethnicity and educational attainment of currently working and exited respondents suggests that these personal factors do not help to differentiate those that have retired from sex trade activity. Because male sex workers are more likely to hold “square jobs” in addition to the sex trade and be involved on a part-time basis (Weinberg et al. 2000), it was predicted that males would be more represented amongst those that had been able to exit the sex trade. However, in both sample groups, female respondents outnumber males more than five-to-one. While working, for the large majority of both currently working and exited respondents, male and female, sex work was their main job, providing their only viable source of income. Refuting my hypothesis that those able to leave the sex trade would be more likely to also work for pay at a job outside the sex trade, exited respondents were not anymore likely to be employed at a “square job” while

working in the trade. As an occupation, research findings here suggest the relative permanency of sex work as a career: the majority of both current and former sex workers interviewed were “long-term” workers, having worked in the industry for five years or more. This is perhaps indicative of the centrality involvement in the sex industry has on the identity of workers, and may well help to explain why exiting for good maybe especially difficult. With high levels of involvement in the sex trade, perhaps to the exclusion of participation in other, more “ordinary” activities, and to the extent that conventional social ties or identities have been severed, the exiting course maybe especially arduous and complex.

Similarly, exited respondents mirror their currently working counterparts in terms of level of education attained, with both groups reporting a relatively low percentage of high school completion. Contrary to what was predicted, exited respondents were not any more likely to be better educated, and in fact, when compared to those currently working, were less likely to have returned for further education or training.

Both groups of respondents’ relative marginalization along the personal characteristics described above also holds when background characteristics and early family situations prior to entering the trade are examined. As findings show, look at respondents’ household dynamics while growing up did not help to predict exited respondents’ successful retirement from the industry. Despite what was predicted, exited respondents were just as likely to have grown up in an unstable family environment and to have suffered physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse as their peers still working in the trade. These findings suggest, then, that the presence or absence of negative and positive childhood experiences do not help to explain why some individuals are able to permanently leave the sex trade behind. Further, exited respondents were not any more likely to have entered the sex trade in adulthood. Both groups of respondents tended to enter the trade as young adults (i.e. 18 years).

In terms of financial situations, research findings suggest that exited respondents, after leaving behind the payoffs of working in the sex trade, were more often than not economically worse off than their currently working counterparts. Contrary to what was expected, comparatively speaking, those currently working were earning more than their retired counterparts. With a low level of formal education and few marketable skills,

those who had retired from the trade found it extremely difficult to find “legitimate” and steady employment that would enable them to adequately support themselves, and in the cases of those with children, their families too. Thus, whether it was due to an inability to find steady employment, or not being able to work due to what they had experienced while in the trade, health reasons or disability, many of the exited respondents interviewed, even those who had been out of the trade for a prolonged period of time, were dependent on social assistance or other means for their financial survival. Although respondents were not directly asked if they had had criminal record, it was clear that for a large number, the presence of a criminal record also imposed further employment limitations by making it extremely difficult to find a “legitimate” job. As previous research has shown, the public visibility of street prostitution and the fact that criminal sanctions penalizing street and other workers are extremely ambiguous (Lowman, 1991), and discriminately enforced by authorities (Shaver, 1993; Boritch, 1997), it is almost impossible to practice street prostitution without getting a criminal record. As such, the illegality of their former occupation meant that for many respondents, the presence of a criminal record was a further barrier to exiting and moving on with their lives.

It has been well documented that a person’s occupation has an impact (either positively or negatively) on their health and well-being (Sullivan, 2000; Lowe, 2000). As findings from this research indicate, this is also the case for respondents currently working as well as those who had exited the sex trade. In terms of health status, the current situations of former sex workers reveals that, exiting the sex trade in many cases has done little to mediate the physical, sexual and, in particular, emotional health toll imposed by the occupational hazards of sex work. Across many health indicators, exited sex respondents do not fair better than their currently working counterparts. In regard to mental health, both groups of respondents appear to stand out from the general population to a significant degree. Clearly, the psychological and emotional health problems described in previous research (Farley and Barkan, 1998; Hoigard and Finstad, 1986) do not necessarily disappear once one has left the sex trade. In fact, exited sex workers were more likely to experience depression, anxiety attacks and emotional trauma when compared with their counterparts still working. One main reason respondents gave for leaving the sex trade was a feeling of tiring or becoming emotionally burnt out by the

work. This is consistent with Ebaugh's findings regarding individuals leaving other occupational role exits such as that of doctors (1988). Findings amongst respondents here are hardly surprising and further suggest the presence of poor mental health as a factor in the exit. Respondents from both groups similarly noted that a large part of their relatively poor mental health was due to the negative manner in which the sex industry is depicted in our society. Indeed, the extremely negative impact of stigma is similarly noted by Beimacki regarding the situations of recovering drug addicts: "social stigma presents a formidable barrier that must be overcome if abstaining addicts are successfully to stop using drugs and transform their lives" (1986, 179). In the case of the exited respondents interviewed for this project, having left the trade appears to have done little to mitigate the extremely negative view of others (Brock 1998; Boritch, 1997); the stigma attached to sex work continued to impact upon their lives in a variety of ways. For instance, whether to reveal their past was a constant source of stress for exited respondents, especially when negotiating new relationships. Like many of their currently working counterparts who tended not to share their involvement in the sex trade with family or even close friends, for the vast majority of exited respondents, the negative view of sex worker meant that their former occupation was something they continued to keep confidential. Respondents felt that they would be treated differently if their past occupation was discovered. Moreover, this nondisclosure often had detrimental effects that may help to further explain the high level of mental ill health evidenced by respondents.

In addition to similar mental health situations, currently working and exited respondents were also comparable when sexual and other physical health indicators were looked at. The impact on respondents' sexual health is evidenced by their history of STDs and the long-term consequences as seen in higher than average rates of cervical cancer, pelvic inflammatory disease and ongoing fertility problems. In fact, when compared to their currently working counterparts, exited respondents reported even higher rates of ever having STDs such as Gonorrhea, Syphilitic, HPV and Herpes infection. Thus, the sexual health of exited respondents was not as expected. Having left the sex trade, exited respondents were not any healthier than their currently working counterparts.

Along key dimensions of physical health, the situations of exited and currently working respondents likewise was less than optimal. Once again, exited respondents were more likely to report the presence of physical health problems including: eating disorders, sleeping disorder conditions, and chronic fatigue, and just as likely to be suffering from migraine headaches, further suggesting health factors as significant to the exit.

The data presented here on drug use highlights the association between drug use and the sex trade as suggested by previous research (McKeganey and Barnard, 1996; De Graaf et al. 1995). For a sizable minority of currently working respondents, addiction issues were concomitant with sex trade activity. As expected, exited respondents were less likely than their currently working counterparts to report a dependency on illicit drugs. However, although to a lesser extent, for a small number of exited respondents, regular illicit drug use was still an issue and the corresponding health problems such as Hepatitis C infections, continued to plaque their lives.

Thus, for a large number of those interviewed, the health impacts of sex trade involvement were potentially numerous and wide-ranging. These findings are not surprising given the fact that 67.2% of respondents said that at some point while working in the sex trade they had received medical treatment for their physical injuries (Benoit and Millar, 2001). Indeed, 33.3% of currently working and 44.4% of those who had exited had been hospitalized at some point specifically because of injuries they had incurred in the sex trade. The commercial sexual encounter, occupational risks posed by addictive drug use, and the often times violent and unsafe working conditions, clearly has an impact and continues to have an impact on individuals long after their retirement. The findings reported here suggest ill-health as significant in the exiting process. The fact that across many physical, sexual and mental health indicators, exited respondents are actually worse off than those still working in the trade suggests that it is the heavy health toll of working in the sex trade that acts as an important push to leaving the sex trade. On the other hand, in contrast to the negative health impact described by many, a number of currently working and exited participants felt that their health had not been negatively affected by their current or prior sex trade activity. The insignificance of health as a

determining factor for some highlights the role of other factors affecting the exiting process as well.

2. Conclusion

Findings presented here show that, in many regards, the situations of exiting workers change little as they move out of the sex trade and back into "legitimate" society. The fact that leaving the sex trade is deemed a socially desirable role exit seems to have done little to mitigate the difficulty and complexity associated making a break from the sex trade or adapting to new roles and identities afterwards. Contrary to popular thought, the lives of sex workers in this study did not "magically" improve once they had removed themselves from the sex trade for good. Despite having exited what many consider to be not only an unworthy, but unhealthy lifestyle, research findings show that there have been few notable social-economic or health improvements in the lives of former sex workers interviewed here.

Overall then, findings here contribute to the two bodies of literature on the sex trade and suggest the need for a nuance of both a "social problem" and "sex trade as work" orientation in order to accurately understand the complexity of both currently active and exited sex workers' experiences. Further, the lack of discernable differences found in the personal, social, economic and health situations of currently working and exited respondents suggests that it may be inaccurate to view these two groups separately. Rather, their similar situations suggest that it may make more sense to think of the exiting process as ongoing. In this view, the exiting process is seen as a continuum, at which respondents exist at various points along, from those active in the trade and who have no intention of getting out, to those contemplating leaving and those who have made previous attempts to exit but have once again returned, to those who have been out for two years or more. Furthermore, although former sex workers interviewed here had been out of the trade anywhere from 2 years to 26 years, the challenges they continue to face afterwards, suggests the need to consider that some individual's may never stop being influenced or affected by their prior identity as sex worker. Although having left the sex trade, exited workers are not able to ever leave the former role behind completely.

Indeed, as Beirnacki notes regarding some recovering drug addicts: “although they may be free from opiates for years, they may still define themselves as addicts” (1986, 25). This notion of a past identity lingering on is also consistent with Ebaugh’s role exit theory (1988), which emphasizes the impact of previous role identification on current and future conceptions of the self, often- in the case of respondents here- to a great extent.

As such, viewing the course of exiting from the sex trade as operating along a continuum and those who are currently working in or have left it at various points along this, a central question remains: at what point time along the continuum can one say an individual has truly *permanently* exited the sex worker role? Understanding the exiting process from the sex trade in this manner has significant implications for conceptualizations of role exit and the ex-role. Despite having been out of the trade for a significant period of time, it reminds us of the importance of not viewing former sex workers’ previous work roles as existing solely in the past. As an indefinite process, understanding the ex role entails a consideration of how the past identity lingers on and continues to impact upon individuals and define their present identities.

3. Directions for Future Research

This study has looked at the life situations of current and more specifically, formerly active sex trade workers in the CRD. Doing so has provided an opportunity to dispel myths by giving voice to a largely hidden and marginalized population. While very little research on the sex trade has sought to specifically focus on exited sex workers, the research reported on here attempts to present a realistic picture of their backgrounds, family histories, working experiences as well as how individuals are able to successfully make the break from the sex trade, the main difficulties they faced in doing so, their current situations and long term impact of sex work.

This study, however, has only scratched the surface. Further research on the exiting process and the lives of former sex workers and the potential long-term impact of sex trade involvement is vital. Among other things, it would be useful to study the exiting situations of former sex trade workers within a larger, more representative sample, one which encompasses greater numbers and variation in regards to gender, age, visible

minority and Aboriginal status, length of time out of the trade and by specific venue. There is also a need for an examination of how individual psychological factors and their interplay with structural factors hinder or promote the exiting process. Indeed, as Mansson and Hedin conclude “[a] woman’s own coping strategies play a major role in how she overcomes the strains and hardships of prostitution” (1999, 76). Future research might be able to discern whether it is individual psychological factors that differentiate a fragile resolution to leave the sex trade from resolve to follow through with a decision.

Future research might also gain insight by looking at other comparable populations. For instance, as a low status occupation, comparing the situations of former sex workers with those formerly employed in other “legitimate” low paying, low status service occupations (such as waitress, cleaners, etc.) may be informative. It may be of interest to conduct a longitudinal study on former sex workers to assess how their economic, social and health situations change over length of time out of the trade.

Although it is assumed that the CRD’s sex trade is not all that different from the organization of the industry in other medium-sized or larger cities in Canada, further research may want to consider this more closely when examining the experiences and current situations of former sex workers. For example, across Canadian cities, different bylaws, local policies, and enforcement patterns govern how those in the sex trade are able to carry out their business. Similarly, different cities may have different social programs/services to assist exited sex workers and those looking to make the transition. Future comparative studies between different cities could help to discern what impact these local policies and bylaws, and social services and programs have on the exiting process and ultimately, on the health and well-being of current and retired workers. Internationally, inclusion of research on the situations of former sex workers in places where the sex trade is more legitimized (for example, Amsterdam and in Germany where legislation has recently passed granting sex workers access to social benefits) would be extremely useful as well.

My findings indicate an urgent need for an evaluation of the health, social and other services and programs specifically available to the exiting population. Given that mental health problems were reported by many of the exited respondents and the fact that 20% of these respondents at the time of interview said that they had no one to turn to who

would help them if something went wrong, it may well be that better and more accessible outreach services to sex workers while they are in transition as well as after they have permanently left would aid them in more successfully adapting to their new life. Further inquiry is necessary to evaluate gaps and service barriers in order to make the needed changes to health and social service policy, programming and service delivery that is specific to the needs of current and exited sex workers alike.

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Case #: _____
 Date: _____
 Start: _____
 End: _____
 Interviewer: _____
 Data Entry Person: _____

EXITED SEX TRADE WORKER QUESTIONNAIRE AND INTERVIEW

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. Through this research I hope to better understand the working conditions and health concerns of current and exited sex trade workers in the Greater Victoria Area and develop ways to help them.

The information that you give me will be combined with that of other sex trade workers and put into a report. This report will be shared with sex trade workers themselves, outreach workers, and governmental agencies addressing the issue of prostitution.

I realize that some of the questions being asked are personal and may be hard for you to answer. If you need to talk to someone about this further, arrangements can be made for you to see a counsellor free of charge.

Q1. What is your gender?

- | | |
|-----------|----------------------|
| 1. Female | 3. Transgendered M2F |
| 2. Male | 4. Transgendered F2M |

Q2. In what year were you born? _____

Q3. In what country/region were you born?

- | | | |
|-----------|--------------------------|------------|
| 1. Canada | 4. Europe | 7. Africa |
| 2. USA | 5. Central/South America | 8. Oceania |
| 3. UK | 6. Asia | |

Q4. Were you born in Victoria?

1. Yes
2. No

Q5. In what province were you born?

- | | | |
|---------------------|------------------|-----------|
| 1. British Columbia | 6. Quebec | 11. Yukon |
| 2. Alberta | 7. New Brunswick | |
| 3. Saskatchewan | 8. Nova Scotia | |
| 4. Manitoba | 9. Newfoundland | |
| 5. Ontario | 10. NWT | |

Q8c. Did you spend the next ten years of your life (after age 10 to age 20) in a very small city/large town (e.g., Campbell River, Stratford, Sidney, Parksville, Terrace, Lethbridge)?

1. Yes
2. No

Q8d. Did you spend the next ten years of your life (after age 10 to age 20) in a small/very small town (e.g., Duncan, Battleford, Hope, Sooke, Bella Coola, Grand Bend, Trinity)?

1. Yes
2. No

Q8e. Did you spend the next ten years of your life (after age 10 to age 20) in a rural/farming community?

1. Yes
2. No

Q9. Did you move frequently from location to location before age 10?

1. Yes
2. No

Q10. Did you move frequently from location to location in the next ten years of your life (after age 10 to age 20)?

1. Yes
2. No

Q11. How long have you been living in Victoria? Years_____ (N/A=88).

Q12a. The employment equity act define visible minorities as persons, other than Aboriginal people who are "non Caucasian in race or non-white in colour." Are you a visible minority member according to this definition?

1. Yes
2. No

Q12b. If yes, which group do you place yourself in?

- | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| 1. Chinese | 5. Filipino | 8. Japanese |
| 2. South Asian | 6. South East Asian | 9. Korean |
| 3. Black | 7. Latin American | 10. Other |
| 4. Arab/West Asian | | 88. N/A |

Q13a. If Native, do place yourself in any of the following groups?

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------|
| 1. First Nation | 4. Indian |
| 2. Aboriginal | 5. Other |
| 3. Metis | |

Q13b. If from one of these groups, which nation are you from?

- | | | |
|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1. Cherokee | 4. Metis | 7. Shuswap |
| 2. Cree | 5. Ojibway | 8. Other |
| 3. Gwichin | 6. Squamish | 9. Don't Know |

Q13c. If from any of these Native groups, have you ever lived on a reserve?

1. Yes
2. No

Q13d. If yes to Q13c, are you currently living on a reserve?

1. Yes
2. No

Q14a. What is the first language you learned and still understand?

- | | |
|--------------------|------------|
| 1. English | 5. Chinese |
| 2. French | 6. Spanish |
| 3. Native language | 7. Other |
| 4. Japanese | |

Q14b. Do you speak any other language?

1. Yes
2. No

Q14c. Which other language do you speak?

- | | | |
|--------------------|-------------|------------|
| 1. English | 4. Japanese | 6. Spanish |
| 2. French | 5. Chinese | 7. Other |
| 3. Native language | | |

Q14d. Do you speak a third language?

1. Yes
2. No

Q15a. What is your sexual orientation?

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------|
| 1. Homosexual | 3. Bisexual | 5. Queer |
| 2. Heterosexual | 4. Two-spirited | 6. Other |

Q15b. If other, what is your sexual orientation? _____

Q16. Do you have a partner/lover?

1. Yes
2. No

Q17. If yes, how many months have you been with your partner/lover? (Zero indicates less than one month) _____ (N/A=88).

Q18. How would you rate the quality of your relationship with your partner/lover?

1. Very good
2. Up and down
3. Abusive (could be physically, emotionally, psychologically)

The following is a list of various types of family situations. Check those in which you lived for a month or more, and circle your age when you started and stopped living there.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|
| Q19a 1.Both biological parents | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 60 | | |
| 2.mother only | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 60 |
| 3.father only | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 60 |
| 4.mother and step-father | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 60 |
| 5.mother and friend/partner | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 60 |
| 6.father and step-mother | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 60 |
| 7.father and friend/partner | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 60 |
| 8.stepmother only | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 60 | |
| 9.stepfather only | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 60 | |
| 10.W/sibling only | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 60 | |
| 11.Foster-parents | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 60 | |
| 12.Other relatives | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 60 | |
| 13.Group home | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 60 | |
| 14.Adoptive Parent | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 60 | |
| 15.Child Welfare | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 60 | |
| 16.Combined formal care | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 60 |
| 17.Partner and children | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 60 |
| 18.Alone w/children | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 60 |
| 19.By oneself | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 60 |
| 20.W/partner only | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 60 |

19b (continued) Other arrangement (please explain and include age)

Answer the following for the male guardian(s) with whom you lived the longest while at home.

Q20a. Did he (your father, step-father, mother's boyfriend, etc.) work outside the home?

1. Yes
2. No

Q20b. What level of formal education (i.e. university degree, college/vocational certificate, apprenticeship program, high school completion, etc.) did he have? _____

Q21. (If yes) Did he work full-time or part-time?

1. Full-time
2. Part-time
3. Occasionally

Q22. (If yes) What was his usual occupation? _____

Q23. In months, what was the longest stretch of time that he did not work outside of the home? _____

Q24. Did he ever study for a degree or a diploma while you lived at home?

1. Yes
2. No

Thinking back in your childhood, tell me how often did YOUR FATHER (step-father, etc.) do the following?

| FATHER | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Usually | Always | N/A |
|---|--------------|---------------|------------------|----------------|---------------|------------|
| Q25a. Cuddle you when you were hurt or feeling down | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q25b. Throw something at you | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q25c. Read to you | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q25d. Slap, kick, bite or hit you with a fist | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q25e. Take you to the park | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q25f. Hit you with object(s) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q25fa. What was/were the object(s)? | | | | | | |
| Q25g. Take you on outings | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q25h. Confine you to a room/other enclosure | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q25i. Speak kindly of you to others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q25j. Belittle you | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q25k. Help you with your homework | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q25l. Ignore you | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q25m. Praise you for your achievements | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q25n. Torture you emotionally | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q25o. Other | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q25oa. If yes, please explain | | | | | | |

Answer the following for the female guardian(s) with whom you lived the longest while at home.

Q26a Did she (your mother, step-mother, father's girlfriend, etc.) work outside the home?

1. Yes
2. No

Q26b. What level of formal education (i.e. university degree, college/vocational certificate, apprenticeship program, high school completion, etc.) did she have? _____

Q27. (If yes) Did she work full-time or part-time?

1. Full-time _____
2. Part-time _____
3. Occasionally _____

Q28. If yes, what was her usual occupation?

Q29. In months, what was the longest stretch of time that she did NOT work outside of the home? _____

Q30. Did she ever study for a degree or a diploma while you lived at home?

1. Yes
2. No

Thinking back in your childhood, tell me how often did YOUR MOTHER (step-mother, etc.) do the following?

| Mother | Never | Rarely | Sometime s | Usually | Alway s | N/A |
|---|--------------|---------------|-----------------------|----------------|--------------------|------------|
| Q31a. Cuddle you when you were hurt or feeling down | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q31b. Throw something at you | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q31c. Read to you | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q31d. Slap, kick, bite or hit you with a fist | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q31e. Take you to the park | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q31f. Hit you with object(s) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q31fa. What was/were the object(s)? | | | | | | |
| Q31g. Take you on outings | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q31h. Confine you to a room/other enclosure | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q31i. Speak kindly of you to others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q31j. Belittle you | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q31k. Help you with your homework | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q31l. Ignore you | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q31m. Praise you for your achievements | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Q31n. Torture you emotionally | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q31o. Other | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q31oa. If yes, please explain | | | | | | |

Q32a. When you were at home, did one of your guardians (mother, step-mother, father, step-father, etc.) or other family members ever have sex with you (including touching or attempting to touch you sexually)? -

1. Yes
2. No

Q32b. If yes, please name who: _____

Q33. If yes to Q32a, how many times:

1. 0-5
2. 5-10
3. More than 10
4. Ongoing

Q34. How old were you when this first happened (as best you can remember)? _____

35. How old were you when this last happened (as best you can remember)?

Q36. Have you ever been in care? "In care" means in care of the Ministry of Children and Families (formerly the Ministry of Social Services) -- e.g., ward of the state, in group or foster home/institution.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know

Q37. If you have been or are in care, what type of care were/are you in?

1. Permanent
2. Temporary
3. Don't know

Q38. (If yes) How would you rate the care you were in/are in?

1. Very satisfied
2. Somewhat satisfied
3. Undecided
4. Somewhat dissatisfied
5. Dissatisfied

What is your current living situation? Tick all that apply

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------|-------|
| Q39a. Rent house or apartment | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q39b. At home (with guardian) | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q39c. Squat | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q39d. Motel | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q39e. Street | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q39f. Hostel | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q39g. Shelter/transition house | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q39h. Group home | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q39i. Bath house | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q39j. Foster home | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q39k. Hotel | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q39l. With trick | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q39m. Trick pad | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q39n. Other | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q39na. If other please specify: _____ | | |

Q40. How much do you pay per month for your living situation? \$_____

Q41a. Do you pay for your rent in kind (Eg., taking care of one or more children, keeping house, gardening, sex, etc.)?

1. Yes
2. No

Q41b. If yes, how so? _____

Q42. Are you currently in school?

1. Yes
2. No

Q43. If you are a student, do you attend:

1. Full-time
2. Part-time
3. Occasionally

Q44. Are you currently receiving any other kind of training?

1. Yes
2. No

Q45. If yes, do you attend:

1. Full-time
2. Part-time
3. Occasionally

Q46. What was the last grade you completed? Grade _____

Q47. Do you have any other formal education/training other than high school?

1. Yes
2. No

Q48. If yes, what type of education/training do you have?

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Post-secondary education | 4. Job Training |
| 2. Alternative school | 5. Apprenticeship |
| 3. Workshops | 6. Other |

Q49a. Are you currently in a job other than the sex trade in which you receive a salary or wage?

1. Yes
2. No

Q49b. If no, have you ever worked for pay outside the sex trade?

1. Yes
2. No

Q50a. If yes, please name the job(s) _____

Q50b. If yes, are you working full-time, part-time or occasionally?

1. Full-time _____
2. Part-time _____
3. Occasionally _____

Q51. How many jobs do you currently hold? _____

Q52. How many hours a week do you work for pay on average? _____

Q53a. How much money are you earning in an average week from these jobs where you receive a salary or wage? \$ _____

If not presently working, how long has it been since you had a square/mainstream job?

Q53ba. Months less than a year _____ Q53bb. Years in total _____

Q54. Are you currently working in the sex trade?

1. Yes
2. No

If not, how long has it been since you have worked in the sex trade?

Q55a. Months less than a year _____

Q55b. Years in total _____

Q56a. How would you describe the frequency of your sex trade work (when you were formerly active):

1. Infrequent
2. Part-time
3. Full-time

In total, approximately how many months/years have you worked/been working in the sex trade?

Q56b. Months less than a year _____ Q56c. Years in total _____

57a. How old were you when you turned your first trick? _____

57b. What were the circumstances that first led you into the sex trade?

Did you learn about the sex trade from any of the following?

- Q58a. Parent/guardian 1. Yes 2. No
 Q58aa. If yes, who? _____)
- Q58b. Relative 1. Yes 2. No
 (Q58ba. If yes, who? _____)
- Q58c. Friend 1. Yes 2. No
- Q58d. Classmate 1. Yes 2. No
- Q58e. Boyfriend/Girlfriend 1. Yes 2. No
- Q58f. Neighbour 1. Yes 2. No
- Q58g. Dealer 1. Yes 2. No
- Q58h. Stranger 1. Yes 2. No
- Q58i. Pimp/Madam/Manager 1. Yes 2. No
- Q58j. Newspaper want ads 1. Yes 2. No
- Q58k. Other 1. Yes 2. No

Q58ka. If other please specify _____

Q59. How far did you have to travel to go to your first sex trade job?

_____ km

Check the type(s) of sex trade work in which you have been/lare still engaged in for pay (in money or in kind --Eg., clothes, food, cigarettes, drugs, alcohol, etc.)?

- Q60aa Phone Sex Indoor 1. Yes 2. No
- Q60ab Phone Sex Independent/Private 1. Yes 2. No
- Q60ac Phone Sex Other 1. Yes 2. No

Q60ac1 If other, Please explain _____

- Q60ba Prostitution Indoor 1. Yes 2. No
- Q60bb Prostitution Outdoor 1. Yes 2. No
- Q60bc Prostitution Independent/Private 1. Yes 2. No
- Q60bd Prostitution Incalls/Your place of work 1. Yes 2. No
- Q60be Prostitution Outcalls/Their place 1. Yes 2. No
- Q60bf Prostitution Other 1. Yes 2. No

Q60bf1 If other, Please explain _____

- Q60ca Stripping Indoor 1. Yes 2. No
- Q60cb Stripping Independent/Private 1. Yes 2. No
- Q60cc Stripping Incalls/Your place of work 1. Yes 2. No

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------|-------|
| Q60cd Stripping Outcalls/Their place | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q60ce Stripping Other | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q60ce1 If other, Please explain_____ | | |

| | | |
|--|--------|-------|
| Q60da Massage Indoor | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q60db Massage Independent/Private | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q60dc Massage Incalls/Your place of work | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q60dd Massage Outcalls/Their place | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q60de Massage Other | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q60de1 If other, Please explain_____ | | |

| | | |
|--|--------|-------|
| Q60ea Modelling Indoor | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q60eb Modelling Outdoor | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q60ec Modelling Independent/Private | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q60ed Modelling Incalls/Your place of work | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q60ee Modelling Outcalls/Their place | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q60ef Modelling Other | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q60ef1 If other, Please explain_____ | | |

| | | |
|---|--------|-------|
| Q60fa Movies Indoor | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q60fb Movies Outdoor | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q60fc Movies Independent/Private | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q60fd Movies Incalls/Your place of work | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q60fe Movies Outcalls/Their place | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q60ff Movies Other | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q60ff1 If other, Please explain_____ | | |

| | | |
|--|--------|-------|
| Q60ga Other Indoor | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q60ga1 Please name the other activity_____ | | |
| Q60gb Other Outdoor | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q60gb1 Please name the other activity_____ | | |
| Q60gc Other Independent/Private | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q60gc1 Please name the other activity_____ | | |
| Q60gd Other Incalls/Your place of work | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q60gd1 Please name the other activity_____ | | |

Q60ge Other Outcalls/Their place 1. Yes 2. No
 Q60ge1 Please name the other activity_____

Q60gf Other Other 1. Yes 2. No
 Q60gf1 If other, Please explain_____

Q61. Did your personal control over your sex trade activities increased, decreased or stayed about the same across your sex trade career?

1. Increased
2. Decreased
3. Stayed about the same.
4. Don't know.

I would like to know a little about your sex trade jobs. Please answer the following set of questions for the sex trade job that had the most impact on your life:

Q62a. Please name the type of venue?

1. Agency
2. Street
3. Hotel/Motel
4. Bar/Strip club/Peep show
5. Home
6. Massage parlour

Q62ab. Please name the activity?

1. Prostitution
2. Massage
3. Escort
4. Stripping
5. Domination/Submission
6. Modelling
7. Movies
8. Phone sex
9. Stags

Q62b. How much control did you have over the money you earn in your sex trade activities?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q62c. How much control did you have over having sex with more than one John at one time?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q62d. How much control did you have over the number of clients per work shift?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q62e. How much control did you have over the place where you perform your sex trade activities?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q62f. How much control did you have over the sex activities you perform with clients?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

More specifically, did you have control over or have the right to decide whether you perform or use the following:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------|-------|
| Q62g. S-M | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q62h. Kissing on the mouth | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q62i. Cuddling/embracing | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q62j. Sleeping with client | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q62k. French/blow job/fellatio | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q62l. Greek/Anal sex | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q62m. Bi-calls | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q62n. Going down on you | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q62o. Submission | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q62p. Use condoms | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q62q. Other(s) | 1. Yes | 2. No |

Q62qa. If other, please specify _____

Q62r. How much control did you have over with whom you work/your co-workers?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q62s. How much control did you have over the hours you work in the sex trade?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q62t. How much control did you have over taking time off or holidays from you sex activities?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q62u. How much control did you have in saying "no" to sex with a John?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q62v. How much control did you have in saying "no" to sex with co-worker(s)?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q62w. How much control did you have in saying “no” to sex with your pimp/madam/boss?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

*For exited sex trade workers, please skip to question 65, page 24

I would like to know a little about a different sex trade job that you have/had:

Q63a. Please name the type of venue?

1. Agency
2. Street
3. Hotel/Motel
4. Bar/Strip club/Peep show
5. Home
6. Massage parlour

Q63ab. Please name the activity?

1. Prostitution
2. Massage
3. Escort
4. Stripping
5. Domination/Submission
6. Modelling
7. Movies
8. Phone sex
9. Stags

Q63b. How much control did you have over the money you earn in your sex trade activities?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q63c. How much control did you have over having sex with more than one John at one time?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q63d. How much control did you have over the number of clients per work shift?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q63e. How much control did you have over the place where you perform your sex trade activities?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q63f. How much control did you have over these sex activities you perform with clients?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

More specifically, did you have control over or have the right to decide whether you perform or use the following:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------|-------|
| Q63g. S-M | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q63h. Kissing on the mouth | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q63i. Cuddling/embracing | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q63j. Sleeping with client | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q63k. French/blow job/fellatio | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q63l. Greek/Anal sex | 1. Yes | 2. No |

- | | | |
|-------------------------|--------|-------|
| Q63m. Bi-calls | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q63n. Going down on you | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q63o. Submission | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q63p. Use condoms | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q63q. Other(s) | 1. Yes | 2. No |

Q63qa. If other, please specify_____

Q63r. How much control did you have over with whom you work/your co-workers?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q63s. How much control did you have over the hours you work in the sex trade?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q63t. How much control did you have over taking time off or holidays from you sex activities?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q63u. How much control did you have in saying "no" to sex with a John?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q63v. How much control did you have in saying “no” to sex with co-worker(s)?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q63w. How much control did you have in saying “no” to sex with your pimp/madam/boss?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Finally, I would like to know a little about another sex trade job that you have/had:

Q64a. *Please name the type of venue?*

1. Agency
2. Street
3. Hotel/Motel
4. Bar/Strip club/Peep show
5. Home
6. Massage parlour

Q64ab. *Please name the activity?*

1. Prostitution
2. Massage
3. Escort
4. Stripping
5. Domination/Submission
6. Modelling
7. Movies
8. Phone sex
9. Stags

Q64b. *How much control did you have over the money you earn in your sex trade activities?*

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q64c. How much control did you have over having sex with more than one John at one time?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q64d. How much control did you have over the number of clients per work shift?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q64e. How much control did you have over the place where you perform your sex trade activities?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q64f. How much control did you have over the sex activities you perform with clients?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

More specifically, did you have control over or have the right to decide whether you perform or use the following:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------|-------|
| Q64g. S-M | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q64h. Kissing on the mouth | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q64i. Cuddling/embracing | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q64j. Sleeping with client | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q64k. French/blow job/fellatio | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q64l. Greek/Anal sex | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q64m. Bi-calls | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q64n. Going down on you | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q64o. Submission | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q64p. Use condoms | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q64q. Other(s) | 1. Yes | 2. No |

Q64qa. If other, please specify _____

Q64r. How much control did you have over with whom you work/your co-workers?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q64s. How much control did you have over the hours you work in the sex trade?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q64t. How much control did you have over taking time off or holidays from you sex activities?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q64u. How much control did you have in saying "no" to sex with a John?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q64v. How much control did you have in saying "no" to sex with co-worker(s)?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q64w. How much control did you have in saying "no" to sex with your pimp/madam/boss?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q65. Presently, how much control do you have in saying "no" to sex in your personal life?

1. Full control
2. A lot of control
3. Some control
4. Very little control
5. No control

Q66a. Overall, who had control over your sex trade activities?

1. Yourself/independent
2. You and your partner in the sex trade
3. Your boyfriend/girlfriend
4. Your pimp
5. Your madame
6. Your dealer
7. Your guardian
8. Other

Q66b. If other please specify _____

Q67. Suppose that you had made 100 dollars in the sex trade. How much of this would you have kept? \$ _____

The money that you keep for yourself was spent on (can check more than one):

- | | | |
|-----------------------|--------|-------|
| Q68a. Rent | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q68b. food | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q68c. clothes | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q68d. entertainment | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q68e. drugs | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q68f. children/family | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q68g. partner | 1. Yes | 2. No |
| Q68h. other | 1. Yes | 2. No |

Q68ha. If other, please specify _____

Q69. While you were still working in the sex trade, approximately how much money did you earn in the last 12 months from your work? \$ _____

Q70. In your current square job, approximately how much money did you earn in total in the last 12 months? \$ _____

Q71. What was the best thing about your job in the sex trade?

Q72. What was the worst thing about your job in the sex trade?

Q73. Before you finally exited, had you ever quit the sex trade?

1. Yes
2. No

Q74. If yes, approximately how many times had you quit the sex trade?

Number of times: _____

Q75. If yes, why did you quit the sex trade?

Q76. If you have quit and later returned to the sex trade, why did you return to the sex trade?

Thinking back over your career in the sex trade, tell me how often, for the most part, did a PIMP/MADAM/MANAGER do the following?

| PIMP/MADAM/MANAGER | <i>Never</i> | <i>Rarely</i> | <i>Sometimes</i> | <i>Usually</i> | <i>Always</i> |
|---|--------------|---------------|------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Q77a. Cuddle you when you were hurt or feeling down | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q77b. Throw something at you | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q77c. Slap, kick, bite or hit you with a fist | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q77d. Hit you with object(s) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q77da. What was/were the object(s)? | | | | | |
| Q77e. Confine you to a room/other enclosure | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q77f. Belittle you | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q77g. Ignore you | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q77h. Torture you emotionally | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q77i. Other | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q77ia. Please explain | | | | | |
| Q77j. Beat you up | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q77k. Rape you/sexually abuse you | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Thinking back over your career in the sex trade, tell me how often, for the most part, did a JOHN do the following?

| JOHN | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Usually | Always |
|---|-------|--------|-----------|---------|--------|
| Q78a. Cuddle you when you were hurt or feeling down | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q78b. Throw something at you | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q78c. Slap, kick, bite or hit you with a fist | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q78d. Hit you with object(s) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q78da. What was/were the object(s)? | | | | | |
| Q78e. Confine you to a room/other enclosure | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q78f. Belittle you | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q78g. Ignore you | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q78h. Torture you emotionally | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q78i. Other | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q78ia. Please explain | | | | | |
| Q78j. Beat you up | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q78k. Rape you/sexually abuse you | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Thinking back over your career in the sex trade, tell me how often, for the most part, did a POLICE OFFICER do the following?

| POLICE OFFICER | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Usually | Always |
|---|-------|--------|-----------|---------|--------|
| Q79a. Cuddle you when you were hurt or feeling down | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q79b. Throw something at you | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q79c. Slap, kick, bite or hit you with a fist | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q79d. Hit you with object(s) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q79da. What was/were the object(s)? | | | | | |
| Q79e. Confine you to a room/other enclosure | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q79f. Belittle you | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q79g. Ignore you | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q79h. Torture you emotionally | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q79i. Other | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q79ia. Please explain | | | | | |
| Q79j. Beat you up | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Q79k. Rape you/sexually abuse you | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Over the last 6 months, how frequently have you used the following substances?

| | Never | Once a Month | twice a Month | once a week | twice a week | once a day | more than one a day |
|---------------------------------|--------------|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Q80a. Alcohol | | | | | | | |
| Q80b. Cocaine/crack | | | | | | | |
| Q80c. Heroin | | | | | | | |
| Q80d. Marijuana | | | | | | | |
| Q80e. Crystal meth/speed | | | | | | | |
| Q80f. Other | | | | | | | |

Q80fa. If other, please specify: _____

Over the last 6 months, have you done the following activities using these substances?

Q81a SNIFFING

1. Cocaine/Crack
2. Heroin
3. Glue
4. Other
5. Have not sniffed in the last six months

Q81b Additional substances sniffed in the last six months:

Q82a SHOOTING

1. Cocaine/Crack
2. Heroin
3. Other
4. Have not shot up in the last six months

Q82b Additional substances shot in the last six months:

Q83a SMOKING

1. Cocaine/Crack
2. Heroin
3. Marijuana
4. Other
5. Have not smoked in the last six months

Q83b Additional substances smoked in the last six months:

Q84a SKIN POPPING

1. Cocaine/Crack
2. Heroin
3. Other
4. Have not skin popped in the last six months

Q84b Additional substances skinned popped in the last six months:

Q85a SW for swallowing

1. Alcohol
2. Cocaine/Crack
3. Heroin
4. Other
5. Have not swallowed these substances in the last six months

Q85b. Additional substances skinned popped in the last six months:

(if substance use above) Please estimate the street value of your habit on a daily basis for the last six months.

Q86a Total cost per day for all substances used: \$_____

Q87. (if substance use above) Is it important for you to reduce your substance use?

1. Yes
2. No

Q88. (if substance use above) Is it important for you to quit your substance use?

1. Yes
2. No

Q89. (if substance use above) Do you consider yourself to be addicted to substances?

1. Yes
2. No

Q94. *If you have received hospital treatment, what type(s) of treatment did you receive?*

Q95. *Have you ever visited a doctor's office for injuries incurred in the sex trade?*

1. Yes
2. No

Q96. *Have you ever visited a health care worker for injuries incurred in the sex trade?*

1. Yes
2. No

Q97. *Are you/have you been taking medication for health reasons?*

1. Yes
2. No

Q98. *If yes, what medication(s) are you/have you been using?*

Q99a. *Do you have your own BC health care number?*

1. Yes
2. No

Q99b. *If no, how do you pay for your health care?* _____

Q100. *Is there a clinic you like to go to?*

1. Yes
2. No

Q101. *Is there a health care worker you like to see?*

1. Yes
2. No

Q102. *In the past year, how many times have you consulted/seen a physician or health care worker #_____*

Do you have/or have had any of the following health conditions. If yes, please specify whether you have been tested, treated and at what kind of health facility:

| | Condition present? 1. Yes 2. No | How many months ago diagnosed or tested (0=never) | How many months ago first treated (0=never treated) | Where treated? 1. Doctors Office 2. Nurses Clinic 3. Hospital 4. Other | N/A |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|-----|
| Sleep disorders | Q103aa Yes No | Q103ab | Q103ac | Q103ad 1 2 3 4 | 88 |
| Migraine headaches | Q103ba Yes No | Q103bb | Q103bc | Q103bd 1 2 3 4 | 88 |
| Flashbacks | Q103ca Yes No | Q103cb | Q103cc | Q103cd 1 2 3 4 | 88 |
| Eating disorders | Q103da Yes No | Q103db | Q103dc | Q103dd 1 2 3 4 | 88 |
| Mental illness | Q103ea Yes No | Q103eb | Q103ec | Q103ed 1 2 3 4 | 88 |
| Depression | Q103fa Yes No | Q103fb | Q103fc | Q103fd 1 2 3 4 | 88 |
| Anxiety/panic attack | Q103ga Yes No | Q103gb | Q103gc | Q103gd 1 2 3 4 | 88 |
| Attempted suicide | Q103ha Yes No | Q103hb | Q103hc | Q103hd 1 2 3 4 | 88 |
| Chronic Fatigue Syndrome | Q103ia Yes No | Q103ib | Q103ic | Q103id 1 2 3 4 | 88 |
| Emotional trauma | Q103ja Yes No | Q103jb | Q103jc | Q103jd 1 2 3 4 | 88 |
| Physical abuse | Q103ka Yes No | Q103kb | Q103kc | Q103kd 1 2 3 4 | 88 |
| Slashing/harming yourself | Q103la Yes No | Q103lb | Q103lc | Q103ld 1 2 3 4 | 88 |

| | | | | | |
|--|---------------------|--------|--------|----------------------|----|
| <i>Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID)</i> | Q103ma Yes No | Q103mb | Q103mc | Q103md 1 2 3 4 | 88 |
| <i>STD*</i> | Q103na Yes No | Q103nb | Q103nc | Q103nd 1 2 3 4 | 88 |
| Q103ne. If yes, Which STDs? (Does not include the list below) | | | | | 88 |
| <i>HIV positive</i> | Q103oa Yes No | Q103ob | Q103oc | Q103od 1 2 3 4 | 88 |
| <i>Hep A</i> | Q103pa Yes No | Q103pb | Q103pc | Q103pd 1 2 3 4 | 88 |
| <i>Hep B</i> | Q103qa Yes No | Q103qb | Q103qc | Q103qd 1 2 3 4 | 88 |
| <i>Hep C</i> | Q103ra Yes No | Q103rb | Q103rc | Q103rd 1 2 3 4 | 88 |
| <i>Herpes</i> | Q103sa Yes No | Q103sb | Q103sc | Q103sd 1 2 3 4 | 88 |
| <i>Cervical cancer</i> | Q103ta Yes No | Q103tb | Q103tc | Q103td 1 2 3 4 | 88 |
| <i>Other(s)</i> | Q103ua Yes No | Q103ub | Q103uc | Q103ud 1 2 3 4 | 88 |
| Q103ue. If Other Please specify: | | | | | 88 |

How often do you use the following forms of birth control?

| | Always | Most of the time | Half of the time | Some of the time | Never | N/A |
|-----------------------------------|--------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------|-----|
| <i>Q104a. Birth control pill</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| <i>Q104b. Morning after pill</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| <i>Q104c. Condom/barrier</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| <i>Q104d. Diaphragm</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| <i>Q104e. Cervical cap</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| <i>Q104f. Spermicidal jelly</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| <i>Q104g. Rhythm method</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| <i>Q104h. Spermicidal sponge</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| <i>Q104i. Intra uterine (IUD)</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Q104j. Other ? _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
|-------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|----|

While working in your last sex trade job, how often did you use gloves/finger cots/female condoms/condoms/barriers with the following types of activities?

| | Always | Most of the time | Half of the time | Some of the time | Never | N/A |
|--------------------------|--------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------|-----|
| Q105a. Hand Job | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q105b. Blow Job/oral sex | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q105c. Vaginal Sex | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |
| Q105d. Anal Sex | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 88 |

Q106a. While working in the sex trade, did you have access to free condoms/barriers?

1. Yes
2. No

Q106b. If yes, from where? _____

Q107a. Did you have access to free birth control?

1. Yes
2. No

Q107b. If yes, from where? _____

Q108. How often do you and your boyfriend/girlfriend use condoms/barriers when having sex?

1. Always
2. Most of the time
3. Half of the time
4. Some of the time
5. Never

Q109a. When you don't use condoms/barriers with your boyfriend/girlfriend, what are some of the reasons?

Q109b. When you didn't use condoms/barriers with your clients, what were some of the reasons?

Q110. (If female) How many times have you had a pap smear test in the last three years? _____

1. More than once a year.
2. Once a year.
3. Once every few years.
4. Rarely.
5. Never.

Q111. (If female) How many times have you been pregnant? _____

Q112. (If female) How many abortions have you had? _____

Q113. (If female) How many miscarriages have you had? _____

Q114a. How many live children have you given birth to (fathered)? #____

Q114b. How old is your first child (oldest child)? _____

Q114c. How old is your second child _____

Q114d. How old is your third child _____

Q114e. How old is your fourth child _____

Q114f. How old is your fifth child _____

115. If you have given birth to (or fathered children), where are they now?

| | Q115a Child 1 | Q115b Child 2 | Q115c Child 3 | Q115d Child 4 | Q115e Child 5 |
|--------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Both biol. parents (1) | | | | | |
| Mother only (2) | | | | | |
| Mother & step-father (3) | | | | | |
| Step father only (4) | | | | | |
| Father & step-mother (5) | | | | | |
| Step mother only (6) | | | | | |
| Father only (7) | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Older sibling only (8) | | | | | |
| Mother & friend/partner (9) | | | | | |
| Father & friend/partner (10) | | | | | |
| Foster-parents (11) | | | | | |
| Other relatives (12) | | | | | |
| Group home (13) | | | | | |
| Adoptive parent(s) (14) | | | | | |
| Child welfare (15) | | | | | |
| Over-18/adult (16) | | | | | |
| Institutionalized (17) | | | | | |
| Detention centre/prison (18) | | | | | |
| Passed away (19) | | | | | |
| Don't Know (20) | | | | | |
| Other (21) | | | | | |

Q115aa If first child other, please explain _____

Q115ba If second child other, please explain _____

Q115ca If third child other, please explain _____

Q115da If fourth child other, please explain _____

Q115ea If fifth child other, please explain _____

Q116. Are you presently taking care of dependent children without pay?

1. Yes
2. No

Q117. (If yes) How many children are under your care? _____

Q118. (If yes) Who took care of the children when you were engaged in sex trade work?

Use the scale provided to show how much emotional support each of the following persons provided to you while in the sex trade and with the knowledge of your sex trade activities.

| | Know / knew | Amount of support provided | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|------|------------|-------|
| | | None | Very Little | a Little | Some | a fair bit | a lot |
| Mother/guardian | 1. Yes 2. No Q119aa | 1 | 2 | 3 Q119ab | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Father/guardian | 1. Yes 2. No Q119ba | 1 | 2 | 3 Q119bb | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Pimp(s) | 1. Yes 2. No Q119ca | 1 | 2 | 3 Q119cb | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Relative(s) | 1. Yes 2. No Q119da | 1 | 2 | 3 Q119db | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Outreach worker(s) | 1. Yes 2. No Q119ea | 1 | 2 | 3 Q119eb | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Lover/partner | 1. Yes 2. No Q119fa | 1 | 2 | 3 Q119fb | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Social workers(s) | 1. Yes 2. No Q119ga | 1 | 2 | 3 Q119gb | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Health care worker(s) | 1. Yes 2. No Q119ha | 1 | 2 | 3 Q119hb | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Other sex trade worker(s) | 1. Yes 2. No Q119ia | 1 | 2 | 3 Q119ib | 4 | 5 | 6 |

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|---|---|-------------|---|---|---|
| <i>Police officer(s)</i> | 1. Yes 2. No Q119ja | 1 | 2 | 3 Q119jb | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| <i>Friend(s)</i> | 1. Yes 2. No Q119ka | 1 | 2 | 3 Q119kb | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| <i>Therapist/counsellor(s)</i> | 1. Yes 2. No Q119la | 1 | 2 | 3 Q119lb | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| <i>Teacher(s)</i> | 1. Yes 2. No Q119ma | 1 | 2 | 3 Q119mb | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| <i>John(s)</i> | 1. Yes 2. No Q119na | 1 | 2 | 3 Q119nb | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| <i>Other ?</i> | 1. Yes 2. No Q119oa | 1 | 2 | 3 Q119ob | 4 | 5 | 6 |

Q119oc. If other please describe: _____

Who do you turn to first in a crisis situation?
(Check the top 3: top=A, second=B Third=C)

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Mother/guardian | 10. Outreach worker(s) |
| 2. Father/guardian | 11. Health care worker(s) |
| 3. Relative(s) | 12. Police officer(s) |
| 4. Lover/partner | 13. Therapist/counsellor(s) |
| 5. PEERS | 14. Pimp(s) |
| 6. Friend(s) | 15. Teacher(s) |
| 7. Child(ren) | 16. Other sex trade worker(s) |
| 8. John(s) | 17. Other? _____ |
| 9. Social worker(s) | 18. Other ? _____ |

Q120a. First One (A) _____

Q120b. Second (B) _____

Q120c. Third (C) _____

Please indicate the extent to which you currently agree or disagree with the following statements:

Q121a. *If something went wrong, no one would help me.*

| | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|----------------------|
| 1. Strongly Agree | 2. Agree | 3. Disagree | 4. Strongly Disagree |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|----------------------|

Q121b. *I have family and friends who help me feel safe, secure and happy.*

| | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|----------------------|
| 1. Strongly Agree | 2. Agree | 3. Disagree | 4. Strongly Disagree |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|----------------------|

Q121c. *There is someone I trust whom I would turn to for advice if I were having problems.*

| | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|----------------------|
| 1. Strongly Agree | 2. Agree | 3. Disagree | 4. Strongly Disagree |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|----------------------|

Q121d. *There is no one I feel comfortable talking about problems with.*

| | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|----------------------|
| 1. Strongly Agree | 2. Agree | 3. Disagree | 4. Strongly Disagree |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|----------------------|

Q121e. *I lack a feeling of closeness with another person.*

| | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|----------------------|
| 1. Strongly Agree | 2. Agree | 3. Disagree | 4. Strongly Disagree |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|----------------------|

Q121f. *People have difficulty feeling close to me.*

| | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|----------------------|
| 1. Strongly Agree | 2. Agree | 3. Disagree | 4. Strongly Disagree |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|----------------------|

Q121g. *There are people I can count on in an emergency.*

| | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|----------------------|
| 1. Strongly Agree | 2. Agree | 3. Disagree | 4. Strongly Disagree |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|----------------------|

Q122. *At the moment, would you say that you are happy?*

1. Always
2. Almost always
3. Usually
4. Some of the time
5. Hardly ever
6. Never

Q123. *At the moment, would you say that you are lonely?*

1. *Always*
2. *Almost always*
3. *Usually*
4. *Some of the time*
5. *Hardly ever*
6. *Never*

Q124. *At the moment, would you say that you are hopeful about the future?*

1. *Always*
2. *Almost always*
3. *Usually*
4. *Some of the time*
5. *Hardly ever*
6. *Never*

For those taking part in the long answer interview portion, please skip to the “open-ended” questions below.

Q125a. *Has working in the sex trade affected your overall health?*

1. *Yes*
2. *No*

Q125b. *If yes, how so?*

Q126a. *If you could live your life over again, would you live it differently?*

1. *Yes*
2. *No*

Q126b. *If yes, what would change?*

Q127. *What would you say to someone entering the sex trade for the first time?*

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

In this open-ended section I would like to explore a little deeper into some of the topics that I have already asked you about. I am interested in learning about your thoughts on aspects of your life, sex trade work, exiting, health, and general well-being.

1. *Can you tell me a little more about your family background? What was your life like before you began working in the sex trade?*
2. *Thinking back to when you were working in the sex trade, can you tell me a little more about your working conditions before you left? Did your working conditions vary by the venue in which you worked?*
3. *If you had tried to quit the sex trade previously and later returned, can you expand upon what kinds of things kept you from exiting permanently?*
4. *Thinking back to the point when you actually left, what was it that finally made you decide to leave? Was there a crucial "event" or was the decision more gradual?*
5. *Can you talk a little about the role of other people in your leaving? Which people supported you and which people attempted to dissuade you in your decision?*
6. *What choices or alternatives (eg. work, going back to school, etc.) did you see to working in the sex trade?*
7. *Were there identifiable stages that you passed through when you finally left the sex trade? If so, please describe them.*
8. *What types of services/ forms of support were most important in helping you to permanently exit? If any, which were not helpful?*
9. *On reflection, what were the main difficulties that you encountered while in the process of finally leaving the trade?*
10. *What were the major challenges that you faced after leaving the trade?*
11. *Can you go into a little bit more detail on how do you presently make a living?*
12. *How does your new job/occupation/form of work compare with working in the sex trade?*
13. *Do you still have contact with anyone who is still working in the trade? If yes, please describe these relationships.*
14. *Can you now talk openly with others about being in the sex trade, or is it something that you do not share openly?*

15. *Are your family members and close friends aware of your past life as a sex trade worker? If so, how do they treat you?*
16. *Do you think that people tend to view sex trade work in a negative light? If so, how do you feel about this negative view? How has it affected you?*
17. *Today how do you feel about the sex trade and those working within it?*
18. *Does the sex trade still have an impact on your life? If so, how?*
19. *Has working in the sex trade affected your overall health (physical, emotional, etc.)? If so, how?*
20. *Currently, what are your main health concerns (physical, mental, emotional, etc.)?*
21. *Currently, are you satisfied with the care you are receiving from your health service provider(s)? Why or why not?*
22. *What would you say to someone thinking of entering the sex trade?*
23. *What would you say to someone thinking of leaving the sex trade?*
24. *In your view, what things need to be in place before someone can leave the sex trade (i.e. for an individual personally, outside support, etc.)?*
25. *Do you have any comments to share about the interview process itself? How could it be improved so that we get a more realistic picture of individuals' experiences in leaving the sex trade and their current health needs?*

CLOSING STATEMENT (hand respondent brochure)

I would like to thank you again for taking the time to participate in this consultation. If you feel that you need to talk to someone about this further, I can make a trained counsellor available free of charge. In sum, thank you very much. Your input is valued and integral for the well-being of our community. Best wishes and good luck with your future endeavours.

CONSENT FORM

Leaving the Sex Trade: Assessing the Long Term Health Impact on Exited Workers in the CRD

Case Number: _____ Date: _____

Thank you for agreeing to this meeting. My name is _____, and I am an ex-sex trade worker who has joined the research team as an interviewer. The project is sponsored by PEERS (Prostitutes' Empowerment, Education and Resource Society) and funded by the BC Health Research Foundation. The principal researcher is Dr. Cecilia Benoit from the Department of Sociology at the University of Victoria (Phone: 250-721-7578), the co-investigator is Alison Millar also from the Department of Sociology at the University of Victoria (250-853-3355), and the project coordinator is Judy Lightwater (Phone: 250-388-5606).

We would like you to participate in this study examining the exiting experiences and long-term impact of sex work on former sex trade workers in the Greater Victoria area. The definition of exited sex trade worker adopted for this study is any individual who has previously been involved in the exchange of sex-related activities for economic reward (in kind and/or money), and who has been permanently out of the trade for at least two years time.

This tape-recorded interview will take between one-and-a half/two hours. There is a small payment of \$40.00 that will be paid to you to thank you for your participation.

All information will be confidential, viewed only by the research team outlined above. The only exception is if you reveal information that must be disclosed by law. Under the law, if you tell me about committing child abuse or your plans to commit physical violence to another person, I must report this to the appropriate authorities.

Your anonymity will be protected. Your name will be replaced with an alias for both the interview and transcription process. Any other identifying information will be removed from the questionnaire and transcribed data.

I realize that some of the questions may be difficult for you. If at some point during the interview wish to terminate it, your wishes and privacy will be respected, and the partially completed questionnaire and partly taped interview immediately destroyed. You are also free not to answer a particular question. All tapes will be destroyed after transcription.

This project has been approved by the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Committee (see copy of the approval form). Should you wish to further verify the authenticity of the research project, please call Dr. Howard Brunt, Associate Vice-President Research, University of Victoria (250-721-7968).

PEERS is a Victoria-based agency that provides services to sex trade workers. Counselling is one of the services provided free of charge should you want it. Choosing

to participate or not to participate will have no effect upon your access to any physician/health care worker or services that you are now receiving.

Yes, I am willing to participate in this study.

Signed _____

Date _____

VITA

Surname: Millar

Given Names: Alison Elaine

Place of Birth: Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Educational Institutions Attended:

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| University of Victoria | 1999 to 2002 |
| University of Calgary | 1998 to 1999 |
| University of Saskatchewan | 1996 to 1998 |

Degrees Awarded:

B.A. (First Class Honours) University of Calgary 1999

Honours and Awards:

- Imperial Oil Higher Education Award, University of Saskatchewan, 1994 to 1996.
- Louise McKinney Post-Secondary Scholarship, University of Calgary, 1998 to 1999.
- Dean's List, University of Calgary, 1997-1999 Academic Years.
- Dean's Scholarship, University of Victoria, 1999 to April 2001.
- Graduate Teaching and Research Fellowship, University of Victoria, 1999 to 2000.
- BC Health Research Foundation Research Grant, University of Victoria, September 2000.
- Graduate Studies President's Scholarship, University of Victoria, September 2000.

Publications:

Benoit, Cecilia and Alison Millar. (2001) *Dispelling Myths and Understanding Realities: Working Conditions, Health Status, and Exiting Experiences of Sex Workers*. Victoria, BC.

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Leaving the Trade: Exiting Experiences of Former Sex Workers

Author:


Alison E. Millar

April 8, 2002

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