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Geneviève SAUVÉ

AUTEUR DE LA THÈSE - AUTHOR OF THESIS

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Coping with constraints : Agentic Strategies in the micro-practice of  
independent adult sex workers in their relations with clients

D. Masson

DIRECTEUR DE LA THÈSE - THESIS SUPERVISOR

CO-DIRECTEUR DE LA THÈSE - THESIS CO-SUPERVISOR

EXAMINATEURS DE LA THÈSE - THESIS EXAMINERS

A. Denis

C. Parent

J.-M. De Koninck, Ph.D.

LE DOYEN DE LA FACULTÉ DES ÉTUDES  
SUPÉRIEURES ET POSTDOCTORALES

DEAN OF THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE  
AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

**Coping with Constraints:  
Agentic Strategies in the Micro-Practices of Independent  
Adult Sex Workers in their Relations with Clients**

**By  
Geneviève Sauvé**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
M.A. Sociology (spec. Women's Studies)**

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## ABSTRACT

Issues of structural constraint and personal agency permeate the discourses of sex workers concerning their everyday practices in sex work, specifically surrounding their interactions with clients. While it appears fruitful and meaningful to respect and value the agency, experiences, and skills of sex workers, their actions remain in part constrained and contextualized by (material and symbolic) structural forces. Nonetheless, sex workers deploy agentic strategies in order to maximize their well-being within sex work. This study is based on qualitative interviews with 12 independent adult female sex workers in Ottawa and Toronto, who work in two settings (street and in-call). Different strategies (individual and collective) are identified and discussed, surrounding the sex worker/client interaction. Eight dimensions are specifically examined: makeup of the clientele, solicitation, contractual terms, pricing, location, boundaries, payment and bad dates. Women's reflective capacities as agents are demonstrated through their articulations of the justifications for actions surrounding their working practices.

## INTRODUCTION

Prostitution is a topic that piques the interest of many. While we could argue that everyone has an opinion on it, it is a concept that remains rather contested and debated. What is consensual adult prostitution? Work or exploitation? An expression of women's sexual power and liberation or a form of patriarchal sexual violence and domination? Deviant behaviour, a crime, an illegal vice? A form of stigmatized labour or marginalized sexuality? In prostitution/sex work, what is for sale (or is it rent)? Sex or sexual services? Time? Labour power? Or rather the use or misuse of a body or body part? Perhaps the self, or yet again powers of command over another? Are those involved in prostitution workers? Victims? Specialty service providers? Feminists? Even amongst contemporary feminist authors, there are wide variations in the conceptualization of 'prostitution'.

In fact, even the terminology is hotly debated. While the term "prostitution" is still widely used to refer to consensual adult commercial sexual-economic exchanges, many authors now contest its use and prefer the term "sex work". Further, there is contestation around the labelling of persons involved: many authors use the term "sex workers", while others use the terms "prostitutes" or "prostituted women". These different labels may be seemingly innocuous but in fact, they are not. Naming is important. Names are labels and carry moral and political judgements. They also position the author and the reader in theoretical debates over prostitution.

In this research enterprise, I have elected to start from the premise that "sex work" (my preferred term) constitutes stigmatized labour, and that sexual services are sold in exchange for monetary reward in the interaction between "sex worker" and client. I

generally favour the use of the terms “sex work” and “sex workers”, as they do not confer the pejorative meanings of the action (to prostitute) or the person (the prostitute). I also believe it is important to respect the terminology that most sex workers prefer to observe. “Prostitute” is often considered a disparaging term, and it also does not reflect the fact that prostitution is not a way of life but rather a way of earning a living. Julie Colpron states it clearly, affirming, about sex work: “ce n’est pas une identité, c’est un travail, c’est une activité génératrice de revenus.” (2001: 12) My use of the term sex work, as a preferred label, has implications. It means that I am not entering into a moral debate about sex-for-money exchange. It also means, as states Colpron, that I am approaching the issue from a stance where:

les femmes partout et en tout temps, devraient avoir l’entière liberté de déterminer les conditions dans lesquelles, elles ont des relations sexuelles, quelqu’en soit le but, procréation, plaisir, rémunération en biens ou en argent et sans craindre de représailles sociales ou juridiques. (2001: 12)

While sex work, as a concept, is contested and debated, as is its associated terminology, the waters are further muddied when we consider that there is a variety of commercial sex occupations and activities, such as phone sex, exotic dance, video or photographic pornography and sexual services/prostitution/sex work. The focus of the present thesis is the provision of *sexual services* -- the use of the terms ‘sex work’ and ‘sex workers’ therein will therefore refer specifically to this type of commercial sex occupation or activity. There is also a wide range of sex work contexts, arrangements and working conditions. As claim Bruckert et al.: “It is [...] evident that the diversity of sex work continues to be poorly recognized and explored.” (2003: 1) Some sex work involves a third party, like a pimp, manager, or boyfriend, who may command a share of up to 90% of revenues. On the other hand, many sex workers operate completely independently. Furthermore, while the most

visible sex workers in Canadian cities work on the street, an arguably greater number work out of their own apartments (in-call), through an agency or in another off-street location like a bar or a massage parlour. Lowman states: "It appears likely that in many Canadian cities, far more people work in the off-street prostitution trade than the street trade." (2001: 5) Davis & Shaffer concur, explaining, "Since there is no way to take a census of indoor prostitutes it is difficult to calculate what their precise number is. However, several studies have estimated that street prostitutes make up only roughly 10% of the total prostitute population in North America." (1994: 44) Shaver's numbers are somewhat higher, but still congruent:

Enforcement patterns inherent (sic) in police activities focus almost exclusively on the public manifestation of sex work: street prostitution. In Canada as elsewhere, however, field study estimates indicate that it represents only a small proportion of the market. Estimates vary from 10% to 15% of the total in the [U.S.], to 30% of the total in England. According to studies conducted in Toronto in 1983 and 1992, street prostitution represents only 20% of all the prostitution in the city. (Shaver, 1996)

Adult sex workers themselves, of course, also have widely varying understandings and ways to relate to the work they perform. For many it is primarily a job and for others it is a career. Some women find it enjoyable and empowering, while for others it is unpleasant and degrading.

The present research will focus principally on adult women involved in sex work in either street or in-call arrangements, independently of third parties, in Canada. While the substantive topic of this research project is sex work, the theoretical focus is the balance of structure and agency. I will investigate the scope of individual and group action of women who perform sex work in urban settings in Canada (Ottawa and Toronto). I will be particularly interested in the (group or individual) agency expressed through daily

professional activities and (micro-) practices of adult female sex workers, primarily in relation to their clients, positing that victimization and agency are not mutually exclusive.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I will present the theoretical framework for the study. The chapter has four major sections. I will firstly discuss how sex work has been theorized in feminist schools of thought. A brief sketch of six theoretical positions will be presented: socialist feminist, radical feminist, Black feminist, liberal feminist, radical sexual pluralist and sex workers' rights. I will then propose a different way to frame the debate. While the main way the debate has been framed is around free/forced, empowerment/exploitation and work/violence dichotomies, I will argue that it is possible to focus instead on women's lived experiences within sex work, thus taking up the debate in the working and social conditions. I will present the body of literature which primarily informed my research, and pull from my reading of it some suggestions for the study of sex work: 1) recognizing the heterogeneity of experiences; 2) valuing experiential knowledge(s); 3) examining micro-practices; 4) positing the diffusion of power; and 5) considering alternative discourses. I will follow this with a brief presentation of my central research questions and main argument. Lastly I will discuss the conceptualization and empirical operationalization of key terms: 'agency' and 'structure'. Agency -- defined with references to 'free will', 'action', 'performance' and 'opportunities' -- is loosely expressed in opposition to, and in an almost symbiotic relationship with structure -- which in turn is defined with references to 'patterns', 'positioning', 'constraints', 'social relations' and 'context'.

In the second chapter, I will present the methodological framework of this research. Firstly, I will discuss my approach, which is rooted in feminist methodology. Specifically, I will explain that the approach advocates collaborative, reciprocal, inter-subjective and non-

hierarchical relations and practices. Further, feminist ethical considerations concerning the process of 'othering' in social research and the social distance between researchers and participants will be highlighted as particularly pertinent. Second, I will present the qualitative interview-based data collection and analysis methods used in this empirical research project: who constituted the 'research sample', how participants were recruited, where and when the interviews took place, what guided our discussions, how the interviews were transcribed and how the data was then analysed. Ethical considerations identified during the University of Ottawa's Research Ethics Board approval process will also be presented.

The third chapter concerns the research project's findings and analysis. I will begin with a brief overview of Canadian prostitution laws. Sections 210 (Bawdy-houses) and 213 (Communication) of the Canadian Criminal Code will primarily retain our attention. I will then move on to present and discuss the findings emanating from my interviews with 12 women who are involved in sex work in Ottawa and Toronto. I have exposed the findings in eight sections, which correspond to eight dimensions surrounding the sex worker/client interaction. "Establishing the Makeup of the Clientele" concerns typical clients, the question of regulars and the characteristics of desirable and undesirable clients. In "Soliciting Custom", I examine in-call workers' and street workers' tactics for attracting and establishing contact with clients, and highlight some of the strategies therein. "Entering into a Contract" concerns sex workers' initial conversations with clients and the negotiation of the sexual-monetary exchange. I will be operating a distinction here between contracts articulated on the basis of time and those articulated on the basis of services. Next, in "Naming the Price", I discuss major themes that emerged surrounding payment, namely standard prices, women's willingness (or not) to negotiate on price, the prohibition of

undercutting, maximizing revenues, and pricing as a strategy for client selection. "Situating the Act" will concern the location for the provision of sexual services. The distinction will be made in the discussion between in-call sex work, where the location is fixed and on the sex worker's turf, and street work, where clients are solicited on the street but where the second location may be up for negotiation. Limits set by sex workers in terms of acts and safer sex in commercial sexual exchanges will then be discussed in "Laying the Boundaries". Women's practices surrounding the prohibition of specific acts or services and the insistence on condom use will be presented, as well as considerations about the enforcement of such limits in their interactions with clients. In "Getting Paid" I will present findings which concern the timing of the actual monetary transaction from client to sex worker, considering strategies at play in women's preference for receiving payment up-front or after services are rendered. Lastly, "Coping with Bad Dates" concerns the high incidence of violence against women in sex work. Strategies deployed by sex workers in order to protect themselves, deal with victimization and seek recourse are presented. Reflections on danger in sex work are also offered.

The final section of the present thesis is the Conclusion, in which I will summarize the major research findings from the eight dimensions of the sex worker/client interaction. I will discuss these results in light of the main research questions. Furthermore, I will consider the theoretical contributions/implications of the present research, while reminding the reader of its methodological limits. I will follow by presenting ideas for future research. Lastly, I will discuss theoretical (sex work as stigmatized labour) and political (labour standards and human rights; collective action) issues ensuing from the present research.

## CHAPTER ONE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 1.1 Feminist Theoretical Positions on Prostitution/Sex Work

There is an array of feminist theoretical positions on prostitution/sex work. Feminism is not a monolith. Within what can arguably be called feminist thought, authors vary in their opinions as to the causes, the definition, and the conceptualization of prostitution/sex work. Feminist positions on the issue can be classified in various ways, but the most common is the classification that opposes feminists who conceptualize the activity as 'violence' to feminists who conceptualize it as 'work'. Socialist/marxist feminism, domination theory/radical feminism, as well as Black feminist thought are all comprised in the violence/exploitation position, while the 'prostitution as work' position is often linked to liberal feminism, radical sexual pluralist theory and sex workers groups/prostitutes' rights feminism. The main way of framing the issue of prostitution/sex work within the feminist theoretical literature has thus been around the dichotomies of free/forced, empowerment/exploitation and work/violence.

Jody Miller, who has conducted empirical research with street workers in the U.S. and now in Sri Lanka, explains that both extreme representations of women in prostitution -- as ultimate victims or ultimate active agents -- can be problematic (1993: 422-423). The first representation negates the possibility of women being "effective social agents on behalf of themselves or others" (Miller, 1993: 422), while the second representation can be said to ignore the structural constraints placed on sex workers.

Through the arguments of selected authors, I will briefly highlight some key points from the six schools of thought listed above, paying particular attention to their ways of understanding structural constraints and personal agency in sex work/prostitution, and noting commonalities and areas of difference. It should also be noted that the differences between schools of thought may not always be as clear cut as they appear here for explanatory purposes.

### Marxist / Socialist Feminism

Marxist feminist theorist Christine Overall (1992) adopts the typically marxist approach of investigating what is 'wrong' with prostitution that is not also 'wrong' with other forms of women's paid labour in a capitalist system. Overall discounts many of the common grounds for condemning prostitution, since these rest on arguably deplorable conditions, but conditions that are nonetheless neither necessary nor exclusive to sex work. The conventional oppositions to prostitution she discusses are as follows: the involvement in prostitution as a source of victimisation, the entry into prostitution as an absence of choice, the practice of prostitution as the yielding of power and control, and the act of prostitution as the commodification of sexual intimacy. The crux of Overall's own opposition to prostitution rests on three points. Firstly, Overall argues that there is an asymmetrical economic exchange inherent to prostitution (Overall, 1992: 716-717). Secondly, Overall believes that prostitution can be condemned because it presents class, age, race, and gender inequalities (1992: 717). One could argue though that prostitution is no exception in this respect, as such inequalities are found in various contexts in classist, agist, racist and sexist societies. Finally, Overall argues that prostitution can be specifically condemned because it is not reversible -- that is, it is not possible to conceive of a world in

which women are the purchasers of sexual services in the same numbers as are men, and men are providers of sexual services in the same numbers as are women (1992: 719).

Overall acknowledges the dichotomy in representations of women in prostitution -- on one hand, prostitutes as agents, and on the other, prostitutes as victims. While she states that she recognises the validity of both of these extremes and wishes to reconcile the positions, an emphasis on structural constraints nonetheless permeates her criticism of the four conventional oppositions to prostitution. While she rejects these common grounds for the condemnation of prostitution, she does so not based on their inherent demerit, but rather on the 'fact' that these deplorable conditions are not specific to prostitution, and in fact exist in other forms of women's paid labour in a capitalist system. Her arguments do not rest on the possibility of sex workers acting as agents who can actively resist structural constraints in order to bring about more favourable working conditions. Therefore, although Overall claims to want to reconcile the representations of prostitutes as strictly victims or agents, her discussion encompasses no reference to prostitutes as actively engaging with structural constraints or victimisation -- thus obscuring agency, though not necessarily negating it.

### Domination Theory / Radical Feminism

Domination theory and radical feminism are closely related. Both highlight the ways in which women's sexuality is used against them. Sloan and Wahab explain that "domination theory assumes the radical feminist position [...] that sex work is inherently oppressive and serves the purpose of asserting male dominance and power over women" (2000: 463). Parent explains that for radical feminists, women's sexuality is appropriated by men in a

patriarchal society, leading to the sexual objectification of women and, consequently, to prostitution (1995: 401).

For radical feminist Kathleen Barry (1984), prostitution is definitely not work like any other. Barry has coined the term 'female sexual slavery'. She is vehemently opposed to female sexual slavery, which she defines as traffic in women and children, as well as forced prostitution (Barry, 1984: 7). But for Barry, all prostitution is 'forced' -- whether force is exerted through physical violence or threat thereof, drugs, 'trickery' (1984: 8), or "love and befriending tactics." (1984: 12) We can therefore understand that Kathleen Barry dismisses altogether the possibility or issue of choice or agency for prostitutes. Misogyny and the appropriation of women's sexuality in patriarchy constitute the source of women's oppression and of prostitution (Barry, 1984: 121).

The stance of radical feminist Andrea Dworkin (1997) shares many characteristics with that of Barry. Dworkin, who is better known for her fervent and vocal opposition to pornography, believes that prostitution is unequivocally the misuse of a woman's body -- it is "in and of itself [...] an abuse of a woman's body" (1997: 141). Far from treating women involved in prostitution as agents, she discusses prostitutes as victimized bodies -- bodies that are used, misused and abused. It is language that takes away all possibility of agency as resistance or innovation. Like Barry, Dworkin dispels the possibility of choice for prostitutes. 'Choice' in one's entry into prostitution is of no consequence -- it is simply an illusion -- in a world where women are dominated. This theorist therefore also dismisses "the distinctions other people make between whether the event took place in the Plaza Hotel or somewhere more inelegant." (Dworkin, 1997: 140-141) She is of the opinion that the "circumstances don't mitigate or modify what prostitution is." (Dworkin, 1997: 141)

Radical feminism is enlightening in its analysis of a gender hierarchy of power as a structural force, which must certainly be retained as a central component of a feminist social analysis. However, by strictly positing that patriarchy is maintained through social institutions (including prostitution) and eliminating the possibility of sex worker agency and reflexivity, there is a clear emphasis on system reproduction (existing institutions cannot be seen as sites of resistance or innovation). Furthermore, the gender hierarchy of power is seen not as narrowing, inhibiting or limiting the scope of action, but as absolutely compelling and confining.

### Black Feminist Thought

Theorists linked to Black feminist thought are said to adopt a stance related to that of domination theorists/radical feminists on the issue of prostitution in that they generally conceptualise prostitution as violence against women. Moreover, as in radical feminism, sexuality seems to be considered a central component of women's subordination. However, they place great emphasis on the ways in which race, gender and class oppression interlock in questions of sexual violence (Collins, 1993: 85).

While Patricia Hill Collins states that sexuality can be both oppressive and empowering (1993: 88), she believes that prostitution, along with pornography and rape, is a "specific tool of sexual violence" (1993: 89). For the author, sexuality's possibility as a site of empowerment as well as oppression does not hold for prostitution, because the sexual-economic exchange is not seen as a sexual act but rather as an inherent violence.

As is the case for radical feminism, Black feminist thought is enlightening for its recognition of gender and, in this case, race inequalities. However, there seems to be no space remaining for personal action, that is for resistance and innovation in the face of systems of subordination.

### Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism is related to liberal ideology, and therefore holds as basic premises the importance of equality of opportunity, as well as individual action and individual choice. Colette Parent (1995: 401) explains that for liberal feminists, the cause of prostitution is women's inequality coupled with labour market discrimination. Also, in liberal feminist thought, it is argued that the prostitute "does not sell her body, as radical feminists believe; rather, she sells a service." (Sloan & Wahab, 2000: 469) Nonetheless, the liberal feminist tradition does not recognize sex work an occupational choice like any other. For liberal feminists, prostitution is a 'choice' only in the absence of other viable options.

Annette Jolin is generally identified as a liberal feminist.<sup>1</sup> Within Jolin's work, equality resonates as a crucial concept. Jolin believes that one significant way to classify feminist thought on prostitution is by opposing 'sexual equality first' feminists to 'free choice first' feminists (1994: 75). Although the author does not readily identify herself as belonging to either of these particular approaches, one can infer that indeed her arguments are closely related to those of 'free choice first' feminists, for whom "the freedom to choose must accompany the pursuit of equality in all of its phases [...]. Restricting choice for a woman,

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<sup>1</sup> One should nuance, though, Annette Jolin's appropriateness as a representative of the liberal school of thought. While Jolin argues that women must be free to choose prostitution, some would argue that in the liberal feminist tradition prostitution is not generally positioned as a 'real' choice.

for any reason reduces her status as a full and equal human being” (Jolin, 1994: 77). Within this frame of thought, explains Jolin, “if freely chosen, prostitution is an expression of women’s status as equal, not a symptom of women’s subjugation” (1994: 77). Jolin contends that only the valorisation of women’s free, unconstrained and unburdened sexual choice [read: the unconstrained possibility to freely choose to engage in prostitution] can possibly lead to women’s equality and as such to the potential end of prostitution (1994: 81).

By assuming that equality of opportunity exists, the liberal feminist stance on sex work can be said to ignore the structural subordination of groups -- ignoring differentially available discourses, subject positions, rewards, status, resources and power. In this sense, the liberal feminist position clearly emphasises agency within prostitution. While this is a definitive break with the three schools of feminist thought discussed above, it may indeed not present a balanced account of the real experiences of women in prostitution, highlighting women’s agency though obscuring the structural constraints placed on sex workers.

### Radical Sexual Pluralist Theory

Radical sexual pluralist theorists, otherwise known as sex radicals, “are critical of all restrictions placed on sexual activities.” (Sloan & Wahab, 2000: 470) They reject the notion that certain sexual acts or behaviours are more morally acceptable or natural than others, and generally recognise sex work as “legitimate work” (Sloan & Wahab, 2000: 470).

Patrick Califia-Rice (formerly Pat Califia) (1994) is an important author within radical sexual pluralism. Califia is supportive of prostitution, which he sees as an outlet for sexual needs (1994: 246), and which he characterises as a deviant sexual behaviour, or a deviant form of human intimacy (1994: 242). Involvement in prostitution -- whether as a buyer or a seller -- is a sexual choice and is only deviant because of subjective moral judgement. This is interesting, since he first and foremost characterises prostitution not as violation or as work, but rather simply as sexual behaviour. Califia does not think that the end of patriarchy will bring the end of prostitution (1994: 242). In a society with gender equality, Califia believes that the range of people both buying and selling sex would change. Unlike most other feminist theorists on the issue of prostitution, Califia points to the possibility of sex role reversal in prostitution, believing that women could be purchasers of commercial sex in same numbers as men (Califia, 1994: 244). Likewise, he believes that the prostitute demographics would shift in a just society -- proposing that "the boundaries between whore and client might become more permeable", as there "would be less need for the high walls between "good" and "bad" people, "men" and "women."" (Califia, 1994: 246)

I contend that radical sexual pluralist theory is limited in both its insight and applicability on the topic of the structure/agency struggle within prostitution. While Califia states that he believes that involvement in prostitution is a legitimate choice, which points clearly towards an emphasis on agency, this is a choice articulated within the framework of morality. Although the author acknowledges the subordination of sex workers, there is no explicit acknowledgement of, or discussion surrounding structural constraints within prostitution. Therefore, Califia indeed talks of sex workers as agents, but their agency is not tackled in terms of their active engagement with, or resistance to, structural forces. This body of

work nonetheless offers a valid and insightful critique of more deterministic feminist understandings of prostitution as resting on moralistic grounds.

### Sex Workers' Rights Feminism

Sloan and Wahab explain that “members of the [sex workers' rights] movement believe that (a) many women freely choose sex work, (b) sex work should be viewed and respected as legitimate work, and (c) it is a violation of a woman's civil rights to be denied the opportunity to work as a sex worker.” (Sloan & Wahab, 2000: 467)

Priscilla Alexander (1997) and Gail Pheterson (1996) are both vocal activists within the sex workers' rights movement. Alexander is critical of the radical feminist stance, which denies the possibility of a woman's consensual participation in prostitution (1997: 83). For Alexander, prostitution is simply stigmatized labour. The sex worker, therefore, is merely a woman who has stepped outside the bounds of acceptable or normative female behaviour (Alexander, 1997: 85).

Like Alexander, Gail Pheterson discusses the sex worker's departure from the norm of female behaviour, arguing that there exists a 'whore stigma' and that 'prostitutes' epitomize deviance. Conceptualizing prostitution as work, and as less oppressive than marriage, Pheterson nonetheless believes that the sex-for-pay exchange remains an asymmetrical relationship: “[t]he woman thereby enters as a subject into a more reciprocal relation with men than under marital conditions of unacknowledged and unlimited service. Nonetheless, the reciprocity remains asymmetric: she needs money and he wants sex.” (1996: 16) While both marriage and sex work serve the same function according to this

author, that is, to serve men (Pheterson, 1996: 18), the author argues that sex work is more transparent than marriage. She states: “[u]nlike in legitimized relations, such as marriage, in prostitution sex with men is explicitly acknowledged as work for women; under good conditions where the woman is an independent agent, the work is negotiated in terms of time [...] and price.” (Pheterson, 1996: 16)

Sex workers’ rights feminism appears to be attempting to strike an interesting balance in terms of structure and agency. Firstly, when addressing sex workers’ requisitions, Pheterson states that “prostitute activists worldwide are claiming the right to the same social and political legitimacy as their customers and the right to decide for themselves how to survive and resist exploitation” (Pheterson, 1996: 29). This is recognition of women’s role as agents operating within a framework of structural constraints, able to actively participate in system reproduction, resistance or innovation. Secondly, both Pheterson and Alexander support a woman’s freedom to choose to engage in prostitution, while at the same time recognizing that sex workers are often victimized and exploited. Alexander, for example, advocates a “change [in] the context within which prostitution takes place” (1997: 91). In my opinion, this signals a more balanced understanding of sex work in terms of structure and agency, when compared to the other five approaches discussed above.

However, I believe that their understanding of the structure/agency struggle within sex work remains insufficient. While there is a recognition that structural forces render sex workers more vulnerable to victimization, they seem to be inadequately accounting for the broader limits placed on sex workers’ range of action by social structures. The arguments,

though critically important, mainly consist mainly of a 'rights discourse'. As explains Bruckert:

While the quality of these accounts is uneven [...] they collectively constitute a critical mass of public proclamations by skin trade workers. Whatever their weakness, the very existence of this work holds the promise of new ways of seeing. I hope that these collective, articulate voices cannot be easily dismissed and rendered invisible. While I applaud these women's contributions these texts are [...] not analytic. In other words, while they necessitate a reconsideration of the role of the workers they do not, on their own, move the analysis any further. (2000: 10)

## 1.2 Framing the Discussion Otherwise

Through this brief outline of six major schools of feminist theoretical thought on sex work, we see that the main way the debate has been framed has been around free/forced, empowerment/exploitation and work/violence dichotomies. I will argue that it is possible to focus instead on women's lived experiences within sex work. It also seems like the main debate has offered a limited analysis of the conditions under which sex work is experienced. However, there is another way of framing the discussion, moving past and not intervening directly into that main debate. Instead, one can look at the structure/agency issue *within* the lived experience of sex workers, thus taking up the debate in the working and social conditions within sex work and not looking specifically or primarily at one's entry into it.

There is a body of literature which is helpful in this effort. A growing number of recent empirical and theoretical writings has been examining the conditions within sex work, with

what could be termed a poststructuralist approach<sup>2</sup> (see Dominelli, 1986; Walkerdine, 1990; Miller, 1993; Sullivan, 1995; O'Connell Davidson, 1995 & 1998; Scambler, 1997; Brewis & Linstead, 2000a & 2000b; Sanchez, 2001; Rickard, 2001; Parent, 2001; Jackson et al. 2001; Kesler, 2002; Bruckert, 2002; Sanders, 2002; Benoit & Millar, 2004a). I would like to anchor myself within and to be inspired by this type of feminist literature, looking at what these authors are suggesting as an approach to studying sex work.

What are these authors suggesting? Five themes will be quickly presented, as emanating from my reading of this body of literature: 1) recognizing the heterogeneity of experiences; 2) valuing experiential knowledge(s); 3) examining micro-practices; 4) positing the diffusion of power; and 5) considering alternative discourses.

First, this body of literature, both empirical and some theoretical writings, are complexifying the issues of 'prostitution', affirming that there are no simple answers. In fact, sex work is highly theorized, and some authors have pointed to the need for the study of fragmented realities in this field, particularly pointing to the heterogeneity of experiences of sex workers. For example, Barbara Sullivan says that "[w]hat we need are more careful and nuanced accounts of prostitution which are able to both specify differences and problems [...] and point to strategies for solving problems." (1995: 194) The writings that guide my reflection around the issue of sex work make reference to heterogeneity, 'fragmented realities,' and 'plurality of contexts' (for example see O'Connell Davidson, 1995; Scambler, 1997; Brewish & Linstead, 2000b; Jackson et al. 2001; Parent, 2001; Rickard, 2001;

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<sup>2</sup> My application of the label 'poststructuralist' may be contestable. I use the term loosely here, akin to Bruckert's use of it when she states: "We cannot seek the truth; we can, however, strive to reveal the truths grounded in the experiences of marginal women's everyday lives. Unlike the reassuring (though erroneous) truth claims of empiricism, these truths are plural, fluid and subjective." (2002: 4-5)

Kesler, 2002; Benoit & Millar, 2004a). In sex work as in other contexts, there are varying experiences and identities. Brewis & Linstead explain:

the prostitute's identity may vary from one which clings by its fingertips to life, heavily addicted, barely able to escape debt, involved in drug dealing and petty crime, in and out of court and subjected to the constant threat of violence from unstable partners, possibly with children in care and which sees itself as either hapless or guilty victim, to one which enjoys a high level of income, planned with proper financial advice, builds a secure business (in or out of the sex industry), pursues a health-conscious lifestyle, develops and shares caring and wisdom, provides a service distinguished by its quality, educates others, is active in the promotion of women's rights and is assertive and positive in its self-regard. (2000b: 177)

This recognition of the existence of heterogeneity of experiences within sex work is an approach that I aim to adopt in my research. Secondly, this body of literature is suggesting that academic feminists listen to what sex workers are saying, facilitating the inclusion of their voices in the academic sphere. As in the wider feminist approach of valuing experience, women who sell sex are experts on their own lives and experiences. In her study on women involved in sex work, Miller argues:

A critical dimension of feminist research involves validating women's understanding of their experiences [...] This is especially important in the current research because street prostitutes have been particularly devalued, stigmatized, ignored and silenced in academic research. Although the very act of doing research may be reproducing unequal power relations [...] I have tried to employ a method that recognizes the women interviewed as most capable of defining their realities. (1993: 425)

Kesler states it more brutally:

Feminism operates within a state of false consciousness as long as it denies the experience of the prostitute women to further the plausibility of theories about them. So, form your own opinion about sex work, but don't do it until you have talked with the women who live this life. (2002: 233)

I thus take from this body of literature that on the issue of sex work as on others, we must value experiential knowledge, women's perspectives, and their voices (see for example Miller, 1993; Rickard, 2001; Kesler, 2002; Bruckert, 2002; Benoit & Millar, 2004a).

Thirdly, this body of literature is suggesting that there is a need to examine micro-practices and everyday activities. I use the concept of 'micro-practices' as a particular subcategory of social life, which refers to the routine and minute aspects of everyday life. O'Connell Davidson points out the importance of examining micro-practices by stating that "the actual prostitute-client exchange is necessarily surrounded by various other activities, such as soliciting custom, negotiating contracts, providing a setting for executing those contracts, managing the throughput of customers, and so on." (1998: 18) Sanchez, in her study, chose to pay "close attention to the microeffects of practice" in paid sexual interactions. (2001: 64) The author states she:

attempted an alternative representation of women's experiences by paying attention to the relationship between agency and violence in the everyday lives of a small group of women. My interpretation should be considered specific, but it may provide a theoretical framework for developing a more contextualized and participatory knowledge of sex trade practices. Identifying sites of resistance to sexual exploitation and discriminatory legal practices can provide a small ray of hope in a generally dark domain. (Sanchez, 2001: 73)

Fourth, this body of literature is suggesting an approach which views power as non-linear, or diffuse. Authors such as Dominelli argue against the widespread understanding of power, where "power is usually posited as linear force -- something which the powerful exercise over the powerless." (1986: 65) She continues:

I argue that power is a complex and contradictory phenomenon. It is neither solely coercive nor solely liberating. Power operates in ways which reinforce the powerlessness of those at the receiving

end whilst simultaneously creating the conditions under which that powerlessness can be overcome. Similarly, it lays the basis through which the powerful can experience powerlessness. Power has a dialectical motion which juxtaposes the powerlessness of the powerful with the power of the powerless in making decisions about the conditions under which they will lead their lives, thereby creating conflict between them. (Dominelli, 1986: 66)

A number of other authors concur, proposing that power is dialectical, multiply-sourced, multidimensional, contingent and contestable (see for example Walkerdine, 1990; Miller, 1993; Sullivan, 1995; O'Connell Davidson, 1998). As states O'Connell Davidson, "In short, there is no single, unitary source of power within prostitution that can be seized and wielded by third party, client or prostitute." (1998: 18)

Finally, this body of literature advocates openness to alternative discourses, primarily about sex workers as agents. Terms such as authorship, agency, autonomy, reflexivity and sexual citizenship are used (see for example Sullivan 1995; Scambler, 1997; Jackson et al. 2001; Rickard, 2001; Sanders, 2002; Benoit & Millar, 2004a; Bruckert, 2002). Australian feminist Barbara Sullivan states that "[f]eminist efforts to intervene in and change the present practice of prostitution could place their emphasis on contesting dominant cultural meanings of prostitution [...] and bringing marginalized discourses [...] into the mainstream" (1995: 190). She adds:

What we need are feminist accounts of prostitution which assert the will and agency of prostitutes, which emphasise their capacity to resist male violence, which refuse the notion that women sell themselves in prostitution, and which reconfigure prostitution transactions. This sort of discursive strategy would change the often destructive discourses which prostitute women are presently forced to embody. (Sullivan, 1995: 197)

I am open to presenting alternative discourses related to sex workers, and my research can conceivably, I hope, move towards this goal. I agree fully with Scambler who argues:

Certainly the respectful premise that women are active, autonomous agents is no less justified in relation to sex workers than in relation to other female workers. There is evidence, too, that women sex workers, unlike many rent-boys, exercise considerable control over their encounters with clients. (Scambler, 1997: 118)

### **1.3 My Research Question and Main Argument**

#### Research Questions

Ensuing from the previous discussion, I identify the main questions that will guide my analysis as the following:

- How do the issues of structural constraint and personal agency permeate the discourses of adult female sex workers concerning their everyday practices in sex work?
- What, if any, agentic strategies do sex workers use in order to secure margins of control?

#### Central Thesis

While some feminists have conceptualized prostitution/sex work as predominantly oppressive or predominantly empowering, I believe that reality is indeed more complex and nuanced. Victimization and stigmatization coexist with women's agency (both personal and sometimes collective) in sex work. While the sex industry is a reflection of a sexist, racist and classist social system, I believe sex work is most fruitfully conceptualized as stigmatized labour. Adult sex workers may actively resist and negotiate structural constraint in their interactions with clients. Within the symbolic and material structural context, women involved in sex work actively reflect upon and rationalize their actions and professional practices and draw on skills, resources, subject positions and experiences in

order to deploy strategies which aim to maximize their control, power, safety and well-being.

#### 1.4 Conceptualization of Key Terms

The two major concepts I will need to shed some light on before proceeding are those of 'structure' and 'agency'. Both are very elusive, slippery concepts. First, let us examine agency. While the concept is difficult to pin down, the following questions will guide my reflection: What is agency? What does it look like? What do we call it? What do we look for when we study it?

Agency is a commonly-used yet elusive concept. Saltzman Chafetz explains:

The term "agency" crops up constantly in feminist sociological writings but is rarely defined. At one extreme, agency might be considered as synonymous with an assumption that human behavior is unconstrained by social factors. The opposite extreme is a totally structuralist argument that treats people as dummies whose behavior is completely shaped by social expectations, opportunities and constraints [...] Feminists especially cannot logically subscribe to too strong an agency position because it denies the reality and potency of structured gender inequality ("patriarchy"), which all definitions of feminists logically presuppose. Rather, contemporary sociologists mostly view individuals as actors who are affected by socially constructed constraints, opportunities, definitions, and by others' expectations and reactions, while also capable of developing varying situational definitions, engaging in role negotiations, making choices among alternatives, rejecting others' expectations, etc. (1999: 146-147)

Some definitions of agency are offered in the literature to which I have referred in the context of this research. Reference is made to terms like 'free will', 'action', 'performance' and 'opportunities'. The definitions offered by Walsh (1998: 33), Simmons (1998: 125 & 128) and Saltzman Chafetz (1999: 147) all emphasize the structure/agency dichotomy in

their definitions of agency, though in slightly different ways. For Walsh, agency is defined as follows:

This concept is used to express the degree of free will that is exercised by the individual in their social action. We express our agency according to the degree of constraint we experience from the structure. Some people have less agency than others because of structural factors like poverty, and some circumstances create less agency, like an oppressive political state. (1998: 33)

Simmons offers the following definition of agency: "The words "consent" and "choice" are commonly used to describe agency, which is the ability of a person to make choices and take action under the social and economic constraints that impede these choices." (Simmons, 1998: 125) She adds: "Agency is therefore a relative term. People make choices, but they make them within particular circumstances, many of which entail constraints." (1998: 128) Saltzman Chafetz, rather than making specific reference to a 'structure' opposing itself to agency, alludes to it nonetheless through the notion of 'social penalty':

I define "agency" as the *extent to which* people enjoy a variety of opportunities/options for behavior, among which they can choose with minimal social penalty. However, the theoretical set of options is socially meaningless if substantial penalty is associated with some but not other choices. Relatively few people will make highly costly choices and their behavior is unlikely to be widely adopted by others. (1999: 147)

Clear 'definitions' aside though, the question of agency is a difficult and contentious one within postmodernism/poststructuralism. Specifically: with the decentering of the subject, is it possible to recoup or retain the concept of agency? Bell explains:

Postmodernism signifies a plurality of discursive formations which produce admittedly partial and interested narratives about the world. The positionality of the historical subject who is constituted as a subject within specific discourses has replaced the

Enlightenment epistemology of the knowing transcendental subject who uses reason to establish universal truth [...] The postmodern subject is a historical subject constituted by multiple and often conflicting social relations. (1994: 5)

From a similar understanding of the postmodern subject, Weedon affirms that the subject remains an agent:

Although the subject in poststructuralism is socially constructed in discursive practices, she none the less exists as a thinking, feeling subject and social agent, capable of resistance and innovations produced out of the clash between contradictory subject positions and practices. She is also a subject able to reflect upon the discursive relations which constitute her and the society in which she lives, and able to choose from the options available. (1987: 125)

Thus for Weedon, the postmodern subject's agency takes its impetus in the "clash between contradictory subject positions". She affirms that: "Knowledge of more than one discourse and the recognition that meaning is plural allows for a measure of choice on the part of the individual and even where choice is not available, resistance is always possible." (Weedon, 1987: 106) This is related to the notion of subjectivity as 'non-unitary' -- neither simple nor completely fixed, containing multiple facets (Bloom, 1998: 3). Barvosa-Carter, inspired by Judith Butler, similarly locates agentic capacity within the multiplicity of subject positions, arguing: "a subject that is multiply constituted and internally diverse will always have resources of self-reflexivity via the juxtaposition and interpenetration of its own many subject positions." (2001: 128) For Bell, the "postmodern subject is decentered and detotalized, a fragmented subject who is a site of disunity and conflict and who consequently can be seen to engage simultaneously in political change and in the preservation of the status quo." (1994: 5) She locates the subject's agency in the "pluralism of subjectivities within each individual subject and a pluralism of different subjects within any collective subject position" (Bell, 1994: 103)

Relocating the discussion, we must now understand how agency -- a contentious and elusive concept -- has been and can be operationalized in the research field. Within the empirical studies on sex work in which I anchor my research, the concept of agency is operationalized through the examination of women's discursive and material 'tactics', 'techniques', 'strategies', 'protective measures', 'precautions', 'competences', 'choices' and 'agentic actions'; which are 'employed', 'perfected', 'exercised' and 'deployed'; in order to reduce clients' power and increase/assert their own, 'protect' or 'safeguard' themselves, 'resist' victimization, maximize 'margins of control' and 'enforce expectations', 'fight back', 'contest', 'counteract' and 'overcome' relations of power and authority and 'manage identity' (see Dominelli, 1986; Maher & Curtis, 1992; Miller, 1993; O'Connell Davidson, 1995; Vanwesenbeeck et al., 1995; Pyett & Warr, 1999; Brewis & Linstead, 2000a; Jackson et al., 2001; Sanchez, 2001; Bruckert, 2002; Sanders, 2002; Bruckert et al. 2003; Thukral et al. 2003; Williamson & Folaron, 2003; Benoit & Millar, 2004a).

For example, in her case study with 16 street sex workers in the U.S., Miller notes that her "research on prostitutes' experiences with violence provides a complex example of the ways in which victimization and agency exist simultaneously and in multidimensional ways in women's lives." (1993: 423) She took an approach which did not eclipse women 'fighting back', affirming: "While there were many structural constraints on the lives of the women I interviewed and most had been victimized frequently, they were anything but passive victims, and employed a number of strategies to resist and fight back at violence against them." (Miller, 1993: 423) As her study focused primarily on experiences of victimization, the author adds: "While violence was an ever-present part of street prostitution [...] the women I spoke with did not passively accept this aspect of their work, but instead

employed a variety of tactics to stay safe, protect one another, and fight back against violence.” (Miller, 1993: 426)

Similarly, in their research involving 21 women who had worked in street prostitution, Williamson & Folaron identified what they refer to as “protective strategies,” which they define as “targeted responses to potentially negative situations.” (2003: 277) The authors note the deployment of both “active, problem-focused protective strategies” and “emotion-focused strategies.” (Williamson & Folaron, 2003 : 280)

In her Canadian study of women who work as dancers in strip clubs, which I believe is pertinent to the present research, Bruckert found that: “Strippers may be in a disadvantaged and marginalized position, but they are not “simply victims who are acted upon.”” (Bruckert, 2002: 99) Resistance -- which she defines as “the strategies employed by subordinated peoples to challenge the status quo” (Bruckert, 2000: 45) -- is exercised. The author highlights the need to examine micropractices in interaction, by explaining that dancers exercise (sometimes open, often subtle) strategies of resistance, but these strategies are constrained by structure:

Like working-class women throughout history, they employ a variety of strategies to counteract exploitative appropriation in the labour force. That these strategies are constrained by their social, labour and gender location, contingent on available discourses and cultural capital and complicated by the far-reaching ideological instruments of advanced capitalism (Scott, 1985: 320) does not mean their resistance is any less real. It does, however, confirm that structure conditions the possibilities of action, and highlights the need to examine everyday politics. (Bruckert, 2002: 99)

She claims that we “need to attend to the subtle and not-so-subtle discursive and material strategies that working-class women employ to *contest* the apparent relations of authority”

(Bruckert, 2002: 99), adding:

It is perhaps testament to the complexity of resistance and to the limited resources and need for innovative strategies on the margins that resistance to broader discourses and practices is realized in interpersonal relations. It is at the level of individual and social interaction that we must look to see the complex negotiations around power in strip clubs. (2002: 99-100)

While Sanders also identifies a number of strategies in her research on sex work, she offers the following cautionary note:

It should not be celebrated that sex workers feel it is necessary to develop stringent emotional protection strategies. The fact that women who sell sex have to expend so much energy creating meanings and barriers to safeguard themselves reflects how this group of women continues to be stigmatized and marginalized from the inclusion and protection of mainstream society. (2002: 565)

This quote thus brings us to consider the second major concept utilized in this research -- ‘structure’, loosely theoretically positioned as that against which agency is deployed. Guiding this discussion will be questions such as: What is ‘structure’? What else do we call it? What do we look for when we study it?

The concept of structure evokes notions of recurring and durable ‘patterns’, ‘constraints’, ‘social relations’, ‘context’ and ‘positioning’. Such patterns are understood to impact, pressure, shape, frame, influence, underpin, circumscribe, mediate and permeate the action, choices and experiences of groups and individuals. While structure is an elusive and slippery concept, as is agency, a few definitions of structure are offered in the body of

literature in which I am anchoring the present research. Walsh offers the following 'conventional' sociological definition of structure:

This concept is central to sociology, it is usually employed to refer to any recurring patterns of social behaviour. Such behaviour, because it is common and regular, has a constraining effect on people and we all tend to act in accord with the pressures exercised by social structure, e.g., we stand in queues; our relationships follow a common pattern. (1998: 33)

Structure, in sociology, usually denotes something larger, in social life, than individuals and groups. It denotes the societal level, the macro. Hays offers the following insight, adding the dimension of the *reproduction* of social structure:

Although mightily contested in its particular content, the term "social structure" is nonetheless generally used to highlight those patterns of social life that are not reducible to individuals and are durable enough to withstand the whims of individuals who would change them; patterns that have dynamics and an underlying logic of their own that contribute to their reproduction over time (albeit in slightly altered forms). (1994: 60-61)

Anthony Giddens coined the term 'duality of structure' in an attempt to "overcome the action-structure dualisms" (Layder, 1996: 125). In this line of thought, structure is understood as both "the medium and outcome of the conduct it recursively organizes; the structural properties of social systems do not exist outside of action but are chronically implicated in its production and reproduction." (Giddens, 1984: 374) For this author, 'structure' is defined as "Rules and resources, recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems. Structure exists only as memory traces, the organic basis of human knowledgeability, and as instantiated in action." (Giddens, 1984: 377) He furthermore defines 'structures' as "Rule-resource sets, implicated in the institutional articulation of social systems. To study structures, including structural principles, is to study major

aspects of the transformation/mediation relations which influence social and system integration.” (Giddens, 1984: 377)

Drawing on the work of Giddens, Hays nuances the conventional understanding of structure as ‘overarching’: “structures should be understood as enabling as well as constraining,” adding “structures not only limit us, they also lend us our sense of self and the tools for creative and transformative action, and thereby make human freedom possible.” (1994: 61)

Within poststructuralist thought, the notion of *discursive* structure is added. That is, structure can be understood in relation to available scripts, discourses and practices. These thus circumscribe and enable action by individual subjects and groups, while action reproduces, exploits and potentially transforms discursive structures in turn. Weedon explains:

Whereas, in principle, the individual is open to all forms of subjectivity, in reality individual access to subjectivity is governed by historically specific social factors and the forms of power at work in a particular society. Social relations, which are always relations of power and powerlessness between different subject positions, will determine the range of forms of subjectivity immediately open to any individual on the basis of gender, race, class, age and cultural background. (1987: 95)

I believe that this poststructural understanding of structure is parallel to Giddens’ notion that power is within everyone’s reach -- but how we deploy power is by drawing upon resources, available subject positions and accessible scripts, and not everyone or every group has access to the same resources, subject positions and scripts.

This leaves us to briefly explore how the concept of structure is operationalized within the empirical studies on sex work in which I anchor my research. We noted earlier that agency was generally operationalized through an examination of women's discursive and material strategies which are employed by sex workers. These tactics are deployed in the discursive and material context which we can understand as structure.

In some empirical studies, this structural context is alluded to with references to 'risks' (Vanwesenbeeck et al. 1995; Pyett & Warr, 1999, Rickard, 2001; Bruckert et al. 2003) and 'hassles' (Williamson & Folaron, 2003) that sex workers must contend with. These typically involve violence and health risks. Many authors go further, referring to 'structure' by contextualizing action in systemic inequalities, within the complementary and interlocking systems of oppression of patriarchy, racism and classism (see for example Dominelli, 1986; Maher & Curtis, 1992; O'Connell Davidson, 1998; Jackson et al. 2001; Sanchez, 2001; Bruckert, 2002; Thukral et al. 2003). Oppression is then experienced through the legal system, in systemic violence and in ideological subjugation. For instance, O'Connell Davidson states that in her study, she was interested in the "structural mechanisms which underpin the everyday experience of participants in prostitution", since such "macro-phenomenon" as "legal and institutional structures, [...] labour market conditions, [...] ideological representations of 'race', sexuality and gender, and so on, shape the experience of prostitution and give meaning to the interactions between [...] prostitutes and their clients." (1998: 8)

Stigma -- defined by Erving Goffman as "the situation of the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance" (1963: Preface) -- is also highlighted as a structural element in a number of the empirical studies I consulted (for example Maher & Curtis, 1992;

O'Connell Davidson, 1995 & 1998; Sanders, 2002; Williamson & Folaron, 2003). I mentioned in the introduction to this thesis that I am choosing to define prostitution/sex work primarily as a form of stigmatized labour. I believe that most independent, adult sex workers primarily experience prostitution/sex work as a means of generating an income: as work, labour, a profession. I understand it to be *stigmatized* labour because within the present social and moral context, it is an occupation widely marked with shame, disgrace and disapproval, and can result in an individual being shunned or rejected. Stella, a Montreal sex workers' organization, explains it clearly when it states:

Un stigmat est une étiquette sociale puissante qui discrédite et entache la personne qui le reçoit et qui change radicalement la façon dont elle se perçoit et dont elle est perçue en tant que personne. Les personnes stigmatisées sont habituellement considérées déviantes ou scandaleuses [...] et [...] elles sont fuies, évitées, discréditées, rejetées, réprimées ou pénalisées. Le stigmat de pute est l'un des plus puissants facteurs de contrôle non seulement au coeur de l'exclusion sociale des travailleuses du sexe mais aussi en tant que menace potentielle planant sur toutes les femmes revendiquant une autonomie personnelle, économique, géographique, sexuelle. (2001)

Bruckert explains that "Labour market location can be a discrediting attribute if the work is illegal, immoral or improper." (Bruckert, 2000: 53) Stigma can operate in a structural manner, she affirms: "when morally disreputable activities are enacted as work, the process, the labour and the workers, are stigmatised as deviant in particular ways that are class and gender specific." (Bruckert, 2000: 55) Though the author is examining specifically the labour of erotic dancers, I believe the statement is applicable to other forms of sex work and is very revealing in the implication of the 'sex work as stigmatized labour' position and in linking this labour with social structures:

Focusing on the labour of strippers allows us to see them as agents and to explore their subjectivity without obscuring the fact that they are engaged in economically marginal, culturally

stigmatized, "immoral" work that blurs the boundaries between private and public, presentation and identity, work and leisure [...] While it is labour, it also resonates with multiple social and cultural meanings which operate independent of the labour market. (Bruckert, 2002: 16)

Generally, what we note is that empirical studies looking at micro-practices in sex work locate women's actions within a social (both material and discursive) context. Structure may be presented in the form of risks, stigma, material violence and victimization or disadvantaged and marginalized social, gender and economic positioning. Structure is seen to limit resources, personal power and control. It may shape the sense of self through internalized stigma. It also has material and psychological consequences, stemming from incidents of personal victimization. Structure is not, however, necessarily positioned as being overarching or entirely determining. Agentic action is thus possible, even on the part of those severely disadvantaged by social inequalities which are played out in the prostitution industry. As states Bruckert about women who perform a related form of sex work: "Strippers may be in a disadvantaged and marginalized position, but they are not 'simply victims who are acted upon.'" (2002: 99) They exercise (sometimes open, often subtle) strategies of resistance and innovation, but their agency is 'constrained', 'shaped' and 'limited', to a certain extent, by structure. The sex worker is "an agent, who within the confines of exploitative and oppressive practices and class-gender relations seeks to maximize personal and social advantage." (Bruckert, 2000: 46)

Wrapping-up the theoretical underpinnings of the present research, I would like to briefly come full-circle by returning to my previous discussion on feminist theoretical positions on prostitution/sex work. The present research -- which examines micro-practices in women's lived experiences in sex work, specifically in regards to sex worker/client relations -- is at once *framed and influenced by*, as well as *resisting* the common classifications/typology of

feminist theoretical writings on prostitution, which are seen in some cases as more deterministic, and more voluntaristic in others. We have seen, in this section, that those feminist schools of thought on prostitution classified as more deterministic -- such as marxist/socialist, domination theory/radical and Black feminist -- conceive of prostitution as *inherently* symmetrical, violent and/or oppressive. There is an emphasis placed on structural constraint, and women's agency, I contend, is obscured if not negated. We have likewise noted that feminist schools of thought typically classified as more voluntaristic -- notably liberal, radical sexual pluralist and sex workers rights' feminist -- conceive of sex work somewhat differently. The conventional liberal feminist conception of prostitution is as the sale of sexual services, while the radical sexual pluralist position conceptualizes prostitution as a deviant expression of sexuality. Radical sexual pluralist theorists such as Califia notably question the moralistic undertones present in much feminist thought on prostitution. It could be argued that sex workers' rights feminists draw on these two theoretical positions (liberal and radical sexual pluralist) in order to position sex work as *stigmatized and deviant labour*. There could be said to be an obscuring, amongst these more voluntaristic theoretical positions, of the structural constraints, both material and discursive, placed on women involved in sex work.

In the context of the present research, which is informed by this backdrop of feminist theories on prostitution, I have further proposed, in this section, to move beyond the free-forced, choice/exploitation dichotomies and focus instead on the working and social conditions within women's lived experiences of sex work. This exploration will be guided by a small but growing body of empirical and theoretical literature on sex work which highlights: the heterogeneity of experiences; the importance of experiential knowledge; the need to examine micro-practices; the diffuse character of power; and the need to consider

alternative discourses on sex work. Finally, the concepts of 'agency' and 'structure' will be central to the discussion, and as such I have explored the meaning of both terms. I have attempted to anchor both concepts in the empirical literature and highlight certain key difficulties with the terms while proposing different nuanced definitions. The following section focuses on the methodological underpinnings of the present research.

## CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This research is based on qualitative inquiry. I am using data collection and analysis techniques that are associated with qualitative research. The particular method that I am using to collect data is interviews -- specifically qualitative, semi-structured interviews. But beyond this, I approach the research enterprise as a feminist sociologist. The fact that I do feminist research, in turn affects the way in which I carried out this qualitative research project. I will discuss feminist methodology and how it informs my research, and describe afterwards the specific steps taken to carry out the data collection and analysis.

### 2.1 Approach: Feminist Methodology

My thesis research is located within feminist research and framed by feminist methodology. In turn, feminist research methodology implies the application of feminist ethics. Let us now consider briefly what is feminist research methodology and how it has informed the present research project.

According to Ollivier & Tremblay (2000) feminist research is characterized by three main features. First, feminist research is guided by a double orientation: academic activism (as part of a project towards the disruption of the status quo and thus seeking social change), and 'scientific' knowledge acquisition (Ollivier & Tremblay, 2000: 7-8). Second, feminist research is characterized by its use of gender as a main analytical lens or dimension (Ollivier & Tremblay, 2000: 8-9). Third, feminist research as a body of work is characterized by its 'plural' nature and is thus composed of different schools of thought which present "une diversité de lectures, parfois contradictoires et souvent complémentaires, de la nature

et des causes de la subordination des femmes à travers l'histoire." (Ollivier & Tremblay, 2000: 10)

Collaborative, reciprocal, authentic, inter-subjective and non-hierarchical relations and practices are advocated in feminist methodology (see Kirsch 1999). As such, feminist research is concerned with particular ethical considerations that may simply not be posed in traditional, malestream research. Some general ethical issues had to be considered in this research project because of their great pertinence: a) the 'othering' of research participants, and b) social distance between the participant and the researcher.

The 'other' can be understood as she who is not the subject, not the referent, she who is not me/us, with whom and against whom I/we construct my/our subjectivity, I/we conceive myself/ourselves as the other of the other. It is in fact a dichotomous way of thinking (self/other, us/other) with hierarchical [not-so-under] undertones that are at risk of surfacing in social research. Silverstein explains that the constitutive categories in dichotomies "essentialize individuals and polarize groups" (1999: 70). She argues that these categories are inadequate and insufficient, and that we must move beyond such essentializing modes of thinking (Silverstein, 1999: 70). Schutte understands the other as:

that person [...] which makes it possible for the self to recognize its own limited horizons in the light of asymmetrically given relations marked by [...] differences. The other [...] is that person occupying the space of the subaltern in the culturally asymmetrical power relation (1998: 54).

For example, when western researchers study issues pertaining to Third World women and in so doing take their own [western] experiences as normative, the resulting analysis could involve the representation of Third World women as others: less modern, less

liberated than western women. When a non sex worker middle-class 'white' graduate student studies issues pertaining to women in sex work, and she takes her own experience as normative, the resulting analysis may involve the representation of sex workers as others: less moral, more sexual, unclean, deviant.

Wishing to avoid, as much as possible, the traps of othering and the difficulties of rigid self/other binaries, one can heed the call of postmodern and postcolonial feminist authors and be conscious of the possibility of inscribing participants as others in research. I attempted to do this. First, I strove to relate to my participants as human beings with multiple, fluid, intersecting subjectivities. Schutte explains: "postcolonial feminisms alert us to the voices of split subjects deconstructing the logic of the totality in the light of cultural alterity" (1998: 67). Secondly, I posited relational positionalities, where it is theorized that power circulates in multifaceted ways" (Friedman, 1995: 21). For Friedman, binary modes of thinking must be supplemented by "relational narratives in which the agonistic struggle between victim and victimizer is significantly complicated" (Friedman, 1995: 7). Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, I wished to acknowledge the possibility of agency, both explicitly in the content of my research but also implicitly through my valuing of my participants' experiential knowledge and their reflexive capability. If we posit relational positionalities where power is not unidirectional, we can admit that others than ourselves can act upon a situation, can resist and can be empowered.

To cross the divide between Us and Them [...] involves being able to imagine the agency of those other from ourselves, to assume their capacity, like our own, to reflect upon and negotiate the shifting confinements and privileges of their multiply constituted positions. (Friedman, 1995: 38).

Finally, I was inspired by Jayati Lal (1996) and Mary John (1996) to be conscious not to reinscribe otherness in the analysis and the drafting periods of this research. Lal explains that in the field, researchers tend to start seeing the realities from the viewpoint of those living it, and that researchers need to fight against re-introducing portrayals of otherness once they return to the academy -- 'home' -- to analyse the data and write the report (Lal, 1996: 192). For example, I frequently returned to my field notes on my encounters with participants, in an effort to ground myself as much as possible in the interpersonal experience of the information exchange.

The other general ethical issue that I felt had to be taken into account in my research is the question of social distance between researcher and participant (see Reay, 1996). In the case of my research, differences existed in terms of class and education. Important social distance between researcher and participants poses the risk of lacking the proper cultural landmarks and bearings necessary to adequately interpret behaviours and messages.

The main strategy advocated in the literature in order to deal with social distance between researchers and participants in the analysis is *reflexivity*, understood as locating oneself in one's research (see Reay, 1996: 60). The risks can be minimised if we try to be conscious of, and accountable for, the social distance or proximity. I have adopted this strategy throughout the research enterprise, and have attempted to maintain this train of thought in the analysis (and not only during encounters with participants). My lens is formed [and re-formed] through my fluid [and variably privileged] positioning as an educated, 'white', francophone, western, middle-class, urban, lesbian, third-wave feminist woman.

While I do not specifically want to *inscribe* difference in the text between the participants and myself (since there are many more elements that make us similar than that which make us different), I must acknowledge that while there is heterogeneity within my sample, there are certain structural social characteristics which I do not share with *many* participants -- notably, as I mentioned, in terms of class and educational attainment. As a result of varying degrees of social distance with participants, there were cases where I was less able to identify with women and their experiences, and was somewhat less able to fully grasp and empathise with the lived experiences they shared with me. This lack of empathy and identification is a consequence of social distance. In order to minimise my greatly misunderstanding the narratives of participants, I 'verified' information frequently with participants, reframing questions to make sure I was understanding their words correctly and as intended, and I 'invited' their reflection and analytical participation upon events and experiences *during* the interviews. I frequently uttered phrases such as "how come?" wanting to leave participants the opportunity to 'explain' themselves, their own actions and decisions, rather than simply imposing or transposing my understandings.

Feminist research methodology and feminist ethical considerations have therefore informed this research project. In the following section I will further explicate the methodological approach adopted by discussing qualitative research methods and more specifically, the interview method.

## **2.2 Methods**

In order to address my research questions, I decided in the very early stages to favour the use of semi-structured qualitative interviews as a data-collection technique. In effect, my

desire to work within the loose framework of feminist methodology and to use qualitative methods preceded my ultimate decision concerning the topic of my research. I wanted to have the opportunity to converse directly with women and give participants a forum for discussing and reflecting upon their experiences in their own words. I was interested in how sex work was subjectively experienced by the sex worker in her daily life. Through the use of qualitative interviews, I wanted to manoeuvre within the framework of validating women's subjective understandings of their own experiences.

### Interview Schedule

A qualitative interview schedule, with open-ended questions, was used and it was possible to modify questions for each interview (see Appendix G). The interview schedule was designed with the following elements in mind: my two main research questions, my central thesis, and the way in which I understood and operationalized the concepts of structure and agency. I also used dimensions I had identified which were inspired by other studies, in particular the work of O'Connell Davidson (1998) and Jody Miller (Miller 1993, as well as unpublished work in progress<sup>3</sup>). In my interview schedule, the questions focused on three analytical dimensions in investigating structural constraint and agency surrounding the sexual-economic exchange: (1) interactions with clients, (2) dealings with law enforcement, and (3) discursive negotiations. The interview schedule was developed between April and September 2001. The finalized interview schedule was built around eight major questions, and prompts were used. It must be clarified, at this time, that during the analysis, the activities surrounding interactions with clients became the central focus, with the two other major areas (dealings with law enforcement and discursive negotiations)

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<sup>3</sup> Personal e-mail communication with Jody Miller (Department of Criminology, University of Missouri-St. Louis), August 4, 2001.

being relegated to supporting and contextual information. As a novice researcher, I had simply not fully taken into account a) the volume of data that would be generated by using qualitative interviews, and b) the scope and level of detail of the analysis. By approaching my subject with these three dimensions, I had evidently bitten off more than I could chew. For those interested in learning more about relations between sex workers and police, a recent study out of the U.S. entitled "Revolving Door: An Analysis of Street-Based Prostitution in New York City" (Thukral et al., 2003) would be a worthy read.

#### Interview Participants: The Sample

The research participants in this project were selected using purposive and voluntary sampling. The sample consisted of twelve adult female participants. These women presently work or have engaged in sex work within the last six months, and operate independently of any industry third party (pimp or manager).

The small sample size in this research project is justified in different ways. First, sex work is a challenging research field to gain access to, and hence it is difficult to recruit a large number of participants in an ethical manner. This has been my experience, as well as that of other researchers (see, for example: Tani, 2002: 34). Second, we can point to general conventions in qualitative research. But while it is conventional, in qualitative interviews, to have sample sizes of 10 to 15 participants (Savoie-Zajc, 2000: 274), this must not be an arbitrary decision. This leads us to the third aspect: the important criterion of theoretical saturation. Theoretical saturation is reached at the point where no new issues or patterns are emerging. Finally, the limited breadth of the claims to generalization to be made justifies the small sample size in this research project. With a dozen participants, I am not

asserting that I am able to extend my claims to all adult female sex workers, but rather I am identifying some of the strategies deployed by Canadian sex workers, and trying to gain an understanding of how the issues of structure and agency permeate the discourse of adult female sex workers in my study. In the case of this thesis research, it was judged that a sample consisting of 12 participants was sufficient and justified, given the difficulty of gaining access to the field, conventions in qualitative research, theoretical saturation and the claims of the project.

Of the twelve women I interviewed, four lived in the Toronto area, while eight lived in the Ottawa area. The interviews took place between November 2001 and January 2002. The ages of participants at the time of the interviews ranged from 28 to 47 years, and the average age of participants was 37 years. The average age of entry of participants in the sex trade was 17 years. Ten of the 12 women I interviewed were 'white' and one of them identified as francophone. One woman in the sample is Aboriginal and one is Indo-Canadian. Two of the women in the study identified as lesbian, though I did not ask the question directly. Some were introduced to prostitution as children, while others were well into adulthood when they first turned a trick. The level of formal education of participants varied widely. While three participants had attended (but not all completed) college or university, the highest level of schooling of the remaining participants ranged from grades eight to twelve. Most participants had not (yet) completed secondary studies. One-third (four) of the women I spoke to worked mainly 'in-call', which means that the solicitation takes place off-street (the women in this survey either have a regular client base and operate by word of mouth, or they advertise their services and clients make contact with them by telephone). In the case of these four sex workers, the encounters with clients take place in the woman's workplace (either her personal house/apartment or her working

house/apartment). The remaining two-thirds (eight) of the women I interviewed were involved primarily in street-level sex work.

I would also like to acknowledge that five of the 12 women I interviewed informed me that they were living with a serious illness, such as HIV-AIDS, cancer or hepatitis-C. It should also be noted that a high proportion (two-thirds) of the women I interviewed volunteered information about personal (past or present) substance abuse issues with 'hard drugs', like crack/cocaine or heroin.

Although an attempt was made to reach women who were working with a third-party (pimp/manager), this turned out to be a difficult task and all 12 participants in this study worked independently. Different factors may explain the fact that no 'employed' sex workers responded to this call for participants. Firstly, it could be that there is indeed less third-party control over prostitution in Canada than in the past, thus a greater proportion of self-employed sex workers. Secondly, we can hypothesize that women working with a third party may be particularly disadvantaged and reticent to engage in participation in a research project for fear of reprisals. Thus, the lack of involvement of 'employed' women in the research could be due explained by the supposed characteristics attached to the 'prostitute'/pimp relationship.

Although the study of independent sex workers was not part of the original intention of this research project, this tweaking of the sample is at once both interesting theoretically, and requiring a methodological cautionary note. The particular theoretical interest rests in the *possibility* that sex workers who operate independently confront one less set of structures (read: the controlling effect of a third party employer) which act as constraints to their

personal agency, even if the relationship is not particularly coercive. This remains a hypothesis, and in my research I did not investigate the nature of this relationship. My hypothesis is that the self-employment arrangement likely contains advantageous components in terms of agency and personal control. Women working with a third party may surrender some of their powers of command over the organization of their work, around the setting of work hours, work schedule, work rate, and prices, and perhaps at times the capacity to freely retract from contracts or withdraw from sex work in general. In a situation with third-party involvement, there is also a distribution of earnings -- the sex worker must thus surrender a (sometimes very considerable) portion of her revenues to the employer.

On the other hand, we have sex workers who operate independently of any industry third party, and these women may be called 'renegades'. I owe this rather clever expression to Marsha, one of the participants in this study. Marsha used the term 'renegade' to designate women who work independently. The expression is evocative of a rebel, a heretic -- an individual who rejects conventional behaviour, and goes against the grain. As Marsha explained, renegades don't work for a pimp, and as such decide on their work rate and work schedules. There is no direct remittance of earnings. Interestingly, Marsha claimed that renegades are disliked by those who operate within the more stereotypical or paradigmatic 'prostitute'/pimp arrangement: "They're hated by pimps because the pimps don't get paid, and, and they're hated by the other girls because the other girls are jealous because they're giving up all their money to a pimp and they know they can't work without them." (Marsha)

Nonetheless, it should be noted that according to Davis & Shaffer, the “stereotypical pimp is a rarity in Canada.” (1994: 7). The authors continue, affirming: “Studies have shown that the majority of adult prostitutes in Canada operate independently,” (Davis & Shaffer, 1994: 39) sourcing the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution (The Fraser Committee) (1985: 378).

There may therefore be interesting distinctions between ‘employed’ sex workers and the ‘renegades’ who constitute my sample. Hence the methodological cautionary note: we must remark that if the results of the present study can be generalized, these only apply to women who work independently of third parties, and therefore may arguably enjoying greater control, on the whole, over the work organization and reap the full economic rewards of their labour.

### Recruitment Methods

Upon deciding that I wanted to learn about the experiences of adult female sex workers, I realised that gaining entry into the field would be somewhat difficult. I learned of the existence of several sex workers’ organizations, and decided to contact them in order to see if cooperation would be possible. Contact was established with two sex workers’ organizations in Toronto, Maggie’s and the Sex Workers’ Alliance of Toronto (SWAT), and after several telephone conversations with representatives of the organizations, cooperation was secured. Maggie’s is a sex worker-run education project, with the mission of providing education and support to assist sex workers in their efforts to live and work with safety and dignity. SWAT, which is also run by sex workers, aims to fight for sex workers’ rights to fair wages, and safe and healthy working conditions. Without the

gracious help and assistance of my contacts at these organizations, I believe that my project would not have been possible. These two women also kindly provided input and advice in relation to other issues, including appropriate terminology, time and place of interviews, honorarium to be offered, interview questions, and informed consent. Contacts were also established -- and cooperation negotiated for the purposes of participant recruitment -- with several community organizations in Ottawa, where there is presently no sex workers' organization in operation<sup>4</sup> (see Appendix A for a full list of partner organizations).

Three distinct strategies were utilised in order to recruit interview participants. First, I was invited by my contact at Maggie's to participate in a community radio show on the University of Toronto's 89.5 CIUT. A call for participants was made at the end of a short interview on the air. Second, a poster was also designed and distributed to partner organizations in both Ottawa and in Toronto (see Appendix D). The posters were placed in drop-in centres and on community boards. Finally, leaflets were produced (see Appendix C). These leaflets were distributed by contacts at partner organizations during street outreach and other community activities. Pamphlets were also made available in drop-in centres. Through these different media, potential participants were invited to telephone me for further information. A local number was available in both Ottawa and Toronto (through a paging service in Toronto, and through a voice-mailbox in Ottawa).

Following the suggestions of my contacts at Maggie's and SWAT, I decided to offer an honorarium of \$30.00 to interviewees. This was stated on the recruitment leaflets and

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<sup>4</sup> A current action research project, funded by Status of Women Canada under the Women's Program, is investigating the possibility of the establishment of such a coalition in the Ottawa-Gatineau region. A final report is expected in early 2006.

posters. The honorarium was considered to be partial compensation for participants' time and for any costs incurred as part of their participation (i.e., transportation, childcare, etc.)

### The Encounters

The interviews took place from November 2001 to January 2002. All interviews were tape recorded with the consent of participants, and lasted an average of 79 minutes. There was one occurrence of an undetected tape malfunction, during the fifth interview. The participant agreed to repeat part of the interview experience (missing sections) and received a second honorarium. The interactions took place in a location of the participants' choosing (although neutral options were provided), either in Ottawa or in Toronto. Residing myself in Ottawa during the period of data collection, I made three trips to Toronto to conduct interviews. Half of the participants invited me into their homes for the interviews, which then took place either in the living room or in the kitchen. One participant invited me to meet her in her working apartment, and another at a public library. One participant preferred to be interviewed in an office at the University of Ottawa, while the three remaining women were interviewed at a women's shelter where they were residing, in a private room. While most interviews took place on a weekday, five interviews were conducted in the late morning, another five were held in the afternoon, and the remaining two took place in the evening. I made myself very flexible as to the time and place of interviews.

I did not take notes during the interviews, in an effort to listen actively to participants and give them my full attention. In addition to the tape recordings, I did, however, keep some field notes. I kept a journal in a booklet, which had a section for each interview.

Immediately after an interview, I would take some time alone in order to write down logistical information (participant's pseudonym, date, time and place of interviews), as well as detailed notes under four headings: "Setting", "Context", "The Participant Herself" and "My Experience". These field notes were very useful later, over the three-year process of analysing the data and writing the thesis. They helped me remember participants, retrieve information that was not captured on tape, and return to my initial reactions, thoughts, questions and reflections on my interactions with the women I interviewed.

### Research Ethics Board Considerations

As discussed earlier, feminist methodology involves ethical concerns not posed in traditional research. Nonetheless, it remains that the conventional ethical considerations had to be respected. Given that my research involved human subjects, I was required to submit an application for ethical review by the Research Ethics Board (REB) at the University of Ottawa. The Social Sciences and Humanities REB granted final approval for the project in November 2001. The ethical considerations involved with the REB's review will be discussed.

Participation in this research was completely voluntary and research subjects were entirely free to withdraw from participation at any time. Given the sensitive nature of information shared during the interviews, and given the criminalized nature of the activities of sex workers, research subjects were expected to be reticent to sign a consent form, especially with their 'real' name. Following discussions with my contacts at Maggie's and SWAT (who were both familiar with research involving sex workers), I opted to present interview subjects with a consent information sheet outlining all necessary information (see

Appendix E), and to obtain tape-recorded verbal consent from interview subjects (see Appendix F).

The anonymity of research participants was strictly respected throughout the project. All names and identifiable information were withheld and research subjects were asked to choose a pseudonym by which they would be referred to in research materials (even in the original tape recording of the interviews and field notes) and publications. Other identifiable information shared during the interview was withheld during the transcription. It is worth mentioning that three participants insisted that their real names be used in research materials -- I acquiesced but omitted their last names. Interestingly, these three participants are involved in sex worker activism, in Toronto. These activists were adamant about maintaining their identity in the research process, indicating their belief that they did not require nor desire any protection.

Tape recordings of interviews and other data collected were kept in a secure manner in my home and only my advisor and myself have had access to the information. The tape recordings were erased as soon as it was possible, and transcription data (without names or identifiable information) will be kept for five to 10 years after the time of publication.

In evaluating the risks posed to participants, it was concluded that even though the activity dealt mostly with professional information, it could potentially cause subjects some emotional discomfort, due to the nature of sex work and possible experiences of violence and social stigma. Since anonymity and confidentiality were strictly respected, research subjects did not face legal risks by participating in the research. Every effort was made to minimise occurrences of emotional discomfort. The interviews took place in a private

location of the subject's choosing and subjects were informed that they could decline at any time to answer questions that made them uncomfortable. Research subjects were also free to withdraw from the project at any time, before or during an interview. Moreover, as a trained crisis counsellor for survivors of sexual violence, I believe that I possessed the required skills and experience to identify situations of discomfort for subjects, and made a list of resources available to participants.

Of course, as noted earlier, the careful consideration of issues surrounding these conventional ethics issues (free and informed consent of participants, potential risks, anonymity, and confidentiality) was paramount in this research, but not sufficient within a framework of feminist methodology. As such, additional ethical considerations were reflected upon, as mentioned earlier in the chapter.

### Transcription and Analysis

As previously stated, the interviews were tape-recorded. Subsequently, I transcribed the recordings verbatim, using word processing software. The transcripts are an average length of 24 single-spaced pages or 12,000 words. The resulting transcripts are detailed and there were no modifications of words or sentences. Frequent utterances such as 'um' or 'uh' were also included and preserved during the analysis. The quotations utilized in the final product that is this document have not been modified, as I believe that my participants recounted their feelings and experiences eloquently and clearly, and I would have done them no favour by altering their words and thus adding an extra layer of interpretation to the exercise.

Once the interviews were all transcribed, the documents were imported into QSR NVivo (qualitative data analysis software). The software facilitated the analytical process by helping me sort, organize, and store the data. I proceeded to qualitative content analysis, inspired by grounded theory, a methodology developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 9). As explain Strauss & Corbin, "In speaking about qualitative analysis, we are referring [...] to a nonmathematical process of interpretation, carried out for the purpose of discovering concepts and relationships in raw data and then organizing these into a theoretical explanatory scheme." (1998: 11)

In this qualitative content analysis (of interviews), I slowly broke down the data into themes (categories), and those were in turn broken down further into sub-themes (somewhat like a tree structure). Loosely following the approach of grounded theory, a *combination* of deduction and induction generated the list of themes utilised in the analysis. (Berg, 2001: 245) With deduction, researchers utilise predetermined categories, which can be inspired by the theoretical approach or previous research, for example. With induction, themes are identified through the researcher's immersion in the data and her search for "dimensions or *themes* that seem meaningful to the producers of each message." (Berg, 2001: 245) Themes therefore emerged for me while working on the literature review, developing the interview schedule, interviewing participants, transcribing recordings, and during actual coding and data analysis.

Each theme and sub-theme (both those inductively and deductively identified) was designated by a code (key word or label) and all segments of data judged to relate to a theme or sub-theme were marked by the code (in QSR NVivo) and thus related to all other segments associated with the same category. I understood this coding process as a way

to manage and subsequently make sense of a large amount of qualitative data -- by associating elements that relate to one another according to a consistent logic.

Again following the principles of grounded theory, two types of coding were performed: open coding, and axial coding. Berg states that the central purpose of open coding "is to open inquiry widely." (Berg, 2001: 251) I saw the open coding period as one where I would examine interviews in their entirety with predetermined categories in mind and creating new categories as required. Axial coding, which "consists of intensive coding around one category" (Berg, 2001: 253), was the subsequent step. "In axial coding categories are related to their subcategories to form more precise and complete explanations about phenomena." (Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 124) Strauss & Corbin explain that:

*Phenomenon* [...] is a term that answers to the question "What is going on here?" In looking for phenomena, we are looking for repeated patterns of happenings, events, or actions/interactions that represent what people do or say, alone or together, in response to the problems and situations in which they find themselves. (1998: 130)

I ended up with nine major themes -- clientele, solicitation, type of contract, price, location, boundaries, transaction, interaction, and bad dates -- all but one of which I retained for the duration of the analysis. I therefore examined, one by one, the nine major themes (both predetermined and those that had emerged during the open coding), scrutinizing all of the associated passages, as a unit, in order to make internal sense of the particular category, and consequently identifying sub-themes. Late in the process, I decided to drop the theme entitled "interaction". Within this code I had gathered participants' references to issues such as 'setting the tone' and the duration of an encounter with a client and controlling the encounter. While the contents of this category were pertinent and interesting, I found that the category was large, diffuse and unfocused. I also found that much of its contents were

already being addressed under other themes, such as solicitation, location and boundaries.

In the following chapter, after a brief overview of Canadian prostitution laws, I will present my findings on the eight themes that were retained, contextualizing my research results in the empirical literature of micro-practices within sex work.

## CHAPTER THREE: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I will present and discuss the research project's findings. I will begin with a brief overview of Canadian prostitution laws. Sections 210 (Bawdy-houses) and 213 (Communication) of the Canadian Criminal Code will primarily retain our attention. I will then present the findings from my interviews with 12 sex workers in Ottawa and Toronto. The findings and analysis are organized in eight sections, which correspond to eight dimensions surrounding the sex worker/client interaction: "Establishing the Makeup of the Clientele", "Soliciting Custom", "Entering into a Contract", "Naming the Price", "Situating the Act", "Laying the Boundaries", "Getting Paid" and "Coping with Bad Dates." I will discuss my findings on these issues and follow this data description with a discussion, anchoring my results in the literature.

### 3.1 LEGAL CONTEXT: Brief Overview of Canadian Prostitution Laws

In 1985, major changes were made to criminal laws surrounding prostitution in Canada. As the Criminal Code presently stands, we are essentially in a system of criminalization -- although interestingly it is not the act of prostitution per se (i.e., a cash-for-sexual-service exchange) that is criminalized, but rather the activities surrounding prostitution. These activities include soliciting, communicating for the purposes of prostitution and procuring. Lowman argues that the goal of Canadian prostitution laws is unclear: while the objective is not the prohibition of prostitution, the political rhetoric remains abolitionist (1998: 1-2). Brock agrees, adding that the implicit goal appears to be to control the trade and make it as invisible as possible (1998: 7).

The illegality surrounding sex work further marginalizes an already marginalized population. It has been argued, for example, that the criminalized nature of sex work empowers “more powerful males”, such as pimps, managers and police officers. (Brock, 1998: 8) It has As Brock explains, “Anyone who is labelled a social outcast is going to be susceptible to those who are more powerful, and legal control only reinforces and exacerbates prostitutes’ vulnerability.” (1998: 17)

The general legal context has specific implications for sex workers’ practices surrounding the prostitute-client exchange, and these repercussions will be considered here briefly. I will accomplish this by presenting a quick overview of the Canadian prostitution laws, in particular the “legislation which most directly affects a woman’s ability to work -- soliciting and bawdy-house laws” (Brock, 1998: 9), and discussing the implications of a criminalized context when sex workers are victimized by men posing as clients.

Canadian Criminal Code provisions relating to sex work can be found in full in Appendix B. The most common prostitution-related offences are found in sections 210, 212, and 213 of the Criminal Code (in Part VII, Disorderly Houses, Gaming and Betting), but only sections 210 (Bawdy-houses) and 213 (Communication) will retain our interest here<sup>5</sup>.

First, let us consider bawdy-house legislation. A common bawdy-house is a place that is kept, occupied or resorted to by at least one person “for the purpose of prostitution or the practice of acts of indecency” (s. 197. (1)). It contravenes the Criminal Code (s. 210) to “keep” a common bawdy-house, to be an “inmate” of a bawdy-house, to be “found, without

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<sup>5</sup> Section 212 relates to procuring -- commonly referred to as ‘pimping’. Given that all participants in the present study operate independently of third parties, this section of the legislation will not be examined.

lawful excuse" in a bawdy-house or to "knowingly permit" a place to be used as a bawdy-house. Section 210 thus applies to managers, sex workers, clients and owners alike. The bawdy-house law in Canada generally applies to massage parlours, body-rub parlours, independent operations in houses or apartments, and sometimes to hotels (or similar establishments), when these are routinely used for prostitution activities.

When enforced, the Canadian bawdy-house legislation has the effect of pushing women to work on the street -- an arrangement which research has shown to be more dangerous than working inside (Lowman, 1995: section 13; Brock, 1998: 43). If the laws allow for no indoor spaces for sex work, then women will continue to work on the street where they are more visible and subject to more danger. The danger in question can be in the form of harassment or violence at the hands of abusive clients, but also of others such as police and passers-by.

This leads us, then, to the Communication Law. Under section 213 of the Canadian Criminal Code, it is illegal to communicate or attempt to communicate -- in public -- with any person "for the purpose of engaging in prostitution or of obtaining the sexual services of a prostitute". The law thus prohibits "public offers to purchase sexual services as well as offers to provide them." (Lowman, 1998: 7) The law thus appears to be conceptualizing street solicitation as a 'nuisance' requiring 'eradication'. While rendering prostitution invisible has not been put forth as an explicit goal of the government in its adoption of the communication law, a critical feminist reading of the legislation indicates that it may indeed be an implicit objective (Lowman, 1998: 4, 13; Brock, 1998: 58). As street-level sex work is the most noticeable, the communication law is applied mostly to this form of the trade.

What are some of the repercussions of the communication law on the sex worker-client exchange? In short, “[t]he communicating law has made street prostitution more dangerous,” states Lowman, who has carried out studies on violence against sex workers in British Columbia (1998: 1). There is basically a tradeoff, for street workers, between legal peril and personal vulnerability. Four negative perverse side-effects of the criminal laws are particularly noteworthy -- all four contributing to an unsafe work environment for street workers and thus increasing the dangers faced by women on the street. There is reason to believe, first, that as a consequence of the communication law, sex workers are less likely to want to work in groups (using the buddy system, a safety strategy which will be discussed further in section 3.2). In order to be less noticeable, women opt to work individually, instead of with others who could “take note of the license plate numbers of car dates, so that the customer is made aware that someone else knows whom the woman is with.” (Brock, 1998: 81) Second, as a consequence of the communication law, sex workers are being pushed away from populated neighbourhoods, in favour of poorly lit industrial areas -- migrating in order to minimise their visibility and thus their legal vulnerability. Thirdly, research indicates that such a law, prohibiting communication for the purpose of prostitution, encourages sex workers to negotiate very quickly with potential clients and to ultimately make rash decisions as to client selection in the solicitation process (Brock, 1998: 81). In particular, section 213 of the Criminal Code targets communication “in a public place”, which includes “any motor vehicle located in a public place or in any place open to public view”. With such an understanding/conception of the distinction between private and public space, sex workers may feel compelled to drive away with a stranger quickly to avoid detection by law enforcement. Fourthly, we can point to a discursive negative repercussion of the prostitution laws. With the criminalization of the activities of sex workers, they may be treated with greater disregard: “Valerie Scott [a prostitutes’

rights activist] asserted that prostitutes were now more frequently abused by customers and others on the streets, because the law symbolically conveyed the message that prostitutes were no good." (Brock, 1998: 81) This is supported by John Lowman (1995), who points to an increase in violence against sex workers after 1985 (the year in which the communication law came into effect).

In attempting to understand why the prostitution laws would have the side-effects noted above, an analytical, feminist interpretation could point to an unacknowledged or underlying goal within the communication law of rendering sex work as invisible as possible. While this may be an interpretation, it may not be much of a stretch, as the same type of assertion was put forth in Statistics Canada's Juristat report, "Street Prostitution in Canada", where it was stated that "The purpose of the communication law, which remains in force today, is to maintain public order by making prostitution less visible, and therefore less of a nuisance, to the general public." (Duchesne, 1997: 2)

Finally, let us consider the case of crimes committed against sex workers, and the recourse provided by the legal framework. It is certainly not unheard of for women to be victimised within the context of sex work (by clients, would-be clients, pimps and even police). Up until now, I have presented the legal system as being fundamentally constraining for sex workers -- but it could be argued that in the case of crimes committed against sex workers, victims could turn to the legal system for assistance or protection -- in particular, mobilizing the Criminal Code as a recourse. The law could thus be seen as an enabling structure for sex workers. While this is possible in theory, such is not the case in practice. In fact, when sex workers are victimised, they are unlikely to turn to the police for assistance, fearing reprisals, given the criminalized nature of their work. Sex workers are

reported to experience various problems in making use of the legal system as victims of crime. For example, it is reported that police are not always willing to press charges when sex workers are physically or sexually assaulted (see Maggie's, 1995: 25). Even when a sex worker does not encounter problems in reporting a crime to police, there are other issues to consider. As states a booklet for sex workers: "You can't press charges without also dealing with any outstanding charges against you." (Maggie's, 1995: 24) Brock concurs: "It is difficult for [sex workers] to call the police when something goes wrong; to do so would be to expose themselves to criminal charges for the work that they do." (Brock, 1998: 21) Furthermore, if a crime is reported and charges are laid, this same booklet, developed by and for sex workers, adds, "And in the end, someone who assaulted you might still get off, or get a very light sentence, because you work as a stripper or a prostitute." (Maggie's, 1995: 25) As explains Brock, "The criminalization of their work makes prostitution potentially dangerous, and prostitutes must provide their own defence, since they cannot rely on the law or the police to do this for them." (1998: 21) And thus, there are difficulties in mobilizing the criminal code and the legal system in general by and in favour of sex workers when they are victimized: in the reporting of a crime, the laying of charges, and the assignment of retribution to perpetrators.

Thus, the Canadian Criminal Code appears to be overwhelmingly a constraining structure for sex workers, in practices surrounding the prostitute-client exchange. It should be highlighted, however, that state power is not unified. The impact of laws depends also on police enforcement practices and interpretations of criminal code legislation. Additionally, provinces, territories and municipalities can exert regional and local power with provincial and local legislation affecting sex work. It would appear, though, that Brock is justified when she states: "Criminalization [...] does not 'protect' women and young people from

violence and coercion, but instead mandates regulatory strategies that may increase their vulnerability” (1998: 139).

### **3.2 FINDINGS: 8 Dimensions of the Sex Worker/Client Exchange**

#### **3.2.1 Establishing the Makeup of the Clientele**

In this following section, I will first describe the content of my data on the theme surrounding the composition of the clientele. I will follow that with an analytical discussion of my findings, finally placing these results in the context of related research. Four issues emerged under the theme of the ‘composition of clientele’ and will be considered and described here: client description/who is a typical client, the question of ‘regulars’, characteristics of desirable clients, and characteristics of undesirable clients.

##### Typical Clients

There were some differences in the way the 12 participants described their *typical* clientele. In terms of age, participants explained that there is great variation, although they indicated that the typical client is generally a middle-aged family man. There was also a great variety amongst clients in terms of social class. Although two participants claimed that their clients are mostly ‘businessmen’, Marsha’s comment is illustrative of most participants’ descriptions of clients: “Oh, I took a guy’s virginity, and then I’ve gone out with guys that were almost a hundred, so it varies ... So yeah, my clients always varied, Black, White, socioeconomically they varied, I went from very wealthy to guys with welfare checks.” (Marsha) Furthermore, most sex workers have regular clients, explained Sophie,

who has worked in the industry for a total of 23 years. This proved to be true in the rest of my sample. Out of the 12 participants, only three women (who happened to work at the street level) stated that regulars account for less than half of their business.

### Regular clients

With a regular client base, sex workers may feel that they are minimizing (though not eliminating) risks, in terms of their physical and legal safety, by decreasing the fear of the 'unknown'. They may also feel, as does Kara, that with a regular client base they are better able to secure some sort financial stability:

I'd say about 80% of my clients are regulars, um, that's partly because, I feel secure with regulars, I feel physically secure in terms of my safety, I feel legally secure because I know they're not cops, and then I have a sense of financial security too because I can sort of predict on a weekly basis, you know, who I'm gonna see and for how much.

Anastasia added another dimension to the appeal of the regular client: the sex worker can reap greater reward through her increased knowledge of a particular client and his preferences: "it's easier to do with somebody I've been with before and I know how they are, and what they're like, and what I need to do and how I need to turn myself to be on with them."

### Desirable Clients

What makes a good client? First and foremost, the women I spoke to overwhelmingly preferred to have a regular client base. Beyond the desirability of the regular client, with the sense of security that this provides, a number of interview participants manifested a

preference for the demographic profile of the 'white, middle-aged, married businessman'. Some of the women I interviewed communicated to me a perception that such a client demographic has "a lot to lose" (Anastasia), and thus does not want to get in trouble, hence representing less risk to the sex worker. Dea explains: "They're less risky when they're married because they're afraid to get caught too. Because they're a john, and their name's gonna be published, you know, and they're ashamed, and they may have children, a family, good jobs, you know".

While most interview participants were wary of younger clients, there were two dissenting opinions in the group, one of whom is Candi. Candi explained why young clients were more desirable to her: "I prefer young guys because they come faster, they get excited easier, and they're easier to rob. They'll believe anything you tell them. If you know how to talk. If you know how to con them, like, you know." Overwhelmingly, though, the interview participants disagreed with Candi on this point. Most sex workers I spoke with attempted to avoid or were more guarded around younger clients (18-30 years). This brings us then to consider the characteristics of 'undesirable clients' amongst interview participants.

### Undesirable clients

When I asked participants about undesirable clients, three major characteristics emerged from responses. First, as noted above, interview participants generally disliked entering into sexual contracts with younger men. Young clients are perceived as riskier in terms of the sex worker's personal safety. Sophie explained that she avoided young clients: "Never, never below 35. Because um, I found them to be arrogant and rough, and, I personally could actually be a lot rougher. And, I didn't like to be pushed, that far." In addition,

younger clients may also be perceived as less likely to render payment to the sex worker: "really there's not very many young, young ones that, for myself, [I] would even take on, just because they're stronger, they're younger, and the chances of a twenty-one-year-old having the money, and not having four guys behind the bar waiting, are -- it's just no." (Dea) Anastasia, who does in-call work, runs ads in local papers offering her services, in which she indicates that clients are to be "thirty plus only."

Second, interview participants vehemently stated that they did not want to enter into a situation where there was more than one client at a time. Multiple clients were to be avoided, again, because of safety concerns -- as there is a heightened fear of being overpowered:

I just go one on one and, like I said, if they're gonna bring me to their place, that's the only guy that I want in there, you know, like I'm not gonna go if there's another guy there, or a couple of guys sitting there, you know. No way, because, it's bad enough just one on one sometimes, you know. Having three all at you, you know, then you don't have a chance in hell. (Star)

Finally, the women I interviewed referred to behavioural characteristics, which would make a client undesirable. Sex workers I spoke with generally attempted to avoid clients who were noticeably intoxicated, particularly men who appeared to have consumed a large amount of alcohol, as they were perceived to be more likely to be violent. For example, Sophie, with 23 years of experience in the business, operated as an independent in-call worker out of a house she rented with another woman. There, they hired a doorman, whose responsibility it was to enforce the house policy against admitting intoxicated clients. The sex workers I spoke to also noted, understandably, that they wished to avoid men who seemed disrespectful, aggressive and authoritative. I asked Sarah what kind of behaviour on the part of a client she wanted to avoid, and she responded: "Aggressive,

insulting, uh, you know, 'I want this da-da-da and you're gonna do this da-da-da for this amount da-da-da' and I go 'Yeah, da-da-da', the car stops and I'm out of the car."

### Discussion

There is an emerging pattern in this theme 'Makeup of the clientele': women take an active role in determining whom they will enter into a sexual-economic exchange with, but they do so to varying degrees. Particularly telling is the understanding that was generated in the findings about what makes a desirable client (a regular customer, someone who is established, the demographic of the 'white, middle-aged business man with a family') and what constitutes an undesirable client (a young man, multiple clients, someone intoxicated, or exhibiting aggressive behaviour). This is telling first because we can easily discern some reflexive action taking place and second because what women determine is desirable or undesirable in a client is the information that she has the potential to act on strategically. Some participants take strategic action on this front, by encouraging desirable clients and avoiding undesirable clients, which will be discussed more in section 3.2.2 (entitled "Soliciting Custom").

The women in my sample appear to be making decisions about their best interests based on their evaluation of the situation. They appear to be actively looking to minimize risk and maximize rewards. Of course, the specific characteristics described varied somewhat amongst the interview participants, depending on their evaluation of who is likely to result in a safe and advantageous exchange.

One important element that emerged from the women's descriptions of 'desirable' clients is that they overwhelmingly manifested a preference for entering into sexual economic exchanges with regular custom. Regulars are considered desirable because they represent a certain physical, legal and financial 'security'. If there has been previous interaction with a particular client, the sex worker can use this to decide whether she wishes to enter into a contract with this client again. She may have reason to believe that the client will not be violent with her if he has not been so in the past<sup>6</sup>. She may have reason to believe that the client is not an undercover police officer if he has frequented her repeatedly<sup>7</sup>. She may also be able to better judge what revenues she is likely to generate if she knows what clients will call upon her services at what interval.

A second important element that emerged from the women's explanation of what constitutes a desirable client is the interviewees' preference for the demographic of the 'white middle-aged married businessman'. This preference appears to be based at least somewhat on the 'respectability' and 'stability' this demographic is perceived to be associated with. We can argue that some of the women are actively playing on this so-called respectability of certain clients, knowing that men who are well established in the community and within their families do not want to have revealed that they are paying for sex. They risk losing much if they are not diligently avoiding criminal repercussion and respecting the boundaries of the sex worker (this issue will be examined in depth in

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6 Of course this could be a false sense of security, since we know that individuals known to the victim, for example, perpetrate most sexual assaults.

7 Here again, she could be mistaken in her assumption. It would appear that under section 210 of the Canadian Criminal Code, a location must be used regularly to be considered a bawdy-house. One woman I interviewed explained to me that undercover police officers sometimes receive services and return later to lay criminal charges. Over a four-day period, Kara explains that "Three undercover cops came in, and took services, um, and then returned, and uh, charged me with keeping a common bawdy-house, and some related charges." She adds: "they have to show that a place is used regularly for it to qualify as a bawdy house, so it has to be, at least two separate incidents. Um, and I've certainly heard cases, and this is really nasty, of the cops sending one officer in multiple times, so then of course the girl gets to trust him."

section 3.2.6 entitled "Laying the Boundaries"). This preference for 'white' clients also reflects wider social stereotypes about race, sexuality and criminality.

On the flip side, the women who participated in this study were asked about undesirable clients, or clients they wished to avoid. They generally attempt to avoid young men, multiple partners, and men exhibiting intoxication or aggressive behaviour. By and large, the fact that the women I spoke with wished to avoid these groups of clients points to a desire to maximize their chances of remaining in control of the interaction with clients.

What we see here, then, through a consideration of a participants' descriptions of 'typical' clients, as well as 'desirable' clients -- including the notion of 'regulars' -- and 'undesirable' clients, is that there is strategic reflection on the part of sex workers, on the topic of the constitution of clientele, and that there is or can be some level of strategic action taking place in this regard. Generally the women I spoke with were active [rather than passive] in the client selection process, with the objective of minimizing risks and maximizing rewards. More examples of strategic action will be discussed in the following section (3.2.2), when we consider the activity of "Soliciting Custom."

The theme of the constitution of the clientele was present in the literature on sex workers' professional practices. For example, subjects in Thukral, Ditmore & Horowitz's New York study were said to employ safety precautions in their work, such as a preference for "obtaining people previously known to them as customers" -- referred to as "steadies." (2003: 46)

Jody Miller (1993) conducted a case study of 16 street prostitutes in the U.S. She likewise noted that the participants in her study made an attempt to select 'safer' clients, stating "the women I spoke with tried -- to the extent possible given their need for money or their need for drugs at the time, both of which varied from woman to woman and encounter to encounter -- to be selective about the men they dated." (1993: 428) Towards such a goal, the women Miller interviewed employed the strategy of considering clients' demographics, as I also found: "Many times, tricks' demographics were drawn upon in deciding which ones to date." (1993: 430) Similarly to the women in my study, the women Miller interviewed reportedly preferred entering into contracts with "older men and white men" rather than "younger and/or African American men." (1993: 430) Miller found that amongst the women in her sample, older men "were perceived as less likely to pull something, and they also posed less physical threat." (1993: 430) This concurs with my findings, although I would also add that older men were perceived as more likely to be able to render payment. Miller also found that "When race was called upon to characterize clients, it often involved the use of widespread cultural stereotypes about African American men, sexuality and violence." (1993: 4320) The women in Miller's study therefore made certain decisions about client selection, but the author cautions: "Some women could afford to be more choosy than others depending on their economic situation and whether they were addicted to drugs." (1993: 430)

In a review of qualitative studies on sex work focused on the U.K. and Australia, Brewis & Linstead present a typology of clients emerging from the research, amongst which they identify 'undesirables' and 'easy trades': "*Undesirables* are those the workers would prefer not to service, including violent, dirty or obese types, and those who try to break the safe sex rules of the encounter." (2000a: 90) The term 'easy trade' refers to highly desirable

clients, clients “who are clean, gentlemanly, come quickly or only want non-penetrative sex, pay and go.” (Brewis & Linstead, 2000a: 91) Other types of clients identified are ‘romantics’, ‘marrieds’, ‘sugar daddies’ and ‘heaven trade’.

### **3.2.2 Soliciting Custom**

Solicitation refers to the practice or act of propositioning someone for the exchange of sexual relations for money. Solicitation can refer to the actions of a sex worker or client. Within the context of the Canadian Criminal Code, street solicitation is specifically prohibited (as communication for the purposes of engaging in prostitution or of obtaining the sexual services of a prostitute, s. 213 (1)). Likewise, in other sex work arrangements, such as in-call settings, solicitation is also risky as it may be used as evidence and lead to charges under bawdy-house laws (s. 210).

In this section, I will present the information participants relayed to me about the initial contact with a potential client. I have divided the data description between in-call workers and street workers, as the solicitation techniques differ greatly along those lines. I will follow this description with a discussion.

#### In-Call Workers: “Your Phone Is Your Crystal Ball”

Of the four in-call workers I spoke to, Anastasia and Kara operate by placing ads (in local weekly papers or on voice mail services) in which they invite clients to call them. The other two, BottomsUp and Sophie, operate primarily by repeat business -- they have no ads, but rather have a regular client base that calls them directly to solicit their services. In all

cases, the telephone is the central element of solicitation for in-call sex workers. BottomsUp states that she also generates business when required by passing out her telephone number or by word of mouth:

And uh, I've had a few clientele that introduce me to their friends, which makes it a lot easier. Like I, if I think I'm getting a little low on clientele I just ask, um, either a couple of my girlfriends ... 'Do you know anybody that could give me a call, here's my number'. Or if I see someone going along the street that's already approached a girl, and, just say he turns around the corner here, I'll just go up and say 'Well if you want to go out give me a call. That's my name, just tell me who you are on the phone.'

Kara explains her solicitation technique:

So I have ads out in the erotic massage categories of different newspapers, or um, voice mail services but, I do indicate in my ads and when I speak to clients that, um, I offer a full range of services ... So, even though massage is a central part of my work, um, and that's how I draw clients, I do offer a little bit more than that.

Kara provides clients with her address when she's on the telephone with them. She prefers to discuss prices and services over the telephone, prior to an in-person encounter with a client, stating:

Over the phone, it's typically pretty cut and dried. I have a pre-recorded message that lets people know that I offer the massage, that my basic fee is \$100, that you know at this point it says I'm offering topless massage and oral release and that, you know, in the past I've said you know there's been a full spectrum of services. So usually when guys call they're just wanting to figure out when they can book, my address, and maybe a specific question, maybe a question, maybe a question like 'do you offer full service' or you know 'how much is it for, I don't know, a topless massage', but usually it's pretty cut and dried, unless somebody phones up with an unusual request like a fetish or what have you.

Anastasia also has ads in the erotic section of local publications in which she lists sexual and domination services. This is arguably a screening technique to avoid arrest by undercover police officers:

In my ads, there's all the services that a dom would perform which is domination, strap-on, role-playing, fetishes, fantasy -- that's what's in my ad. And cross-dressing ... And I figure because I list those services [laugh] cops are less likely to want to show up here and, you know, because they think I might dress them up like a girl and fuck them up the ass, so ... And I mean off-duty I'm sure there's a few of them who would, like, get into that.

Anastasia solicits only over the telephone. Potential clients will see her ads and will call her, inquiring about services and prices. Moreover, Anastasia explains that after seeing her ad: "when they call and they book an appointment, unless they're a regular, they don't come and buzz me downstairs, they have to go to the payphone. So, I face south, I face the six payphones, I have a set of binoculars, so I can check people out." Arrangements are made on the telephone -- she strictly refuses to discuss prices and services in person in her apartment. Interestingly, when I visited Anastasia's apartment for our interview, I noticed a sign on the front door which read, "No soliciting."

If they start asking me how much for what, I would say 'Go back to the payphone', so I never have anybody do that. They might go 'How much is it again?' and I don't say anything, I wait for them to say something and I'll go 'Uh-huh.' And then I'll just take the money, because that's what cops try to do, they try to play the game, say they came for a massage, you offered them more, and they want you to quote prices and stuff like that. The CRTC has deemed the phone lines private so you do all your talking on the phone. That's the way I've been schooled and taught. (Anastasia)

For Anastasia and Kara, who generate business by placing ads, their call-display telephone is a useful tool for screening clients during the solicitation process. Anastasia

explained to me that there is “a whole little code with your phone, and how you’re supposed to use your phone” amongst sex workers. She expanded on this:

Yeah, but [police] usually call from a certain number, that’s another thing, your phone is like your crystal ball. You know, we all have name display and number display, and um, you know, people block their numbers, you tell them they have to call you back with their numbers unblocked. Unknown name, unknown numbers is usually um, the police, if they’re calling from a division or headquarters, but they can also call private suppressed number, I’ve seen that come up too, when they call from divisions.  
(Anastasia)

Kara echoes these comments, adding that she often finds she is balancing issues of personal and legal safety.

I try, for example, only to return phone calls, uh, instead of picking up the phone ... I also particularly don’t pick up the phone if it reads ‘unknown number’ or ‘payphone’. Um, but even then that’s not guaranteed, and you know, I sort of, sort of flip-flop between being concerned about legal issues and concerned about personal safety, and so if, for some reason I’m concerned about being busted ... I’ll you know, try to return calls and pick up calls where it’s clearly from a business, and maybe from a business that I know, so if it pops up on my screen like you know ‘Toronto Board of Education’, or [laugh] you know ‘Ontario Government’, I think ‘Ok, probably safe’. But the interesting thing is that when I do that, because I think they’re probably not a cop, I actually don’t know who the guy is, so then I’m jeopardising my personal safety as opposed to, when you have a first and last name on your call display, and, you know, unless he’s calling from a friend’s place, chances are that’s really the guy and you have a way of tracing him if something goes wrong, but, that could also be a cop. So that’s a big tradeoff. Yeah. What I tend to do now is I tend to put a little bit more money into advertising. Because that way I can afford to only respond to guys who leave me their names and their numbers.

### Soliciting on the Street: "Walk, Wave and Be Wary"

By definition, street workers solicit custom on the street. Like in-call workers, they are deeply concerned about undercover police posing as clients and this is reflected in their solicitation techniques. The issue of personal safety is also at the forefront during the initial interaction with clients (and it remains so throughout the duration of interaction). How does street solicitation work? What happens during the initial interaction where the parties will proposition the exchange of sexual relations for money?

In my interviews, I asked the eight women who generally solicit on the street to help me understand how they establish contact with clients. Four women told me about how they dress to go out to work. Two of them explained that they like to "dress just normal" (Marie), whereas two other women explained that they go to great lengths to attract clients using their attire. When I interviewed Candi in her living room, she told me about her work wear: "I dress up really slutty so I get picked up quick. Like I wear my fur coat, pussy shorts that go like up my butt." She then went into her bedroom, retrieving examples of work attire: frayed jean shorts, a frayed jean skirt and a very short tight black patent leather dress. Likewise, Marsha referred, in her discussion with me, to her work "uniform", explaining:

Well, I put my ho gear, I mean -- I always wore wigs and hairpieces, and, oh yeah, my nails were always done and I always wore beautiful clothes. But I never wore dresses, I always wear um, pants with cowboy boots and a trench coat -- but I always had something low cut. Well, I did wear dresses, but not often. I always wore low cut with my cleavage exposed. And I also wore really long wigs.

Marsha also told me about some cold weather wardrobe tactics she utilized for street solicitation:

And uh, they taught me tricks on how to look like you're half naked when you're not, in winter time. Like, wearing sweaters that are just on your back. Because my assets are my breasts, and I wear my cleavage exposed even in forty below zero weather. So there's little tricks on how to put a sweater on and then pull it up over the back so that it's just on your back and then you put your coat on. Just ways of dressing that maybe a normal woman wouldn't think of, little tricks that make your boobs look larger, your legs look thinner or, just how to accentuate what your assets are.

Once dressed (or not) for the occasion, some street workers may opt to work collaboratively with other women. Two of the women I spoke to related to me their preference for soliciting in pairs or working collaboratively. This is a strategy put in use by some sex workers in order to maximize personal safety. Dea explains: "You develop a closeness on the street, yeah, after midnight even if you, like kill each other during the day, you know what I mean, at night time, after midnight, you just, you don't know. You just don't know what's gonna happen. It's dark." She continues: "like you got two, and one's watching what car you got in, and then the other one waits. And if the other one gets picked up then you go but you make sure you go right back to that stop and you make it as quick as possible." (Dea) Marsha tells of a similar practice, when I ask her about taking clients' licence plate numbers down: "Back in the day when that's what I did for a living, that was my profession, or my whatever, uh yeah, I took down license plates of my girlfriends, they took down license plates for me." (Marsha) She explains further:

not anymore so much in Ottawa but, several years ago, there could be twenty thirty girls down by Mellows [ByWard Market area] working. So I mean, somebody's always seeing you get into somebody's car, and somebody will always remember what kind of car it was or what colour it was or, that sort of thing. Yeah, there is a, the prostitutes tend to -- now I don't know about low track and middle track, but I know on high track they work together. (Marsha)

A 'track' or a 'stroll' is a geographical area where sex workers congregate to solicit custom. Crossroads Outreach's (Edmonton, Alberta) "Street Glossary" notes that "Usually there is

a distinction between "high track" & "low track" based mainly on how much money can usually be charged for various types of sexual services." (2003) 'High track' thus implies that higher fees are charged, and also *may* often imply pimp participation.

Another element that many of the street workers I spoke to told me about was the practice of walking while soliciting. Women choose to walk rather than stand in one place so that their solicitation is more subtle, and less easily perceived by police or onlookers. One woman explained: "I know other girls who work the streets, and stay in one spot and they kind of, you know, it's obvious, it's open." (Pauline) Interestingly, many of the women seemed to think that walking around was not a common practice, affirming in a few cases "I don't work like other girls." (Sarah) I wanted to better understand how potential clients would know that the women were working. Waving at cars seems to be common practice, as does simply walking continuously in one area, so that potential clients who are circling the block will understand. Candi describes her practice:

Walk while you work. Don't just stand there. Walk. Wave at the cars, you know, wink at them, call them over, you know? A lot of guys, they'll drive by and they'll go like this [pointing], and that means across King Edward, and then you watch them go down Rideau and they turn down Rideau and they go down Nelson, they go around. And then you see them over on the other side, they flash the lights. And then you go across. Because a lot of guys are scared to pick girls up on the market.

Marie states:

Me, I walk. I, you'll see me on Bronson, then the next time, the next thing you'll see me on Somerset, you know, I'm just everywhere. I'm just walking around, and if I get bored, I'll just take a stroll on the block, you know, on the same block, just to, you know, see if anybody notices. A lot of times the guys will go around and around and around just to double-check it.

Sarah explains: "You don't even know I'm working because, I don't go up to cars. Like I'll be there or whatever, I walk. Continuously walk. A person wants, a client wants to see me, you know, um, he'll let me know that he wants to see me."

Once a potential client pulls up, the face-to-face interaction begins. The street workers I spoke to clearly indicated that this is a crucial moment of the interaction. They related in great detail the process of making quick assessments of a potential client, attempting to discern whether a 'john' might turn out to be a 'bad date' or an undercover police officer.

A 'bad date' refers to a client who physically or sexually assaults a worker or otherwise causes her harm (i.e., stealing from her or withholding payment). 'Bad date sheets' or 'bad call lists' refer to databases of descriptions of violent men who pose as clients. These databases may be kept by sex worker organizations or other community groups. Bad date lists are then compiled, updated and produced as leaflets or more recently also on websites. On the street, bad date information can be collected when the lists are distributed and information is thus shared (both ways). Sex workers may also report bad dates to a certain location<sup>8</sup>. Sex workers may also call in bad date information. This is the typical mode of reporting violent men for sex workers who book clients over the telephone. (Sorfleet, 1995) A number of the women I spoke to mentioned bad date lists as a work tool: its use consists in a screening strategy<sup>9</sup>. By consulting a bad date sheet, workers can try to avoid dangerous clients. I asked Marsha if it's part of her practice to consult bad date lists:

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<sup>8</sup> In Ottawa, street workers may report bad dates to the 'Site van'. The Site Program, a municipally funded initiative, exchanges new needles for used needles and distributes free condoms, provides testing for STDs, offers short-term counseling, as well as referrals to health and community agencies and treatment centers. The van is the program's mobile unit. (City of Ottawa, 2003).

<sup>9</sup> I argue later that reporting crimes to bad date lists constitutes a sort of recourse strategy, complementary to, or used in place of reporting a crime to law enforcement (see section 3.2.8).

Um, yeah always ... Well, see a lot of the girls that work now, they say girls that work now in Vanier, uh, they don't know how to work, nobody ever taught them properly. So, they don't carry bad date lists, they don't tell each other about bad dates, but um, downtown by Mellows and stuff, there's like a little network and, and they uh, tell each other bad date license plates, they give descriptions, they phone Site.

*So girls help each other out then.*

Oh yes, yes. Even if you don't like the girl, and you don't like the girl's man, or something, you don't let another girl go with a bad date.

Beyond the use of bad date lists by some workers, overall, the women told me that they use the critical first minutes after the potential client pulls up to suss out whether he might be bad news, a threat to her personal safety. The women I interviewed who work on the street told me that they use their 'instincts' and are vigilant in attempting to determine if a client might turn out to be a bad date. They may look clients in the eye and have a discussion, picking up on subtle cues in the interaction, being attentive to the 'vibes' and their 'instincts'.

For example, Marsha states that "prostitutes are really superstitious, and they're one for their instincts, and if there's something doesn't feel right, you just don't go." She adds: "I always look into their eyes. And if they can't look you in the face, there's something wrong. And that's true to say in any situation. Uh, if somebody can't look you in the eyes, and they're looking like this when they're talking to you, they have something to hide." (Marsha) Sarah states: "when I get in the car I look and stuff 'Hey, how you doing' and this and that. If I sense something ... if I sense that it's not correct, first stop I get out." Pauline explains:

Well I think you look at people you try to pick up on, um, you know um, the way they interact with you, in the sense that ... are they reasonable ... are they really sort of agitated, are they really insistent about pushing things on you, you know, that sort of thing.

So if you can really just develop a, like a conversation with him, and you can read off that. And when you don't get a good vibe from someone then you just simply say um, 'I'm not interested'.

Some of the women I interviewed told me that they discretely look over the vehicle for clues of a threat to their person. Marsha tells me what she looks out for: "no door handle on your side of the door" as well as "windows that won't go down" and a "license plate [that's] hard to read". Candi stresses:

You always look what he's got on the floor by his feet, you look by the car, you know, the door, to see if he's got any knives sticking out, you know, you just glance in the back, you know, see if he's got anything lying around that he could and might hurt you with ... you try to see if there's a childproof lock, you know, it's kind of hard to see that sometimes, you really gotta get in there. You just look around and you just use your vibe, you know? I have that vibe because I've worked for so long, you know, I think it takes like years to develop.

Could he be a cop? In order to determine this, the women draw upon certain strategies. Some women simply adopt the practice of asking clients if they are police officers. Others, like three of the women I interviewed, explained that they screen out undercover officers by insisting on intimate touching prior an open discussion, asking clients to "prove it" (Marie). Candi explains:

Well, you get in the car, and you drive and you find out if they're a cop or not, you get them to show their dick while you're driving, you grab him, and you say 'Baby let me feel that dick' and you, right in his underwear, don't go over his underwear, over his pants, you've got to go right in his pants.

Similarly, Dea tells me about her practice:

I say 'Are you a cop?' And he says 'No' I say 'Ok, well can you touch me? Prove it.' I go and undo my pants, they touch me. Touch me in a private spot, I don't care if you touch my boobs, touch my crotch, and I have to touch you too. To prove to you I'm

not a cop. Because you can't, cops can't touch, because cops can't touch. They're not supposed to be able to touch. As soon as they touch then they can no longer arrest you. They can't do fucking nothing unless it's a sting or something, you know, it's planned, and then a whole bunch of them have different rules, you know, the same rule, it has to be a click. But as soon as you ask that, ok, so ask him to touch me, and they touch me, and I say 'Ok, you're not a cop. What are you looking for? How can I help you? Are you looking for some fun?'

This 'touch strategy' for screening clients, they believe, will limit the likelihood of arrest under the communication law. Candi adds that clients will sometimes want her to also prove *she* is not an undercover police officer: "a lot of the guys want to grab me. They're like 'I want to make sure you're not a cop'. They're all nervous and they'll grab me, and then I know, they're not cops, because they're grabbing me. But I take my tit right out and I make them touch my skin."

The women I spoke to explained to me that they talk about the specifics -- services and prices -- only once they are satisfied the potential client is unlikely to be an undercover police officer or turn out to be a bad date. The formal solicitation, then, in terms of an overt proposing of the exchange of sexual acts for money, does not generally happen right away, according to the women I interviewed. One woman I met told me she goes even further in her precautions surrounding solicitation. Marsha will pick up clients in Ottawa's ByWard market and instruct them to cross the bridge to Gatineau, Quebec before she talks specifics about prices or services. As police jurisdiction changes by crossing provincial boundaries, she feels that she is protecting herself against arrest. She states: "Ok, so I take that bridge, and then there's a couple parking lots over there. So [...] I'm over the bridge, I feel safe enough to say, 'What do you want, some head? Or do you want to get laid?'"

## Discussion

Women who work in-call and those who work on the street make use of various techniques for establishing a first contact with clients for purposes of solicitation: perhaps by word of mouth or through advertisements, or by waving at cars while walking on the sidewalk. Everyone I spoke to was concerned about and careful around solicitation.

In-call workers are careful to try and screen out undercover police officers during the solicitation process. They may be wary of soliciting in their place of business, and prefer to do it over the telephone for fear of arrest under bawdy-house laws (s. 210 and 211). They may also, like Kara, be balancing issues of legal repercussions and personal safety. O'Connell Davidson, in a study of one independent sex worker whom she considered to be at the 'apex' of the sex work hierarchy, found that Desiree had a great degree of control over all aspects of her business, including solicitation:

Desiree's brothel is based in a private house in a residential area, and does not, therefore, attract passing custom. Because clients have to book an appointment by phone before being given the address, they all receive the receptionist's sales spiel and so have an idea of her general price range. (1993: 91)

This is similar in many ways to the professional practices of two of the in-call workers I interviewed, Kara and Anastasia. I did not find additional references in the literature I reviewed which discussed strategic telephone use (i.e., practices surrounding call display, usually to screen out undercover police).

Street workers are also very much concerned about undercover police and this is reflected in their solicitation techniques. They will generally attempt to suss out if a client is a police

officer before discussing prices or services, a good number of them insisting on intimate touching prior to such a discussion. I only found one explicit reference to this practice in the research I reviewed on sex workers' strategies. In their study with 21 women involved in street-level prostitution in the Midwestern U.S., Williamson & Folaron found that "women who use strategies to assess for the police believe they reduce their chances for arrest." (2003: 277) The authors quote one of their interview participants: "I ask them 'are you police?' I ask them to pull it out and I ask them to touch me. If you have a suspicion that it's a police officer you say, 'well that depends'. You don't never say yes or no answers." (Williamson & Folaron, 2003: 277)

Moreover, street workers are concerned about their personal safety and of course wish to avoid bad dates. Towards this end they may work collaboratively to maximize their safety. This was also reported in a recent study with street workers in New York City. For example, the authors present one participant's contribution:

Mimi described efforts among street-based sex workers to ensure their safety. "Most of the time like, you know, there's this little group of us, you know, and we all make sure we see like who's going with whom, what kind of car they're going into and try to be back at a certain time, back at the same place, you know, or if there's something like it's local, it's like right there, one of the girls goes with me and looks out. (Thukral et al., 2003: 46)

Many of my participants also mentioned using a special knowledge of 'what to look for', as well as their 'sixth sense' or 'instincts' during the initial contact with clients. This is congruent with the findings of other studies. For example, Norton-Hawk, in a study involving 50 interviews with incarcerated female street workers in the U.S., finds:

The women attempt to evaluate the setting: "I am aware of my surroundings;" "I always look in the back seat and check to see if there is another man hiding there;" "I always know where his

hands are;" "I check to make sure there are door and window handles;" and "I make sure the car door is never locked." Decisions about the customer's dangerousness must be made quickly. (2001: 410)

Williamson & Folaron found that "protective strategies used to screen out potentially dangerous dates consist of ritualistic behavior and intuitive assessment of customers." (2003: 277) Brewis and Linstead state: "Both male and female prostitutes also have a series of strategies for establishing the psychological context of the encounter, involving [...] sussing out the client which involves both attracting them, and figuring out what they want and are likely to need" (2000a: 89). The authors add: "This also entails a reading of the body language to anticipate potential problems, a skill which extends into the encounter." (Brewis & Linstead, 2000a: 89) Miller identifies picking up on cues in the individual interaction as a strategy employed by sex workers in client selection. She explains: "For some women, long-time experience on the streets provided them with what they felt was a special knowledge for reading tricks. Other less experienced women sometimes went by instincts, refusing dates with men who gave them bad vibes" (Miller, 1993: 428). Miller explains that sex workers pick 'safer' dates by being attentive to subtle clues within the interaction (1993: 428). Miller did, however, note a certain diversity within her sample: "Younger women and women with less experience as street prostitutes did not discuss their ability to use street knowledge to read clients." (1993: 429) In their Norwegian study involving women who work in a variety of sex work venues, Høigård & Finstad also noted this practice of screening during the initial conversation, stating: "Psychology comes in handy on the street. Several of the women mention this as important if you want to avoid violence." (1992: 60)

Pyett and Warr, in their study involving 24 Australian sex workers, comment that for street workers, “active risk management meant that their working hours were characterised by high levels of stress and vigilance.” (1999: 192) The authors note that for street workers:

Strategies to reduce risk included avoiding cars with more than one man in them, avoiding hire cars or cars with interstate registration plates and finding an opportunity to check inside the car for hidden weapons. Kylie explained how she would take note of a car’s make and colour and devise a rhyme to memorise the number plate. She would check the inside of the car thoroughly, beginning with the door handle to make sure it opened from the inside. (Pyett and Warr, 1999: 192).

Unfortunately, Pyett and Warr note that:

While the value of experience and practice wisdom should not be underestimated, the findings [...] suggest that reliance on ‘gut instinct’ or ‘sixth sense’ is neither reliable nor sufficient as a means of protection from the levels of risk and violence to which street workers are exposed. (1999: 194).

Whether ultimately successful or not, there appears to be a number of strategies that sex workers, both in-call and on the street, put into practice surrounding solicitation in order to maximize their well-being and safety.

### **3.2.3 Entering into a Contract**

I asked interview participants to tell me about their initial conversations with clients, and about how the prostitution contract is negotiated. I was inspired, in this line of questioning, by Julia O’Connell Davidson (1998) who proposes a typology of prostitution contracts, which distinguishes between, on the one hand, informal and diffuse contracts, and on the other, formal and commodified contracts. Informal and diffuse contracts are characterized by a time limit placed on the encounter (O’Connell Davidson, 1998: 10). Formal and

commodified contracts are characterized by a stricter pre-establishment of the specific acts to be performed: where the sex worker/client exchange is “formally arranged along the lines of a closely specified, speedily executed commodity exchange (that is, x sexual service for x amount of money)” (O’Connell Davidson, 1998: 10). In this section, I will describe the content of my interviews with the 12 women who told me their stories on the contract they enter into with clients. I will be using O’Connell Davidson’s (1998) typology to expose the types of contract entered into by the informants in my study. I will follow this with a discussion locating my participants’ remarks in the context of the wider literature on the topic.

#### Contracting on the Basis of Time

In my interviews with participants, I inquired as to the base of the contract (time versus specific services), in order to attempt to ascertain whether participants were engaging in diffuse or commodified contracts. I noticed that a third of participants (four women) opted to enter into contracts on the basis of time. For example, a sex worker may charge a certain fee -- say \$80, in exchange of 30 minutes of her time, with the unsaid implication that sexual service is part of the package. For example, Sarah, who primarily works on the street, states:

I look at them -- I tell them they pay me for my time. Okay? Whatever happens, in that period of time is what happens. Okay? And I keep reminding them. If they hand me money I turn around I say ‘You’re paying me for my time’. Okay, whatever happens, happens. If it does it does, if it don’t it don’t.

Three of the four women<sup>10</sup> who enter into contracts on the basis of time explained that they generally did so in an effort to 'protect' themselves legally, against criminal charges and convictions. By not naming specific services in an explicit manner, there is the perception that police officers will have greater difficulty in laying communicating charges -- or the charges are less likely to 'stick'. Hence, some participants offered clients a time period, during which "whatever happens, happens". (Sophie) She further argues, "It's illegal to sell sex. But it's not illegal to charge for your time". (Sophie) Candi echoes this legal opinion:

Well, you know what, let me tell you something. Prostitution is not illegal. Communicating for the purpose of engaging in prostitution is illegal. So, if you tell him 'I'm gonna charge you \$40 for a blow-job', if that's a cop you are fucking screwed, you are going to jail. If you tell him, 'well, you're kind of cute, maybe we'll get it on, but you gotta to pay me for my time', he cannot arrest you for that.

It should be noted, however, that there was no consensus on this legal implication amongst the 12 women I interviewed. I asked contacts at Toronto Police Services about this issue. A Police Constable (51 division) I spoke with explained that it is a "grey area" in criminal law enforcement and it all depends on the circumstances, the officer, and the judge. The Police Constable stated that generally an undercover officer would attempt to get a sex worker to name both the service and the price. However, it appears certain that the practice of offering only 'time' in exchange for money is not a blanket protection against arrest under the communication law (s. 213 of the Criminal Code -- see Appendix B "Criminal Code Provisions Relating to Prostitution").

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<sup>10</sup> Anastasia, who works in-call and does domination work, is the fourth woman. The motives behind her choice to enter into contracts on the basis of time are unclear.

### Contracting on the Basis of Specific Services

Another considerable portion of participants -- seven out of the total 12 -- preferred to enter into highly commodified contracts. These women entered into contracts on the basis of specific services, providing lists of prices for various acts or activities. For example, for Marie it's "twenty for a hand-job, thirty for a blow-job, eighty for everything." (Marie) Marsha explains what she charges for her services: "Yeah, now, fifty dollars for blow-jobs -- fellatio, a hundred for sex, and a hundred and fifty for a half-and-half. Half-and-half is uh, you start with fellatio and you finish with, uh, a lay. But it's only one orgasm. It's not two."

Let's explore Marsha's case. Marsha reported generally entering into contracts in terms of specific services. Most of her ten years of sex work experience were spent in street work -- more specifically, the high track of street-level sex work. As mentioned earlier (see 3.2.2 Soliciting Custom), a 'track' or a 'stroll' is a geographical area where sex workers congregate to solicit custom, and the high versus low tracks are mainly distinguished by the amounts charged for various services. (Crossroads Outreach, 2003) Marsha, who solicited mostly in high track areas, articulates her practices relating to exchanges with clients around the rules of 'the game', around street codes. The Crossroads Outreach "Street Glossary" notes that "to be in the "life" or in the "game" is to be involved in prostitution" (2003). Williamson & Folaron affirm:

Prostitution is often referred to as 'the game' or 'the lifestyle'. In street level prostitution the term 'game' is often used by pimps to refer to the prostitution business. The term 'lifestyle,' is often used by the prostitutes themselves who must learn to both survive and thrive within the world of street level prostitution. (2003: 276)

I understand 'the game' as the street sex work subculture related to pimping. The game has its distinctive vocabulary and rules. The fundamental rule of the game appears to be that street sex workers need to have a pimp or 'player'<sup>11</sup>. Other 'rules of the game' include such things as the prohibition of anal sex and kissing in prostitution, according to Marsha. Even though she generally contracts in terms of acts (the standard practice in 'the game'), there are some cases where she accepts to contract in terms of time, at the request of clients, since "some guys think they're gonna get a better deal if they pay for time," while others "want to talk to you, they want to get to know you, so they'll book for a half an hour." (Marsha) Nonetheless, so strong are both the street code and her categorical nonsense approach with johns that "he's still getting the same thing as if he booked me for five minutes." (Marsha)

The seven women who enter into contracts on the basis of specific services have a tendency to want to minimize the duration of the encounter. By offering services and not a set time-span, they can 'hurry up', and utilizing their interpersonal and technical skills, complete the encounter as quickly as possible. While some of the women hinted that they were minimizing time particularly to avoid/evade clients as much as possible, others made reference to avoiding being spotted by police and getting arrested.

A final research participant, Kara, who works in-call offering 'erotic massage' was an exception in that she generally opted to enter into highly commodified contracts, but based the price on a *combination* of specific services and time: she charged a base fee for a set

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<sup>11</sup> The "Street Glossary" defines a pimp as "a person, usually a male, who recruits, trains and controls the activities of a male or female working as a prostitute, and/or who collects (or simply benefits from, as in living on the avails of) the monetary proceeds of this activity." (Crossroads Outreach, 2003)

period of time plus a fee for specific services. More specifics about pricing will be discussed in the following section 3.2.4 titled "Naming the Price."

### Discussion

One-third of the 12 women in this study contract on the basis of time, three of whom said they were responding to the fear of arrest and conviction. By not naming specific services in an explicit manner, I believe these women are acting on their interpretation of the criminal law surrounding prostitution laws and in particular the communication law (section 213 of the Canadian Criminal Code), in an effort to reduce the likelihood of their legal chastisement.

However, the majority of the women I interviewed explained that they contract on the basis of specific services. Overall, I observed a tendency towards highly commodified contract. O'Connell Davidson argues that a commodified form of contract can be used "to obtain the maximum payment possible from each individual client." (1993: 62) My findings are congruent with those of O'Connell Davidson, who claims:

[P]rostitutes in the Western world typically enter into closely specified, narrowly circumscribed, highly commodified exchanges with clients. Both prices and the limits to the transfer of powers over their person are thus usually negotiated with the client in advance of the sexual transaction itself. (1993: 61)

The women I conversed with who enter into commodified contracts do so seemingly in order to lessen the time they spend with clients and also to reduce the likelihood of getting 'caught by the cops.' The women who explained to me that they want to minimize the time spent with the individual client appear to be concerned with minimizing the occurrence of

physical/sexual violence. Moreover, some alluded to the idea that turning tricks implies affective/emotional abuse, and this is what they are seeking to diminish. For example, BottomsUp explained: "I don't go by an hourly rate because that's, just a little bit too much stress on my part so, you know, I like to make it quick and easy and see-you-later kind of thing." I believe it is necessary to acknowledge, here, that for some women, selling sex can be a very stressful and negative experience, even when they do not experience overt physical or sexual violence.

Yet others appear to be contracting on the basis of specific services and thus minimizing the duration of the encounter in the hopes of avoiding being spotted by police and getting arrested. By offering services and not a set time-span, they can complete the encounter as quickly as possible, in response to the fear of legal penalty. Dea states that clients pay for specific services only, adding that: "like after you hear what they want it's like 'are you quick?' And then I say 'Okay, well you're not quick in this way so we'll do it this way, you just pay me the forty and like this we'll get done and we won't get caught'".

Interestingly, I found that whether the women enter into contracts in terms of time or services, there's an additional internal logic, which speaks to the reflection behind participants' actions. The contract (for the sexual-economic exchange) is a site where one can discern agentic action on the part of sex workers, who act based on a reflection about their own best interests. The women's choice on this issue (whether to contract in terms of time versus service) seems articulated in response to the constraints, which take shape in part in the power relations between sex workers and law enforcement or clients.

According to O'Connell Davidson, specific and commodified contracts may constrain clients' actions:

In theory, where the prostitution contract takes a highly commodified form, it operates as a constraint upon the client's 'freedoms' within the transaction. Indeed, this is the whole point of close contractual specification. By stating that a given sum of money entitles the client to command use of the prostitute's mouth for purposes of fellatio, but not for kissing, for example, the contract simultaneously confers rights upon and restrains the client. Even where specification refers only to the amount of time a client may spend with a prostitute, this still represents a constraint upon his freedoms (1998: 61-62).

Of course, in considering the form of contract, one must consider also enforcement of the terms, as well as one's capability to retract from a contract, cautions O'Connell Davidson:

Even when individuals mutually and voluntarily enter into contracts, there can be power differentials in terms of each party's freedom to retract from an agreement. The greater one side's power to enforce a contract, the more the other side's freedom to retract from it is restricted. (1993: 94)

The author continues: "arranging the prostitute-client transaction as if it were a narrowly contractual commodity exchange does not, in and of itself, empower the prostitute. She must also be in a position to ensure that the contract is executed on her terms." (O'Connell Davidson, 1993: 101) The author explains that physical vulnerability in relation to the client is the number one reason why independent sex workers may have difficulty in enforcing the terms of the contract (O'Connell Davidson, 1998: 63). And as I will discuss further in section 3.2.8 "Coping with Bad Dates", "experienced independent adult prostitutes, being conscious of these risks, take a variety of precautions to reduce the likelihood of assault." (O'Connell Davidson, 1998: 63)

### 3.2.4 Naming the Price

Five themes emerged relating to prices. These are what I have called: standard fees, negotiation, undercutting, maximizing revenues and price as a strategy for client selection. I will discuss my findings on these issues and follow this data description with a discussion, anchoring my results in the literature.

#### Standard Fees

I asked the women I interviewed to tell me about the money they get from clients. What I found was that, compared to the women who work on the street, women who work in-call (including the one participant who does 'erotic massage') appear to generally get more money from individual clients (although some may see a smaller number of clients over all). While this study has a very small sample size and with some participants charging by the hour and others by specific services (see section 3.2.3), there is reason to believe that in-call workers have higher fees than women who work mainly on the street.

Amongst the four women in my sample who primarily work in-call, the average charged per client was approximately \$140 around the time of the interviews. Anastasia charges \$220 per hour, in addition to which, she adds, "I take tips. I encourage tips". (Anastasia) Sophie, who at the time of the interview had recently left sex work, explained to me that she previously worked five days a week, generally seeing three clients per day, at "no less than 200 per client." Kara works in-call performing erotic massage, and sets a minimum rate of \$100 for a 45-minute session. She explains:

What tends to happen with massage is, there's a set rate for the massage, maybe \$40 or \$50, and then, what they call extras, are an additional cost, so maybe an extra twenty for a topless massage, an extra 40 for a nude massage, an extra 40 for an oral release, etc. Um, I've just found it easier instead of, you know, having this huge range of \$50 up to maybe \$150, because I'm independent, because I get way more phone calls than what I can respond to, it's easier for me just to have either a set rate or you know a minimum rate and frankly that way I don't waste my time, you know it's better to see someone for \$100 than \$50 (laugh).

On the lower end of the in-call price spectrum, BottomsUp -- who at the time I spoke with her was working in-call with a small number of clients but had previously worked many years on the street -- made between \$30 and \$40 for fellatio and \$50 to \$60 for vaginal intercourse.

For the women who work on the street, the monetary rewards per client were generally lower. For fellatio, the street-involved sex workers I interviewed named a price range between \$20 and \$60, and the median fee amongst them was \$40. For vaginal intercourse the range provided by women who primarily work on the street was between \$40 and \$100, with \$95 as the median fee.

For instance, Candi, who works on the street in Ottawa, outlines her practice relating to her asking price:

Right now? Well, I charge \$50 for a blow-job and \$100 for a lay -- you want a blow-job and a lay it's gonna cost you \$150, you want an hour of my time it's gonna cost you \$150 to \$200. All depends on how much money I see you pull out, all depends on what he looks like, you know, what he's driving. You know because a lot of guys that like, I'd say 80% of guys that drive expensive cars have no money.

Dea told me that she usually asks for \$30 for oral sex and \$50 for vaginal intercourse, but her minimum prices are generally \$20 and \$40. Marie explains: "Myself, personally -- like I don't know, some girls are all different. Uh, myself I charge 20 for a hand-job, 30 for a blow-job, 80 for everything."

Rachelle, who explained that she has an ongoing problem with hard drug use, and has been addicted to both cocaine and morphine, attested to the impact of drug addiction on revenues. Rachelle states that for oral sex, "it's 60 and more. But when you are, in need of a drag, you go down to 40." She explains that cocaine 'pushes' her to engage in prostitution:

Well, because when you do cocaine, it gives you such a good feeling, that when you're, you're, you're, you start coming down from cocaine, you need more. You're, you know, you need some more. So what you do is you go on the street, and you do just, you know, the guy picks you up and you do your thing. (Rachelle)

### Negotiation

Eight of the women I spoke to said there was some room for negotiation about their fees. On the willingness to negotiate, there is also a distinction to be made between women who work in-call and women who work on the street. The street workers in my sample have more willingness to negotiate and make deals with clients. Only four women strictly refused to negotiate their prices -- three of whom work in-call. Candi, who works on the street, explains that her prices are negotiable:

I have a set price, but a lot of guys are like 'Oh, I only got \$80' and you know, they show me their wallet, and I'm like 'Well, ok well I'll fuck you for \$80. Let's go', you know. Sometimes I've done it for 60, on really slow nights, when it's like dead out and there's like cops everywhere, you know, you just get in and 'Just drive!' (Candi)

Dea, who also works primarily on the street, negotiates by increments of five dollars and explains that when clients inquire about her prices, her attitude is:

Well, what do you want? What are you looking for? You want, you know, you want a little bit of a blow-job and a lay, then you gotta combine these two prices, and then we'll work out a deal. What do you have? You know, if you don't have it all, I'll work something out. I mean, it's, you know, I need the money just as bad as you need the happiness.

Sarah is also willing to negotiate on the prices, and appears very sympathetic to clients' financial situation: "Well, me I negotiate. I'm, like, I tell them I don't want their last penny out their pockets, like it's Christmas, and this and that, whatever you can afford. So it's all right".

For other street workers, negotiating with clients is absolutely out of the question. Star explained that in her initial interaction with a client, she asks "What are you looking for?" and, they say it and, they ask how much, and I give them my price. It's either close to what I say, or, I just, forget it." Marie's attitude about negotiation is similar:

Yeah but, and negotiating, no, because you know what? We're already putting ourselves down. Ok, this is sick anyways ... Um, if you don't want to pay what I've asked, forget it, I am not gonna, you know. Um, and they'll, they'll give you a sad story of 'Oh, I'm just a student' or 'Oh, I just make' -- so? Look I'm a prostitute, I'm making money this way, you know what I mean, it doesn't matter what you are.

### Undercutting

Another theme that emerged from my interviews with participants was the topic of 'market pricing' and 'undercutting'. Undercutting means charging less than competitors (in this case, other sex workers in the specific area, often a 'high track' for street prostitution).

Undercutting is defined in the Crossroads Outreach "Street Glossary" as follows: "to charge less than the accepted rate for sexual services. Very disapproved of by others, to the point that it could incur physical violence or being "jacked-up" [robbed]." (2003)

Only two participants discussed this issue, but there is reason to think that it is indicative of a wider reality or practice in street-level prostitution. Marsha introduced the concept of undercutting:

Once you start undercutting other girls they will rob you. So you don't undercut. The prices are the prices. You know like, if you work in front of Mellows [in Ottawa's ByWard market area], you can't go there and charge thirty dollars for a blow-job, because the girls will beat you up and take your money.

Dea discussed market prices: "Like on the [ByWard] market, when I was working market, there was always a lady, uh, there's like a boss. Ok, the one who's been there the longest, you know, and it's like if you get caught charging ten dollars for a blow-job, you're gonna get your head kicked in".

### Maximizing Revenues

Several of the street workers I interviewed explained that they actively attempt to maximize their revenues with individual clients. They articulate this in terms of assessing a client's financial situation, trying to determine 'what you can get away with asking for', based on the client's appearance, his vehicle, and his perceived level of interest in the sex worker. Candi states: "All depends on how much money I see you pull out, all depends on what he looks like, you know, what he's driving." Marie echoes this statement: "If I'm getting into a car that's, you know, and the man looks like he's got money, I'm gonna charge more. You

know?" For Rachelle, it's her feeling about just how badly a client 'wants her' that she pays attention to in setting a price: "Otherwise, uh, you got uh, you kinda know hey? Like, I know when somebody really likes you and you feel good, so you can go up to a hundred and sixty."

With Marsha, this attempt to maximize earnings with individual clients is discernible in her attempt to tack-on 'extras'. She lists detailed prices for various services and activities, and says that she is willing to negotiate somewhat on price:

Not much, but yeah. Yeah, and then uh, or if a guy has, uh, like head for fifty, if he wants to see my breasts, again, or touch my breasts, it's another twenty. So I'm still ending up with seventy dollars, because nine times out of ten, if a guy's picked me, it's because I've got big breasts. (Marsha)

Marsha has a strict "one-orgasm rule" and explains that if a man has an orgasm early in their encounter:

There's no refunds. It's your fault. Now if you want to give me maybe another, fifty or a hundred dollars, I'll see what I can do. But it's all about money, it's all about -- everything is money. You want to see my breasts? Can you give me another twenty dollars? Or, you want me to take off all my clothes? Well, could you give me a hundred dollars? Everything is money.

Dea, who also works on the street, told me that she has experienced a lot of pain in prostitution and explains that she engages in prostitution "because of the self-abuse." She attempts to maximize revenues from individual clients who are "nice guys", in order to "stretch it" and see fewer clients:

I stretch it, I get the guys and they're nice guys and I just stretch it. I say 'Ok, well, is there anyway we can stretch it so I don't have to go back out there?' Because I don't want to go back out ... I'll say 'Is there any way I can make any extra money, because I really

don't want to go back out there? I haven't worked the streets for five years and I really don't want to go back out there. You know, but I have to pay' -- I'll lie, I'll say 'I have to pay this pimp this money man, and I just really, and I want some pocket money for myself.' (Dea)

Dea adds that during the negotiation process, she will lower her fees but will make statements such as "Ok, well ok that's all you have, but if you're satisfied can you -- because I owe this money, can you please like spare, I don't know, change, cigarettes, extra money, pocket money, you know, because I gotta pay this to somebody else." Dea's motivation or goal for maximizing revenues with an individual client is thus not to make more money in an evening, but rather to make enough money to get by while seeing as few clients as possible.

#### Price as a Strategy in Client Selection

Only one participant -- Anastasia -- discussed the issue of attracting a particular clientele (pre-selection on the basis of social class) as a bi-product of setting a higher fee for services. One can assume that the practice is particular to higher-end sex work -- some in-call, independent massage, and presumably also escort. Anastasia, who works in-call out of her own home (a tastefully decorated one-bedroom apartment in a Toronto high-rise), and offers domination services as well as the more conventional sex services, charges \$220 per client, for one hour of her time. She jokingly states that: "Two hundred and twenty dollars gets rid of a whole class of assholes." (Anastasia) She further explains:

Price does contribute to a certain type of person, it's gonna attract a certain type of background, because you know, if you're working class sixty dollars is a lot of money but you can afford it but you can't afford two hundred dollars, you know what I mean. So again it appeals to a certain person. (Anastasia)

## Discussion

Structure and agency are at play in the determination of prices in the prostitution industry. On one hand, it is possible to identify a number of phenomena, which structure prices. On the other hand, sex workers exercise their agency -- both individual and collective -- in a number of directions.

Let us begin with a few comments about standard fees. I believe that the standard prices can be understood as an 'outcome' of the intersection of structure and agency. Also, the wide range of fees presented by the women involved in this small study is illustrative of the hierarchy of sex work arrangements.

First, the results of my study seem to point to a difference in the fees charged by women who work on the street and women who work in-call. This raises the following questions: Why do street workers command lower fees? Why are they possibly also more willing to negotiate on their fees?

Scambler states that "Like patterns of work, the graded fees women charge for sexual services vary." (1997: 116) It does appear, from the literature, that women who work indoors have a tendency to be able to garner a higher price for their services from individual clients.

These rates [from the lower strata of the prostitution hierarchy] may be contrasted with those charged at the upper end of the market, for example with exclusive escort agencies or madams or independently. Boyle contends that it is women who work independently, inconspicuous in research studies, who tend to enjoy the highest incomes. (Scambler, 1997: 116; see also Boyle, 1994).

Høigård and Finstad argue, "Money is often used to measure social status. Measured in terms of the cost of the acts there do appear to be status differences between the types of prostitution," adding that "prices control the selection of customers to a certain degree." (1992: 130) This relates, in my study, to Anastasia's 'pricing as strategy for client selection' scheme. However, "For the women the situation is more complicated. Their total earnings are just as important as the price they receive per trick." (Høigård & Finstad, 1992: 130) Interestingly, the authors of this Norwegian study remark "The difference, to the extent that there is any, is that the women can earn more on the street if they really keep at it." (Høigård & Finstad, 1992: 131) While women who work on the street tend to garner lower fees from individual clients, they may have a tendency to see a greater number of clients.

In their study of the Norwegian sex industry, Høigård and Finstad found that "Drug and alcohol problems are somewhat more prevalent for [sex workers] who only work the street." (1992: 126) One could hypothesize that a potentially greater prevalence of drug abuse on the street could have a general effect on prices as compared to in-call. Looking at prostitution prices over time in an American study of women crack users, Maher and Curtis remark: "Both crack-induced increases in the number of women sex workers and crack-accelerated shifts in the nature of the sex work (e.g., from vaginal intercourse to blow jobs, indoor to outdoor) have deflated the going rates for sexual exchanges." (1992: 225) The authors continue:

All of the women who participated in the current study agree that "crack" increased the number of women working the strolls and had a significant impact on the kind of work they did, the [remuneration] they received and the interactions that occurred in and around street-level sex markets. (Maher & Curtis, 1992: 228)

Laidler and Chesney-Lind define the (unfortunate) term 'crack ho' as "a prostitute who will trade sex for extremely small amounts of money or drugs, often, but not always, in crack houses generally run by men." (1997: 136)

There is no doubt that the crack scene has affected street prostitution, long mainstay of women's survival tactics in marginalized communities. In a study of the effect of crack in three Chicago neighborhoods, it was noted that [...] the arrival of crack and the construction of the "crack ho" has created a desperate form of prostitution involving instances of extreme degradation that had previously only been seen in extremely impoverished countries such as the Philippines and Thailand". (Laidler & Chesney-Lind, 1997: 137)

In my study I found that some women, but not all, were willing to negotiate with clients over prices. I noted that street-involved women might be more likely to agree to negotiate. In my study, I found that the women who negotiated had a tendency to do so: in order not to lose business; because a little money is better than no money on a slow night; because the cops are out; because they are in desperate need for money; or out of concern for clients' finances. The women I spoke to who did not want to negotiate on fees refused to do so because: it is too degrading a practice; or it is their established business practice, and they have the volume of business to permit this choice. Whether they choose to negotiate or not, it does seem to generally appear as a reflected choice.

O'Connell Davidson discusses negotiation and maximizing revenues, explaining that negotiation can serve the interests of the sex worker:

Because experienced adult prostitutes are not answerable to any third party in terms of the prices they charge or the degree of 'customer satisfaction' they provide, they are also in a position to vary the terms of the transaction they enter into. Clients often haggle over prices, but experienced prostitutes are usually skilled at such negotiations, as well as using a highly commodified form of

contractual relation to obtain the maximum payment possible from each individual client. If a client appears to be naïve, nervous or credulous, they will build upon an agreed price for, say, a hand job, by adding charges for 'extras' -- x amount more to undo or remove her top, x amount more to touch her breasts, and so on. (1998: 62-63)

In my study, the theme of the prohibition of undercutting also emerged from the interviews. As a result of the prohibition of undercutting, general prices remain more elevated, and prices are standardized, similar. It also means that an individual woman, even if she works independently of a third party, does not entirely set her own prices in relation to the 'pure' forces of the 'market' but rather is also influenced by street norms.

Prostitution is an industry -- and the street-level sex market is somewhat akin to classical economists' concept of a 'perfect market' -- where there is clear opportunity for major competition -- and the market determines the prices to a large extent. In a perfect market, the suppliers (sex workers) are 'price takers' -- they 'take' the market price as almost given. (Luenberger, 1995: 58) Yet, we must remember that there is some pressure, when working in the same area, to keep the prices up for all women who are working -- if one offers lower prices, then she is undercutting and attracting more business at a lower price, and it is perceived as unfair for the other women who will lose business if they don't in turn lower their prices. It's frowned upon because it makes everyone's prices decrease. Sometimes this may be formalized, in the sense that there is agentic intervention by an older, more powerful worker (referred to as a 'boss') who 'polices' or 'disciplines' others and 'enforces' market rules and prices.

Høigård and Finstad, in a report on a study from Oslo, Norway, discuss the concept of undercutting: "The women are preoccupied with this. "Not to go under the price" is one of

the strongest norms on the street. Taking tricks without a condom falls in the same category. Both of these transgressions are punished." (1992: 41) Amongst their sample, they found:

On the question of price, the majority answer like Inga: with a rather long and detailed price list. These prices have varied over time. But at any given point in time the various services have their fixed minimum prices. There was nearly total uniformity of the minimum prices quoted by the women. The system of minimum prices is an exact parallel to the internal solidarity employees exhibit when it comes to the question of pay. Personal interests coincide with common interest. If someone sells herself cheap, it affects all the others. Prices fall. (Høigård & Finstad, 1992: 41)

Under the general category of pricing, a number of themes have emerged: standard fees (women who work in-call may tend to garner more from individual clients), negotiation (some women negotiate, some don't, but sex workers tend to exercise a number of skills to reap benefits from the negotiation process), the prohibition of undercutting (and its enforcement), strategies to maximize revenues, and price as a strategy for client selection. It is possible to identify a number of phenomena which structure prices, like market demand and the general conception about the hierarchy of prostitution. On the other hand, sex workers exercise their agency -- both individual and collective -- in a number of directions. Individual sex workers may exert agency in maximizing their personal rewards, and collective strategies such as the prohibition of undercutting and its enforcement can be understood as collective strategies, preventing prices from slipping below a certain level.

### 3.2.5 Situating the Act

Commercial sex acts can take place in the client's home, car, hotel room -- or in the independent sex worker's personal apartment, working apartment, favourite parking lot or stairwell. In this theme of location, an important distinction must be highlighted between women who work in-call and women who work on the street, since the working arrangement has a direct impact on the working location. Women who work in-call have the clients come to them. Women who work on the street solicit clients on the street and then generally travel to a location with a client. The location is thus up for negotiation in the case of street prostitution, whereas it is fixed in an in-call setting.

In this section I will describe the data as was related to me by my interview participants on the topic of location. I will provide an overview of the typical or preferred location for turning tricks for the women I spoke with, distinguishing of course between street workers and in-call workers. I will describe the factors which appear to be motivating the women's choices for locations and work environments, and follow this presentation of my research results with a discussion grounded in the wider empirical literature on the topic.

#### In-call Workplaces

By the very nature of the working arrangement, sex workers who operate on an in-call basis perform the interaction on their own 'turf'. The client (often but not exclusively a regular) generally calls the sex worker to set up the encounter, and comes to see the woman in her workplace. The four women I spoke to who work in-call (including Kara, who performs 'erotic massage') have an established and regular work location. Kara and

Sophie have exclusive workplaces -- for Kara, this is a working apartment in central Toronto. For Sophie, it is generally a 'working house', which is rented with another sex worker. Both Anastasia and BottomsUp use their personal apartment to see clients.

Kara's working apartment is in a downtown Toronto high-rise. It is a bachelor apartment, comprised of one bedroom and one bathroom with a shower. The walls are dark purple and the lighting is dim. The queen-size bed has posts which are draped with material. There is a professional massage table, and one also notices items such as an ashtray, K-Y jelly, water bottles, clothing, CDs and a CD player. There is nowhere to sit but on the bed, which is where our interview took place. The setting is utilitarian -- the space serves the purpose, which is business.

Sophie generally turns tricks in one of her 'working houses'. However, she explains that hotels are also acceptable to her, but not cars:

Never. Because it's dangerous like you would not believe. When I was young I had done it like, a few times, but the last times I ever did it, this son-of-a-bitch drove me way out passed Aviation Parkway, and then, ripped me off and left me there. So, never again from that point on. (Sophie)

Her preference is one of the working houses, because she can exert most control over the environment, and build in some safety precautions, such as having guard dogs and a doorman. She states the dogs served a dual purpose: they "alerted us to cops and they got rid of undesirables." (Sophie)

Anastasia works out of her personal apartment. It is a one-bedroom apartment in a central Toronto high-rise building. The lovely apartment is meticulously clean and tidy. Anastasia

explains, "Some girls make their workspace very austere, very plain, because that's just what it is, it's a workspace and they don't want people to linger. My space is made up for people to relax and get comfortable and stay the hour." The bedroom is a richly decorated room with dim lighting and dark wood furniture. The contrast is present between the sex toys and sexually suggestive pictures on the walls, and the stuffed toys neatly arranged on the corner chair. This work environment is well thought-out. She states:

So, my bedroom, there's a lot of symbolism, of sex and sexuality, and some of it is very obvious and I have a lot of sex books in my bedroom. And um, I have teddy bears sitting on one of the chairs. I always realised when you're, like you know, setting up a space to work in it has to be aesthetically pleasing, and I set it up so it's very um, not only pleasing to the eye but psychologically. I figured the teddy bears, you know, put people in a certain frame of mind, so people are less likely to have violence on their mind, you know. [...] So, yeah, that's the, the idea, um, you know, you look to make your environment very comfortable and pleasing, you want people to relax. And if you notice, I use a lot of wood. There's a lot of dark brown which is very, you know, um, you know it's very much masculine, but yet there's little touches of femininity there, the bears and the books and you know, the sex objects, and then there's a couple of vases and there's the statue. So, you know, so it's supposed to convey a certain message, as well as set a certain mindset, you know. Get them in the mood, but at the same time, you know, make sure they're nice and calm and passive. You know, I want passive clients. (Anastasia)

Anastasia explains that safety is an important motivator in seeing clients in her personal apartment. She states she's "Less likely to be killed. It's harder for a trick to beat you to death or stab you to death or shoot you in your own home. That's not to say it can't happen but the likelihood is, you know. But you're still vulnerable to assault." (Anastasia)

### Street Workers' Locations of Choice

The situation for street workers is different. Clients are solicited on the street, and the sex worker will travel with the client to a location to turn the trick. There was some variation in the location preferences of the street workers I spoke to. The overall agreement amongst participants was that the client's car was an acceptable location for performing sex acts. Some of the participants added that they wanted the client to park his car in a specific parking lot or on a one-way street. Amongst the eight street workers I interviewed, four stated that they sometimes performed the acts in the client's home, though the group clearly communicated to me that there is a shared wisdom that sex workers should avoid going to the client's home. Three of the women I spoke to said they sometimes went to hotel or motel rooms with their clients, while two women mentioned other locations for turning tricks: stairwells and alleyways.

Candi doesn't like to bring clients into her personal apartment, but will generally direct clients to park their cars in the parking lot of her apartment, or to join her in the stairwell of her Ottawa lower-town apartment building. If she is soliciting in an alternate area which is farther from her home, she brings clients to a location (behind a building) that she knows well and finds safe. Being close to home or at least in a familiar environment is crucial for her. She stresses the importance of the woman controlling her own work environment:

Another thing I wanted to say, always go where you know the parking lot, where you know the area. Have your parking lots chose, like chosen, have your routes and the way you're gonna go and everything, the bank machine if he needs a bank machine, and don't go to anywhere he wants to go. Unless of course, you know, it's a hotel room, and he shows you the key and, you know because that's usually pretty safe because you can always yell, somebody's gonna hear you in a hotel, you know, or whatever.  
(Candi)

Safety is important for Candi. A recovering addict at the time of the interview, Candi states that she is 'safe now' and controls the location of the interaction with clients, but that this was not always the case:

When you're strung out on coke, you want to get high, and you don't give a shit where you gotta go to get the money, you know ... As long as you get enough to get a taxi back and still have enough to score your dope ... A lot of girls will go anywhere. And a lot of girls are so high when they get picked up they, they don't know where the fuck buddy's taking them. (Candi)

Marie turns tricks in clients' vehicles. She states: "Um, my thing is always one-way side streets, ok, because the cars only come one way, so it's, you know ... And uh, parking lots with lots of cars and you park between two cars, or two trucks, or, you know." (Marie) When asked to further explicate the reasoning for this choice, she explains that it comes down to avoiding arrest. However, personal safety in relation to the client is also an important concern for Marie, and this is highlighted when she discusses being transported far from the location of solicitation. She states: "See, myself when I get into a car, I do not go, very rarely I go on the Queensway ... Because they could just keep on going. You know, the only way you're getting out is jumping out." (Marie) She doesn't want to be taken far from the pick-up location, stating: "if it is dark, and I have to walk somewhere, walk back to where I am ... at least I'd know". (Marie)

Sarah prefers cars to hotel rooms. Her central concern here is clearly personal safety:

Like when you go into a car, you have an escape. In a motel room, it, it's harder. You know, because uh, things can happen more in a room, like a hotel room, than they can in a car. In a car, um, the guy's either masturbating or you're giving head. Right, so you do, um, I found I had more of a chance, being in a car than being in a hotel room. (Sarah)

Marsha will turn tricks in a client's vehicle or hotel room, and occasionally in an alleyway. She explains that she prefers not to go to a client's home. She explains her safety practices relating to location:

Just like you don't go to people's houses, um, for safety. If you do go to somebody's house, the minute you get there you pick up the phone and you phone someone. You tell them where you are and then they've got the phone number on their call display ... I'd phone my husband and I'd say uh, 'Hi, I'm just checking in, I just got here, here's the phone number, ok, I'll call back around when I'm leaving.' And the guy, if he's gonna do anything, gets a little intimidated with that. (Marsha)

Marsha adds another strategy to maximize her safety if she was going to a client's home to turn the trick:

If I go to somebody's house I make sure that somebody knows where I'm going. Like say if I was working downtown and a guy picked me up said 'Will you come to my house?' 'Well, where do you live?' 'In the west end.' 'Where in the west end?' I need the address ... I take the address, and I give it to someone.

Star explains that she will turn tricks in the client's car, in the client's home, or in a motel room. She states, however, that she does not want "to go, like, far far away in the car with them", and if she is going to the client's home, she wants to make "sure that, like, there's not other people there. And if a guy's bringing me to his place, I don't want to go there if there's other guys there. You know, it's just him, one on one, you know, type thing. Because, it can be scary, you know." (Star)

Participants, in our discussions, thus emphasized personal safety surrounding location. In the determination of location, avoiding arrests emerged as another (secondary) concern for street workers.

## Discussion

There was a tendency to exert command over the working environment/location amongst the women I spoke to. A number of the women who work on the street explained that they want to direct the client to a spot they are comfortable or familiar with (whether for reasons of a) personal safety or b) avoiding arrests). Of the four women I met who work in-call, three explained that they explicitly and actively manage the location of the sexual-economic exchange. The two types of motives behind the work environment management for the in-call workers I spoke to appear to be a) direct maximizing of personal safety (with elements such as dogs, bodyguards and hidden weapons), and b) setting a mood (avoid client lingering and thus encourage a quick exchange in one case; make clients relaxed and passive and thus presumably also encourage personal safety in another).

This trend towards an active and reflected management of location was also noted in the literature on North-American sex workers' practices. In a recent empirical study based on in-depth interviews with 50 incarcerated street workers in the U.S., Norton-Hawk found that personal safety emerged as the primary concern in location determination by the women. She states:

The women wish to avoid isolated settings in order to minimize the level of risk: "I try to stay in areas where there are more people" and "I try to use a hotel." Forty percent have a policy of refusing to provide services in an alley, 54% refuse to provide services in a drug house, and 68% refuse to provide services in an abandoned building. Unfortunately, the need for money forces them to violate these safety precautions on a regular basis. Eighty-eight percent report that the most likely location for performing services is in a customer's car at a secluded spot. In this setting women are very vulnerable to assault. (Norton-Hawk, 2001: 411)

In a case study in the U.S. with 16 women who work on the street, examining in particular the issues of violence and resistance, Jody Miller found: "A consistent means by which street prostitutes attempted to stay in control and remain safe was by choosing the location for the sexual transaction, based on the limited choices available." (1993: 436) She continues: "All of the women I spoke with stressed the need to choose the location themselves, rather than leaving it up to the men." (Miller, 1993: 436) Miller notes that the actual "choice of locations varied among women." (1993: 436) Her findings as to the motives behind the drive to control the location are congruent with mine: in my interviews with street workers both personal safety and avoiding arrests were identified as motives. Similarly, Miller finds that street workers are in essence balancing two 'dangers':

Because street prostitutes are highly visible and are therefore at great risk of arrest [...] some women often choose to car date in secluded areas, in order to avoid being caught by the police. Others chose areas where they felt the police wouldn't find them, but where there were likely to be other street people around to provide some measure of safety. Still others placed their personal safety above getting caught by the police, and would engage in sex in open, visible places. (1993: 436)

Women who work in-call experience a different set of circumstances relating to location and work environment, as they can generally exert a greater degree of command over these elements. A British case study examined the practices of Desiree, a financially successful, self-employed, 34-year-old white 'prostitute' (O'Connell Davidson, 1993 and 1995). O'Connell Davidson explains the advantage -- on the issue of location -- of the independent in-call worker: "Desiree, unlike most prostitutes and most wage workers, has chosen, designed and owns the physical environment in which she works." (1993: 91) Desiree keeps her working environment very tidy, sterile and impersonal, using for example different linens and towels for work than for living quarters (Brewis & Linstead, 2000a: 90). This is also congruent with my findings about the independent in-call sex

workers in my small sample, who have an established and regular work location over which, of course, they exert a great deal of control.

We can thus affirm that sex workers are exerting or (attempting to exert) agency, on this issue of location, within the sexual-economic exchange. We can discern a trend of directing the client to a spot that is perceived as familiar and 'safe' by street workers. We likewise can observe that in-call workers may explicitly and actively manage the location of the sexual-economic exchange towards greater safety and personal benefit. The two types of motives behind the work environment management for the in-call workers I spoke to appear to be a) maximizing personal safety and b) setting a mood (avoid client lingering in one case, and make clients relax in another).

### **3.2.6 Laying the Boundaries**

In this section, I will look at the practices and strategies deployed by sex workers (both street and in-call) around boundaries -- limits in terms of both sexual acts and condom use in commercial sexual relations. I will describe the content of my interviews around the prohibition of certain sexual acts and its enforcement. I will then discuss condom use as a widespread practice (and its exceptions) amongst participants, as well as the enforcement of consistent condom use. The description of findings will be followed by a discussion centring on the establishment of boundaries by sex workers (sex acts and condoms), the enforcement of these boundaries, the context of unprotected commercial sexual relations and the notion of boundaries in sex work as a tool in emotional distancing.

## Boundaries Around Sexual Acts

The women I spoke to generally establish certain boundaries for their relations with clients, in terms of sexual acts they are willing to engage in. The main boundaries listed by participants in terms of acts were: kissing, anal sex, submissive sadomasochism and vaginal intercourse (minimizing/avoiding).

A number of interview participants mentioned that they refuse to kiss their clients. This activity appears to be perceived as too intimate, too personal to be shared in a commercial sexual encounter. Many sex workers appear to reserve the intimate act of kissing for their private lives. Candi states: "I won't kiss on the lips, I've had guys offer me like \$100 for one French kiss, I'm like 'I can't' -- just nasty, I can't, because -- yark! I just kiss my boyfriend [laugh]." Marie echoes this statement:

Um, kissing. I don't let, I don't kiss. Because, my mouth isn't protected, and theirs isn't protected. You know ... I kiss my kids. I don't wanna be kissing people. It's, it sounds weird because I, I suck someone off, ok, but I suck someone off with a condom. So ... I don't know, it's weird.

In the same vein, in our discussion Anastasia made reference to clients wanting to touch her face and hair: "certain things are a gesture of intimacy, and touching the head and face is a gesture of intimacy." Again in reference to the degree of intimacy, Marsha links kissing with another activity which she deems too personal for her to share with a client: "it's personal, it's a personal like, I couldn't sit and neck with ten different strangers in a night. The thing is like, it's very erotic and, it's personal. And I would never let anybody uh, do oral sex on me." Not only is oral sex performed by the man deemed to be too intimate in the same way as kissing on the lips, but it is also an activity which is focused on the

woman's sexual pleasure, and may thus be avoided in sex work where the activity for the woman is about work and not about letting go and experiencing sexual pleasure. Anastasia puts sex workers' boundaries around kissing and cunnilingus in relation with established sex work practices or norms: "You know because there's usually, you know, there's this hooker code which is: you don't kiss, you don't let tricks finger you, you don't let them go down on you, you know."

Anal sex was also listed as a boundary for a number of the women I spoke to. Six of the 12 women I interviewed stated that they refuse to have anal sex with clients, and two others stated that under certain circumstances, they may (rarely) engage in anal sex. Marsha links this practice with an established code amongst sex workers: "in the life and the rules of the life, there's no kissing, there's no kissing, anal sex is a very big no-no, and if, and it's a specialty thing, if a girl does it, she's getting paid, my girls anyway." Candi explains her practice:

I don't do up the ass, unless they got a little tiny dick, but ... I want to see their dick first, you know, if they got a tiny little dick and I ain't gonna feel it ... whatever. Just do it and hurry the fuck up you know? You have like five minutes. I light a cigarette, put it in the ashtray. If you're not done by the time the cigarette is burnt, oh-fucking-well hey? That's what I do. You know?

Kara is flexible on this issue:

I don't have any fixed rules around things like, um, anal sex. Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't, if somebody asks me in advance and I don't know and I'll say 'Well, we'll have to wait and see'. You know, I judge according to how my body feels and how big they are, and all the rest of it.

Six of the 12 women I interviewed also said explicitly that they avoid submissive sadomasochist activities or more generally sexual acts containing violence. For example,

Kara establishes this type of boundary for herself in order to protect her well-being and avoid feeling vulnerable with her clients. She states:

I should say something I don't do is any sort of submissive work, especially people [who] I don't know. If it's something really playful like 'Oh, can I give your bottom a little spank' that's fine, but even with clients I've known for ages, no bondage, nothing like that, nothing where, I feel like I could be in jeopardy. (Kara)

Another theme that emerged in the interviews was that some sex workers may actively avoid vaginal intercourse as much as possible through trickery. Candi explains:

A lot of the times I don't turn my tricks, a lot of the times I, maybe give them a couple of licks and give them a hand-job, you know, or when I bend over to fuck them I put my hand there [places hand over buttocks] and they're actually fucking in between my pussy and my hand. So they're not actually entering me. You know, I do that, like that's how transvestites do it.

Marsha concurs: "Um, most prostitutes, like I said the tricks of the trade says you keep your hand down there. Generally it's sad to say, it's they're fucking your hand. But you, and the guy says 'Why do you have your hand down there?' 'I want to make sure the condom stays on.'" Anastasia explains why sex workers might be avoiding intercourse as much as possible: "My attitude is the less you fuck, the safer you are. That's the way, you're cutting the risk, you're cutting the risk severely."

Certain activities may thus be avoided because they are considered too intimate, personal, loathsome, disgusting or dangerous (in terms of personal safety or health). Kara explains that she finds there is some safety in the establishment of clear boundaries with clients: "I think in a sex work context the guys know up-front what they are and aren't getting, and if they want something more or they want something differently, they'll go somewhere else. You know, there is that safety to it." For most of the women I spoke to, boundaries were

articulated in an introverted fashion, in such a way as to be turned inward and centred on the self -- conceptualized in terms of personal preference and practice. For others, boundaries were articulated in relation to external norms or conventions in sex work, with reference to 'rules.'

### Enforcing the Boundaries

Boundaries mean very little if they cannot be shared with clients and enforced, since some clients inevitably try to cross the line set out by the worker for herself. There was general consensus amongst the women I spoke to that clients frequently attempt to cross boundaries. I asked participants to tell me how they enforce their boundaries.

The women I spoke to generally take a firm stance with clients who attempt to cross boundaries. BottomsUp told me:

No is no, you know, that's my thing, and, that's the way it goes. I'll give you a blow-job, a lay, but you know, if you keep pursuing this anal stuff, I'll just take your money and say 'See you later', you know, it doesn't take much English, when I say no, no, and if you keep harassing me about it I just take your money and say 'See you later. When you get that shit out of your head, come back.'

Stating that clients "always" try to cross boundaries with her, Marsha explains that she deals with that by being firm: "you tell them no. And uh, I'll say no once, and maybe twice, but if I have to say it a third time I'm leaving." Marie also wants to put an end to an encounter if a client is insistent: "Yeah I'll just get out. I don't even like arguing with them. There's no point. I'm there to do a job, ok, if you don't want the job done, then fine." Vigilance is important, according to Pauline. Of clients crossing boundaries, she affirms:

Always, yeah always, it's always a constant ... like for instance some guys uh ... this is just an example, you know, grabbing your tits like ... and being really rough and stuff like that. And you say to them, you know, 'Don't do that anymore,' or otherwise it, you know, you have to constantly -- so they'll come back, they'll be much better, they'll come back and they'll try it again you know, so, stuff like that you have to constantly be on top of. (Pauline)

Kara utilizes an original strategy in insisting on the terms of the exchange. Adopting a maternal persona in her interactions with clients, she finds that she can better enforce boundaries:

For me I think the biggest thing is being in control. And that can be, um, setting my boundaries and being clear about it. Um, for me in terms of my interactions with the client, I do the sort of maternal thing -- I know other women who just, you know, they'll sort of be bossy and the guys seem to like that too. (Kara)

Two of the women I spoke to made reference to physical force in their attempt to enforce the boundaries they set for relations with clients. Anastasia explains:

Guys will try and stick their fingers in you and you're like 'What are you doing?' You know? Um, you know, so, then you have to like get forceful verbally, like 'What are you doing?' or 'Excuse me? I told you not to do that.' Or I'll tell guys before 'Don't grab my head, don't push my head down, don't grab my hair' ... But, personally I have that ability, I don't feel -- I have contact with girls as being an activist through SWAT where they're small in physical stature, and they feel they have a hard time saying no, or negotiating what guys can get away with. And some girls just don't know like, hey, you're a whore, you have the power to decide what men can and cannot do. Like, you know, and they don't know, because they think they have to do anything and everything, you know.

Candi recounts one experience:

I had this guy, he was having sex with me, he'd paid me \$150, I told him 'Don't kiss my face.' He started grabbing my hair, pulling my head back and kissing my face. So anyways, I got my hand down in between, I grabbed him by the fucking yats and I squeezed and I eventually got him off me and, I'm like 'Buddy, you

just fucking -- I'm not even gonna finish, I'm leaving'. Snap my knife out, 'You come fucking near me you're gonna eat this.'

Candi told me she was fairly successful at enforcing boundaries with clients. She explains: "Maybe it's because I'm not tiny. Maybe a lot of the tiny hookers, get that, because the guys pick them up because they can't defend themselves. I can defend myself. Like, you know, I'm not a small girl."

### Safer Sex and Condom Use

With few exceptions, the sex workers I spoke to consistently practiced safer sex with clients, the majority of them telling me that health and disease were major concerns. All 12 of the participants in this study explained that they insist on consistent condom use when having (vaginal or anal) intercourse with a client. However, there was a consensus around the fact that some clients request and insist upon sexual activity without protection. Anastasia -- an activist for 12 years and a participant in distributing condoms to street workers during outreach activities -- explains that while most sex workers practice safer sex, unprotected commercial sex does happen: "Usually when it happens it's with a regular, or some guy offers you more money. But, as a rule, most of us don't suck bare. Never have, never will. You know?" She adds:

We're not offering, the clients are asking ... We have this little saying in the business ... 'Nobody ever held a gun to a trick's head and told him not to use a condom.' So the point is, you're responsible for your own sexual health, you know ... So, the point being is, tricks ask for activity without rubbers. We don't, most of us, as a rule, don't offer. (Anastasia)

In our discussion about condoms, Marsha told me:

They [clients] never want you to use them. I've said to the guy, 'Why would you want to have sex with me without a condom? You know, I've already slept with three guys tonight. What are you crazy? Or are you stupid?' 'But it doesn't feel the same' 'Well it doesn't matter. Is your life worth a little bit of feeling?' But guys are just uh, just stupid or, they don't care, I don't know what it is. But I've had guys beg me.

Three of the street workers I interviewed explained that while they prefer to use condoms, they were willing to negotiate on condom use, in particular for fellatio, and especially if a client was persistent and offered monetary incentives. Candi tells me that clients frequently ask her for services without a condom: "Yeah, that happens a lot a lot. Like the guy this morning, he was like 'Oh, I'll give you an extra \$20 to do it without a condom'. I'm like 'Sorry bud, that's not enough.'" Incidentally, these same three women were or had been heavy drug users, and made reference to the impact of drug addiction on their occasional willingness to consent to unprotected sexual activity. Candi explains:

Girls that are getting high, if you're all strung out ... you honestly don't care. I mean, some of the girls won't use condoms ... I've done it without condoms ... But, a lot of girls when they're strung out, no they don't use condoms because, I don't know, the client comes faster, you know, it's a, they're willing to pay more money for it without a condom. But now that I'm straight I never do it without a condom. Unless, the guy is a businessman or he's, he's really clean, you know, and he won't come in my mouth, and he's gonna pay me like an extra like \$80, like an extreme amount of money -- sure I'll do it without a condom.

One other woman, an in-call worker who was employed part-time as a counsellor in a sexual health clinic, was open to unprotected oral sex: "Um, with any sort of intercourse I definitely use condoms. For many years I used condoms without fail with oral sex, and now, I don't as often I mean now that I'm working in a sexual health clinic I know a little bit more about the different risks." (Kara)

## Enforcing Condom Use

The women in this study employ a number of strategies in an attempt to enforce consistent condom use, when clients request unprotected sex. The three types of strategies that emerged from my discussions with participants are as follows.

Firstly, two women who work in-call told me that they rationalize with clients and explain to them the necessity of using condoms. Kara told me:

There've been some safe sex issues, you know, where guys have said, including guys that have been regulars that have said 'Oh, come on, but you know me now, blah-blah-blah', and ... I always say to them 'But this is how I keep me safe and you safe' 'Oh, but you know I don't have anything and I trust you', and I say 'But you know that, you know that I see other -- ' [laugh] Please! It's not like they can pretend that this is like a trust issue, they know I'm seeing other people.

Sophie tries to educate her clients who insist on unprotected sex:

I'd say 'Well, you know what, I'm sorry but you'll have to leave. Because sex isn't worth dying for.' And it would seem the minute those words came out of my mouth they'd be going like 'What are you talking about?' And then I'd explain all about the STDs and they'd be going 'Oh my god are you serious? Oh my god I let a hooker ...' 'Well, go get tested. They have [a] confidential [clinic] on fucking Clarence. Go get yourself checked, nobody will know, not your wife, nobody.'

Secondly, two women who work on the street told me that they use trickery to enforce condom use -- cleverly putting the condom on a client without his knowledge:

Condoms, you know what, I don't care how much money you're giving me, you're putting on my condom ... No matter what. I got this thing where, I know how to put on a condom without the man knowing. Because I'll tuck the condom in my mouth ... the guy will say 'Oh, I don't feel nothing with condoms, you know.' But after

you're done, the condom's there. So, you know it's just a dirty excuse that the guys have. (Marie)

Finally, four of the street workers I spoke to explained that they enforce condom use by taking a no-nonsense attitude about it. If a client insists on unprotected sexual activity, they simply refuse:

I walk. But I get paid first. Trust me, I get paid when I walk in the door. When I bring out the condom, if a guy says 'No, I don't want to use that' 'Ok, then bye'. 'Well I want my money back.' 'No. I don't give refunds. So, either you're gonna do it with a condom, or you're getting nothing and I'm leaving with your money'. And you have to be aggressive, with tricks. You have to be. Because if not they'll run all over you. (Marsha)

### Discussion

In this section, I will examine the practice amongst sex workers of establishing boundaries, both in terms of sex acts and condom use. I will discuss the enforcement of such boundaries and will look at the contexts of unprotected commercial sex acts. These areas will be examined in relation to other empirical analyses of and with female sex workers. I will then explore the reasons for the establishment of boundaries, beyond straightforward health-conscious prophylactic use: boundaries as emotional distancing, defence mechanism, protection of the self and management of the body as place.

The interview participants in this study established certain boundaries for their relations with clients, in terms of sexual acts. Common boundaries identified related to kissing, anal sex, submissive acts and vaginal intercourse. This practice of a clear establishment of boundaries by sex workers was also widely reported in the literature. Sex workers may have a code of practice that "proscribes sexual (and other) acts outside a pre-defined set

of categories." (Scambler, 1997: 115) For example, many women may "forbid the intimacy of kissing" (Scambler, 1997: 115) Bruckert et al. found that amongst their sample of Canadian sex workers employed in indoor settings, some participants "refuse to provide submission services or impose limits on the clients (refusing, for example, to be gagged)." (2003: 32) Likewise, Brewis and Linstead note the practices of "faking penetrative sex ('trick sex' between the well lubricated upper thighs) or faking oral sex using the hand" (2000a: 90) amongst their sample. The avoidance of penetrative intercourse is also noted in other studies:

The customer pays to empty himself in the prostitute's vagina. Perhaps the simplest method of protecting oneself is to cheat the customer of what he's paying for, to rip him off. It's also called a dry hustle. The large majority have done it once or, more often, many times. (Høigård & Finstad, 1992: 71)

Condom use for commercial sex was also widely reported in the literature on sex work in highly industrialized western societies. Jackson et al. affirm: "the vast majority of the women we spoke to pointed to the importance of condom use with clients and the fact that they consistently used condoms -- or at least tried to use condoms -- with clients especially when having vaginal intercourse." (2001: 46) More generally, Meaghan reports that: "Studies in Denmark, Switzerland, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada confirm that female sex workers have exceptionally high rates of prophylactic use and low seroprevalence-rates." (2001: 107) This tendency towards consistent condom use was also reported in O'Neill (1997), Pyett & Warr (1999), Bruckert et al. (2003) and Williamson & Folaron (2003). Meaghan states: "Sex workers in New Zealand have demonstrated exceptional negotiation skills and a strong sense of self-efficacy in their ability to persuade clients to use condoms and the use of safer sex alternatives such as frottage ("body slides") and masturbation ("hand relief")." (2001: 107) The author adds:

Canadian sex workers were similarly found to more consistently use condoms, Femidoms, and spermicides than the general public. They were also more inclined to avoid kissing, use a condom for vaginal sex, perform fellatio, and rarely engage in anal intercourse. (Meaghan, 2001: 107)

Boundaries mean little if they can't be enforced. I found that most sex workers were actively deploying some form of strategy to enforce their boundaries in terms of sexual acts and condom use. I noted that some in-call workers might rationalize with clients and explain to them the necessity of using condoms as an enforcement strategy. Pyett and Warr have referred to this strategy as "playing the therapist" and using "humour with their clients, in order to explain the risks of various STDs." (1997: 543) Maintaining boundaries can be difficult. Bruckert et al. noted that:

[W]orkers must repeatedly remind clients about the limits of the sexual services they provide. In some case, clients manage to manipulate them so effectively that they succeed in causing a significant breach in the boundaries established by the workers -- and then treat the worker contemptuously. (2003: 33)

Some authors have noted, like I did, that women may use other micro-strategies such as trickery to enforce condom use:

Some of the women spoke of how they were taught to use condoms either by a former "pimp" or other female prostitutes. Moreover, they were often taught strategies (such as obtaining the money prior to providing the service) to reduce the client's power, and to increase their power to insist on condom use. A few of the women spoke of how they slipped the condom on the client when he was otherwise distracted as a means of ensuring condom use. (Jackson et al. 2001: 46)

Williamson & Folaron's findings were similar:

Women were creative in overcoming male resistance regarding condom compliance. For example, some women hold condoms in the side of their cheek while negotiating for the date, slip it on

during oral sex and slide it off with her hand, the male never being the wiser. Intercourse requires even more skill and women meet the challenge. (2003: 278)

In their Australian study based on interviews with 24 women<sup>12</sup>, Pyett and Warr (1999) noticed that there was a great diversity in sex workers' approaches to 'risk management'. They note that on one side of the spectrum, some legal brothel workers "were able to outline firm guidelines for the services they would and would not provide and to describe strategies they employed to enforce condom use with all clients" (1999: 188) thus asserting that "these women maintained strict boundaries between themselves and their clients." (1999: 185) Some street workers were likewise found to be "able to outline specific routines or 'active risk management strategies'. [...] These women had established routines which included persuading the client that he needed to use a condom and checking the clients for signs of STDs." (Pyett and Warr, 1999: 191). On the other end of the risk management spectrum, one-third of the participants of this study were street workers who were:

identified as working without strategies [...] [and] could give no account of how they would enforce safe sex practices. Their personal situations were characterised by multiple difficulties, such as homelessness, social isolation, heavy drug use and a history of physical and sexual abuse in childhood. They were younger and had begun sex work at a younger age than other women in the study, although some had already worked for ten years. These women tended to talk in terms of a 'sixth sense' that offered little practical demonstration of how they were able to deal with client resistance to condoms. (Pyett and Warr, 1999: 192).

It should be reiterated that all of the women I interviewed work independently. While their actions were certainly constrained by social forces, they are their 'own boss.' O'Connell

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<sup>12</sup> The 24 participants in the study by Pyett and Warr were selected because they "were perceived as potentially vulnerable to risk because they were young, inexperienced, homeless, drug or alcohol dependent, or working in illegal brothels or on the street." (1999: 184)

Davidson explains that women who work for third parties have more difficulty imposing boundaries and conditions and enforcing them: "Prostitutes who are most exploited and most unfree in relation to third parties and clients are the least able to insist upon condom use as a condition of contract, enforce that condition and freely retract if the client refuses to comply." (1993: 38) Of course, independent sex workers may also encounter difficulties in setting boundaries (since they may be limited in their ability to enforce or retract from contracts). They are limited in this capacity, according to O'Connell Davidson, by their physical vulnerability (1993: 63), their financial situation (1993: 65,67) and their individual histories and psychologies (1993: 67).

So while sex workers generally report consistent condom use in commercial intercourse, unprotected sex with clients *does* occasionally happen. Four of the women I spoke to were willing to perform fellatio without a condom in some instances. Structural forces such as economic need, client intimidation and insistence, as well as substance abuse emerged in my interviews as significant issues in unsafe sex practices. The women in my sample reported that clients frequently request sex without a condom. Some of the women in my study were heavy drug users, and explained that they were less careful around safer sex practices when they were using or were in serious need of money to support their habit.

The literature on sex work reinforces these findings. Client insistence and threats of violence were noted in other studies. O'Neill reports that while the British sex workers she spoke to understood the importance of safer sex practices, "their clients are not so conscious of the risks. Many men ask and pay more for sex without the use of condoms." (1997: 17) Pyett and Warr recount:

[A]ll of the women in this study were determined to use condoms for sexual intercourse with clients and most were extremely reluctant to perform oral sex without a condom. However, client resistance, whether in the form of threats or enticements, was a continual obstacle to be overcome by negotiation in the sexual encounter. Physical assault and difficulties with enforcing condom use were reported much more frequently by street workers than by brothel workers. (1999: 186)

Clients' threats and insistence were not the only factors highlighted in the literature. Economic duress also emerged as a factor. In their study based in the Netherlands, Vanwesenbeeck et al. found that while most participants (81%) "used condoms consistently", approximately 10% "omitted to use a condom selectively and incidentally" and approximately 10% "regularly and unselectively worked without a condom." (1995: 504) In considering the case of risk takers, the authors conclude: "High financial need is an important factor in the fact that these women comply with circumstances that are very disagreeable in their own eyes as well." (Vanwesenbeeck et al. 1995: 513) Jackson et al. report: "a number of women also noted that at times, their economic need was a key factor. Some women reported that they would sometimes agree to service a client without a condom if it meant making needed money." (2001: 45) O'Connell Davidson explains: "The more financially desperate she is, the less freedom she has to dictate the terms of the exchange." (1993: 65) She states that while sex workers establish personal boundaries, "under economic duress prostitutes will sometimes feel that they have no choice but to breach their own rules and limits." (O'Connell Davidson, 1993: 67)

Substance abuse was also mentioned in the literature in relation to sex work and safer sex practices. Hard drugs can sometimes be used as a coping mechanism within sex work (in order to "numb the awareness") (Brewis & Linstead, 2000a: 86). However, Brewis and Linstead note that "although drug use made the work more bearable, it could compromise

their ability to negotiate safe sex with clients.” (2000a: 86) The authors state: “there is widely reported evidence that drug users may offer unprotected sex and that many clients still demand it.” (2000a: 89) In their Australian study, Pyett and Warr encountered some women who “had been persuaded to have unprotected oral sex with clients.” (1999: 192). These authors noticed that “almost all of these women needed large amounts of money to support drug habits and many acknowledged that they could lose control of the sexual encounter when seriously affected by drugs, or ‘savagely on the nod’, as one woman put it.” (Pyett and Warr, 1999: 192)

Structural forces thus have a serious incidence on safer sex practices in commercial encounters. “The unequal position of women in society -- discrimination in the labour market, economic inequality, and exposure to violence -- cannot be ignored in attempting to deal with safer sex issues.” (Meaghan, 2001: 108)

We have thus far established, with the findings in the present study and supported by the related literature, that sex workers generally establish boundaries with clients in terms of sexual acts and condom use. We have also established that there are attempts to enforce boundaries in the commercial sexual encounters, but that these may not always be successful, especially in the case of consistent condom use, where client insistence, economic need and substance abuse play considerable roles.

Moving on, let us explore the notion of boundaries as ‘emotional labour’ in sex work. O’Connell Davidson argues that: “If emotional labour is taken to be ‘the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display’ (Hochschild, 1983, p. 7), then the intensity of the prostitute’s emotional labour is quite phenomenal.” (1995: 8) A

review of the literature which pertains to sex workers' establishment of boundaries with clients reveals that boundaries in particular can be understood, at least in part, as emotional distancing strategies and coping techniques. Clearly, sex work is not easy for most people working in it. It places the worker in dangerous situations and poses risks. It involves very intimate relations with strangers in exchange for money, and for many women the relation with clients is difficult and unpleasant. I believe that boundaries are linked to self-protection.

Boundaries may serve as psychological and physical barriers between a sex worker and her client and thus help the sex worker cope with the work (Høigård & Finstad, 1992; Scambler, 1997; Jackson et al. 2001; Brewis & Linstead, 2000a; Williamson & Folaron, 2003). Interestingly, while sex workers have a high incidence of consistent condom use in commercial sex, such is not the case in their personal relationships. "Although the majority of the women stated that they always used, or at least tried to use, condoms with clients, it was quite the reverse when they discussed condom use at home." (Jackson et al. 2001: 46) It was commented that "many [sex workers] [...] see the condom as a barrier, real and symbolic ('He will never be able to reach me, I think to myself. It is like the condom guarantees that he will never touch me')." (Scambler, 1997: 115) Jackson et al. report: "For a number of the women, servicing a client "was bad enough" and they used condoms to keep the transaction as clean as possible." (2001: 46) The condom "and the generally non-negotiable nature of safe sex" are devices which enable "prostitutes to erect a psychological barrier between themselves and the client." (Brewis & Linstead, 2000a: 89) As explain Høigård and Finstad,

Almost all prostituted women demand that the customers use condoms, even for blow jobs. Its rational explanation lies in the prevention of sexual disease. Simultaneously the condom serves

as a physical barrier between the customer and the prostitute. Another related protective mechanism is to shy away from some sexual variations -- variations that are experienced as loathsome and degrading. This applies particularly to oral and anal sex. (Høigård & Finstad, 1992: 67)

The existence of boundaries on commercial (though not personal) sex may also exercise a separation between private and public and thus help protect one's identity (Høigård & Finstad, 1992; O'Connell Davidson, 1995; Brewis & Linstead, 2000a; Sanders, 2002). For Høigård and Finstad, setting boundaries results in reserving:

certain parts of the body for uses other than prostitution [...] In prostitution [the typical good-girl] boundary is inverted. The body parts' relative worth is reversed. Genitals are allowed. The mouth is taboo. Evaluated in terms of the usual double standard this is an odd, twisted system of values. (Høigård & Finstad, 1992: 66)

This phenomenon was clearly identifiable in the practices of participants in the present study -- such as Candi ("I just kiss my boyfriend") and Marie ("I kiss my kids"). Høigård and Finstad elaborate:

After considering it more carefully one realizes that the prostitute's bodily value-system is nevertheless logical. Customers are preoccupied with buying entry to the vagina, in part because in everyday life women's genitalia are less accessible than their mouths. When genitals and intercourse lose their value, another value is put in their place. It's not strange that it is the mouth that is allotted this sacred position. The mouth is the organ we use in the first all-absorbing relationship we have with life, the relationship with the mother. The mouth is the means of acquiring life-sustaining nourishment. The mouth is the instrument of speech. The mouth is the most important channel of communication with other people. It is the mouth, not the eyes, that is the mirror of the soul. A study of the mouth says more about a person's mental state than a study of the eyes. Cold sores cause more immediate personal irritation than [sic] most sexual diseases. The mouth is closely linked to identity. The mouth is particularly well-suited to assume a sacred position. (1992: 67)

In a large qualitative study of 100 sex workers (mostly indoor) in Britain, Sanders identified a clear need for boundaries to separate private and public sex and relationships:

In commercial sex the body is being sold as a consumption product, or at least body parts are rented out for an exchange of money. The ambiguous state of the body as a commodity means that for many sex workers it is imperative that boundaries are placed between private lives and working lives. (2002: 561)

Sanders believes that within a range of defence mechanisms deployed by sex workers to distinguish private and personal relations, the condom is a central component (2002: 561). The existence of such mechanisms demonstrates "how sex workers create strategies to protect their feelings and identities." (Sanders, 2002: 561) Boundaries help distinguish private sex from work sex:

In order for the sex act in the commercial relationship to achieve contrasting definitions to sex in private, women must engage in emotional labour to construct the meaning, sustain the division and consistently reproduce the separation each time a sex act is sold for money. The continual separation of sex work from private sex is achieved partly by limiting the type of sex acts that are sold. Sex workers often sell sex that involves the least amount of energy, physically and intellectually, often reducing contact to a minimum. In many situations sex workers take off as little clothing as possible, making only the bare minimum of their body parts available. They also control the sexual position (the woman on top was preferred rather than being dominated by the client), and many sex acts are not available as they are seen as too time consuming, too painful, disgusting or are simply reserved for their own private pleasure (Høigård and Finstad, 1992; O'Connell Davidson, 1998; Phoenix, 1999). (Sanders, 2002: 562)

Boundaries (in relation to condom use and sexual acts) may thus serve various functions for sex workers, amongst which, of course, are health and disease control. But laying boundaries in sexual encounters with clients appears to also serve to limit intimacy and control the commercial sex act, according to Sanders (2002: 562-563). Condoms and other boundaries can be understood as emotional distancing and psychological coping

techniques (Sanders, 2002: 563). “[Sex workers] often adopt a complex and flamboyant system of defence mechanisms as ‘tools of the trade’, with the intention of preventing that trade destroying their emotional stability and mental health.” (Sanders, 2002: 561) The author goes on to make a theoretical argument relating to agency, stating: “By controlling the meaning of condom use, sex workers are insisting that it is their right to define the situation and that it is in their power to prevent certain feelings occurring in inappropriate contexts.” (Sanders, 2002: 564) Moreover,

From the voices that have been presented here, as well as other research findings, it is clear that sex workers can be active participants in constructing ‘working identities’ and the meaning of commercial sex. Creating boundaries in their professional lives to protect personal relationships and self-identity enables women to assert their rights to sexual citizenship. (Sanders, 2002: 564)

### **3.2.7 Getting Paid**

In this section I will discuss practices surrounding the monetary transaction. I will discuss the common practice of insisting on getting paid ‘up-front’, as well as the exceptions where women will accept payment at the end of the exchange. I will follow this data description with a discussion, incorporating the results of other studies on sex workers’ practices.

#### Getting Paid Up-Front

Two of the four participants I interviewed who work primarily in-call had a preference for receiving payment from clients at the end of the date. They were the exception. The other two in-call workers, as well as all eight street workers interviewed in this study adhere to a strict ‘money-first’ policy. Anastasia, who works in-call, tells her clients “‘Ok, let’s take care of business first’.” She does this to protect her own well-being, stating:

If you're independent, for safety reasons you can't [wait until after] because somebody might decide they're gonna fuck off and not pay you. So, there's a number of reasons. I just rather get it out of the way because, you know, then there's some guys you don't know if they're psychologically imbalanced, they're like 'That fucking whore, she wants her money, you know, fuck that, I'm not giving it.' (Anastasia)

BottomsUp, who also works in-call, states that clients must pay "Right up-front ... They just put it on top of my, I have a counter there, it's just, if you've been with girls before you know you pay first, it's business. If you don't know that, then you shouldn't be [laugh] seeing girls, I mean it's the first thing, you know." Paying up-front, she explains, is the common practice. It's the way the business works.

The street workers I interviewed were unanimous on this topic: sex workers must receive payment from a client before performing sexual services. Candi works on the street and explains: "I want to see the money when I -- I get the money first, before I bring them anywhere near a private area, that's just the way I do things." (Candi) She states that "a lot of guys, they'll, they'll agree, then they'll get you to the spot and they'll be like 'Oh, I don't have enough', or, or 'Oh, I forgot my wallet at home', or 'I gotta stop at a pay stop' like a cash thing before, or they'll just try to jump on you." (Candi) She explains that when clients don't want to pay beforehand, she adopts a no-nonsense attitude: "Uh, well I tell them straight up 'You're not gonna fucking pay me, you're not getting shit. Drive me back'. You know? Simple enough." (Candi)

For Marie, who also works on the street, clients must pay before the sexual act. I asked her to explain her reasoning for this choice:

Why? Because I, myself, I am, like uh, if they don't pay me, ok, I'm afraid they're not gonna pay me after, if they're pricks and they got a free thing going, you know. Or, when the cops, if the cops catch you, and I have no money in my pocket, I'm going inside with like nothing. You know, that's another thing I had a fear of. (Marie)

Like other participants, Marie has encountered clients who try to delay payment. She states: "I've had where, I've, they'll start saying 'Well listen, why don't you, I'll give you fifteen dollars now, fifteen dollars after.' You know and, pay little by little, you know. I was like 'No, you give it all at once' or, you know." (Marie)

Pauline, who mostly works on the street, explains that she likewise gets the money up-front. She explains her reasoning, making a distinction for trusted regulars:

Well I think that uh, primarily women are more uh, you know trustworthy. I think that um, getting the money up-front is a better way also of feeling the client out. If a client is um, a serious client and he has, you know, a lot of respect for you he will pay the money up-front as opposed to afterwards. And I think that that also changes, you know, when you have a regular client then it doesn't matter, you know, pay after or pay before, it's not gonna be -- but I think initially, then you get the money up-front. (Pauline)

Star also receives payment up-front, stating that otherwise, "once they get their service, then they can just turn around and say well 'Fuck you.'" She takes the attitude that "You don't give me the money, you don't get nothing," adding "It's money first or I'll walk. Ok, that's it, that's the bottom line." (Star) She refers to this practice as 'the rule'.

## Receiving Payment Afterwards

Two of the 12 women I spoke to do not adhere to a money-first policy. Kara works in call, offering what she calls 'erotic massage,' and prefers to receive payment at the end of the exchange with a client:

I'm a bit unusual that way, I don't take payment until after, um, for a couple of reasons. Part of it is because, my background is largely massage, and, while right now I have sort of a flat rate, the typical scenario, at least in massage parlours is, the guys pay an initial fee, but then all the other services are extra ... some girls will ask for the money, you know as soon as the guy wants the service, but my feeling was, you know you're in the room, you've got this nice mood, do I want him to have to get up and rustle around in the dark for \$20, and then ten minutes later rustle around for another \$20. So I just decided at that early stage, you know, I would just wait and get payment at the end. And, interestingly enough, you know, in 12 years, I'd say maybe eight people have ripped me off.

For Kara, we can understand that getting paid afterwards is a different kind of strategy, with the objective, seemingly, to foster a good relation with her clientele. She adds: "And the other thing I learned early on was when I got the money at the end, um, guys would say 'Wow, I really like that', you know, it makes them feel that you know, they're not [mistrusted]." (Kara)

While Sophie agrees with most that "A hooker's number one rule is to ask for the money up-front", it is not her practice to do so. Similarly to Kara, Sophie appears to want to foster good working relationships with clients, who are typically regulars:

For those that I thought were worth it, I wouldn't ask them, and then see what would happen afterwards. And 99% of the time, they all paid. And they said 'You know what? You really are a decent person because most of the girls just want that money, they don't give a shit. They take five or ten minutes, blow us off and

then that's it. You didn't ask for the money up-front, you took your time'.

Sophie explains that she preferred not to have to ask for payment, and to see if clients respected her enough to pay her: "I wanted to see how much respect they actually had. And if they had respect enough to pay, then I had respect enough to keep them on as regulars." It is thus utilized almost as a weeding out strategy. She continues: "the ones who did pay, you pretty much knew they would be very honourable. And that was somebody you wanted to stick with. And you were somebody they wanted to stick with, because you trusted and respected them, and that was unusual for them." (Sophie)

### Discussion

Getting paid up-front can be understood as a strategy employed by many sex workers to maximize personal well-being. The women want to make sure that they receive payment. While a client could always rob the sex worker to get the money back after the sexual act (an experience some of the women I spoke to told me about) these street-savvy women nonetheless feel they hold more power in the sex worker/client relation if they have already received payment. So common is this practice that a number of the participants in this study referred to it as a 'rule'.

I believe that there is a relation here to the 'rules of the game' or 'street codes', which were discussed previously (see section 3.2.3 "Entering into a Contract"). "The game" -- the street prostitution subculture related to pimping -- has its distinctive vocabulary and rules. Along with rules such as the prohibition of anal sex and kissing, I believe that requesting payment up-front is likewise a 'rule of the game' or convention within street sex work.

This 'money-first' convention finding is congruent with the limited information found on this topic within the literature. Miller, in her case study of street workers in the U.S., found that throughout their encounters with clients, participants employed a number of strategies to maximize their safety, one of which was to get paid 'up-front' (1993: 434-435). The practice is not exclusive to street workers, though, and may be generalized in sex work as a protective measure to ensure payment. O'Connell Davidson states of Desiree, an independent self-employed British sex worker: "Unless they are trusted regulars, Desiree insists that clients pay up front. The money they give her is then safely stowed away." (1993: 92)

Thus, though there are some exceptions to 'the rule' -- such as the cases of Kara and Sophie in my study, who get paid at the end of the exchange in an effort to foster good relations with clients -- sex workers generally choose to demand payment before sexual services are rendered. This is one way that women are maintaining power in the relation with clients. Drawing on a 'convention' or 'rule', they appear to be exerting agency in their enforcement of this practice (with a no-nonsense attitude) to maximize their well-being.

### **3.2.8 Coping with Bad Dates**

The term 'bad dates' can refer to incidents of (in no particular order): physical assault; rape and sexual assault; robbery; verbal abuse, harassment and threats; confinement; condom refusal; unacceptable requests; and being thrown from car (Lowman & Fraser, 1995). In a technical report for the Department of Justice Canada, the authors specifically define a "bad date" as "any date which involved any physical, sexual or emotional acts of violence as well as any form of robbery/financial loss as a result of a customer." (1995)

The women in my sample widely reported incidences of bad dates -- violent encounters with clients, or perhaps more appropriately, men posing as clients. The discussions surrounding this topic were the most difficult in the interviews conducted in this study, both for me as the interviewer and of course for participants to talk about and relive. I drew on my volunteer experience on a crisis line for women who have experienced sexual assault and on the training I received for this work<sup>13</sup>. This baggage helped me, in the interviews, to thread on the issues of violence, rape and victimization with, I hope, respect, sensitivity and empathy for the courageous women who shared their feelings and experiences with me. In my writing of this section of the results, I have decided, as in other sections, to provide the reader with a great deal of direct quotes by participants. While I have some concerns about sharing with the reader detailed accounts of women's personal experiences of victimization, I believe that my exploration is not gratuitous. The goal here is to illustrate that violence does occur within the context of sex work (under present conditions). I want to then present how the women interviewed protect themselves and/or deal with a confrontation with a client as well as consider recourse after victimization. Further, I will present respondents' reflections about the danger present in sex work. I will follow this data description with a discussion, putting the information recounted by interview participants in the context of broader research on sex work.

### Violence in Sex Work

Three of the women I spoke to, while acknowledging that bad dates happen, did not want to discuss their personal experiences with violence, and I respected this. The other women

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<sup>13</sup> I volunteered for a period of two years at CALACS (Centre d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel) in Ottawa, from spring 2000 to 2002. The training and experience I received there were invaluable. I thank both the women employed at CALACS, for their wisdom and leadership, and my fellow volunteers, for their friendship, support, and dedication.

recounted experiences of violence and victimization as sex workers: rape and sexual assault, physical assault by clients, being driven out of town by car dates against one's will, and home invasions. While the experiences recounted by participants, some of which I chose to present here, were brutal, it is my understanding that they are not uncommon in sex work.

Anastasia introduced me to the term 'home invasion.' According to Justice Canada, the term "describes a robbery or break and enter of a private residence when the perpetrators force their way in while the occupants are at home and use or threaten to use violence against the occupants." (2003) Anastasia, who keeps a 'bad date sheet' in Toronto, explained to me that so-called 'bawdy-houses' or locations in which sex work takes place are often targeted for home invasions. She stated:

What they do is, ok, uh, say you're running an in-call. Somebody books an appointment, somebody comes to the door, next thing you know, there's bandanas up on their faces, and people have guns and people are being pistol-whipped, taking hold of your money. That's what a home invasion is. Sometimes people are being tied-up. Uh, I had a, the last report I had was a lone Black male had been to this place before, came upstairs and he pulled out a gun and, robbed all the girls and, you know. (Anastasia)

The women I interviewed told me about experiences of violence at the hands of clients. Anastasia was sexually assaulted on the job when she worked on the street, prior to working in-call:

I was raped. And, it was like, the horror -- oh my god, I've been a sex trade worker for nine and a half years and somebody did that to me? And I became like really, really angry. And I couldn't do it anymore, it was like seeing the guy who raped me drive by me like three months later [...] Was he a client? No. No. I made the mistake of getting into his car, you know, driving somewhere; he was supposed to be a client.

Marsha told me about one of her experiences with a violent client:

One time I took my date over the bridge, and he raped me ... I was waiting for him to take his money, he was going for his wallet, and I was going for a condom. And I had my head down and I was looking in my purse, and as I pulled out the condom, as I went to put up my head, I felt something sharp, on my neck and it was a carpet knife, one of those hooked, right on my jugular vein. And he said 'Listen you bitch, one of you's ripped me off and uh, and uh, now I want what I deserve, I want to get laid', basically. Well I said 'But it wasn't me that ripped you off' -- 'Well it was a blond girl.' And I said 'It wasn't me. Was she a big girl?' 'No, but she was blond.' 'So I'm blond, she's blond, I'm a hooker, she's a hooker, so now you're gonna take advantage of me, because someone took advantage of you?' He said 'Well they're your friends. You should work to straighten it out.' So I started to cry -- well, not cry but the tears welled up in my eyes and I got really scared. And I said 'Listen, ok, ok, ok. You want to get laid that's fine.' I said 'But I have uh herpes and syphilis and gonorrhoea and uh, I think I have HIV, and uh, I think that you should better wear a condom'. I just said that, because I was so afraid ... So, he did ... uh, like we were in a car, he put his seat back, took off one of my pant legs and he crawled over on top of me and, on about the third or fourth strokes, he lifted himself off me and ripped off the condom. Well I went berserk. Because I'm thinking if I told him I have all these things and he's taking off the condom, he must have something he wants to give me ... like HIV, like AIDS. And, I started to scream, and the knife was in his hand ... he had locked the door, but I guess I didn't realise with the kind of car it was when you pull the handle the lock pops up. So I pulled the handle and the door flew open, and as the door flew open he pushed me out of the car, threw my purse at me, and drove away.

Dea told me about a very brutal attack she lived through:

He was a client; he picks me up on the market. We're walking, I'm gonna do him right there. He shows me the money, I knew he had the money; I had my hands in his fucking pockets. I could've grabbed the money, but I'm honest ... Freggin' guy raped the shit out of me. I had to go to the hospital. My back was broken, my pelvis was broken.

Some of the women interviewed also recounted experiences of being driven out, abducted, or stranded by clients. Candi stated: "And a lot of the girls ... they end up

getting, getting in a car and buddy locks the child proof locks and they can't get out and they fucking let them out in Aylmer, 'Give me a free blow-job or walk back', you know? That's happened to me in my past."

### Protection and Contingency Strategies

Having established that violence does occur within the context of sex work, I asked the women I interviewed about confrontations with clients, about contingency plans when bad dates do happen, about getting out of dangerous situations. Some of the women I interviewed explained that they try their best to talk their way out of difficult situations with clients. Dea explains that she will tell clients just about anything to get out of situations where she feels vulnerable and uncomfortable. "You know uh, don't give them a rough time, even if they give you a rough time, say 'Well, ok, well this is just not gonna work, my pimp's right there' or 'I've got somebody waiting' ... You talk your way out of it." (Dea) Kara explains that in situations with clients where she's felt vulnerable, she uses her interpersonal skills to 'talk clients down' and thus ward off violence:

I've always just been able to talk them down and tried to normalize -- not just the situation but myself, and then with lots of sort of small talk and little snippets about my life, relaxed body language, keeping an eye on where the door is, but during it all my heart just pounds. [...] There have been cases where people have, guys have been, not violent but slightly physically forceful, and usually what I've done is, once again just physically ... blocked them, like kept my thighs really tight, or wiggled a certain way, and usually they get the message and if they haven't I've gone from the no-no-no and the sort of cajoling tone to something very harsh, you know -- I've said 'No!', and I've removed myself, and usually that, you know, will stop them.

When words are not enough to ward off an attacker, some women will draw on more physical measures. A number of the sex workers I spoke to explained that they deal with

difficult confrontations with clients with physical force. Five participants made specific references to weapons (or makeshift weapons) for self-defense.

For example, Anastasia -- who works in-call and has a carefully planned workplace, told me that she keeps a baseball bat in her apartment in order to protect herself against clients who are threatening. She stated, in reference to her bedroom:

You noticed there was frames, pictures by the bed and, there was like a glass lantern on the other side. Well, all those are potential weapons, um, too. Sharp corners, things to like gouge, bash people with -- I know that sounds horrible, there's like two knives under the bed on my side as well. One's a big long dagger, one's a short one, you know, whichever I can grab first, you know.  
(Anastasia)

BottomsUp also works in-call. She noted: "You just gotta be prepared for the worst. And uh, I always keep something around the house just in case they get out of hand ... Fire extinguisher, bat." (BottomsUp) Sophie also has a history of working inside, in her case mostly out of houses rented specifically for sex work. At these working houses, she and her associate not only had doormen, but they also had guard dogs (Rottweilers): "Um, bad dates, like I said, there were dogs for them. You know? The minute I would yell out, the dogs would be in that room, and he'd know. Like, I mean, there's ways for girls to protect themselves." (Sophie)

Candi, who works on the street in Ottawa, told me that her regular practice is to carry both a knife and pepper spray when she goes out to work. She also told me that she makes do with makeshift weapons when necessary. Case in point -- her stiletto heels: "pick them up and use them as weapons, because they're very good weapons, stiletto heels are very good weapons. [Laugh] I put holes in people's heads, with stiletto heels. Yeah, take them

off -- crack! Oh, they hurt, they hurt, yeah." (Candi) She candidly tells me about a number of physical altercations with clients:

Oh yeah, I fight back, when I'm attacked, man or woman. I wrestle with these guys [boyfriend and male friend] all the time. Oh yeah. I play football with them. Like, tackle football like, there's no rules. We wrestle all the time. I can use nunchucks. No, I'm a street fighter, I mean I've lived on the streets all my life, you learn, how to survive, you know? (Candi)

While Sarah does not carry any weapons, she will fight back physically against clients who cross the line: "If I'm doing a date and all of a sudden he starts getting carried away thinking well, this or that, um, I've had to fight with a couple, I have gone into physical confrontations with people." She stated: "I've been on the street since I was 12. I was taught how to fight. I don't like to, but push me in the corner and I will." (Sarah) Marsha also carries weapons when working: "Sometimes I'd carry a rat-tail comb, a stainless steel comb with a long tail on it. Or I'd carry like a little exacto knife. For a while there I carried an ice pick. But I always had a cell phone; not really a weapon, but I mean, if nine-one-one's on speed dial."

Another innovative strategy that Marsha explained to me related to building and drawing on alliances with taxi drivers. Marsha explains that taxi drivers will sometimes assist sex workers in difficult situations:

And, and then of course you have a network of cab drivers [...] because most girls have their own cab driver that they prefer to take [...] I have a friend that drives a taxi for Capital, and that's when I met him I was a working girl and to this day we're still friends [...] If a guy's threatening to hit you your cab driver will help you. Say, say, say I was in a hotel room. I'm at the Concorde and I call [my cab driver friend]. And I say 'Ok Joe, I'm gonna be ready to leave in fifteen minutes, can you come pick me up,' because the guy's only paid me for such a time, this is why I'm leaving. So, that makes the guy hopefully a little leery to hurt you because he

knows someone's coming ... But if my cab driver was outside and he knew I was in room twelve and I wasn't coming out, he's come knock on the door, for sure."

Not all of the women I interviewed were able to name specific strategies for getting out of dangerous situations or fighting back against violent dates. Some women seemed resigned that violence is an almost integral part of sex work. Dea told me about violent situations she has experienced, and I asked her how she handled that: "I just cry. [Laugh] You just, you just sit there. I just sit there. I take it. I take it and then uh, if that guy freggin' well falls asleep, he'd better not fall asleep because I'd take it out, I'll take your drugs. I'll take your money." She believes that fighting back will worsen the situation for her, perhaps spurring an attacker to greater violence.

Finally, I want to discuss the content of the interviews I conducted in relation to 'recourse' after a bad date. The women I spoke to were mixed on their willingness to report the crime to police. There was a clear mistrust for law enforcement amongst interview participants. A number of interview participants told me they would not call on police after an assault in the context of sex work. While some participants were ambivalent about law enforcement officers, others felt they and other sex workers were severely mistreated by police officers. I asked Sophie about police treatment of sex workers: "[They treat us] like a piece of shit. Like we're not human. And that's exactly how they treat hookers, like, they're beneath, they're subhuman ... they don't count, they don't exist, except when one of their bodies show up and then it's a pain in the ass." (Sophie) Kara offers an explanation:

We don't really have the protections built-in ... because the police tend to be the adversaries [laugh] ... and this also links to the stigma and the stereotypes about prostitutes ... you know, if you do have an issue of assault, even outside of sex work, even in a domestic situation, you know, are you gonna be taken seriously if people know you're a prostitute, or, you know, if the assailant, you

know, informs the police -- that, that you're a prostitute or other type of sex worker. So, you know, you have that, that constant pressure that's really, it really is a terrible strain.

On the other hand, some of the women I interviewed told me they had gone to the police after a bad date. For example, Anastasia explained that she has generally reported crimes committed against her as a sex worker to the police. However, "I didn't necessarily get responded to, ok, in the appropriate fashion." (Anastasia) Marie has, on a couple of occasions, called upon police officers after a bad date. Marie explained:

Another one I, I told the cops about because the guy wanted me clean -- he was just a prick, it was in the Vanier area. He picked me up, he wanted uh, to make sure I was clean. I said 'Ok fine, you know, make sure I'm clean.' He wanted to clean me with a face cloth and soap, but I didn't realise the soap was in the face cloth and he shoved the soap so far up I had to go to the hospital for it.

Marsha told me about one occasion where she did seek help from the police after a sexual assault which took place in Gatineau (Hull sector) directly across one of the bridges from Ottawa:

I got his license plate number, I had a perfect description of him. I came back to Ottawa, and I phoned the police, because I had solicited him in Ottawa, and he had Ottawa plates, but I had performed the date, or the rape, in Hull. And the cop who was working at the time ... said 'Marsha, I'll take his license plate.' He says 'But I'm telling you right now, you have to make a report in order for us to be able to go, you have to report this to the Hull police.' I said 'No way.' He said 'Why?' I said 'First of all, because I have warrants, in Montreal, and second of all, because they don't care.' They don't. They're rude and they're mean and, and they'd probably laugh at me. And then they'd take me to jail in Montreal for my warrants, they wouldn't care that I got raped. So, not all police forces are the same.

Candi told me that she generally does not seek help for herself from police after an assault: "I've never uh, had them help me because I've never really had a problem and

then gotten out and ran to a cop. I've always just ran home, you know or ran to the dealers or ran and got my fucking gun you know, or ran and whatever. I don't truly trust cops." However, Candi told me about a very negative experience where police did get involved after a bad date. She recounted that after she was brutally beaten by a man, in his parked car, she was arrested by the police, who had been called by a passerby:

The cops showed up because I guess somebody had heard or seen him beating me in the parking lot. The cops showed up, they arrested him and arrested me. Hmm. Arrested me, I went to jail, that night, I had no fucking buttons on my dress.

*Arrested you for what?*

Because I was a prostitute ... but, the next morning they let me go. They didn't charge me they just held me there overnight. Gave me no blanket. Three male cops -- dress, little dress with no buttons, I'm like holding it shut, you know, I'm bleeding from everywhere -- and they're like 'Oh, do you have AIDS?!' They're all like 'Ooh, you're a prostitute!' and, I'm like, I started talking to them in French, swearing at them you know (Candi)

While sex workers may not always want to report bad dates to police, some may report it elsewhere: directly to other sex workers, or to organizations that keep bad date lists. Marie stated: "I just, basically tell the girls. If there's something that happened to me, you know, I'll tell the girls that work in the same area, you know, 'Watch out for such and such' or, you know, and if it's a bad date I'll tell SITE van." While I have previously discussed, in section 3.2.2, the use of bad date lists as a screening tool/strategy in client solicitation, what we have here is agentic action using the bad date list as an alternative recourse strategy.

Candi, as I explained earlier, has not chosen to report incidences to law enforcement officials. She has, on the other hand, drawn upon a sort of 'street justice,' of retribution, explaining:

I was out on the street and they were all drunk and they, they fucking started harassing me, trying to grab my ass and stuff, I'm like 'Yeah, you watch!' Right now two are in hospital, and the other one -- anyways I got them beaten up ... By friends of mine. I know where they live, so you know. (Candi)

Dea told me about what could be termed a *passive* form of retribution. Though, sadly, this passive sort of vengeance, of 'getting back' is vastly out of line with the magnitude of the offence:

One [man] took me all the way to, Quebec side. Rape[d] me to the point where I was bleeding, and but I'm ok, because ... it was in his white car, and I didn't tell him I had my period because I knew he was an asshole to begin with, and I had a feeling, a bad feeling. And I knew he had a wife and kids too. So he's gonna have to explain all that blood all over his white plush seats and everything. So that's how I got him back. (Dea)

Dea also told me about how she has coped after incidences of sexual and physical assault experienced on the job. Dea has turned to drugs in an attempt to numb the experience of violence:

And I walk away and then I just uh -- actually I ended up, a couple times, almost overdosing because I wanted to get rid of the pain so much I wasn't paying attention to what I was putting in the spoon. It was just like, get it in me, because I hurt so freggin' much and it's not just inside -- my heart, my whole body. So I just put it in and by then it's too late. But you don't realise, you're not thinking, it's just get rid of this feeling. The feeling is not, it's not even shame, it's not anger, you don't even know what you're feeling, it's just you don't want to feel it. You know and that's whether you're abused or not, but usually the abuse makes it twice as bad because you just can't think straight ... It's like, listen, gone, no taking time to put it in a spoon and look -- it's pour the whole thing in, get some water, use puddle water, away you go ... I don't care, I'm hurting. You know? That's really, it's such a complicated, you're doing one heck of a, you picked a heck of a study to do, hey?

## Reflections Upon Danger in Sex Work

In my interviews, I asked participants to reflect upon the danger, which may or may not be inherent in sex work -- but is undeniably a part of the prostitution industry within the present social context. Dea told me about the risks in street sex work, explaining that it is "because you got ...you got power there, because you're in control, but yet you don't know whether you're gonna live or die, so you're on excitement hey, you're living on edge." I asked her if she thought her work, in general, was risky or dangerous. She answered:

Very much so ... because you never know. Because when you're being picked up off the street and you're bringing them into a dark parking lot so you won't get caught, you don't know what's in that car.

*Ok. So you're kind of trading safety for not being caught?*

That's what living on edge is. The excitement, not knowing what's gonna happen. (Dea)

Marsha also discussed with me the danger she experienced as a sex worker. She is of the opinion that "bad dates are a common occurrence. And hopefully, you know, if anybody's never had one, I hope they never do." (Marsha). She adds:

Well, you get into a car with a guy and, I mean, he could be a murderer. You go into an alley with a guy, he could be a murderer. It's a very dangerous -- you don't know, at any time, any day, and time ... You just, I mean, even not prostitution, you can live with someone all your whole life and never know them. You know what I mean? Everything is dangerous but prostitution, for sure. (Marsha)

Kara told me she had not frequently experienced bad dates in her 14 years in sex work. I asked her about danger in sex work: "I'm not really conscious of it, but every now and again I realise that I think there is a constant low-grade fear." (Kara) As a sex worker

activist, she has reflected upon violence against sex workers in the context of woman abuse, and of the prostitute as the epitome of the victim in a patriarchal society. She told me: "you know there are gonna be guys who just want to commit, you know, violence against women and prostitutes can be easy targets. They're accessible, and you're not necessarily gonna ... be investigated never mind charged and sentenced." (Kara) Comments from Anastasia, who is also a sex worker activist in Toronto, pick up on this thread:

[T]here is an element of danger, but that comes from the apathy society has in their attitudes towards hookers, that we're expendable, you know. I think you know, you won't ever change everybody and ... society's not perfect but if you'd work on that, then you'd see a dramatic decrease in the way people violate us to a degree. Because it's like oh, well, these people count -- society has that ability to dictate how people should behave, and they refuse to [do that] with us.

Anastasia maintains: "I think you'd curtail a lot of the violence and the way people deal with us in that regard if, you know, there was some more acceptability." She places sex work in the context of labour rights and working conditions, adding:

This is the way I will sum it up. The danger comes from the apathy of society, unwillingness to deal with [prostitution] and get over it, and tell people that this is a profession like anybody else who might be a worker, and we have rights and responsibilities as well as ... expectations of how society or members of society should treat us. So ... we have rights as workers. You know, regardless of how you may feel, because you may look down upon people working at McDonald's but, you know, you certainly, whether you care or not, those people have rights and, that's that. And why shouldn't we have, you know -- all workers should have rights. You know, you expect, working for a company that people can't come in the building and go berserk and shoot you. Well I expect that people are not supposed to go berserk and shoot me, either, you know. (Anastasia)

The women I spoke to during this research thus placed violence in sex work in the wider context of violence against women in a patriarchal society.

### Discussion

The findings I have described in relation to “bad dates” are very consistent *with* and supported *by* the empirical literature on sex work. Sex workers unequivocally experience violence at the hands of clients -- this is widely reported in the body of literature on sex work, as I will present. Benoit and Millar report: “While most commercial sexual encounters between client and worker proceed in a straightforward manner, the potential for violence is ever present.” (2004a: 50)

Empirical studies involving sex workers in Canadian, American, Australian and Western-European cities report that a high proportion of respondents have experienced violence at the hands of clients (see for example Silbert & Pines, 1982; Maher & Curtis, 1992; Høigård & Finstad, 1992; Miller 1993; Lowman & Fraser, 1995; Vanwesenbeeck et al. 1995: 510; Pyett & Warr, 1999; Brewis & Linstead, 2000a; Norton-Hawk, 2001; Sanchez, 2001; Thukral et al., 2003; Raphael & Shapiro, 2004; Benoit and Millar, 2004a; Lowman, 2004).

Benoit & Millar conducted a study involving 201 respondents working in different venues of prostitution in the Victoria, B.C. area. Their participants worked mostly independently from third parties (2004a: 42). The authors reported “almost all of those interviewed for this study said that they had been exposed to dangerous working conditions on at least one occasion. Indeed, the majority of respondents mentioned their fear of abuse as the worst thing about working in the sex trade.” (Benoit & Millar, 2004a: 50-51)

In a Norwegian study, involving women working in different sex work venues, Høigård & Finstad found that:

The prostitution milieu is a violent milieu. A few pimps use violence [...] But it is without doubt customers who are responsible for most of the violence against prostitutes. The great majority of tricks take place without traditional violence. The majority of customers are peaceful men. But not all. If the woman has had *many* customers, there is a strong probability that she has experienced customer violence. Nineteen of the 26 women we interviewed have been exposed to varying forms of violence once or, more often, many times; from slaps to rape, from confinement to threats of murder. The seven who have not been exposed to violence say they're lucky, and simultaneously talk of violent episodes friends have been victims of. (1992: 58)

Furthermore, the venue of sex work -- whether on the street or indoor, in one's own home or in a parlor -- appears to have a significant relation to experiences of violence. Street workers seem to be particularly vulnerable to victimization at the hands of clients. In their quantitative study involving 222 women from different sex work venues, Raphael & Shapiro found that "Street-level prostitution had the greatest prevalence of being slapped, punched, hair pulled, kicked, ripped clothes, and threatened with a weapon." (2004: 133). Benoit & Millar argue that "in addition to a work environment that often entails working alone, at night, and in dimly lit areas, the current Federal legislation that makes soliciting in a public space illegal limits the street worker's ability to screen out potentially violent and dangerous clients." (2004a: 51)

In a Department of Justice Canada report, based on a survey of street-involved sex workers in Vancouver, B.C., the authors assert that "98% of the women had been victims of violence as a result of a "bad date" at least once while they had been working." (Lowman & Fraser, 1995) Other Canadian federal government publications highlight the

vulnerability of street-involved sex workers. Namely, a Justice Canada report from the Federal, Provincial, Territorial Working Group on Prostitution states:

The street is a dangerous place for prostitutes. There is a relationship between violence against prostitutes, including assaults and homicides, and the venue of its occurrence. Nearly all assaults and murders of prostitutes occur while the prostitute is working on the street. (1998)

A number of other studies focusing on women involved in street work also highlight the level of violence present in these women's working lives (Maher & Curtis, 1992; Pyett & Warr, 1999; Silbert & Pines, 1982)

Finally, there is a high incidence of murder amongst women who sell sex in Canada. A number of studies focusing on women involved in street-level sex work also highlight the level of violence present in these women's working lives (see Silbert & Pines, 1982; Maher & Curtis, 1992; and Pyett & Warr, 1999). Numerous tragic and extreme cases of violence against sex workers have been reported in Canada in the last few years (the Pickton and the Bakker cases in Vancouver, as well as the unsolved murders of sex workers in Edmonton are three examples). While it is clear from recent news reports that the figures have climbed since then, a 1997 Statistics Canada report on street prostitution reveals that

Between 1991 and 1995, 63 known prostitutes were murdered. Almost all were female (60); seven were juveniles aged 15 to 17. Most deaths were related to the trade: 50 prostitutes were thought to have been killed by clients, and 8 by pimps or in a drug-related incident. (Duchesne, 1997: 1)

This same report highlights findings from 1994 and 1995 surveys, carried out on behalf of the Department of Justice Canada, in various Canadian cities<sup>14</sup>, on violence against sex workers: "A recent study confirms that physical and sexual assaults on street prostitutes are commonly carried out by clients, pimps and boyfriends." (Duchesne, 1997: 8)

In the face of such a context of "well-founded" (Høigård & Finstad, 1992: 58) "constant low-grade fear," (Kara) sex workers utilise different strategies, to varying degrees of success, in order to resist and cope with violence at the hands of clients. I learned about this in my interviews with participants, who have been involved in sex work for an average of 18 years, and whose experiences are generally reflected within the body of literature on sex work. In their (somewhat dated) predominantly quantitative study based on structured interviews with 200 women involved in street prostitution in the U.S., Silbert & Pines report:

In 78% of the cases of physical abuse by the customers, the women felt they could do nothing about the abuse ("Do nothing; go along with it; take it; nothing you can do.") In 16 percent of the cases, women mentioned fighting back; in 8%, they cited getting away; and in 5%, they suggested talking their way out of the problem. Despite the fact that the main reason for having a pimp was the protection he provides, only 9% of the women mentioned telling the pimp. One percent mentioned reporting to the police; 3% cited warning other women; 1% carry a weapon; 1% mentioned "letting someone else know where you are. (1982: 128)

In my interviews, I found that some women deal with difficult confrontations with clients with physical force. In fact, some participants referred to carrying weapons in order to defend themselves. The use of violence in self-defence is highlighted in a number of empirical studies on sex work. Studies by Silbert & Pines (1982), Høigård & Finstad (1992), Miller (1993), Norton-Hawk (2001), Bruckert et al. (2003), Thukral et al. (2003) and

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<sup>14</sup> Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, Winnipeg and Vancouver. See Brannigan, 1996; Fleischman 1996; La boîte à qu'on-se-voir, 1996; Lowman & Fraser, 1996.

Williamson & Folaron (2003) make specific reference to carrying weapons. Norton-Hawk, in her study based on in-depth interviews with 50 female street workers in the U.S. affirms:

Believing that they can't rely on the law, these women are prepared to use violence in self-defense. Fifty percent of the subjects admit to carrying a weapon such as a knife, a broken bottle, a can of mace, scissors, high-heeled shoes, or a gun. Razors are popular because they avoid legal complications and can be concealed in easily accessible places such as between the fingers, in their hair, or in the mouth. Eighty-two percent of the women report having verbally abused a john and 38% have actually used a weapon against a customer. (2001: 413)

The 12 women I interviewed in Ottawa and Toronto also had misgivings about turning to law enforcement as recourse after being victimized. The women interviewed by Høigård & Finstad had similar reticence to go to police for help, and the authors argue that: "Generally it seems that women are often met with offensive reactions when they attempt to report a rape. The prostitute woman's position is even weaker." (1992: 62) Thukral, Ditmore & Horowitz report that in their American study:

The overwhelming majority of respondents did not go to the police after they experienced violent incidents. Street-based sex workers described enormous difficulties in their attempts to report prostitution-related violence to police [...] Others who attempted to report violent crimes were told by police that their complaints would not be accepted, that this was what they should expect, and that they deserve all that they get. (2003: 8)

Miller's findings are also similar. The author explains: "The women I spoke with did not make a habit of going to the police when they were victimized. Usually, this was because they felt the police would not take their complaints seriously or would harass them for being on the streets." (1993: 440) She continues:

However, the women I spoke with did occasionally turn to the police, especially when it was to report a man they considered particularly menacing, or someone who was targeting street

prostitutes regularly. Usually when they did so, it was not to press charges, which they perceived as futile, but to call upon the police to stop the man from further violence. While the police were not perceived as an avenue women could go through individually in order to combat violent men, they did believe that the police could be useful in scaring potentially dangerous men away (Miller, 1993: 440-441).

If women do not frequently report these crimes to police, it does not mean that they are silent. The women I interviewed mentioned warning other workers -- either personally or through the intermediary of a bad date sheet. This is reflected in other studies. For example, Miller notes that there is some solidarity between sex workers: "the women I spoke with also discussed a code of ethics among street prostitutes that involved sharing information about tricks with one another." (1993: 432) This act of reporting to the bad date sheet is a sort of recourse strategy, in the same way as consulting the bad date sheet can be understood as a screening strategy (see section 3.2.2).

On the other hand, some women might seek 'retribution'. One of the participants in my study discussed this practice, explaining that while she does not trust law enforcement officers, she has resorted to street justice, seeking retribution for abuses against her by having other persons physically assault the offender. Similarly, in an American case study looking at agency and victimization in the lives of sex workers, one participant explained that she went to the police for help after being assaulted and the police blamed the sex worker and refused to take a report. The sex worker then decided to opt for street justice instead (Sanchez, 2001: 68).

Finally, I would like to reflect on violence against sex workers, drawing on the body of empirical literature on sex work, in western industrialized societies. In my interviews, I asked participants to discuss the danger that is part of the prostitution industry within the

present social context. Interview participants placed violence in sex work in the wider context of violence against women. I believe that relations of power are at play in sex work. But these relations in the prostitution industry are simply a [somewhat distorted] reflection of relations in wider society. Prostitutes are "easy targets" (Kara) for men who want to commit violence against women in a patriarchal society, since 'prostitutes' and sex work are so marginalized and stigmatized (whore stigma). There are "[w]idely held perceptions of the prostitute as sinner, sexual deviant, or sexual slave." (Brock, 1998: 12)

Present 'prostitution' and labour laws hurt those involved in sex work, because they are a reflection of our sexist and racist society. For example, women who work on the street presently trade safety for not getting caught by police. Norton-Hawk argues that:

avoiding arrest increases the level of violence. Working alone, prostitutes often find themselves in dangerous situations. Lack of time to adequately evaluate a customer, the necessity of providing services in isolated places, and the lack of legal protection all increase the likelihood of victimization." (2001: 411-412)

Benoit & Millar's Victoria, B.C. study participants agreed "that the "occupational hazards" associated with sex work are more serious than square jobs where workers have access to minimum government imposed rights, as well as access to police under circumstances of duress." (2004a: 50)

As Brock argues, criminalization "does not 'protect' women and young people from violence and coercion, but instead mandates regulatory strategies that may increase their vulnerability." (1998: 139) Sex workers are viewed as "expendable", like they "don't count" (Anastasia). Thukral, Ditmore & Horowitz remark:

Prostitutes often encounter the popular belief that it is not possible for a prostitute to be raped. Sex workers have limits to what they are willing to do with clients, and all acts and money to be exchanged are negotiated beforehand [...] The tacit acceptance of such violence, represented by indifference to these crimes on the part of the police and society, only encourages such violence. (2003: 8)

Nonetheless, even within this constraining structural context, we have seen that women in sex work exert their personal and collective agency with a number of strategies in order to maximize their health and well-being.

## CONCLUSION

The main questions that guided this thesis were: How do the issues of structural constraint and personal agency permeate the discourses of adult female sex workers concerning their everyday practices in sex work? What, if any, agentic strategies do sex workers use in order to secure margins of control and/or maximize their well-being? I have posited that victimization and agency are not mutually exclusive, and proposed framing the discussion in the lived experiences of sex workers, taking up the structure/agency debate in the social and working conditions of sex work. I have advocated for an approach to studying sex work that recognizes the heterogeneity of experiences, values experiential knowledge(s), pays attention to micro-practices, posits the diffuse character of power and is open to alternative discourses.

In this final chapter, I will briefly review the evidence and discussion presented in the Findings and Analysis chapter, surrounding eight dimensions of the sex worker/client exchange. I will then contemplate the theoretical contributions of this thesis, and follow this with a consideration of its methodological limitations. I will finish with a discussion of some research, theoretical and political issues ensuing from the present thesis.

In the first results section, "Establishing the Makeup of the Clientele," I explored the themes of typical clientele, regular clientele, desirable clients and undesirable clients. It was noted that most sex workers have a regular client base and that this is desirable for the workers for different reasons, notably for maximizing personal safety and financial stability. It was also found that sex workers have distinct preferences for client profiles which they find pose less risk for personal safety (older men, men who are perceived as

having 'a lot to lose') and try to avoid clients whose characteristics they perceive as more risky (young, intoxicated and uncooperative men). Through the interviews I conducted it was found (and supported by the empirical literature) that some active selection of clientele takes place, but it is a process which is structurally conditioned by a woman's need for money and/or drugs. Women take an active role in determining whom they will enter into a sexual-economic exchange with, but they do so to varying degrees.

In the second section, titled "Soliciting Custom", I examined in-call workers' and street workers' tactics for attracting and establishing contact with clients, and highlighted some of their strategies therein. I noted that for in-call workers, the telephone constitutes a central work tool, used strategically for screening in the solicitation process, for example. For street workers, it was found that the initial face-to-face contact with a potential client is a crucial moment used to assess and screen clients. Women will generally attempt to discern whether a client is likely to be an undercover police officer or a bad date, before a detailed discussion on prices and services takes place. It was thus found that in the solicitation process, sex workers -- both in-call and on the street -- exercise strategies to maximize their well-being which are reflective of structural elements, notably their precariousness stemming from their criminalized status and their positioning as 'easy' targets of violence against women.

The third section, titled "Entering into a Contract," concerned sex workers' initial conversations with clients and the negotiation of the sexual-monetary exchange. I found the distinction between contracts articulated on the basis of time and those articulated on the basis of services to be useful. The data points to a minority of sex workers who opt to enter into time-based exchanges with clients. A central factor behind this preference is the

women's fear of arrest and/or conviction, in particular under the communication law. Conversely, a majority of sex workers in my sample stated a preference for entering into highly commodified contracts, and this was echoed in the literature on sex work in highly industrialized western societies. This form of contractual arrangement may be favoured as a means to obtain maximum payment from individual clients, as a way to minimize time spent with clients, and/or as a method of reducing the likelihood of arrest. Whether women enter into contracts in terms of time or services, there is an internal logic, which speaks to the reflection behind participants' actions. The contract is thus a site where one can discern agentic action on behalf of sex workers, who act based on a reflection about their own best interests. The women's choice on this issue (whether to contract in terms of time versus service) seems articulated in response to the constraints, which take shape in part in the power relations between sex workers and law enforcement or clients.

Next, in "Naming the Price", major themes surrounding payment were discussed, including standard prices, negotiation over fees, and the prohibition of undercutting. Based on my interview data and the literature reviewed, women who work in-call tend to command higher fees per individual client than women who work mainly on the street. This is illustrative of the hierarchy of sex work arrangements. The negative impact of drug addiction on prices was also noted, emerging both from the interviews I conducted and from the literature on sex work. Furthermore, it was found that while some sex workers are open to negotiating with clients on fees, for others this is unacceptable and prices are fixed. The street workers in my sample appear more willing to negotiate than women who work in-call. The practice of prohibiting undercutting and its enforcement were also highlighted in interviews and echoed in other studies. Structure and agency were found to be at play in the determination of prices in the prostitution industry. Factors such as market

demand and the hierarchy of sex work structure prices. On the other hand, sex workers can exercise agency in a number of directions, utilizing personal strategies for maximizing their revenues from individual clients and maintaining general price levels through the collective prohibition of undercutting.

The fifth dimension explored concerned the location for the provision of sexual services, in the section titled "Situating the Act." In the case of in-call sex work, the location is fixed and is controlled by the sex worker, while in street-level work, clients are solicited on the street but the second location may be up for negotiation. Women who work in-call may explicitly and actively manage the work environment, with both personal safety and the right atmosphere in mind. A number of the street workers I spoke to highlighted their desire to direct the client to a location that is comfortable for and familiar to them. Personal safety was emphasized by interview participants in our discussions surrounding location. In the determination of location, avoiding arrests emerged as a secondary concern in the case of street workers. This trend towards an active and reflected management of location was reflected in the existing empirical sex work literature.

In the following section titled "Laying the Boundaries," limits set by sex workers in terms of sexual acts and safer sex in commercial sexual exchanges were explored. Women's practices surrounding the prohibition of specific acts or services and the insistence on condom use were presented, as well as considerations about the enforcement of such limits in their interactions with clients. The women I spoke to generally establish certain boundaries for their relations with clients. Some women, for example, may choose to reserve the 'intimate' act of kissing for private (noncommercial) partners. Some workers strictly prohibit any activity where they are asked to take a submissive (S&M) position, in

order to minimize their vulnerability in relation to the client. Others avoid or minimize vaginal intercourse through the deployment of various strategies. It was further noted, based on my interviews and supported by the empirical literature, that sex workers generally insist on consistent condom use with commercial partners. Of course, the capacity to enforce boundaries on relations with a client is crucial. I found, not surprisingly, that most sex workers actively deploy some form of strategy in order to enforce their boundaries in terms of sexual acts and condom use. However, these strategies may not always be successful, especially in the case of consistent condom use. Structural factors like economic need, client intimidation and insistence, as well as substance abuse emerged from my interviews as significant issues in unsafe commercial sex practices as well as the infringement of set limits. The literature on sex work reinforces these findings. Furthermore, reasons for the establishment of boundaries, beyond straightforward health-conscious prophylactic use, were explored: boundaries as emotional distancing, defense mechanism, and protection of the self and management of the body as place.

In "Getting Paid" I presented findings around the timing of the actual monetary transaction from client to sex worker. I noted that the majority of sex workers I interviewed insisted on receiving payment from a client before rendering sexual services. This finding was echoed in the literature review on sex workers' practices. This normative practice is articulated as a protective measure to ensure payment and may even be referred to as a 'rule'. There are, of course, some exceptions, like two of the in-call workers I interviewed, who prefer to receive payment afterwards in an effort to build a relation of trust with clients. Generally, though, women's insistence on up-front payment is a strategy women are drawing on in order to maximize their power in the interaction with clients.

The eighth and final dimension explored, "Coping with Bad Dates," concerned the high incidence of violence against women in sex work. Strategies deployed by sex workers in order to protect themselves, deal with victimization and seek recourse were presented. Reflections on the danger in sex work were also offered. The particular vulnerability of women who work on the street was highlighted, attributable it appears, to a combination of work environment and persecution under the communication law (section 213). It was found that women generally deploy strategies in order to protect themselves, deal with victimization and seek recourse, but that these actions are heavily constrained given the present structural context. Sex workers today seem to be 'easy targets' of woman abuse, given their marginal status, their stigmatized identities and their criminalized activities.

We must now consider the theoretical contributions and implications of the present research. In relation to the main research questions, concerning the discernment of structure and agency in the discourses of women involved in sex work and to the deployment of strategies therein, we can affirm that issues of structural constraint and personal/group agency permeate the discourses of adult female sex workers concerning their everyday practices in sex work. While it has appeared fruitful and meaningful to respect and value the abilities, skills and experiences of sex workers, their actions remain in part constrained and contextualized by structural forces, both material and symbolic -- poverty, racism, sexism, woman abuse, drug abuse, illegality, whore stigma and the non-recognition of sex work as labour. The favoured theoretical stance, in relation to structure and agency, consisted of a poststructuralist understanding of the (multiply constituted and internally diverse) subject as socially constructed in discursive practice but retaining her agency through the juxtaposition, contradiction and interpenetration of subject positions. Furthermore, we can affirm unequivocally that sex workers deploy agentic strategies in

order to secure margins of control and maximize their well-being within sex work, specifically surrounding the sex worker/client exchange. A large number of different strategies were identified and discussed. Inspired by a growing body of studies interested in micro-practices in sex work, I examined women's material and discursive practices, stratagems and competencies which are deployed and exercised in order to increase their power in the balance, resist physical and psychological victimization, manage identity, maximize well-being and contest relations of authority. Women's reflective capacities as agents were also clearly demonstrated through their articulations of the justifications for actions and the rationalization of choices surrounding their working practices.

I would like, at this time, to remind the reader of some of the methodological ambitions and limits of the present research. Clearly, this is a small study with a restrained group of participants. My research findings are based on qualitative interviews with 12 adult women involved in sex work in Ottawa and Toronto, Ontario. Two-thirds of respondents were street-based workers, while the remaining one-third of respondents worked in-call, out of their own spaces (personal or working apartment/house). The sample is not representative of the variety of sex work arrangements. Another characteristic that I believe may be significant is the age of participants: respondents in this study ranged in age from 28 to 47 years. The average age of participants at the time of interviews was 37, while their average age of entry into sex work was 17. The workers I interviewed were thus seasoned and experienced. Furthermore, none of the women I interviewed worked for a third party (pimp or manager). They all worked independently, keeping all earnings and potentially enjoying greater control over their working lives than women employed by a third-party. For these different reasons, there are particularities about the sample which place limits on the claims that can be made in terms of generalizing the findings. I would like to

underscore, however, that most findings were either corroborated by previous research findings or were, at least, congruent or coherent within this body of literature.

Methodological limitations notwithstanding, I would like to consider a number of research, theoretical and political issues that I believe ensue, at least in part, from the present research. First I believe that my research points to interesting areas for future research. I strongly believe that immediate attention and research is warranted on micro-practices in relations between sex workers and law enforcement officials. The women I spoke to suggested they felt very vulnerable in their relations with police officers. I also believe that the study of discursive negotiations on sex work, from the stance of sex workers, would be another important avenue for future research. Furthermore, while I did not investigate the nature of the relation between sex workers and industry third parties, I contend that such an investigation would be warranted.

Second, there is the theoretical issue (which easily spills into the political) of the recognition of sex work as stigmatized labour. My project lends some support to this position, as well as advocating it as a preferred feminist theoretical stance. The recognition of sex work as *work* permits the examination of work practices and conditions, facilitating also the validation of women's skills, competencies and strategies. Bruckert et al. claim that sex workers' "struggle for recognition of their activities is fraught with pitfalls." (2003: 52) The outcast status of the 'prostitute' and the lack of recognition of her income-earning activity as work deny her legal, social and other protections available to workers. The phrase 'sex worker' points out that those who sell sex for a living are engaged in a form of work. It shifts the emphasis from a moral judgment to a discussion about labour and human rights. Bindman & Doezema recommend that prostitution be redefined as sex work

as a preliminary condition for the enjoyment by sex workers of their full human and labour rights. (1997) The authors argue:

By looking at commercial sex as work, and at the conditions under which that work is performed, sex workers can be included and protected under the existing instruments which aim to protect all workers in a general way, all persons from violence, children from sexual exploitation, and women from discrimination. (Bindman & Doezema, 1997)

Third, there are some political issues that follow from the present research. I would like to add my voice to those calling for labour rights for sex workers, though I believe the issues need to be further fleshed out, as the industry is informal and many workers are in fact not engaged in a strict employer-employee relationship. An exploration of the contentious application of labour standards to the sex industry is offered in Bindman & Doezema (1997). Beyond labour rights, though, I believe that, as it stands, sex workers do not enjoy the full respect of their *human* rights. For example, sex workers' security of person and equality before the law are not respected when the law is not mobilized against those who commit crimes upon them. As state Bindman and Doezema: "The lack of international and local protection renders sex workers vulnerable to exploitation in the workplace, and to harassment or violence at the hands of employers, law enforcement officials, clients and the public." (1997) The authors continue:

[M]ost people working as prostitutes are subjected to abuses which are similar in nature to those experienced by others working in low status jobs in the informal sector. Their predicament is made much worse, however, by the stigma and criminal charges widely attached to prostitution, which allow police and other officials to harass them without ever intervening to uphold their most elementary rights. (Bindman & Doezema, 1997)

Furthermore, still on the political front, I would like to add my voice to those calling for the decriminalization of sex work. Recalling my overview of Canadian prostitution laws as they

currently stand, as well as my findings on this topic, the reader will remember that in Canada we are essentially in a system of criminalization, although it is not the cash-for-sexual-service exchange that is criminalized, but rather the activities surrounding it (i.e., soliciting, communicating for the purposes of prostitution and procuring). I have argued that the illegality surrounding sex work further marginalizes an already marginalized population. Canadian prostitution laws reinforce and exacerbate prostitutes' vulnerability. The bawdy-house law (s. 210, 211) has the effect of pushing women to work on the street, where they are more vulnerable, rather than indoors. Further, the communicating law is particularly problematic, as previously noted, with street workers incited to work alone, favour poorly lit industrial areas and negotiate very quickly with potential clients in order to reduce visibility. Moreover, given the present context, the legal framework offers limited recourse to sex workers who have crimes committed against them: sex workers are unlikely to turn to the police for assistance, fearing reprisals, given the criminal nature of their work. Sex workers may face difficulties: in the reporting of a crime, the laying of charges, and the assignment of retribution to perpetrators.

A final political issue ensues from the present research: that of the collective action of sex workers. I believe that greater collective action amongst sex workers is desirable. Increasing collective action amongst sex workers would facilitate the deployment of more collective strategies to ameliorate the working conditions, margins of power and well-being of sex workers. Through this thesis, agentic action was explored, in the form of strategic working practices. Like in the case of Bruckert's study with strippers, I found while women "periodically resisted collectively for the most part strategies were individualistic," and sometimes even "divisive." (2000: 298) This implies that those most exploited, vulnerable and inexperienced, those with the least resources and skills to draw upon may be on a

lesser footing in the deployment of strategies in their working relations with clients. (Bruckert, 2000: 298) Sex workers' associations, such as two of my partner organizations (see Appendix A), Maggie's and the Sex Workers' Alliance of Toronto (SWAT) can serve an important and significant role the promotion of sex workers' individual and collective strategies. I agree with Bruckert, who claims that such organizations can provide "a representative collective voice" on labour issues, can offer "a measure of emotional support" and can "forg[e] a discourse that support[s] rather than undermine[s] the identity of workers." (2000: 299) Such organizations could also be sites and tools for sharing and promoting strategies that help maximize sex workers' well-being, safety, health and control. Bruckert affirms: "Though clearly still marginalized and stigmatized these organizations are increasingly assuming a political voice -- particularly since feminists have started to fight with, rather than against, them." (Bruckert, 2000: 299) While I may have criticized the analysis of the sex workers' rights position as a theoretical framework because of its analytical limitations, I believe that their work in the field can be understood as complementary to a woman and worker-centered poststructuralist and arguably third-wave feminist academic conceptualization of sex work as stigmatized labour. Organizing in this way is not easy, however. Bindman & Doezema argue:

Organisation among sex workers can be impeded by the stigma and legal penalties attached to the sex industry, which can make them reluctant to assert themselves publicly. Where remarkable women and men have overcome these obstacles to start sex worker organisations, it may be difficult for them to find the allies they need among women's and human rights NGOs, and trade unions. Action is needed to support sex worker organisations and their linkage to other activist groups. (1997)

I believe it is beneficial for sex workers to organize but the responsibility for action on this front does not lie exclusively with the sex work community, as their efforts must be supported and respected, not to mention funded. I would like to advocate for greater

linkages and bridges between sex workers and mainstream feminists, for greater efforts towards the inclusion of sex workers' issues into feminist struggles.

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## APPENDIX A

### PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS (in alphabetical order)

#### **Hooked Up Program, Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa -- Ottawa, Ontario**

The Hooked Up Program targets women and transgendered individuals who are involved in the sex industry. The program: provides a peer support model and extra support to families; examines the underlying issues and harms related to prostitution; offers an after hours crisis line; develops harm reduction strategies and alternative choices; facilitates a supper club component; offers access to food banks, laundry facilities and survival kits; and assists participants with basic needs.

#### **Living Room, AIDS Committee of Ottawa -- Ottawa, Ontario**

The AIDS Committee of Ottawa (ACO) is a community-based, non-profit organization providing free, confidential services for people infected with HIV and others affected by HIV/AIDS in the Ottawa area. The Living Room is a program centre that provides practical and peer support to individuals living with HIV/AIDS or individuals closely affected by HIV/AIDS.

#### **Maggie's Toronto Prostitutes' Community Service Project -- Toronto, Ontario**

Maggie's is a sex worker-run education project, which provides information about health promotion, AIDS and STD prevention, Canadian law, and dangerous clients to sex workers. Maggie's was founded in 1986 and is an incorporated Ontario non-profit charitable organization. The organization's mission is to provide education and support to assist sex workers in their efforts to live and work with safety and dignity.

#### **OASIS, Sandy Hill Community Health Centre (SHCHC) -- Ottawa, Ontario**

SHCHC is committed to work with and for its community, in both official languages, to advance health and well-being, and to promote a sustainable, just and caring society. OASIS program for people living with or concerned about HIV/AIDS offers its clients testing, free condoms and dental dams and the chance to talk to a counsellor, nurse and doctor about their health. Everyone is welcome, but Oasis especially welcomes people who are poor, who live on the street, and who use street drugs or alcohol.

#### **Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre (ORCC) -- Ottawa, Ontario**

The ORCC is a proactive, anti-racist, feminist organization working to end all forms of sexual violence. The ORCC counsels and supports women, educates for change and works to create a safe and equitable community.

#### **Sex Trade Worker Diversion Program, Salvation Army -- Ottawa, Ontario**

The Salvation Army carries out an extensive corrections and justice service. The Salvation Army is involved in community service orders, pre-charge diversion, family group conferencing, pre and post-release planning, chaplaincy, substance abuse counselling, music therapy, life skills and literacy training, as well as providing circles of support and aftercare.

#### **Sex Workers Alliance of Toronto (SWAT) -- Toronto, Ontario**

SWAT was founded in 1992 to fight for sex workers' rights to fair wages, and safe and healthy working conditions. SWAT opposes any law that criminalizes sex work. SWAT publishes a Bad Date Booklet, provides health and legal information, and free condoms. Volunteers support others working in the sex trade by doing outreach and court watch. SWAT also educates service providers and policy makers about the needs of sex workers.

#### **Vanier Community Service Centre (VCSC) -- Ottawa, Ontario**

The VCSC is part of fourteen non-profit multi-service centres offering an array of social services to the Ottawa area. Their mission is to a) help the Vanier community in improving its quality of life through prevention services, education, and intervention in an atmosphere of trust and harmony; b) to promote and support the rights of the francophone community and increase social awareness; and c) to help people to help themselves by developing community collaboration.

## APPENDIX B

### CRIMINAL CODE PROVISIONS RELATING TO PROSTITUTION<sup>15</sup>

#### Definitions -- Section 197

197. (1) In this Part,

"common bawdy-house" means a place that is

- (a) kept or occupied, or
- (b) resorted to by one or more persons

for the purpose of prostitution or the practice of acts of indecency;

"prostitute" means a person of either sex who engages in prostitution;

"public place" includes any place to which the public have access as of right or by invitation, express or implied.

#### Bawdy-houses -- Sections 210, 211

210. (1) Every one who keeps a common bawdy-house is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years.

(2) Every one who

- (a) is an inmate of a common bawdy-house,
- (b) is found, without lawful excuse, in a common bawdy-house, or
- (c) as owner, landlord, lessor, tenant, occupier, agent or otherwise having charge or control of any place, knowingly permits the place or any part thereof to be let or used for the purposes of a common bawdy-house,

is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction.

(3) Where a person is convicted of an offence under subsection (1), the court shall cause a notice of the conviction to be served on the owner, landlord or lessor of the place in respect of which the person is convicted or his agent, and the notice shall contain a statement to the effect that it is being served pursuant to this section.

(4) Where a person on whom a notice is served under subsection (3) fails forthwith to exercise any right he may have to determine the tenancy or right of occupation of the person so convicted, and thereafter any person is convicted of an offence under subsection (1) in respect of the same premises, the person on whom the notice was served shall be deemed to have committed an offence under subsection (1) unless he proves that he has taken all reasonable steps to prevent the recurrence of the offence.

211. Every one who knowingly takes, transports, directs, or offers to take, transport or direct, any other person to a common bawdy-house is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction.

#### Procuring and Living on the Avails -- Section 212

212. (1) Every one who

- (a) procures, attempts to procure or solicits a person to have illicit sexual intercourse with another person, whether in or out of Canada,
- (b) inveigles or entices a person who is not a prostitute to a common bawdy-house for the purpose of illicit sexual intercourse or prostitution,
- (c) knowingly conceals a person in a common bawdy-house,

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<sup>15</sup> Source: Justice Canada (2002) *Criminal Code of Canada: PART VII Disorderly Houses, Gaming and Betting*. Retrieved September 9, 2002 from <<http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/C-46/38983.html>>.

(d) procures or attempts to procure a person to become, whether in or out of Canada, a prostitute,  
(e) procures or attempts to procure a person to leave the usual place of abode of that person in Canada, if that place is not a common bawdy-house, with intent that the person may become an inmate or frequenter of a common bawdy-house, whether in or out of Canada,  
(f) on the arrival of a person in Canada, directs or causes that person to be directed or takes or causes that person to be taken, to a common bawdy-house,  
(g) procures a person to enter or leave Canada, for the purpose of prostitution,  
(h) for the purposes of gain, exercises control, direction or influence over the movements of a person in such manner as to show that he is aiding, abetting or compelling that person to engage in or carry on prostitution with any person or generally,  
(i) applies or administers to a person or causes that person to take any drug, intoxicating liquor, matter or thing with intent to stupefy or overpower that person in order thereby to enable any person to have illicit sexual intercourse with that person, or  
(j) lives wholly or in part on the avails of prostitution of another person,  
is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding ten years.

(2) Notwithstanding paragraph (1)(j), every person who lives wholly or in part on the avails of prostitution of another person who is under the age of eighteen years is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding fourteen years.

(2.1) Notwithstanding paragraph (1)(j) and subsection (2), every person who lives wholly or in part on the avails of prostitution of another person under the age of eighteen years, and who  
(a) for the purposes of profit, aids, abets, counsels or compels the person under that age to engage in or carry on prostitution with any person or generally, and  
(b) uses, threatens to use or attempts to use violence, intimidation or coercion in relation to the person under that age,

is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding fourteen years but not less than five years.

(3) Evidence that a person lives with or is habitually in the company of a prostitute or lives in a common bawdy-house is, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, proof that the person lives on the avails of prostitution, for the purposes of paragraph (1)(j) and subsections (2) and (2.1).

(4) Every person who, in any place, obtains for consideration, or communicates with anyone for the purpose of obtaining for consideration, the sexual services of a person who is under the age of eighteen years is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years.

### **Offence in Relation to Prostitution (Communication) -- Section 213**

213. (1) Every person who in a public place or in any place open to public view  
(a) stops or attempts to stop any motor vehicle,  
(b) impedes the free flow of pedestrian or vehicular traffic or ingress to or egress from premises adjacent to that place, or  
(c) stops or attempts to stop any person or in any manner communicates or attempts to communicate with any person

for the purpose of engaging in prostitution or of obtaining the sexual services of a prostitute is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction.

(2) In this section, "public place" includes any place to which the public have access as of right or by invitation, express or implied, and any motor vehicle located in a public place or in any place open to public view.

# Looking for Interview Participants

- Grad student conducting research for Master's thesis
- Looking to speak to female sex workers (18 years or older) about interactions with other people in the industry, clients and police
- Interview length: approximately 90 minutes
- Time and place flexible
- Confidentiality and anonymity assured
- \$30 honorarium paid to participants
- If you are interested in participating or want more information, please contact Geneviève by telephone at (XXX) XXX-XXXX (please leave detailed voice message)

# Looking for Interview Participants: Research on Prostitution

- Grad student conducting research for Master's thesis
- Looking to speak to female sex workers (18 or older) about interactions with other people in the industry, clients, and police
- Interview length: approximately 90 minutes
- Time and place flexible
- Confidentiality and anonymity assured
- \$30 honorarium paid to participants
- If you are interested in participating or want more information, please contact Geneviève by telephone at (XXX) XXX-XXXX (please leave detailed voice message)

## APPENDIX E

### INFORMATION SHEET FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

- You are kindly asked to participate in a research on prostitution that focuses on issues of personal power and constraint in the experiences of sex workers. This research is conducted by Geneviève Sauvé, from the Sociology department of the University of Ottawa, for the purpose of obtaining her Master's degree. The project is under the supervision of Prof. Dominique Masson.
- Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you will be invited to take part in one 90-minute interview session (with a possible follow-up if required) during which you will be asked questions relating to your interactions with clients, third parties in the industry, and law enforcement authorities.
- You will receive an honorarium of \$30 for your participation in the interview. You will receive an honorarium (\$15) for a follow-up interview if this is required and mutually agreeable.
- Your confidentiality and anonymity will be strictly respected. Your name and identifiable information will not be used in publications or research materials. Tape recordings of interviews and other data collected will be kept in a secure manner in the researcher's home and only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the information.
- Since this activity deals with personal information, it may cause emotional discomfort, although this may not be the case. Every effort will be made to minimise these occurrences. The interviews will take place in a private location and you may decline at any time to answer questions that make you uncomfortable. You are free to withdraw from the project at any time, before or during an interview. You may also refuse to answer certain questions, at any time, without prejudice. A list of community resources has been compiled by the researcher, and is available for you.
- The research also involves benefits. The experience of discussing strategies for maximising personal control and well-being in relations with clients, third parties and authorities, may be empowering for you as a participant. Your contribution will also involve the possibility of furthering general knowledge.
- Any information requests or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project may be addressed to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board of the University of Ottawa, or by contacting the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, (613) 562-5800 ext. 5387.
- If you have any questions about the conduct of the research project, please contact the researcher or her supervisor (contact information below). If you wish to receive a summary of the findings of this research (available in September 2002), please provide a mailing address to the researcher.

Researcher: Geneviève Sauvé

Supervisor: Dominique Masson

## APPENDIX F

### CONSENT CHECKLIST FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

- You are kindly asked to participate in a research on prostitution that focuses on issues of personal power and constraint in the experiences of sex workers. This research is conducted by Geneviève Sauvé, from the Sociology department of the University of Ottawa, for the purpose of obtaining her Master's degree. The project is under the supervision of Prof. Dominique Masson.
- Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you will be invited to take part in one 90-minute interview session (with a possible follow-up if required) during which you will be asked questions relating to your interactions with clients, third parties in the industry, and law enforcement authorities.
- You will receive an honorarium of \$30 for your participation in the interview. You will receive an honorarium (\$15) for a follow-up interview if this is required and mutually agreeable.
- Your confidentiality and anonymity will be strictly respected. Your name and identifiable information will not be used in publications or research materials. Tape recordings of interviews and other data collected will be kept in a secure manner in the researcher's home and only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the information.
- Since this activity deals with personal information, it may cause emotional discomfort, although this may not be the case. Every effort will be made to minimise these occurrences. The interviews will take place in a private location and you may decline at any time to answer questions that make you uncomfortable. You are free to withdraw from the project at any time, before or during an interview. You may also refuse to answer certain questions, at any time, without prejudice. A list of community resources has been compiled by the researcher, and is available for you.
- The research also involves benefits. The experience of discussing strategies for maximizing personal control in relations with clients, third parties and authorities, may be empowering for you as a participant. Your contribution will also involve the possibility of furthering general knowledge.
- Any information requests or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project may be addressed to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board of the University of Ottawa, or by contacting the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research. The contact information appears on the Information Sheet.
- If you have any questions about the conduct of the research project, please contact the researcher or her supervisor. The contact information appears on the Information Sheet. If you wish to receive a summary of the findings of this research, please provide a mailing address to the researcher.
- Do you understand your rights and what your participation in this research entails?
- Do you consent to participate?

## APPENDIX G

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### Initial Questions:

- What would you like me to call you? (Pseudonym)
- Are you from Toronto? If not, where are you from? When did you move here?
- How far did you go in school? How old are you?

#### 1. Can you tell me a little bit about how you became involved in sex work?

- Age and mode of entry; brief sex work history

#### 2. What kind of sex work are you involved in?

- Type of location (street work, brothel, massage parlour, escort agency, etc.)
- Self-employed/Type of employer

#### 3. What can you tell me about how your work is organized?

- Hours, schedule, rate of work, money, distribution of earnings
- Control of manager/pimp over the work and relationship to manager/pimp (if applicable)
- What affects the amount of control you have over your work/the organization of your work?

#### 4. Can you tell me about your clients and about how the exchange usually takes place?

- Typical clientele, regulars (proportion), choice of clients, solicitation
- Type of contract (informal & diffuse or formal & commodified), price, transaction (timing), location
- Negotiation of contract and boundaries (e.g., sexual acts or condom use)

#### 5. Can you describe your contacts with the police?

- Experiences with various types of interactions with police (arrests, interpellations, requests for help)
- Treatment by police during different types of interactions
- Strategies for coping when police are cruising the streets while a prostitute is working (if applicable)
- Advice for other sex workers in their dealings with police

#### 6. Do you feel that your work is risky, or dangerous? In relation to whom? How?

- 3 angles: clients, pimps/managers, police
- Drugs; safe sex; condoms
- Experiences with: crossing of boundaries; clients refusing to pay; ending a transaction; violence

#### 7. How do you protect yourself? Are there any 'tricks of the trade'?

- 3 angles: clients, pimps/managers, police
- Strategies for being less vulnerable to violence; making work safer; feeling more in control
- Dealing with violence or other crime if/when it takes place

#### 8. Can you tell me a bit about why you are involved in sex work?

- Benefits and drawbacks
- Capability to quit sex work
- Feelings about doing sex work

#### 9. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about?