

**“Coming soon to your city”: Independent mobile sex workers managing the risks  
and stigma of doing sex work in Canada**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research employs sex work theory to interpret the experiences of independent mobile female sex workers in the Canadian sex trade. This thesis argues that employment-related mobility and independent worker status are central in both the risk and ideology management of independent mobile sex workers. Mobility and independent worker status contribute to the risk management of independent mobile sex workers in Canada in many ways including: avoiding saturated markets that have a greater supply of sex workers than the current demand of clients, creating a unique market niche, establishing safer working conditions, and generally allowing for economic success in the sex trade. Altogether, the workers' status as independent mobile sex workers allows the women in this study to manage the risks of doing sex work that threaten their physical health and safety, and emotional and social well-being.

## **DEDICATION**

Dedicated to the women who welcomed me into their homes and hearts— without their stories these pages would not be. Thank you.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

Sex workers in the Canadian sex industry have a variety of experiences that result in a wide spectrum of outcomes which range from exploitation and abuse to affluence and agency. Within this broad spectrum is a niche of workers whose independent employment status and employment-related mobility intersect to create a unique experience of working in the sex industry. The market in which sexual services are exchanged is referred to as the sex industry and sex trade. In this study the individuals who work in the sex industry, including the participants, are called sex workers. This terminology reflects the theoretical framework that positions their activities as work. The term sex worker is commonly used in sex work literature by scholars like Leslie Ann Jeffrey and Gayle MacDonald (2006), John Lowman (2001), and Cecilia Benoit and Alison Millar (2001, 2012). Sex workers employed in the sex trade occupy an array of occupations ranging from massage parlour attendants to exotic dancers to street based sex workers. This thesis explores this niche of sex workers by examining the lived experiences of independent mobile female sex workers. The goal of the research is to examine the effects of mobility on the experiences of independent mobile sex workers in Canada. This thesis argues that employment-related mobility and independent worker status are central in shaping a positive work experience and contributing to the risk management of independent mobile sex workers in Canada in many ways, including avoiding saturated markets, creating a unique market niche, having safer working conditions, and generally allowing for economic success in the sex trade.

This research serves to illuminate a section of the sex industry in which the experiences of the participants stand in contrast to the tales of abuse and exploitation that underpin certain sex work literature, the news stories of the media, and the problematic mission statements of community groups that seek to abolish the industry and “save” sex workers. This study stands alongside the work of scholars like Agustin (2003; 2005), and Jeffrey and MacDonald (2006) that dismantle grand narratives of the sex trade. In doing so, this work contributes to a greater understanding of the intricacies of what it means to live and work in the highly contentious market of the sex industry.

Sex work may be defined as the active exchange of sexual services for money between two consenting adults - the sex worker and the client - yet the reality of sex work is much more complicated. For example, this exchange may occur in an indoor or an outdoor location, and payment for the services may include different forms of compensation. In this study exchanges usually occurred in hotel rooms or a rented room in an apartment or condo, and the payment between the participants and their clients always involved money.

It is important to not confuse sex work with human sex trafficking. Sex work is significantly different from sex trafficking, but there is often a slippage in common use between these two terms. Sex work and sex trafficking diverge primarily on the basis of the level of agency of the worker involved. Sex trafficking is a process that is founded in coercion and forced labour; whereas sex work is the sale of sex and intimacy (Butcher, 2003). Confusion exists when boundaries are blurred and agency and coercion are both apparent. It is important to create a clear distinction between these two processes. If sex



work is continuously grouped with sex trafficking, we delegitimize the agency and choices of those who choose to sell sex in exchange for money.

It is important in a thesis of this nature to gain a preliminary understanding of the intricacies of the Canadian sex industry. An examination of sex work in Canada, current legislation, segmentation of the Canadian sex industry, segmentation of sex work, agencies and brothels, and sex work in Canadian society both historically and currently will provide an essential foundation to later data analysis and discussion.

### **1.1 Sex Work in Canada**

Similar to today, sex work in nineteenth-century Canada was done for many reasons. As Constance Backhouse (1991) explains, “Some [sex workers] were impoverished, overworked, ravaged by disease and alcoholism, and subjected to unrelenting police harassment....others used [sex work] for empowerment to achieve positions of material security and social status despite their unconventional business” (p.228).

In the 1800’s in Canada sex work was primarily conducted in brothels that were grouped in the same neighborhood and often located in poorer areas of a city (Shaver, 2012). Some of the most historically successful brothels in Canada originated in Saint John, New Brunswick, and Halifax, Nova Scotia as these brothels provided customers with a blend of sex, alcohol and gambling in one setting (Shaver, 2012). Brothels were generally located near the docks in cities like Saint John, Halifax, and Kingston, and close to railway stations in Western cities as a way to provide maximum access and maintain a steady stream of clients. Mobility has long been associated with the sex trade, though

historically it was primarily the clients, rather than sex workers, who were mobile (Shaver, 2012). During this time in Canadian history sex work was tolerated and brothels were rarely a target of RCMP and police enforcement since authorities assumed that the sex trade could not be eradicated (Shaver, 2012). Despite this apparent toleration of sex work, disorderly behavior that would have typically been overlooked in other women often would result in criminal charges when committed by a sex worker (Backhouse, 1991). Currently, sex work is not legally tolerated and enforcement of the sex trade is achieved through criminalization of acts related to sex work, including keeping a common bawdy house and living off the avails (Barnett, 2008). Attitudes have shifted and the sex industry is a point of contention among policy makers and legislators alike.

Discussion of eradication versus acceptance of the sex industry in Canada continues to this day. The legal reformation happening in Canada is a prime example of the continued concern over sex work in this nation. The change of allowing for common-bawdy houses (brothels) in Ontario first brought the sex industry in Canada into the public eye, and has raised relevant issues like the controversial laws regarding sex work in Canada and the importance of sex worker rights ([understandingsexwork.ca](http://understandingsexwork.ca), 2012). The Supreme Court of Canada's decision in December 2013 to strike down Canada's anti-prostitution laws (including laws prohibiting brothels, living on the avails of sex work, and communicating with clients in public) and the federal government's reaction in proposing new legislation in Bill C-36, which would criminalize buying sexual services, living on the avails, and communicating with clients in certain public spaces, demonstrates the continued tension in Canada over sex work legislation (Hannay, 2014).

The sex industry has become a topical issue and the focus of contemporary research (Understandingsexwork.ca, 2012; Van der Meulen, Durisin & Love, 2013), legislation (Barnett, 2008), and the media (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2013). This current study is important because it introduces employment-related mobility into the discussion of the experiences of sex workers in Canada. While sex work literature is expansive in breadth there has been little examination of the influence of mobility. Employment-related mobility is important to consider as it differentiates geographically fixed sex workers from those who tour, thus results in a variety of benefits and challenges that are unique to these mobile sex workers.

Overall, the sex trade brings many issues to the fore, and the ways that media, government, and law navigate these issues have a wide range of legal and social implications (e.g. in areas of work, gendered inequality, sexual freedom, and public health). This study provides a unique vantage point for understanding the sex industry in Canada by examining the lived experiences of independent mobile sex workers. The next section introduces the laws in Canada that govern sex work, and reviews the legal framework around the sex industry both historically and in present day.

## **1.2 Canadian Law**

Reviewing the laws surrounding the sex industry, both historical and contemporary, provides a basic understanding of how the sex industry is set up in Canada. The Canadian sex industry was historically controlled through vagrancy laws based on the British Vagrancy Act of 1824 that punished disorderly persons and vagabonds (Vagrancy Act, 1824). The earliest legislation that impacted the sex trade in Canada is the Nova Scotia

Act of 1759 that states that all “disorderly persons, vagabonds, and persons conducting themselves lewdly” would be ordered to a house of correction, though this act was not clearly directed at regulation of sex workers (Shaver, 2012, p.1). Nova Scotia first developed these vagrancy laws in 1759, followed by Lower Canada in 1839, and later by Canada West in 1858 (Backhouse, 1991). The first law explicitly mentioning sex workers was not founded until 1839, in Lower Canada; it authorized police to apprehend all common prostitutes or night walkers wandering in the fields, public streets or highways, not giving a satisfactory account of themselves, since sex work was considered a lifestyle crime that “threatened to undermine morality” (Backhouse, 1991, p.234). Canada followed the colonial lead of its mother nation in the 1860’s and mandated that all sex workers could be subject to medical inspection at any time and treated for venereal disease without their consent (Levine, 2003). This was the beginning of Canadian regulation of the sex trade. In the late 19th century, under the social purity movement, which emphasized the need to protect the virtue of young women in society, the acts of procuring (a pimp or agency facilitating a sex worker in arranging a sex act with a client) and keeping a common bawdy house (a property that is used as a place for sex work) became criminal offences.

Though legislation has never criminalized the act of selling sex for money, Canadian law still maintains the sex industry on the margins of society due to the ambiguous regulations of the trade; Canada’s legal system does not declare sex work as a criminal activity and only activities associated with the job are considered illegal. Legal reforms from the 19th and early 20th century remain relatively unchanged in Canada.

According to the Criminal Code of Canada, the following activities remain illegal: operating a common bawdy house, procuring, soliciting in a public space and living on the avails of prostitution (Barnett, 2008). The actual act of exchanging sex for money is not, in itself, a criminal activity in Canada. For instance, it is legal for a woman to sell sexual acts, but it is illegal for her to use an agency (a common bawdy house), have an independent contractor like a pimp or agency manage the booking (procuring), speak publically about the deal of exchanging sexual services for money (soliciting) or share her profit with anyone else (living on the avails).

The law is further complicated because the Federal Government has jurisdiction over creating laws, but the Provincial Government is responsible for the enforcement of the law. Therefore, legislation that controls morality and criminal conduct, like sex work, may be administered by the provinces, but legislation that creates an actual prohibition must fall under federal jurisdiction (Barnett, 2008). Provinces have also addressed sex work through creative means such as legislation on highways and traffic, community safety and child protection (Barnett, 2008). Since provincial laws are subject to federal law, it can create complications when the federal and provincial governments have divergent views on the sex trade.

The sex trade is also regulated on a municipal level in Canada as some municipalities require sex workers and massage parlours to be licensed. For instance, Calgary is one Canadian city where independent sex workers need to hold a business license under the Dating and Sex worker Service Bylaw (Dating and Sex worker Service Bylaw, 2006). Sex worker bylaws like this stipulate when and where sex workers can

work, how they should advertise, how they manage their working affairs, and that they are also subject to random inspections. If sex workers fail to meet the requirements of the bylaw they are subject to a series of penalties and fines. Other cities that employ a business licensing bylaw for sex workers include Montreal, Vancouver, Ottawa, Victoria, and Winnipeg, for example.

The legal framework that addresses the Canadian sex industry is currently in reform. The 2010 court case *Bedford v. Canada* challenged the laws that make living on the avails, operating a common bawdy house and soliciting in a public space illegal. Legislation addressing living on the avails and operating a common bawdy house are more directed towards pimps and escort agencies, and soliciting in a public space is focused on sex workers. The law that criminalizes living on the avails of prostitution places sex worker's intimate partners at risk since some sex workers may share their income with their partner and children. Also, this same law means that the participants are technically not allowed to hire a driver, bodyguard or a personal assistant or secretary as this too would result in breaking the law of living on the avails. The laws that prohibited these activities were said to be in violation of Section 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in which "everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice" (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982). Ultimately, Justice Susan Bindel struck down these laws as they violated the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but upon appealing the decision to the Ontario Court of Appeal, a new decision was rendered, which decriminalized common bawdy houses. However,

communicating for the purpose of sex work continued to be a criminal offence in Ontario and in the rest of the country. Shortly after this ruling, on December 20, 2013, the Supreme Court of Canada determined that laws prohibiting brothels, public communication for the purpose of sex work, and living on the avails to be unconstitutional (*Canada (Attorney General) v. Bedford*, 2013). The decision at this highest court in the nation is significant, as the ruling will be in effect for the entire country. The Canadian Parliament was given twelve months to rewrite sex work legislation, while in the meantime the prior laws will continue to be enforced. While the twelve month deadline has passed the federal government is still in talks over how to best restructure Canada's sex work laws. The most recent proposed legislation by Prime Minister Stephen Harper criminalizes the purchase of sexual services, targets those who benefit from prostitution (such as pimps), and criminalizes sex work near schools and places where children gather (Campbell, 2014). Many sex workers and sex worker advocates believe that the proposed legislation will do greater harm than good for sex workers. Jean MacDonald, head of the sex worker support organization Maggie's in Toronto, explains that the new legislation would "simply move sex workers out into more isolated and more marginalized areas of the city, and in many ways this legislation would be a gift to sexual predators....With the bill the Conservatives are "spitting in the face" of the Supreme Court's landmark prostitution decision and ignoring the vital input of sex workers" (CBC News, 2014).

The current legal framework in Canada makes it difficult for the participants to operate a business. A few of the participants in this study avoid touring to cities like

Calgary that require a sex worker to hold a business license, and instead prefer cities where they can comfortably work and not be under surveillance by authorities. Since communicating for the purpose of prostitution is also a criminal activity in Canada, the study participants must be careful about how they advertise their services. For example, sexual services may be advertised as daytime or nighttime encounters, weekend getaways, a dinner out, an intimate rendezvous, and any number of phrases with hidden meanings. The payment for the appointment is generally referred to as the honorarium or gift.

Since sex work is not illegal it is possible for sex workers to file taxes. This is important because it allows for sex workers to still be able to save for an RRSP, and make large purchases (buying a home, for instance) without questions from the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). Money used in maintaining their business may also be claimed. According to The Sex Professionals of Canada (SPOC), “any money that [sex workers] have to spend in order to make income can be claimed. This includes, but is not limited to: cosmetics, cosmetic surgery, clothing, condoms, implements (such as sex toys, etc...), and transportation i.e.: taxi or mileage on your own vehicle, etc.” (Sex Professionals of Canada, n.d, p.1). However the downside of filing taxes is that since sex workers do not get deductions like Income Tax or Employment Insurance they are not likely to receive a tax refund. Of course if a sex worker does not pay taxes, like all other workers, the CRA will continue to collect interest on taxes owed to them and could eventually freeze the worker’s bank account. While some sex workers prefer to go under the CRA’s radar and do not file taxes, other workers prefer to treat their job like any other and file their taxes.



In conclusion, the legal landscape of sex work in Canada is undergoing radical changes that will undoubtedly affect the lives of sex workers in this nation. The current legislation is contradictory and can make it difficult for sex workers to navigate their work in the sex trade. With careful planning it is possible for the participants to avoid breaking any laws like communicating for the purpose of prostitution through advertising their services as an “intimate dinner for two” and receiving a gift at the end of the evening, for example. However, some laws are more difficult to avoid, such as not living on the avails, since sex workers may choose to share their income with their intimate partner and family. The ongoing review of Canadian Law may make it easier or more difficult for sex workers to work in the sex industry in the future. The next section focuses on the segmentation of the sex industry in Canada and reviews the factors that create these divides.

### **1.3 Segmentation of the Canadian Sex Industry**

The contemporary Canadian sex trade can be understood as having a rudimentary order. This structure is not a professional ordering of the sex work sector, but rather it is imposed by researchers as a way of understanding the sex industry. The organization of the sex industry can be interpreted as being based on the level of control the worker maintains in their work and general well-being of the worker, which depends on factors including location of the work, working conditions, and reasons for entry into the industry. This framework of understanding the sex trade is useful since it can help researchers to track the similarities and differences between different types of sex work. Well-being is an important concept of the organization of work in this thesis, and can

generally be grouped into three broad categories including physical, mental, and social well-being. Physical well-being considers the participants' physical health, safety and security. This includes the level of victimization and exploitation in their work and home life, health considerations like susceptibility to physical abuse, and presence of disease and infection. Mental well-being refers to the general emotional and psychological state of the participants and generally reflects self-esteem, and general satisfaction and fulfillment with life. Social well-being includes the participants' interpersonal relationships with friends, family and partners, and the relationship with and involvement in the community. Well-being is dependent on the participants' actual conditions and the perception of the objective reality. For instance, the level of perceived control over one's working conditions impacts an individual's well-being. A study by Emily Hughes and Katharine Parkes suggests that by simply allowing a worker to have flexibility in their work hours can decrease the negative affect of working long shifts and can lead to an increased level of overall well-being (Hughes & Parkes, 2007). The chart below overall offers a brief overview over how the sex industry can be segmented. It is based on Weitzer's (2009, p.217) model. The table refers to female sex workers who have not been trafficked against their will. Exploitation by third parties means third-party (pimps or agencies) receipt of some of the profits while also having some control over the working conditions of the sex worker.

### SEX TRADE SEGMENTATION CHART

	Business Location	Exploitation by Third Party	Risk of Victimization	Public Visibility
Independent Indoor Sex Workers	Private premises or hotels	Low to none	Low	Very Low to None
Brothel and Agency Sex Workers	Brothels and Agencies	Moderate	Very Low	Low
Massage Parlour Attendant	Massage Parlour	Moderate	Very Low	Low
Independent Outdoor Street Sex Workers	Street contact - service in cars, parks, etc.	Low to Moderate	High	High
Managed Outdoors Street Sex Workers	Street contact – service in cars, parks, etc.	High	High	High

This chart shows four key factors (business location, exploitation by third party, risk of victimization, and public visibility) that influence the working conditions and experiences of sex workers in the Canadian sex trade. It is important to note that there is no one defining factor in influencing the segmentation of the sex trade, but instead it is a combination of elements that create these segments. This also points to the importance of similarities between different areas of the industry. For example, massage parlour attendants and brothel/agency workers share many key aspects of their work including low public visibility, very low risk of victimization, and moderate exploitation by a third party. The main factor that divides these two segments is their business location. Agency and brothel work is almost interchangeable as the key difference between them is that brothel workers are generally in-call only business where the clients must come to the brothel. Agencies may provide both in-call and out-call services where the client can come to the agency or the sex worker can go to the client, however agencies are typically out-calls. For example, a massage parlour could operate as an agency if they send workers

out to meet the client in the client's own home or a hotel room, and a massage parlour could operate as a brothel if clients would come to the massage parlour location to receive services.

The next section examines the role of agencies and brothels in the sex trade.

Agencies and brothels are a significant part of the sex industry in Canada as they provide a safer place for sex workers to work compared to the streets, and may provide a point of entry for some sex workers.

#### **1.4 Agencies and Brothels**

Agencies and brothels are essentially a mediator between clients and sex workers, and fill a specific niche in the sex industry. Brothels typically have a space for sex workers to provide the appointment (known as in-calls) while agencies typically only provide the connection between sex workers and customers. In other words, brothels provide in-call services and agencies may provide both in-call and/or out-call services (Scarlet Alliance, 2013). Agencies and brothels typically have an owner and a manager, or an owner who also manages the business. Both agencies and brothels tend to manage most of the administrative and organizational labour of the sex-work including creating the sex workers schedule, screening clients, and collecting the workers' honorariums. While brothels tend to take responsibility for creating a safe environment generally free from most violence and abuse for the appointment to take place, agencies only facilitate the appointment between the client and the sex worker and do not typically arrange for the premises (Scarlet Alliance, 2013). Sex workers working with a brothel are usually only responsible for providing the sexual services that occur during the appointment time.

Brothels are similar to a small hotel or motel in which there are rooms assigned for each sex worker to work in during their booked hours. Smaller brothels may have only two or three individuals working at one time, while large brothels may have over ten workers available for clients in the same building, but in different rooms. Many brothels allow for clients to book an appointment in advance with a sex worker while other businesses may also allow for walk-in appointments where the client does not have to book ahead. Next, societal views in Canada regarding the sex industry, and the impact of these views and social norms and values are discussed.

While massage parlour attendants and agency/brothel workers share many similarities, the most evident example of differences in the segments is between independent indoor sex workers (very low to no public visibility, low risk of victimization, and low to no exploitation by a third party) and managed outdoor street sex workers (high rate of public visibility, high rate of victimization, and high rate of exploitation by a third party). In this way, the only common factor between these two segments of the sex industry is that they both provide sexual services for compensation.

While there are many different methods of dividing the sex industry, as previously shown, the most common way of segmenting the sex trade is the division between indoor workers and outdoor workers (Weitzer, 2007). Sex workers can further be grouped according to their level of “emotion work” including amount of intimacy and level of emotional support provided in the appointment (Weitzer, 2007, p.30). Christine Harcourt and Basil Donovan conclude that there are at least twenty-five types of sex work some of which include: street workers, brothel workers, agency workers, escorts, private workers,

and survival sex workers (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005). Sex workers may also be divided into two groups – those who are pimp controlled and those who are not (Norton-Hawk, 2003). Williamson and Baker (2009) categorize sex work depending on “work style” that is based on the worker’s perception and description of their work behavior (p.31). The resulting categories of Williamson and Baker’s work style include controlled sex work where sex workers are managed and controlled by pimps, independent entrepreneurs who work independently from a pimp, brothel or agency, and outlaw sex workers (also known as street hustlers) who are “people who participate in dishonest activities to swindle and obtain money or items from unsuspecting victims through manipulation or forceful action” (p.37). According to Vanwesenbeeck (2001), researchers have generally failed to “adequately differentiate between sex workers,” and more research is needed in order to gain a clearer understanding of how types of sex work differ (p.279). For the purpose of this study the sex industry will be divided into three general sectors including: outdoor street workers, indoor agency and massage parlour workers, and independent indoor sex workers. These three sectors were chosen as they are distinctive from each other based on working environment (indoor or outdoor) (Weitzer, 2007), the level of control the worker maintains in their occupation (Norton-Hawk, 2003), and general working style (Williamson & Baker, 2009).

There is a significant difference between sex workers who work from a street location and those who work indoors. Street sex work typically occurs in an outdoor setting where workers actively market themselves by walking in specific geographical locations sometimes known as strolls, and therefore this type of sex work is usually the

most visible type in the community. Street workers meet their clients from a street location and the appointment may be held in the client's vehicle, or a location pre-determined by the sex worker or her pimp. Sex workers who work from an outdoor street location generally have the least control over their working conditions when managed by a pimp, as they relinquish a portion of their profits and autonomy. According to Weitzer (2007) sex workers who work from an outdoor location have higher rates of childhood abuse, enter the sex trade at a younger age, and have less education as compared to indoor sex workers who work at an agency (companies that provide sex workers with clients), massage parlour (companies that provide intimate sexual massages for clients) or work independently (where the worker manages her own working conditions, clients, and fees). Plumridge and Abel's (2007) exploration of the sex industry in New Zealand supports Weitzer's findings and suggests that street workers tend to have entered into the sex trade at a younger age, have less education, are less likely to have children, and are more likely to spend their income on drugs as compared to their indoor sex worker counterparts. The research overall suggests that indoor and outdoor workers tend to be different populations of individuals and "that street work is a different career-track to indoor work" (Plumridge and Abel, 2007, p. 82).

Outdoor street workers may be further segmented into sex workers who work independently and those who are controlled by a pimp (a person who manages a sex worker by arranging clients for a percentage of the sex worker's earnings). Indoor sex workers who work independently may exercise more control over their working conditions and environment compared to indoor agency and brothel workers whose

clients and schedule is typically decided by the brothel or agency manager (Abel & Fitzgerald, 2012). Independent street workers are generally able to work the hours they choose and to select the clients with whom they feel comfortable. However, autonomy is not always available for street workers and some street workers lose much of their control as a result of engaging in survival sex in which they sell sexual services to support an addiction (Jeffrey & MacDonald, 2006). Individuals who practice survival sex are more likely to be abused and exploited by pimps and clients, are vulnerable to being robbed, raped and even killed, and tend to be disconnected from the community and social support (Heyl, 1979; Weitzer, 2007).

Working environment is a dominant factor in segmenting sex workers and creating a range of risks (Whittaker & Hart, 1996). Independent sex workers, brothel workers, and agency workers generally work from an indoor setting, and are therefore more likely to evade risks like physical, sexual and psychological abuse as compared to individuals who work from an outdoor location. Risks such as physical abuse, substance abuse, and societal stigma are generally more prevalent on the street level of the trade, but not entirely removed from the experiences of indoor workers (Weitzer, 2005; Reynolds, 1986). Agency workers are able to work in a fairly safe indoor environment with other sex workers, and some agencies are equipped with cameras and panic buttons for additional safety (Abel & Fitzgerald, 2013).

Massage attendants, brothel and agency workers often sacrifice control and a portion of hourly wages to the manager, which typically gives them more control than street workers who are managed by a pimp. Indoor massage attendants and agency



workers generally have less control over their working conditions as compared to independent street sex workers.

Independent indoor sex workers generally maintain maximum control over their working conditions compared to other sectors of the industry. Working independently, as compared to being managed by a pimp, massage parlour or agency, in an indoor setting (hotel room or private residence) gives sex workers the opportunity to determine their own clientele and working schedule from a safer location (Vanwesenbeek, 1994; Weitzer, 2005). Sex workers who work for an agency or pimp generally are granted less control, or have no control at all, over their working conditions and often must forfeit a percentage of their earnings to the brothel manager or their pimp.

Sex workers in different segments of the industry tend to regard their work as distinct from other workers. Weitzer (2007) argues that indoor workers generally do not place themselves in the same category as other sex workers, and do not see their work as degrading or view themselves as victimized. He notes that many indoor sex workers that work independently are generally satisfied with their work and even may consider their job as an improvement to their lives. This is not often an experience shared with individuals who work on the streets. This is an important consideration in later discussion of the participants' ideology management in mitigating risks to their mental well-being. The following section focuses on one specific segment of the Canadian sex industry: agencies and brothels. The section reviews the effect that agencies and brothels have on the working experiences of sex workers.

### **1.5 Sex Work and Canadian Society**

Though much of the stigma that has been attached to the industry has been challenged in favour of a more expansive understanding of sex work, there continue to be strong opinions regarding the immorality and exploitation of the sex trade (Farley, 2003, 2004a; Jeffreys, 2010; Pateman, 1999). Indeed, sweeping generalizations that portray the industry as a site of oppression and victimization are not uncommon. As Ronald Weitzer (2007) explains, sex work continues to be viewed as an “unqualified evil” (p.28). Moralists and anti-sex work advocates often argue that “what incest is to family, prostitution is to the community,” making monolithic statements like “regardless of prostitution’s status (legal, illegal or decriminalized) or its physical location (strip club, massage parlor, street, sex worker/home/hotel) prostitution is extremely dangerous for women” (Farley, 2004b, p.7).

In the sex industry there are many factors that pose a threat to the overall well-being of sex workers. In Canada some of these factors include systemic racism (Culhane, 2003; Farley, Lynne & Cotton, 2005; Razack, 2002), sexism and violence against women (Gurevich, 2009; Currie, 2003, Farley, 2004b; Epele, 2002), and poverty (Monroe, 2005; Khan, Johansson, Zaman, Unem, Rahat & Lundborg, 2010; Joy, 2004). These issues may impede the physical and mental well-being of the workers, ranging from health risks like sexually transmitted infections, to social risks like maintaining relationships with friends, family, and intimate partners.

Individuals who work in this trade continue to be stigmatized and pushed to the margins of Canadian society. Many sex workers, especially street level workers, are often

regarded as diseased miscreants who are supporting some type of addiction (Jeffrey & MacDonald, 2006; Winters, 2011). Benoit and Millar mirror this notion, commenting that “compared to other workers, sex workers are burdened with a stigma merely because they are involved in the commercial sex trade. The impact of this stigma is amplified by the tendency of Canadians to view the sex trade as a social problem that needs to be solved through criminal sanctions” (2001, p.8).

The social stigma of sex work has many repercussions. For instance, many sex workers, especially street based workers, may be denied health care services, or be mistreated by health care professionals when it is discovered that they work in the sex trade (Lazarus et. al., 2012; Jeffrey & MacDonald, 2006). The recent *Bedford v. Canada* case illuminates contemporary discourse concerning the Canadian sex industry. The testimonies from expert witnesses emphasize common conceptions of the industry. For instance, the respondent’s witnesses described sex workers as vulnerable and victimized, and noted that “the vast majority of prostitutes want to exit or leave prostitution, but face difficulties in doing so” (Bedford v. Canada, III. 134, 2010).

A case study examining the local sex trade in Vancouver offers an example of how sex workers in Canada continue to be regarded. Sex workers in Vancouver’s downtown are often viewed as a moral contagion and treated as undesirables (Ross, 2010). One reason given for ostracizing sex workers is their direct challenge to the “idealized, patriarchal norm of heterosexual marriage, monogamy, and motherhood” (Ross, 2010, p. 210). As a result of their position outside societal ideals, sex workers are considered troublemakers and treated as less than human. Regarding sex workers as less than

deserving of equal human rights is marked by their poor treatment by police, abuse by clients, and inadequate protection by the legal system (Sallman, 2010). In fact, stigma often perpetuates violence against sex workers because abuse against marginalized groups does not seem as consequential as it would be against other non-marginalized populations in society (Farley, Lynne & Cotton, 2005; Farley, 2004). The Canadian legal system is undergoing reforms in its approach to regulating the sex trade. As such, it is possible that social attitudes in Canada may change future legal reforms of the sex industry.

### **1.6. Conclusion**

In general, this chapter contextualizes the research and provides a foundation from which the participants' narratives can be understood. Regulation of the Canadian sex industry began in the mid 1800's when legislation mandated that all sex workers could be subject to medical inspections and treated for venereal diseases. Soon after, procuring and keeping a common bawdy house became criminal activities due to the influences of the social purity movement.

These legal reforms had remained relatively unchanged until the 2010 Ontario case in which Justice Bindel struck down the laws criminalizing common bawdy houses, living on the avails, and communicating for the purpose of sex. The case was later taken to the Supreme Court of Canada in 2013, and it was determined that the laws prohibiting brothels, public communication for the purpose of sex work, and living on the avails were unconstitutional. The current legal reformation of sex work laws in Canada destabilizes a long past of hazy sex work laws that criminalize only specific aspects of sex work while leaving the act of selling sex legal. While the Canadian Parliament was given twelve

months to rewrite sex work legislation in the country, the federal government is still determining the best way to restructure Canada's sex work laws. Until legislation has been reformed, current laws continue to make many acts associated with sex work illegal, including operating a common bawdy house, procuring, soliciting in a public space and living on the avails of prostitution. Canada's laws governing the sale of sexual acts makes it challenging for sex workers to sell their services while still abiding by the confining laws.

The sex industry has commonly been segmented by researchers as a way of understanding the sex trade. Some of the means of segmentation include location of work (indoor or outdoor), level of public visibility, risk of victimization, and level of exploitation by a third party. This thesis segments sex workers into three categories, based on Weitzer's (2007) method, as a way of understanding sex worker's working conditions. These key segments of the Canadian sex trade include outdoor street workers, indoor agency and massage parlour workers, and independent indoor sex workers. One of the most significant distinctions between types of sex work is the location of the work, as indoor sex workers generally have safer working conditions and may be less likely to practice survival sex work. Sex workers who work from an indoor location may choose to work with an agency or brothel, or work independently in a hotel room or rented apartment or condo.

The next chapter further examines sex workers who work independently from an indoor location. Specifically, the working conditions of independent mobile sex workers, including the paid and unpaid labour components of their work, will be discussed. The

following chapter will also introduce the participants in this study and present the chapter outlines for this thesis.

## **CHAPTER TWO: INDEPENDENT MOBILE SEX WORK**

The previous chapter introduced the sex industry in Canada and reviewed legal and social changes from the 1800's to present day. The current reformation of sex work legislation is likely to change the ways sex workers practice their work and carry out their business in Canada. This chapter examines how Independent Mobile Sex Workers currently practice sex work.

This chapter begins with examining the working environments of independent mobile sex workers, focusing on the importance of internet boards and forums, and websites in maintaining a strong online presence when on tour. Next, the intricacies of touring are explored, and the significance of paid and unpaid labour in sex work is reviewed. The chapter concludes with an introduction to the participants in this study and a brief chapter overview that will provide a guide to the thesis.

### **2.1. Independent Work: Websites and Internet Boards and Forums**

Independent sex workers most align with Harcourt and Donovan's (2005) idea of a private worker who works alone in an indoor setting and makes arrangements with clients over the phone or email; this allows the sex worker to have control over their working environment and to preselect their clients. Independent sex workers do not work under the management of a pimp or a brothel/agency owner, and therefore they must take on the responsibilities typically performed by pimps and managers including finding clients, booking appointments, handling financial transactions, and maintaining their online presence via boards and forums, and their business website (Appendix A).

The most common settings for an independent sex worker to conduct in-call appointments are in hotel rooms, their own private residence or a pre-arranged rental property. Some independent sex workers provide services that include attending events and dinners with their client, which is followed by a sexual act in a private setting, while other sex workers only provide direct sexual services during the appointment. During an appointment independent sex workers may provide many different services ranging from cuddling and holding hands to the ‘porn star experience’ which is typified by replicating sexual acts that are often performed in pornography. Most independent sex workers outline what services they will and will not provide on their website or advertisement.

Advertising is an essential part of independent sex work since independent workers do not have a manager or pimp to advertise and market for them. One of the most significant tools used to advertise is online boards and forums. Online boards and forums are interchangeable terms that describe online sites where people can read and post messages and engage in discussion. Boards and forums differ from chat rooms as messages are archived so that users can go back and read prior posts and discussions. Examples of discussions on the Canadian Escort Recommendation Board (Canadian Escort Recommendation Board, 2014) include best in-call sex workers, recommendations for couples looking for sex workers, and the best place for massage appointments in specific locations. This section will provide a preliminary understanding of online boards and forums, such as the Canadian Escort Recommendation Board ([www.cerb.ca](http://www.cerb.ca)), and the Canadian Sex Worker Review Forum ([www.caerf.ca](http://www.caerf.ca)), which will set the foundation for



discussions regarding the study's participants' work practices and working environments.(Appendix B, C and D).

The recent phenomenon of buying intimacy online has opened a new arena for sex work scholars. In the nineties, researchers began to speculate about the impact of the rise in internet use relative to sex work, suggesting that the web may offer new opportunities for both sex workers and their clients (Maxwell, 1997). The use of technology has indeed changed the operations of the sex industry today. Independent sex workers generally utilize the internet for marketing, developing business websites, and advertising their services and touring dates, while clients use online forums to comment on services and experiences with sex workers (Rocha, Holme & Liljeros, 2010). Websites are an integral business tool for independent mobile sex workers. Their websites generally are divided into many sections (Appendix A). The “About” section is where the sex worker describes themselves as a sex worker and showcases their personality and unique attributes. This is an important part of marketing as the sex worker can convey their sex worker persona through this piece, such as revealing a witty and humorous persona or presenting a more sultry and mysterious character. The “Gallery” section is where the sex worker displays photos of themselves. To maintain client interest and remain relevant this section needs to be regularly updated, with new photos posted every few months, though some sex workers prefer to update their Gallery every six months to a year. As the participant Addison (her pseudonym) notes, “Ideally you want to update them [online photos] every 3-4 months. Yeah, and it’s a cost. It’s at least \$200-\$300. Or it can be as high as \$1000 for a photo shoot. And that’s all part of marketing” (Addison). For many

sex workers the gallery section includes only professionally taken photos, however, some sex workers prefer to use self-taken photos. The “Donations” section can also be called “Rates” or “Honorarium” and this is where the sex worker discusses the fees for the various services they provide. Some sex workers have a minimum appointment time, usually of one hour, but the appointment can go as long as an overnight stay. This section is usually worded carefully to stay within the legal parameters in Canada, so services may be categorized by terms such as “dinner dates.” The “Contact” section provides information on how to contact the sex worker including phone number or email, and the sex worker will usually note what form of contact they prefer. The “Calendar” section is an important section for mobile sex workers as this is where the sex worker posts her touring schedule and outlines which cities she will be visiting and on which dates. This section needs to be continually updated to reflect the sex workers changing schedule. Altogether, these pages are usually the very minimum for a sex worker website.

Many independent mobile workers include additional pages. For instance, “Etiquette” is a page where the sex worker discusses how a client should behave during the appointment, such as offering the donation at the beginning of the appointment in an envelope and showing up to the appointment washed and groomed. This is important for new clients as clear expectations are stated so the client will know what is expected of them and how to properly behave during the appointment. Another page that a sex worker may have on their site is a “Duos” page for sex workers who frequently include services involving another sex worker. On this page they list and post a link to the sex worker with whom they are comfortable having a duo appointment. The “Links” section is also a page

that many independent mobile sex workers like to include on their site. Links is a place to promote other sex workers, and in exchange they will post a link to your website and promote your page. This is a wonderful marketing tool as cross-promotion can bring in new clients, though this is another page that will need to be continually updated as the sex worker finds new peers in the industry to cross-promote. Finally, there are some sex workers who now write a blog as a way to differentiate themselves, draw clients to their page, and offer more information on their lifestyle and career. Overall, a webpage is a useful tool for sex worker promotion where they can provide all the information required for clients, market themselves, as well as engaging their clientele while on tour (see Appendix A).

Online boards also provide a generally safe environment for clients with varying sexual preferences to find workers to meet their needs and for sex workers to market their services and find clients from the safety of their home or hotel room (Ashford, 2008). Online forums and boards, like the Canadian Escort Recommendation Board ([www.cerb.ca](http://www.cerb.ca)), are innovative ways of facilitating the exchange between workers and clients (Appendix B, C and D). Potential clients are able to read the advertisements and posts on the online forums and be linked to the sex worker's website. From the advertisement on the forums the client may contact the sex worker from the information provided, usually through email. Workers are better able to screen their clients over a series of emails as they can analyze the client's style of writing, their use of language and general attitude (Sanders, 2005b). This offers greater protection to sex workers as they can gather information beyond the initial contact with the client by gaining insight into

the customer's motives, attitude and personality. For example, most of the participants are able to conclude over a series of emails what the appointment of the client will entail and if they are comfortable accommodating the needs and preferences of the customer. It also gives the sex worker a chance to develop a preliminary relationship with the client before the appointment.

Different areas of the world have their own online forums and discussion boards. Canada, for instance, has numerous boards, but the key sites include the Canadian Escort Recommendation Board ([www.cerb.ca](http://www.cerb.ca)) and its affiliated boards including the Pacific-Prairie Escort Recommendation Board ([www.perb.ca](http://www.perb.ca)) Montreal Escort Recommendation Board ([www.merb.ca](http://www.merb.ca)), and Toronto Escort Recommendation Board ([www.terb.ca](http://www.terb.ca)), and the Canadian Escort Review Forum ([www.caerf.ca](http://www.caerf.ca)). Also, My Provider Guide ([www.myproviderguide.com](http://www.myproviderguide.com)), Escorts-Canada ([www.escorts-canada.com](http://www.escorts-canada.com)), Erslist ([www.erslist.com](http://www.erslist.com)), and Backpage ([www.backpage.com](http://www.backpage.com)) are commonly used by independent sex workers.

The sites are generally divided into sections according to geographical area; there is a section for key cities in each province (See Appendix B). For example, while Newfoundland only has one section on CERB (the St. John's section) Ontario is broken down into fourteen sections, including Kingston, Windsor, Toronto, and other areas (Canadian Escort Recommendation board, 2013). The boards are generally divided into different sections including: client recommendations' section where clients can review their experiences with sex workers and offer their recommendation, a sex worker section where the sex workers can advertise their business and post their schedules, and a

discussion section where both clients and sex workers can comment and discuss a range of different topics relevant to the sex trade in the city and in Canada (See Appendix C). Larger cities like Toronto and Ottawa will have additional sections including discussion on strip clubs and massage parlours (See Appendix D). Touring sex workers commonly post about their upcoming tour dates while using the forums to advertise their services in the Advertising – Schedules and Announcements Section (Canadian Escort Recommendation Board, 2013). Sex workers generally include a brief biography about themselves, a few pictures, and the date in which they will be in the specific city in their posts. Another part of these boards and forums include a “Recommendations” section where both clients and sex workers may provide reviews and recommendations of sex workers, but only positive reviews are accepted in order to maintain the boards and forums as a safe and positive space. Finally, there is a “Discussion” section which is less restricted in terms of what may be posted and clients and workers can discuss anything from fetishes to their experiences within the sex industry. Online boards and forums are an essential tool for mobile independent sex workers when they tour as they offer a way to stay connected with clients and continue their advertising even when they are touring. The next section discusses the working conditions of independent mobile sex workers while they are touring throughout Canada.

## **2.2 Touring: Working Conditions of Independent Mobile Sex Workers**

With new advances in transportation, mobility has been become more accessible for tourists and workers alike in Canada. Truckers, fishers and ferry workers have historically participated in employment-related mobility, and presently many more occupations have

joined the ranks of mobile workers, including sex workers (Workers on the move in Canada, n.d.). Erotic dancers have typically been noted for touring in strip club circuits, and more recently independent sex workers have taken advantage of the benefits of employment-related travel in their work (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2013). This next section looks at the experience of mobility for independent mobile sex workers.

Mobility differs from migration as the participants do not resettle in a new location for their work; rather the women stay from a few days to a few weeks in each city. This is similar to other professionals who go on tour such as musicians. However, while other workers may utilize different forms of transportation, the study participants rely primarily on air travel – flying between cities and provinces.

Touring demands much effort and attention to detail. Specifically, the participants tend to plan their touring schedule months in advance in order to ensure that they receive enough bookings to make a profit from touring. In some cases, when there is not enough interest in a sex worker, that worker may choose to increase their advertising or remove the city from their itinerary all together. Many sex workers who tour post on online forums to notify potential clientele of their touring schedule, while also having a calendar on their webpage outlining the dates and cities that they will be visiting.

When selecting a new city for touring, mobile sex workers often try to get a feel of what the city is like before investing time and money into setting up a tour date. Indeed, touring requires finding free time in their schedule, booking flights and hotel rooms, and setting up appointments. Therefore, mobile sex workers may choose to post on online forums like CERB ([www.cerb.ca](http://www.cerb.ca)) or CAERF ([www.caerf.ca](http://www.caerf.ca)) to see if there will be

enough interest from clients. Despite best efforts, sometimes sex workers encounter cities that fall short of expectations, and cause them to lose rather than to make money. This is often a result of last minute client cancellations, and issues with flights and hotel bookings. The majority of this study's participants only tour within Canada.

Once the tour schedule has been confirmed, some preliminary appointments booked, a hotel room reserved, and tickets bought, the independent mobile sex worker is ready to begin her tour. When touring the participants typically manage their businesses from hotel rooms and coffee shops. Unlike other entrepreneurs, the participants' office spaces are continually shifting. However, there are a few aspects of their work that provide stability when they are touring. For instance, all participants manage a website where they can connect with clients and maintain a strong client base when they are travelling by posting tour dates, updating photographs and personal information, or even keeping a blog to maintain the interest of regular clients. This provides a sense of stability for their business when their schedule is always in flux and they are rarely geographically settled in one town for any longer than a month or so. As well through posting on blogs and advertising on online boards and forums, such as CAERF and CERB, the women are able to maintain a strong presence online while they are touring. This notion will further be discussed in later sections of this chapter.

Since the participants are continuously travelling and work from indoor locations it is nearly impossible to connect with clients in face to face interactions. Therefore, participants rely almost exclusively on email in initiating and maintaining contact. However, a few study participants also incorporate telephone use into their business.

Email contact is always initially started by an interested client who discovers the sex worker from their website, a newspaper classified advertisement, an advertisement on an online board or forum or from word of mouth. The back and forth communication continues for a few days or weeks, up to a month in some cases, before the actual appointment takes place. This allows both the worker and client to gain familiarity and present the needs, boundaries, and requirements of the appointment.

While touring, participants are constantly connecting with new clients, maintaining relationships with their regular clientele, providing appointments, and managing future tour plans. Most of the work leading up to the appointment occurs online, which requires strong written communication and adept technical skills like using online boards and forums to advertise, and post updates and schedules. This is juxtaposed against the appointment in which solid verbal and non-verbal communication skills are required, as well as sense of intuition in understanding and meeting the individual client's needs and essentially being the perfect host for the hour(s) spent with the client.

The idea of being an excellent host is essential in creating an appointment that the client will enjoy and remember for future occasions when they would desire a sex worker again. Indeed, having regular clients is a significant factor in sustaining a strong business in the industry, and is often preferable for many sex workers. As a result, much preparation is given to each appointment by the study participants, and seldom is one appointment followed directly by another. Generally, much attention is given to providing the unique "look" or role the client is interested in – whether that is creating the look of the Girl Next Door or dressing up to play the part of the seductive vixen. As well,



creating the perfect atmosphere is important, and many of the participants give thought to the appointment's atmosphere and environment, whether that is to work out of a luxury hotel suite or carefully preparing their accommodations to suit the needs of the client.

The working environment of independent mobile sex workers is constantly shifting and therefore, having a strong online presence through websites, emails and advertisements is important. Connecting with clients and maintaining relationships with current customers must be carefully negotiated while working and touring. Indeed, employment-related mobility provides many benefits to their work. The following section reviews the paid and unpaid labour components of sex work and how they impact the working experiences of the women in this study.

### **2.3 Paid and Unpaid Labour**

As the previous discussion suggests, there is much labour required that is unaccounted for in general understandings of being an independent mobile sex worker. While the split between paid and unpaid (or indirectly paid) labour differs for each individual worker, the amount of time and energy that is required for an appointment to be done flawlessly is more than might be expected. The maintenance of their website, creating advertisements and internet banners, updating photographs, posting on online forums, beauty work (maintaining physical appearance), and creating travel arrangements are activities required in order to attract clients and maintain a strong client base.

Advertising demands much attention and time of independent sex workers. While agencies are usually responsible for attracting new clients, independent sex workers must find clients for themselves. Advertising involves many different avenues. For instance,

sex workers may choose to create web banners to post on different online forums and message boards, posting advertisements in the adult personal classified section of local newspapers, and having a business website.

There are other aspects of unpaid labour outside of advertising such as creating a comfortable, sensuous and relaxing setting for the appointment. This may include everything from selecting a particular hotel and hotel suite to choosing the best attire to suite the client's personality and interest. Similarly, the maintenance of the sex worker's physical appearance is another essential part of the job that occurs outside of the appointment time. Beauty work such as manicures and pedicures, diet and exercise, waxing, and hair appointments, also take time and money.

Beyond advertising, providing atmosphere and maintaining physical appearance, security is a crucial part of unpaid labour that independent sex workers must consider. The key aspect of security is screening clients. Screening new clients is essential for protecting the sex worker's safety, and most often requires obtaining a reference about the prospective client from one or more sex workers. This allows the sex worker to understand what type of client the individual is – what services they enjoy, if they are respectful of boundaries, time and fees, and to determine if there is a comfortable fit between the prospective client and sex worker. However, when the individual is a first time client, and has not visited a sex worker before, then most workers are comfortable receiving a full name, phone number, and work information from the client. Sex workers will often check the facts provided by the client to determine suitability. Fact checking may be done through discreet phone calls to employers and searching online to ensure the

information given is accurate. This method may appear precarious, but many workers rely on intuition in their screening process. If a sex worker feels uneasy about a client they may decline an appointment in order to protect their safety and well-being. This approach is possible for independent mobile workers as their economic well-being does not necessitate a constant stream of clients because their hourly rate is generally set high enough to allow for only one (or sometimes two) customers a day and thus, the women are able to remain more selective of their clients. On the other hand, sex workers who have a lower hourly rate, or who have to give up a portion of their earnings to a pimp or manager are more likely to have to see more clients in a day in order to have a high enough income to support themselves.

Generally, the direct hour(s) spent with the client are the only paid portion of the job (at least within a 'billable hours' framework). The per hour fees requested by independent mobile sex workers (typically around \$350-\$450 an hour, and often with a two hour minimum) help to compensate them for the time spent doing the required 'unpaid' labour and the fees are generally enough to entice workers to stay within the industry. The average rate per hour charged by the study's participants is roughly three hundred dollars and prices may fluctuate depending on client requests. An independent sex worker's annual income will depend on the number of appointments per week and the length of each appointment. On average the participants in this study saw one to two clients per day while touring and the appointments varied in length from one hour to overnight stays.

Section 2.4 offers details about the nine participants as way to give a more intimate understanding of their narratives and quotes found throughout this thesis. The information provides a relatively detailed account of their lives, linking commonalities and differences among the participants, but also protects the women's confidentiality.

## **2.4 Introduction to Participants**

Nine independent mobile sex workers (their pseudonyms: Valerie, Mina, Lacie, Kyla, Gwen, Elise, Devon, Callie and Addison) participated in this study. Most of the women come from middle-to-upper class socio-economic backgrounds. Seven of the participants identify as Caucasian, one woman identifies as mixed race, and another participant identifies as Métis. All of the participants self-identify as women and market themselves as female sex workers. The majority of participants are in their early-to-mid-thirties, the youngest participant is 23 and the eldest is 36 years old. Some of the women have intimate partners and children, while others are unattached and have no dependents.

Nearly half of the participants have past or ongoing employment in markets outside of the sex industry including interior decorating, baking and event planning. Four of the participants are actively pursuing or are interested in pursuing different avenues for business in the sex industry, such as managing their own agency. Seven of the participants have a university or college education ranging from business management to a Ph.D. in the Humanities, and some of the participants are considering a return to academia.

Six of the nine participants originally came from Ontario or Quebec, using cities like Toronto and Ottawa as a home base and touring to other cities in Canada from there.

Seven of the participants strictly tour in Canada, while the other two have expanded their tours to cities in the United States and the United Kingdom. While on tour, some of the participants rely on their intimate partner to take care of the children (if they have any) and the household, while they manage their businesses from the virtual realm of online boards and their business website. The participants typically spend a few days to a few weeks in each city; how long they spend in the place depends on the number of clients that show interest in their services and how many appointments have been booked prior to their departure. In all, the nine independent mobile sex workers who participated in the study have many similarities based on their socio-economic background, and working conditions. However, there are some differences in respect to their intimate relationships and pursuits outside of the industry. A brief description of each participant is useful in contextualizing their narratives in terms of their personal background and life experiences:

**Addison** is a thirty-one year old woman who maintains a home base in Toronto. Addison is fluent in three languages, has a university education and maintains a business venture outside of the sex industry. She has an extensive tour that spans the country, from Vancouver to St. John's. At the time of the interview, Addison had been touring for three years.

I really enjoy it and it's a lot of fun...It's been on par with my non-x rated career, except it's a lot more fun. (Addison)

**Callie** is a thirty-five year old woman who is in the initial stages of her touring career and planning for her first Canadian tour. She works primarily from her home in Toronto with the goal of expanding her sex work business into markets in Alberta and

Ontario. Callie has the highest university education of the participants, completing a Ph.D. in the Humanities and pursuing a Post Doctorate before she decided to enter into the sex industry as a way to explore her sexuality and utilize her strong interpersonal skillset.

I think it's fascinating. It's some of the most fascinating work I've done... The researcher in me is like this is phenomenal. Very interesting, and it's also emotional work [and] physical work. I find it very satisfying actually. Academia, it was very...it's all about criticism and being critical, and you're always being talked down. In this work people are telling me I'm gorgeous and beautiful and how amazing I am, spending hundreds of dollars to spend time with me. It's funny because sex work seems to have this bad stigma...oh they must feel really bad about themselves blah, blah, blah. But it's pretty nice actually. (Callie)

**Devon** is a thirty-six year old Métis woman who tours extensively in the West, including cities like Calgary, Saskatoon, Regina and Prince Albert, and has incorporated some Eastern cities into her tour including Ottawa, where she and I met for the interview. Devon has been touring for about five years, and uses Alberta as her home base. Devon is also a college graduate, and pursued another business venture before entering into the sex trade.

I really do feel like a lot of the people that I'm spending time with I'm helping them in some way. Sometimes it is just that need for a physical release. Just like sometimes I need that physical release in the form of crying. Maybe my emotions are running over and I need to let it out. I need a friend to hug and hold and bawl my eyes out. Or be by myself and have that outlet. So that makes me feel really good that I'm able to help people on that level. It makes me feel good to make them feel good. I get to make my own schedule. That's awesome. It gives me a good sense of self. It makes me feel like I am not the grunt, just going along for fifteen bucks an hour. Or whatever that may be. I like being able to decide for myself and making it work on my own. And there are no boundaries. I can make whatever I want to make. I can live my life the way I want to live, to an extent. So, I like a lot of the freedom it affords me (Devon).

**Elise**, thirty-two years old, had toured for about a year at the time of the interview, including various cities in Canada in her tour schedule such as St. John's, Charlottetown, Toronto, Ottawa, Brandon, Thunder Bay, and Vancouver. She had worked two years as an independent sex worker in the sex industry before deciding to tour. Similar to many other participants, Elise managed her own business outside of the sex industry before becoming a sex worker. She is educated in the trades and holds a management diploma.

The best part is the people I get to meet. You never know who you're going to meet. And sometimes the people you think are going to be boring are actually exciting. I learn something from everyone I meet. I've learned so much stuff about the entire country that I never would have known had I not done this. And I've gotten to see all of Canada... That's the perk, that's the highlight of my job (Elise).

**Gwen** is a single thirty-seven year old woman who has an extensive college background spanning ten years and resulting in four diplomas ranging from legal assistant to child psychology. Gwen markets herself as an Exquisite Companion, and her touring network is restricted primarily to Eastern Canada, including cities like Halifax, Kingston, Ottawa, and Montreal. Gwen had been working four years as an independent sex worker before deciding to tour, and had been touring for one year at the time of the interview.

The money is good. I like the travelling. I can meet new and awesome people. It is very rewarding. I also like doing good things for people. You give yourself to those people; it's not always an act. You are helping others. It is not all about sex. ...It definitely is emotional work. You need to be a good conversationalist and know where you are going. There is more to it than sex. They are your guest and client. It is fun and challenging at the same time. It keeps you on your toes (Gwen).

**Kyla** is aged thirty-six and usually restricts her tour to Ontario when in Canada, however, she is also the only participant who sometimes expands her tour to the United Kingdom. Kyla manages other entrepreneurial pursuits, and has two other businesses outside of the sex industry. Kyla's services are unique, as she not only provides

companionship in an intimate setting, but she also offers aromatherapy and healing massage in her services.

You see, I know myself well. I know my strengths and I know my weaknesses. And I know that it pays in life to play for your strength. I knew that I liked men. I feel much more comfortable around men than women. And these things just came together. I like travelling, I like culture, and I like this (Kyla).

**Lacie** is the youngest of the participants, being twenty-three years old. She entered into the sex industry at the earliest age of the participants – working as an exotic dancer at age 18. Similar to Kyla, Lacie tours primarily in Ontario, and focuses her business in cities like Ottawa and Toronto. Lacie began her work in the sex trade industry eight years ago at the time of the interview, and began working as a full time sex worker at the age of 20. She has been working as an independent mobile sex worker for nearly three years.

You know what, I honestly love it. I make my own hours, I am my own boss. If I don't want to work for three days, or a month, I don't have to and I still have a job when I want to go back to work (Lacie).

**Mina** is twenty-three years old, and like many other participants she is university educated, holding a Bachelor of Science. Like Callie, Mina is new to touring and has only a few cities in Canada where she travels including Toronto, Ottawa and St. John's. However, Mina is looking to expand her business to the Yukon, Vancouver and Calgary. She began her sex work career as an independent mobile sex worker and had been working for a year at the time of the interview. Mina is well versed in women's studies and feminist issues including topics of violence against women, sexual health, and the sex trade.

I wouldn't have the possibilities to travel if I didn't do this job. I am able to work anywhere. It pays gloriously, which is really nice.... And you get to meet people you would never meet otherwise (Mina).



**Valerie** is a thirty-three year old woman who tours throughout Canada and the United States marketing herself as an Elite Courtesan and VIP Travel Companion.

Valerie worked for three agencies before deciding to manage her own business in the sex industry. At the time of the interview Valerie had been working as an independent mobile sex worker for twelve years.

It can only be my responsibility. It's pretty much my call every time. It's a lot more responsibility, but it gives me more in terms of being able to accomplish pretty much what I want (Valerie).

In addition to their status as mobile workers, the women in this study shared other characteristics as well, such as having a similar socio-economic status. The differences among them include their relationship status and whether or not they have dependents.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has reviewed the working conditions of Independent Mobile Sex Workers in Canada. As independent sex workers the women in this study have many responsibilities that would have generally been taken care of by brothel and agency managers, or pimps. These responsibilities include advertising, finding and booking clients, and maintaining an online presence.

New technologies have offered sex workers a new domain to market themselves, seek clients, and expand their networks. Some of the key boards and forums utilized by the participants in this study include the Canadian Escort Recommendation Board and the Canadian Sex Worker Review Forum. Boards and forums are an online space where clients and sex workers can come together to share information via board posts. These

posts may include client reviews of sex workers, and sex workers posting their touring schedule and sharing their services.

Another important marketing tool for sex workers is their websites. Having a business webpage allows independent sex workers to showcase their personality and unique attributes, advertise their services and prices, and draw in prospective clients with their photos. Maintaining a website and being present online via boards and forums are all unpaid labour that is required in independent mobile sex work.

A notable difference between the segments of the sex trade is the ratio of ‘unpaid’ and paid labour required. Working in a brothel or agency most often requires little to no administrative or organizational work as advertising, booking clients, and arranging appointments are the responsibility of the owner or manager. Independent sex workers must take on these responsibilities themselves and account for that work indirectly with their hourly rates. As well, independent mobile sex workers have an increased amount of ‘unpaid’ labour duties as a result of their tour, including booking flights and accommodations, advertising their services and touring schedule in various cities, maintaining an online presence, while also gaining clients and maintaining their client base while on tour. Generally, the direct hour(s) spent with the client are the only paid portion of the job.

Overall, this research explores the lived experiences of independent mobile sex workers who work primarily in the Canadian sex industry. The next chapter sets a foundation to understanding the research findings, and reviews in depth the literature on sex work, work, and mobility. Different theoretical viewpoints are examined for what

they add to the literature, and what they overlook or do not address. The key theoretical lenses used for this study, including sex work theory and “dirty” work theory, are introduced and reviewed for the ways they contribute to the overall findings of this study.

## **2.6 Chapter Outlines**

Chapter one has briefly introduced the study and contextualizes the research in terms of the current state of the sex industry in Canada. As the majority of the participants travel solely within Canada, with the exception of two of the women, it is integral to have a preliminary understanding of the current status of the Canadian sex trade. Chapter two builds on this foundation and examines the working conditions of Independent Mobile Sex Workers. Chapter three provides a review of key literature regarding the sex industry, and explores current theoretical understandings of the sex trade, while also discussing historical and current notions of work in general. Finally, chapter three provides a brief review of ideology management as it relates to those who work in “dirty” professions.

Chapter four explains the methodology underpinning the study. Specifically, the sections include research design, participation selection and details, data collection and analysis, and general research limitations are discussed. Chapter five and six offer an analysis of the data. In particular, chapter five examines the participants’ working conditions and physical health as influenced by their mobility and independent status in the sex trade, beginning with shared experiences among sex workers in Canada and ending with a discussion of experiences unique to the niche of independent mobile sex workers in this study. Chapter six focuses on the effects of mobility and independent sex worker status on the participants’ emotional and social health. Chapter six begins with

similarities among sex workers in Canada, and then centers on the participants' experience of emotional and social challenges while doing sex work, focusing on the concept of ideology management. Chapter seven reviews the results, provides a summary of the findings, explains the social relevance of the results and offers areas for future research.

### **CHAPTER THREE: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

The previous chapter introduced this study and provided a brief overview of the sex industry in Canada, including the legal landscape and societal views of sex work. The segmentation of the sex industry and the general business operations of independent mobile sex workers in Canada as compared to agencies and brothels were explored. While chapter one and two gave a larger overview of concepts of sex work, this chapter focuses more in depth on key aspects of the sex trade in Canada and reviews the literature on this area of study.

This chapter argues that the most suitable theoretical frameworks for reviewing and understanding the research findings are sex work theory, “dirty” work theory, and risk management. First, I discuss the different ways of understanding sex work, arguing that sex work theory is the best theoretical lens for examining the research findings. Sex work theory focuses on the social, individual and labour dimension of sex work. Next, theories of work, from historic to modern times, are discussed and the framework of “dirty” work (Hughes, 1951) is examined for how it relates to sex workers experience of work. Then, the working conditions of independent mobile sex work are discussed, focusing on the emotional labour elements of independent mobile sex work. This section concludes with an important concept in this study, risk management. Specifically, the risks involved in sex work, the use of ideology management, and the impact of employment-related mobility on risk management are reviewed.

### **3.1 Theoretical Views on the Sex Trade**

The sex industry has been documented, examined, praised and critiqued. Scholars have researched almost every facet of the industry from the sexual agency of and risks faced by brothel workers in Belize (Ragsdale, 2007) to survival sex work in Vancouver, Canada (Chattier, Shannon, Wood, Zhang & Kerr, 2010). The experiences of sex workers are as diverse as the individuals that occupy the industry, and thus multiple frameworks have been crafted in order to best examine the unique experiences of different segments of the sex trade. First, there are overarching frameworks that conceptualize the sex industry and situate it within broad systemic issues in society such as patriarchy and violence against women. While some frameworks that focus on the societal level of the sex industry are concerned with problems such as violence against women, others may argue that the sex industry actually challenges problematic issues such as the Male Gaze, in which women are typically objectified and sexualized by the gaze of men (Jeffrey & MacDonald, 2006). These lenses offer theoretical understandings of the sex industry, but fail to provide a sufficient analysis of the individual sex workers' experiences. Another type of framework examines the individual level of sex workers and explores topics such as disembodiment or the agency and autonomy of sex workers (Farley et al., 2003; Pateman 1999, Jeffrey and MacDonald, 2006). Finally, there is an approach that combines the previous two frameworks and explores the sex industry from the individual level while also acknowledging broader societal forces that impact sex workers (Weitzer, 2007; Kontula, 2008; Kempadoo, 1998). This approach is successful in capturing the

research participants' unique experiences of the industry and aligning them with larger theories like sex work as a form of labour.

The first overarching framework that addresses the sex industry focuses on societal forces that create systemic problems in society. This approach is based on the notions of patriarchy and male domination, and tends to focus on issues of violence and exploitation in the sex trade (Weitzer, 2009). Scholars who employ this approach include Andrea Dworkin (1981, 1997), Sheila Jeffreys (2009), Melissa Farley (1988; 2003; 2004; 2005; 2009) and Carole Pateman (1999).

Dworkin argues that sex work is harmful to women and comments that “when men use women in prostitution, they are expressing a pure hatred for the female body” (Weitzer, 2005, p. 937). Similarly, Catherine MacKinnon notes that men’s access to women’s sexuality in the sex trade only reaffirms women’s inequality in society in general (MacKinnon, 1998). It is commonly cited that the majority of sex workers are women while most clients are men, which is often used as evidence to suggest the subordination of women within the sex industry (Satz, 1995). Sex work is understood to be complicit in maintaining structures of patriarchal male power in society. In fact, it is often stated that supporting sex worker rights is essentially supporting men’s access to women’s sexuality and promoting violations against women’s human rights (Jeffreys, 2010).

Carole Pateman (1999) and Melissa Farley (2009) also acknowledge the sex trade as being a site of violence against women, arguing that the contract between sex workers and their clients negatively impacts broader society. Pateman (1999) states that “when

women's bodies are on sale as commodities in the capitalist market, the terms of the original [sex] contract cannot be forgotten; the law of male sex right is publically affirmed, and men gain public acknowledgment as women's sexual masters – that is what is wrong with prostitution" (p. 62). This inequality in the contract between sex workers and their clients is reiterated by Farley (2009) who emphasizes the violence and exploitation in the sex industry, suggesting that "the institution of prostitution promotes and cements sex and race inequality" (p. 311). However, concerns about the sex industry extend beyond male domination and physical dangers to sex workers. It is also argued that the sex industry's other consequences include magnifying the objectification of women in pornography, contributing to the rise of strip clubs and maintaining global sex tourism and human trafficking (Plummer, 2010). The sex contract between sex workers and their clients is seen to contribute to overarching societal problems such as perpetuating the inequality of men and women and contributing to violence against women.

The converse of this notion is also apparent and yet still fitting within the framework that views the sex industry at a broader societal level. While the previous ideas present the sex industry as complicit in maintaining a system of patriarchy, there are scholars who believe that sex work actually destabilizes the patriarchal system and reforms the idea of male domination of women's bodies in the sex trade. This lens posits that sex workers resist societal forces like the male gaze and patriarchy and are political actors in challenging systems of control (Jeffrey & MacDonald, 2006).



It has been suggested that the sex trade is one of the rare sites in society in which men are actually subordinate to women. Scholars like McClintock state that sex work centers around “the man’s dependence on the woman’s sexual power and skill” (McClintock, 1992, p. 72). Sex workers may challenge the hold that patriarchy maintains in society because they demand money for services that other women give freely to men (McClintock, 1992). Furthermore, sex workers may actually dismantle the private/public spheres divide that is present in society (McClintock, 1992). The private sphere includes the household, family, unpaid domestic labour, and is often attributed to feminine ideals, while the public sphere includes paid employment, politics, life outside of the home, and is generally associated with men (Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology, 2000). Sex has been situated as acceptable only in the private sphere, conducted in the home and unpaid, and when sex workers engage in sexual acts for economic compensation outside of the home they are breaking down walls that bind sex to the private realm.

An additional means of sex work defying dominant power structures in society is by confronting the norms of the Male Gaze. Jeffrey and MacDonald (2006) explain that sex workers can challenge the rules of the Male Gaze by “invert[ing] the ‘male gaze’ by creating what the male gaze desires but on the sex worker’s own terms” (p.11). This understanding of sex work aligns with postmodernist feminism and queer theory that views sex workers as “a resistant identity that exposes the suppression of women’s sexuality and the exploitation of her labour. That is, sex radicalism emphasizes the potential of sex work in exploding and expanding the boundaries of sexuality and gender” (Jeffrey & MacDonald, 2006, p. 10-11).

A different way of examining the sex industry focuses on the sex workers themselves, with particular emphasis on their bodies. Indeed, the notion of disembodiment, a disconnect between the mind and body, is essential to this understanding of the industry. This framework maintains that women who are involved in the sex trade are selling their bodies in a capitalist society, which inhibits their personal sexual expression in intimate relationships (Pateman, 1999). In this light, sex workers are commonly reduced to their bodies, and are regarded as “raw materials of the industry” (Jeffreys, 2009, p.316). Since the self is seen as being inextricably linked to the body, sex workers are understood to be inevitably selling their inner self as they put their bodies for sale on the market (Pateman, 1999).

If, as Pateman argues, sex workers have to sell a sense of themselves, they may need to rely on disassociation techniques. Sheila Jeffreys (2009) notes that women’s bodies are dissociated from their inner self as a way to cope and survive the work, which negatively impacts their personal lives. The disembodiment that is required of sex work results in the loss of being capable of experiencing intimacy and sex in intimate relationships (Farley et al., 2003). The alienation of women’s bodies through sex work is said to result in depression, psychological trauma and emotional dissociation (Kesler, 2002; Jeffreys, 2010), and further, is constructed as a threat to women’s personal lives and intimate relationships (Jeffreys, 2010). This understanding of sex work is most applicable to sex workers who are, in fact, being abused, exploited, and victimized while in the industry.

An additional framework that focuses on the individual level of the sex industry examines concepts of choice and autonomy. On one hand, there are scholars who suggest that the agency of sex workers is influenced by unfavorable factors, and therefore it is not a true choice at all (Kesler, 2002; Jeffreys, 2010). In this case, “agency” describes the capacity for sex workers to control their own working conditions and the power they have over their own choices. Some women are forced to choose sex work as a result of unfavorable circumstances, including poverty, homelessness, abuse and addictions. These conditions construct a situation in which sex work becomes the only viable option for these women to have an income. It is even suggested that this type of choice is comparable to the choice of staying in an abusive relationship (Kesler, 2002). The impacts of poverty, homelessness, social exclusion and addictions are viewed as key obstacles to having a choice to enter or remain a sex worker (Coy, 2009). In general, the idea of free choice and agency is problematized and is understood in the context of a variety of factors like addiction and poverty.

While the previous frameworks have merit in particular cases, a common drawback with them all is that they fail to consider the effect of segmentation in the sex industry (Weitzer, 2009). For instance, McClintock (1992) who outlines the historic trajectory of sex work, the legal framework surrounding sex work, and its social implications in “Screwing the System: Sexwork, Race and Law” argues that sex workers are often poorer single mothers from ethnic minorities, while their clients are generally middle class, married white men. Though arguments like this may be a reality in some instances, they cannot be generalized to all workers and clients in the sex industry. As Jeffreys notes

(2010) generalizations that situate sex workers as “objects of a harmful practice” unfairly group all workers into a general category of exploited victim when this may not be the reality for some individuals (p.212). The premise that sex work is abusive and exploitive to women assumes that all sex workers share the same experience in the sex trade, which is not the case as Kesler found (2002). Frameworks that seek to characterize the sex industry in sweeping generalizations often rely on anecdotal evidence to back up their claims and ignore counterevidence that challenges their assumptions (Weitzer, 2005). As Jacobson notes, using specific cases to make general claims about the industry denies sex workers difference and is often out of touch with the multiple realities of the sex industry (Jacobson, 1993). Strict adherence to an approach that relies on negative anecdotes and generalizations leaves little room for narratives of success and prosperity in the sex industry to be heard, and problematically negates the agency of workers who are actually in a position to make choices regarding their work and lifestyle in the sex industry. Viewing sex workers as lacking any agency and regarding the sex industry in a generalized manner does not allow for an exploration of the broad range of motives and experiences of sex workers, and curtails a richer understanding of sex worker experience (Jacobson, 1993).

The theoretical framework that best informs this research focuses on the occupational dimensions of sex work, highlights the complexities of the sex industry, and positions sex work in relation to other forms of labour. This lens considers the individual level of worker’s experiences and working conditions while still examining larger social forces that influence the experiences and conditions of sex work. For instance, in

Kempadoo's (1998; 2003) exploration of the global sex worker movements from the 1970's onward, she uses sex work theory to examine the working conditions, relationships, and lifestyle choices of sex workers and also situates sex workers in the fight for human, civil, political and social rights. As Kempadoo (1998) notes, sex work exists on a spectrum between abusive and empowering; therefore any framework that reduces sex work to a single experience limits our understanding of what it means to work as a sex worker. Just as sexual experiences for women vary widely in private relationships, so too is sexual expression heterogeneous for sex workers (Kontula, 2008). A framework like Kempadoo's, that regards sex work as work, challenges grand narratives of experience of the sex trade.

Weitzer's (2007) sex work analysis is critical of accounts that generalize the sex trade as being an industry of abuse and exploitation, and suggests that a polymorphous model that "recognizes multiple structural and experiential realities" may be more accurate in understanding sex work (p.30). This study is founded in the idea that sex work is neither wholly positive nor negative, but rather it is a series of complicated and evolving experiences. Sometimes entering into the sex trade is a solution to issues like systemic poverty and homelessness, which often results in limited choices and resources of which sex work is the most appealing option (Rosen & Vankatesh, 2008). However, the agency of sex workers in choosing this profession should not be underestimated. The autonomy, flexibility, limited time commitment, and fast money often makes sex work an alluring and advantageous job (Jeffrey & MacDonald, 2006; Rosen & Vankatesh, 2008).

In this way, sex work is understood as a choice and not a decision made solely as a result of force or coercion (Boris, Gilmore & Parreñas, 2010).

An analysis that views sex work as a form of labour with multiple experiences has areas of contention. For instance, using the term sex work may fail to challenge the negative aspects of the trade. Certainly, the danger of labeling sex work as simply work is that many of the harms that may arise from it, like sexually transmitted infections, violence, and rape, may become invisible (Farley, 2004). However, authors like Jeffrey and MacDonald (2006) distinguish ‘sex work’ from ‘survival sex work’ as a way to remedy this issue. Survival sex work describes sex work that is used to feed addictions and often creates a loss of control and true agency in the work (Jeffrey & MacDonald 2006). Therefore, terming prostitution as being sometimes ‘sex work’ and other times ‘survival sex work’ acknowledges the different motives behind the job, allowing for a clearer understanding of the type of labour that is being discussed.

Using the framework of work does not necessarily disregard the problems within the sex industry. A work-focused analysis acknowledges that sex work does sometimes come with exploitation, abuse and violence. However, as Pheterson writes, “[sex workers], like other workers, want to change those circumstances without necessarily changing their trade” (1993, p.40). Indeed, other professions have occupational hazards, but instead of arguing to remove the entire profession, the hazards are regulated and certain precautionary and protective measures are taken, but this is seldom the case with sex work. By naming sex work as a form of labour, it means that legislation which governs working conditions must be created just as it is created for other jobs (Jeffrey &

MacDonald, 2006). Therefore, the issues faced by sex workers, like exploitive clients and dangerous working conditions, would have to be addressed by the Federal government if sex work were seen as a valid job. Jeffrey and MacDonald (2006) argue that “viewing sex work as work rather than sexual exploitation or moral debauchery enables political approaches that recognize and support sex workers as rights-bearing political and social agents rather than objects of intervention and control” (p.11). This will, in turn, allow for legislation and policies to be created that focus on sex worker’s needs.

This study is based on the analytical approach that considers sex work to be a form of labour. Regarding the sex industry as an economic market challenges negative social discourse and problematic understandings of the sex industry that seek to oversimplify an increasingly complicated entity. Viewing sex work as work broadens the narratives of sex workers. For this study in particular, an analysis that regards employment-related mobility as a reality for a particular segment of sex workers expands current conceptions of what it means to live and work as a sex trade worker in Canada. This approach allows for the exploration of the lived experiences of independent mobile female sex workers in Canada without minimizing the struggles and obstacles they may experience. Sex workers possess complex identities that are not exclusively dependent on their work in the sex industry (Kempadoo, 2001). The stigma of working in the sex trade is due, in part, to the legal institutions and dominant discourses that frame sex work as a degrading activity (Kempadoo, Sanghera, & Pattanaik, 2005). Viewing sex trade workers as workers offers

the workers agency, but at the same time does not disregard the coercion and exploitation that is sometimes part of working in the sex trade.

### **3.2 Perspectives on Work**

If sex work is understood to be a form of labour, then it is integral to understand the history of work in general. For this study the term work is used to describe paid employment. Work has been conceptualized in many ways; each mode having a different effect for examining the lived experiences of sex workers. This section traces the history of current conceptions of work and explores the basis of meaningful work. The discussion of work concludes with an examination of the theory of “dirty” work, a framework that examines jobs generally perceived as degrading by the general public (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999), and its significance in analyzing the narratives of independent mobile sex workers.

What is identified as work in contemporary society has evolved from a long history of meanings. As early as Greek civilization work was measured and differentiated – with slaves performing instrumental labour tasks, while philosophy and politics, which were left to the elite, were not considered to be work at all (Piore, 1995). In mediaeval Europe the spiritual element of work was stressed and work performed for economic reasons was viewed as inferior (Tawney, 1962). Beginning in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, scholars like Adam Smith (1776), David Ricardo (1817) and Max Weber (1905) began documenting foundations of labour, such as worker challenges and divisions of labour. More recent documentation of work may be traced to the Hawthorne experiments in the early 1920’s, which explored worker productivity and management (Roethlisberger, Dickson, Wright



& Pforzheimer, 1939). The Hawthorne study opened the doors for contemporary work theorists and subsequent research on worker motivation, sociotechnical systems design, and human potential (Ardichvili & Kuchinke, 2009).

What do we define as work today? At the most basic level, labour is instrumental – a tool used to meet fundamental standards of life (Kelly, 2000). This narrow approach is often supported by economists who reduce work to labour that provides purchasing power (Gill, 1999, p.725). From a basic economic standpoint, stripped of context and meaning, work is an activity that allows the worker to make money in exchange for the loss of leisure time (Gill, 1999, p.726). However, work has evolved from being something required for human subsistence into what it is today, an activity that has multiple meanings. Moving away from a purely economic approach, to a more sociological and socio-psychological view of work, allows for a less restricted exploration and offers a greater understanding of the nuances that exist in meaningful work.

With the wealth of literature exploring and analyzing concepts of work, this study reviews two key theories as a way to manage the material and provide a brief foundation of theories of work. These approaches are categorized based on their level of analysis - as either looking at the individual worker or at the organization and community of workers as a whole. The first method explores what work means to individuals and the second approach discusses occupational communities and corporate cultures.

One approach for examining the meaning of work for the individual worker is through Kelly's (2000) five conceptions of work that form current definitions of employment, including: instrumental/utilitarian, individual, ethical, social and

institutional conceptions. Instrumental work is work for survival and subsistence, while individual work is understood as being psychologically essential and an expression of creativity. Ethical work is considered a spiritual calling with redemptive factors; social work is a part of socialization and creating one's social identity. Finally, institutional work is a force of power. These five factors have overlapping boundaries, and as a result, a job may have multiple meanings for the worker. For instance, one individual may believe their work is a gift from God that must be shared with the world, which is an ethical notion of work. Meanwhile, another worker may understand their work to be a way to provide for their family while also allowing them to creatively express their talents, which aligns with an instrumental and individual view of their job. Sex work, too, can fall into any of Kelly's five types of work. For instance, survival sex workers generally participate primarily in instrumental work for subsistence, while the mobile sex workers in this study often associate with individual or social work done as a way of expressing and creating their own identity.

Kelly's five ingredients for meaningful work are mirrored in Harpaz, Honig and Coetsier's (2002) cross-cultural and longitudinal analysis of the meaning of work. Harpaz et al. (2002) found that most workers gain instrumental and socio-psychological meanings from their work. In this way, work is integral to our understandings of ourselves and plays a central part in our lives, sometimes having more importance than leisure, community and religious activities. Additionally, Ardichvili and Kuchinke (2009) emphasize the significance of work in modern society, noting that work has a significant impact in constructing identity, offering means for achievement, providing subsistence,

and influencing one's position in the broader community and society. Altogether, a sociological analysis of the meaning of work has shifted away from an economic framework to theories that suggest a more complex relationship between workers and their work.

Work is not a static entity, but is constantly shifting in meanings depending on the individual who is performing the work. As Drew, Mills and Gassaway explain, "the people who work in particular occupations construct, reconstruct, and co-construct their perception of their jobs, how the work should be done, and the value of their occupations" (2007, p. 5). Chalofsky (2003) states that the combinations of sense of self, work self, and sense of balance form an integrated wholeness of a worker, which creates meaningful work. Sense of self refers to a worker's need to be fully present at their job and to maximize personal potential. Work self, on the other hand, is about the ability to perceive that one's work is valuable and contributing to their well-being while aligning with their life purpose. Finally, having a sense of balance relates to having different compartments of one's life – work, family, leisure – in equilibrium. It is also important to have our mental, physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions of our personal lives balanced in order to carry out meaningful work. When all these factors are in alignment – sense of self, work self and sense of balance – it produces an internal and external environment in which meaningful work can manifest. As Chalofsky notes, "work is not just about the meaning of the paid work we perform; it is about the way we live our lives ... it is about integrated wholeness" (2003, p. 80).

Another way to understand work is to move away from the individual, and view work through the framework of occupational communities. Occupational communities are “groups of people who consider themselves to be engaged in the same sort of work, whose identity is drawn from the work, who share with one another a set of values, norms, and perspectives that apply to but extend beyond organizational matters, and whose social relationships meld work and pleasure” (Van Maanen & Barley, 1984, p. 287). Occupational community affects a worker’s sense of occupational identity, which is “a set of central, distinctive, and enduring characteristics that typify a line of work” (Drew, Mills & Gassaway, 2007, p. 3). Using the framework of occupational community may offer a fuller explanation of how independent sex workers perceive their work and interact with their working environment and others in it.

The next section looks at the concept of “dirty” work, which expands on Drew, Mills and Gassaway’s (2007) idea of an occupational community. Similar to occupational communities, “dirty” workers are also a “group of people who consider themselves to be engaged in the same sort of work” (2007), but “dirty” work has unique characteristics that separate it from other forms of occupational communities.

### **3.3 “Dirty” Work**

“Dirty” work was first explicitly conceived by Everett Hughes (1951; 1962) in the 1950’s, referring to work that was widely perceived as denigrating to the worker, and later expanded by scholars like Ashforth and Kreiner who examine specific taint management techniques in so-called “dirty” professions such as janitors and garbage collectors (1999). The dirtiness that underscores these jobs is not an innate characteristic

of the work, but rather a social construction based on what is deemed pure in society (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999).

Since Hughes' introduced the concept of "dirty" work the exploration of "dirty" occupations has been used as a method to examine different types of labour, including: gynecology nurses (Bolton, 2005), correctional officers (Tracy & Scott, 2011), HIV/AIDS and addiction caregivers (Martinez, 2011), administrative assistants in large corporations (Sotirin, 2011), and various other occupations. These occupations all have different bases for being categorized as "dirty." The next section breaks down the forms of taint in "dirty" work.

Current analysis of "dirty" work employs the same basic framework first developed by Hughes (1951; 1962) and later developed by Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) to explore variety of contemporary "dirty" professions (Drew, Mills & Gassaway, 2007). "Dirty" work is understood as being "absolutely necessary to continue civilized life as we know it" (Drew, Mills & Gassaway, 2007, p.1). However, while society relies on the skills and labour of "dirty" workers, these workers tend to be stigmatized and pushed to the margins of cultures of work (Drew, Mills & Gassaway, 2007). Referring to sex work as "dirty" work fails to challenge social constructions of the sex industry as being tainted and "dirty", but it does lend some comparisons to other forms of labour that have been similarly marginalized. Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) explain that sex work is a form of "dirty" work as a result of the physical and moral taint involved in the job, and other scholars have used the concept of "dirty" work to examine different subsets of the sex industry. For example, Melissa Tyler's (2011) study on sex shops in London offers an

exploration of the physical, moral and social taint of the job and how workers manage the stigma of the work. Kara Anne Arnold and Julian Barling (2003) use “dirty” work to analyze the occupational stress of geographically fixed sex workers in their study, discussing the effects of “taint” like discrimination and societal stigma. The concept of “dirty” work has been used to examine the experiences of sex workers in a couple contemporary studies like the ones previously mentioned. This study expands on Arnold’s and Barling’s (2003) examination of sex work as “dirty” work, and offers additional insight into the experiences of sex workers, with a focus on independent mobile workers.

“Dirty” workers are similar in that they all are labeled with a form of taint (or stigma), but the type of taint differs among “dirty” professions. Three key elements, or forms of “taint”, define “dirty” work – physical, social and moral taint. Physical taint occurs when the work is performed under dangerous conditions or involves particularly repulsive elements like death and effluent (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). “Dirty” work characterized by its physical taint includes funeral directors, proctologists, gynecology nurses and soldiers. Social taint occurs when the worker associates with individuals or groups who are themselves stigmatized, and thus the stigma transfers to the worker. For example, prison guards who work with inmates commonly experience social taint as a result of working with this stigmatized population. Finally, moral taint underlies work that is regarded as lacking virtue and being sinful in nature, or where the worker is deceptive or intrusive as a part of their work, such work may include telemarketers, exotic dancers, and tabloid reporters (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). These three categories of taint may intersect, resulting in occupations that are tainted on more than one level. Sex

workers, for instance, are generally perceived to be physically and morally tainted as a result of their dangerous working conditions, their work with bodies and bodily fluids, and working in an area that is often seen as being dishonorable (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999).

The next section explores the daily experiences of independent mobile sex work that extend beyond “dirty” work, including: work challenges, emotional labour, and working conditions. The physical and emotional dimensions of the work create a unique work experience that will be now discussed.

### **3.4 Independent Mobile Sex Work**

The stigma of doing sex work, similar to other “dirty” work professions, differentiates sex work from other forms of labour that have little to no stigma attached to them. The physical and emotional demands of the work paired with the stigma of performing “dirty” work presents challenges for independent mobile sex workers, leading to various concerns. Other obstacles of working as an independent mobile sex worker result from the legal regulations in Canada in restricting the behaviors of sex workers and their clients. This section addresses these concerns and offers a preliminary understanding of independent mobile sex work as a form of labour.

Independent sex work has unique working conditions and job requirements. A unique feature of the job is the strong emotional dimension required. For the participants there is an equal matching of physical and emotional labour due to the formulated intimacy that is created in the sexual encounter, and the emotional work of concealing one’s profession in the sex industry (Scambler, 2007; McDowell, 2009). Emotional

labour requires the participants to express desirable, and sometimes fabricated, emotions during the appointment. As Hochschild (1983) explains, emotional labour involves following the job's emotional expression in which workers must actively engage in evoking, shaping or suppressing feeling by modifying their thoughts and expressive gestures. In the case of independent mobile sex workers, the emotional work required involves creating an open and inviting atmosphere for the client that goes beyond sensuality (Kontula, 2008), while manufacturing an identity that caters to the client's interests and desires (Sanders, 2005a). Sex work requires specific abilities to "nurture pseudo-relationships and false personas in order to satisfy customers' needs" (Pasko, 2002, p.64). Maintaining an occupational persona requires the skill of using "their dress, language and movements [to] produce 'real' acts of seduction and intimacy" (Pasko, 2002, p. 55). Many of the workers interviewed by Kontula (2008) discussed the importance of tailoring each appointment to fit the individual needs of each client, which reflects the study's participants' descriptions of their appointments. There is great skill and thought required by sex workers in determining how the appointment should progress and what services should be provided.

Laura Agustin (2003) and Wendy Chapkis (1997) also highlight the emotional demands of being a sex worker in their respective works. For Agustin, sex work has been erroneously "reduced to overt and specified physical contacts with particular points of the human body known as erogenous zones, and everything else that goes on is excluded" (Agustin, 2003, p. 385). In reality, sex workers have to play the part of a hostess, entertainer, friend, companion, and sexual partner all in one. The emotional work that



comes with sex work is counter to the notion that sex workers only provide physical sexual acts to clients, and thus require little skill in their trade.

As a result of the emotional demands of the work, sex workers use a variety of strategies to cope. Such techniques used to manage the emotional labour of sex work may include drug use, faking pleasure, and creating an alias and work identity that is different from their personal life (McDowell, 2009). The “manufactured identity,” for instance, is a common facet of working in the sex trade – a process in which workers create a new identity for themselves while being employed (Scambler, 2007, p.1081). Manufacturing an identity may include changing one’s name, appearance and even personality. Many sex workers will use an alias, for instance, and separate their work identity from their personal identity, which makes sex work different from other types of work.

Because sex work is not legally understood as being work in the majority of Canadian provinces, independent sex workers must work in an environment that is not protected by health and safety regulations or workers’ compensation (McDowell, 2009). Moreover, since the activities surrounding sex work, including procuring and living off the avails of sex work, are criminalized in Canada, with the exception of Ontario, this form of work must occur in the private sphere. This is inconsistent with many other forms of labour in the economy that happen in the public arena. The public/private divide that is often taken for granted by many workers in Canada is not readily available to sex workers (McDowell, 2009). These features make sex work a unique job that can be fulfilling but also dangerous depending on the specific work conditions.

In all, the sex industry employs many individuals in Canada. There are specific characteristics of the work that separate it from other occupations. The complex pairing of emotional and physical work differentiates it from many other forms of labour.

Altogether, the sex industry is a unique market in Canada that entails a diverse set of job characteristics.

### **3.5. Risk Management**

The key aspect of “dirty” work that is integral to this study is the idea of risk management in positions of “dirty” work. For the purpose of this study, risks are divided into two broad categories. The first category is risks that affect the psychological and social welfare of individuals. The second category encompasses risks that affect the physical health and well-being of individuals. Together, these risks must be managed by workers in order to maintain a safe working environment and positive well-being.

The notion of risk management stems from financial studies that examine the mechanisms that drive the financial sector (Power, 2007; Haslett, 2010; Dempster, 2002; Das, 2006). It is a way of monitoring and minimizing inevitable threats and unfortunate events, and minimizing their negative impact (Power, 2007; Dempster, 2002). Risk management as used in this study refers to the idea that certain risks - physical psychological, social - naturally come with the terrain of sex work, and cannot necessarily be evaded. Rather than trying to avoid risks, risk management offers a way to manage constant risks through different methods and tools. As a result, it is fitting to employ such a model to explore the market of sex work, as many of the forces driving other markets for goods and services also underpin the market for sexual services.

While risk may be defined in a variety of ways, the definition of risk employed in this study comes from John Chicken and Tamar Posner's explanation of risk. These scholars posit that risk is equated to the potential hazardous situation multiplied by the extent to which the individual may be exposed to the hazard; in other words: risk = hazard x exposure (Chicken & Posner, 1998, p.7). As such, while there are numerous hazards experienced by the general public, including the threat of physical and psychological violence, the sex industry tends to increase the exposure to such hazards; and thus, magnifies risks that may otherwise be overlooked.

Generally, risks can be classified by their level of consequences and how able the individual is able to avoid the risk (Chicken & Posner, 2007). For instance, while entry into the sex industry may be a voluntary risk for the participants, after entering the sex trade there are various unavoidable risks that are not always voluntary (Chicken & Posner, 2007). An unavoidable risk may include meeting with new customers in order to expand their client base. However, clean boundaries are hardly present, as the voluntary risk of entering the industry is often complicated by a sex worker's extenuating circumstances.

The most predominant unavoidable risk that affects the psychological and social well-being of sex workers is the social stigma of "dirty" work. There are different techniques that workers can employ to manage the social and psychological stigma of "dirty" work, as determined by Ashforth and Kreiner, which can be grouped under the category of ideology management (1999). The three key techniques of ideology management used by the participants to manage the risks of sex work include 1)

reframing, 2) refocusing and selective social comparisons, and 3) resisting a sex worker identity. First, the use of reframing to transform the meaning of the work through the processes of infusing or neutralizing, has the most potential to mitigate the stigma associated with “dirty” work. There are two methods involved in reframing; first the method of infusing involves switching the negativity of the work into something positive and even honourable. For instance, sex workers may describe their work as providing therapeutic or educational services to clients rather than “selling their body” (Miller, 1987; Thompson & Harred, 1992). Neutralizing is the second method in reframing in which the worker simply denies any negative values and negates the stigma of the work. This may include denying any injury or responsibility of the work. Reframing involves modifying one’s perspective, and often results in the use of explanations or metaphors to describe their work, and in the case of the participants in this study it may cause them to resist a sex worker identity (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999).

Next, through the process of refocusing, workers focus their attention on the positive aspects of their work and overlook any stigmatized portions. Whereas reframing changes the meanings of stigmatized qualities of the work, refocusing simply does not recognize the qualities. The greater the proportion of core attributes that are stigmatized, the more likely attention will focus on features that are extrinsic to the work itself such as money (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999). Finally, selective social comparisons involve assessing ambiguous attributes through comparisons with similar and salient others, either within or between groups (Wood, 1989). Selective social comparisons can be directed either upward or downward. Upward social comparisons are associated with self-

knowledge, providing benchmarks for motivational or aspirational purposes (Major, Testa & Bylsma, 1991). Downward social comparisons are associated with self-esteem, providing protections for the vulnerable ego (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999).

Selective social comparisons are similar to Tversky's (1997) contrast model which explains how people make judgments about similarities and differences between entities. Bryan (1965) considered how independent indoor sex workers compared themselves to women who worked on the street, contrasting elements of their situation: serving more upscale clients and working in a more structured context vs. picking up clients on the street and living with more unpredictability and danger. The core element of their jobs – providing sexual services – is the same, making the comparison realistic.

Altogether, these five methods are known as ideology management, and may be employed to manage the stigma. These tools may be utilized separately or used in combination to acquire the desired effects of managing the stigma. These tools of ideology management will be later discussed in chapter six when examining how the participants in this study manage risks to their mental and emotional well-being.

The second category of risk involves the potential danger to the physical health and well-being of sex workers. The most glaring hazard is the risk to the health of the individual. Particularly, the risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections is a reality for many sex workers who maintain a spectrum of clientele. Indeed, sex workers are generally acknowledged to be one of the highest risk groups in the public for HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections (Gaspari, D'Antuona, Bellavista, Trimarco & Patrizi, 2012). However, it is important to note that much of the literature that frames the sex

industry in a polarized and negative way tends to also regard sex workers as victims of society (Sawa, 1987; *Prostitution Laws*, 2004).

Another area for concern is the physical and sexual violence that threatens the safety of sex workers. Violence within the industry is undeniable, and while some scholars link violence to the result of the criminalization of many aspects of the trade in Canada, others claim that the act of sex work is inherently violent (Farley, 2004b). While most scholars agree that the magnitude and frequency of violence in outdoor sex work is much higher in comparison to sex workers who work from an indoor location, others maintain that violence is a risk for all workers in the sex trade (Raphael & Shapiro, 2004; Weitzer, 2000; Benoit & Millar, 2001).

Overall, the sex industry encompasses many risks that threaten the physical and mental well-being of sex workers. These risks vary in magnitude and frequency and affect sex workers in varying ways depending on the worker's position in the industry. While the hazards of the industry have been continually explored, there has been little discussion of how these risks are mitigated. The next section looks at employment-related mobility, which is another form of risk management for the participants in this study.

### **3.6. Mobility and Sex Work**

Employment-related mobility is a part of the risk management of the participants in this study. As later chapters will discuss, mobility allows the participants to mitigate many of the risks of sex work like avoiding the consequences of market saturation. Before we can examine the importance of employment-related mobility, we first have to gain an understanding of this type of mobility and how it is similar to, and different from,

migration. This section reviews the literature on mobility (the temporary movement for work) and examines mobility and risk, gender, and sex work. This provides a foundation to later analysis of the employment-related mobility of women in this study.

There are certain risks and negative outcomes associated with employment-related mobility and migration. The literature on migration tends to apply to permanent or semi-permanent movement rather than short-term work related mobility. However, migration literature can highlight significant factors that are also important to mobile workers like risks. Some risks for mobile and migrant workers include strain on mental health, emotional health (i.e. burnout, depression and substance abuse) and intimate relationships, or an inability to access health services (Newhook, et al., 2011).

Conversely, labour mobility also has the potential to positively affect the mental, emotional and social health of workers through increasing the wages of workers and broadening the workers' social networks and support systems. However, as Newhook et al. note (2011), literature on the interprovincial migration of workers typically focuses on the internal migration of international immigrants in Canada, while neglecting the short-term mobility of Canadian born labourers. This position is confirmed by Angell as he states, "the literature on migration indicates that there appears to be little difference between the plight faced by foreign and domestic migrants with respect to difficulties associated with the resettlement process," as few studies have examined the resettlement process for internal migrants (1992, p.273). Therefore, little is known about the experiences of internal short-term labour migrants in Canada and the outcomes of their migration. Currently, research is being done to fill this gap in the literature. *On the Move*

Partnership is a five year SSHRC funded study that includes more than forty researchers from seventeen disciplines across Canada, including Barbara Neiss from Memorial University of Newfoundland. This research partnership seeks to expand our understanding of short-term employment related mobility in Canada and expand on “the existing research on employment-related mobility [which is] limited and fragmented” (On the Move Partnership, n.d.).

A gendered analysis of migration offers insight into different dimensions of the migration process. Until the mid-seventies, it was commonly believed that women only migrated to follow a relationship (Knorr & Meier, 2000). Some migration theories, like economic migration theory, suggest that the typical migrant is a young male who is seeking employment in order to improve his current economic position (Schultz, 2000 in Knorr & Meier, 2000). If women did migrate it was assumed that their only motivation was their intimate relationships. However, studies now suggest different reasons for women’s migration patterns, and women’s mobility is no longer understood solely in relation to their intimate relationships. For instance, women migrate for reasons based on self-development, escaping harmful relationships, and finding more suitable employment (Hiller, 2009; Behera, 2006).

A few studies examine the internal migration of women in Canada, finding differences between the experiences of male and female migrants. A study by Angell (1992) reveals that women who relocate to urban areas after living in a rural setting often find the migration process to be more traumatic than what male migrants experience. Also, the key motivation for many women is to maintain ties to family and friends,



whereas men primarily consider economic reasons for migration (Schultz, 2000).

Migration can offer women their first opportunity to find steady employment outside the home, which grants them greater economic autonomy and independence (Gmelch & Gmelch, 1995). In addition, women are generally more influenced by social factors like family and friends, and therefore they are likely to return to their home community after a period away (Walsh, 2008). The key gender difference in remigration is that women are less likely to be satisfied on their return to their home province. One woman interviewed by Gmelch and Gmelch expresses that, “When I first came back I sat in the house all day with nothing to do, thinking that at that hour if I was still in Toronto, I’d be out working in the factory, and wouldn’t I be happier for it? I never did like doing nothing, and it was all the worse when I got back here” (1995, p. 472). Statements like this suggest the importance of employment-related mobility for many Canadian women, highlighting the differences between the experiences of women and men in the migration process. There are, however, similarities between male and female migrants in Canada. Similar to the experiences of male migrants, women continue to feel a strong attachment to their home province and community after relocation (Angell, 1992). Also, men and women are influenced equally by the attributes of their homeland and by any negative elements in their “host society” (Gmelch & Gmelch, 1995, p. 471). In other words, interprovincial migrants are more likely to return to their home province due to positive opportunities awaiting them than to be influenced by negative incidents that have occurred in their current community. Overall, though men and women’s experiences of migration may differ, there are some key areas that overlap.

Research regarding Canadian women and migration often focuses solely on the general population of women and excludes any discussion of marginal groups like sex workers (Hancock, 2000; Lacey, 1997). Moreover, the majority of feminist research that addresses sex work and migration uses a lens of human trafficking; often forgetting that not all migrant sex workers are trafficked (McDowell, 2009). Agustin (2003) claims that academia's fixation on trafficking minimizes the agency that can exist when sex workers actively choose to be mobile. Currently, most studies that examine the sex industry focus on reasons for entry and the experience of sexual exchange, with the effect of excluding narratives of mobility or work (Agustin, 2005).

The strong international focus of mobile sex workers overshadows internal mobility patterns. The lack of literature on mobile sex workers who have not been trafficked is problematic. Indeed, the limited data and information on mobile sex workers means that an entire migrant sector is being overlooked. Shedding light on the experiences of mobile sex workers is a significant part of understanding the sex trade in Canada while also contributing to the body of literature dispelling the myth that all mobile sex workers are victims of traffickers. However, the results of international studies, like those done by Laura Agustin (2004; 2005), may inform and guide research that addresses the interprovincial mobility of sex workers in Canada.

One benefit of mobility for sex workers can be increased wages and a better working environment for workers (Agustin, 2004). Many international migrants who work in the sex trade are often escaping poverty and poor economic and social conditions in their home country (Scambler, 2007). Most internal mobility migration in Canada is

generally influenced by economic opportunity rather than political instability. Though international and internal mobility may be influenced by poor economic conditions, international migrants are more likely to be influenced by systemic poverty and impoverished conditions that reflect political instability (Scambler, 2007). In general, international patterns of mobility are regarded as being a part of the larger narrative of globalization in which economic, political and culture factors influence mobility.

On an international level, the result of mobility is sometimes referred to as the brain-drain in which highly skilled and educated individuals like doctors, teachers and lawyers leave a region to find employment elsewhere (Scambler, 2007). Essentially, this brain-drain is removing the resources of a nation, as these educated individuals seek opportunity elsewhere. This idea may also be used to understand the effects of the internal mobility of sex workers in Canada. Sex trade workers, for instance, might not be considered an important resource, and the out-migration of these workers may be celebrated. However, it is important to consider the contribution sex workers bring to their community as volunteers, consumers and tax-payers. If we view sex workers as draining society's resources, then we are at risk of discounting their important contributions. As Kempadoo, Sanghera and Pattanaik affirm, like other workers, sex workers possess complex identities that are not exclusively dependent on their work in the sex trade (2005). If sex workers are consistently leaving a region, then this may have ramifications for local communities.

Altogether, there are areas that are overlooked in the literature, often concerning the mobility patterns and experiences of sex workers who travel for their job. Currently, there

is no research that explores the lived experiences of independent mobile sex workers in Canada, as most research focuses on the more accessible population of street level workers who remain in a fixed location. The hidden nature of women who work and travel from indoor locations has meant that their narratives have often been overlooked; which is detrimental to understanding the complexities of the Canadian sex industry and the women who work within the trade.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has reviewed the varying conceptions of sex work, work, emotional labour, risk, ideology management, and mobility. First, theoretical understandings of sex work were examined and critiqued. Three key lenses of understanding the sex trade were discussed, including focusing on larger societal forces like patriarchy, focusing on the individual sex worker, and a combination of those two which considers both larger societal forces and the individual worker. This combination is known as sex work theory, which also considers the labour dimension of sex work. This theoretical framework broadens the narratives of sex workers and is optimal for allowing the exploration of the experiences and working conditions of independent mobile female sex workers in Canada without minimizing the struggles and obstacles they may experience.

Just as there are many theories that address sex work, so too are their many lenses that seek to theorize the concept of work. From basic instrumental understandings to more complicated conceptions, work has been theorized in many different ways. Kelly's (2000) five conceptions of work focus on the different ways that work is given meaning and understood by workers, including instrumental, individual, ethical, social, and

institutional work. This theory is mirrored by the work of other scholars like in Harpaz, Honig and Coetsier's (2002) who examined the instrumental and socio-psychological meanings of work. For this study, the best theory of work originates from Hughes (1951) scholarship that discusses "dirty" work. The most recent addition to Hughes theory comes from Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) who conducted an in depth study on "dirty" workers. In general, the concept of "dirty" work can be applied to understanding the experiences of sex workers in relation to taint and ideology management.

Indeed, ideology management, as a part of the overarching concept of risk management, is a foundational concept in this study. The stigma of sex work is a predominant risk for the sex workers in this study. As well, the emotional labour involved in sex work adds to the level of risk experienced in the sex industry, which negatively impacts emotional and mental health. However, these risks that threaten the health and well-being of sex works can be mitigated through risk management. The concept of ideology management is a significant part of the overall risk management of the participants in this study.

Overall, this chapter has reviewed the varying conceptions of sex work, work, emotional labour, risk, ideology management, and employment-related mobility. The next chapter reviews the methods and methodology of this study. Chapter four discusses the beginning of this research process like research design and participant selection, and highlights the importance of online boards and forums and sex worker websites. Next, data collection, analysis, and reflexivity are discussed. As well, concepts of

confidentiality and informed consent are reviewed and their importance in this study is explored.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY**

The previous chapter has established a foundation to understanding the concepts and literature that is an integral part of this study. Concepts of sex work, “dirty” work, risk management, and employment-related mobility were examined. This current chapter builds on this foundation and reviews the methods and methodology of this study. The methodology of the research is significant in order to appreciate the evolution of the research and to later understand the research findings. The chapter starts where the research first began – research design and participant selection. The beginning stages of the research also include making contact and gaining informed consent, and confidentiality. Data collection through in-depth interviews and content analysis is then reviewed, followed by reflexivity and data analysis. This chapter concludes with a discussion of research considerations.

As a Gender Studies student, the principles of feminist research fundamentally guide this study. Much of feminist research connects theory and practice. As Gayle Letherby notes, “feminist researchers start with the political commitment to produce useful knowledge that will make a difference to women’s lives through social and individual change” (Letherby, 2003, p. 4). Feminist research goes beyond the notion of filling a gap in the literature and has a greater goal of knowledge production that will contribute to political or social change. While this research has a goal of filling a gap in the literature, it also seeks to contribute to political and social change in Canada by dismantling grand narratives of what it means to be a sex worker. As well, this research seeks to add to the current work being done to restructure Canadian legislation to make

Canada a safer place to do sex work. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber (2007) confirms that as a feminist researcher there is a central concern for social justice for women and other marginalized groups. This chapter reviews the foundational epistemology of the study, explains the methods that underpin the design and implementation, and details the process of research design, participant selection, data collection and analysis.

#### **4.1 Research Design**

The research design is based on determining the effects of mobility on the lived-experiences of sex workers, and is founded in reflective research practices grounded in a sex work framework. The topic of this study, the experiences of independent mobile sex workers, originated from my reading of the personal classified advertisements in St. John's daily newspaper, *The Telegram*, in which a sex worker advertised her St. John's tour date. A follow up on the advertisement through the sex worker's online webpage, and links to other sex workers who were recommended by her on her website suggested that sex workers actively tour to cities like St. John's for work in the sex industry.

The research method was initially based on the literature that examines workers in the oil industry who travel between Newfoundland and Fort McMurray for their work, as there is currently no literature that explores sex workers who complete a similar tour between the two provinces. Preliminary contacts in Fort McMurray were established and a two week placement in Fort McMurray was planned to conduct interviews. During the first interview I learned of the existence and importance of online boards and forums for independent mobile sex workers. These are open webpages where sex workers and clients alike may read, post and comment on discussion threads. In chapter two I provide details



of online boards and forums. While reviewing and analyzing these online boards and forums, I saw the opportunity to find potential participants through these online sites.

Once I became familiar with using the online boards, I identified some of the key independent mobile sex workers in Canada based on their amount of touring (dependent on their posts and website calendars), the average number of posts and comments per week, and the recommendations from clients on the online boards. The workers who post on online boards and forums usually have a link to their individual business website, and after reviewing the tour dates of potential participants as posted on their site, it became evident that many sex workers would be in Ontario during a two to three week span over December and January, 2012. I matched my own research schedule in Toronto and Ottawa with the women's touring schedule and contacted potential participants by email that overlapped to see if they were interested in taking part in my research. Fortunately many of the sex workers had a home base in Ontario and Quebec and were travelling home for Christmas, thereby overlapping my research schedule with their personal schedule. This technique allowed me to schedule many interviews in two cities in eight days. Appointments were arranged and the interviews were conducted during four days in Toronto and then four days in Ottawa.

#### **4.2 Participant Selection**

Though snowball sampling tends to be the standard when researching hidden populations, this method of finding participants was less helpful than the literature suggests. According to Watters and Biernacki (1989) hidden populations are populations that are "socially invisible or "hidden" in the sense that their activities are clandestine and

therefore concealed from the view of mainstream society and agencies of control” (p.417). Street workers are the most visible group of sex workers because they market themselves from a street location, but sex workers who work in an indoor setting and are touring are not as visible to the public. The only way to find traces of indoor sex work is through sex worker advertisements, websites, and posts on online boards. Cold-calls and directly approaching participants are not generally useful tools in accessing more marginal populations such as sex workers, as these groups generally remain hidden to protect their identity and livelihood (Watters and Biernacki, 1989). However, approaching sex workers via email was an effective tool (See Appendix E).

The potential participants’ information was located via the internet; specifically, through online forums that host both sex workers and clients. The key online forums that formed the basis of the study include the Canada Sex Worker Review Board and Directory ([www.caerf.ca](http://www.caerf.ca)), Sex workers Canada, and the Canadian Escort Recommendation Board ([www.cerb.ca](http://www.cerb.ca)) and its affiliated boards: Pacific-Prairie Sex worker Board ([www.perb.ca](http://www.perb.ca)), Toronto Sex worker Board ([www.terb.ca](http://www.terb.ca)), and Montreal and Maritime Sex worker Board ([www.merb.ca](http://www.merb.ca)). These boards serve as a safe space for sex workers, both touring and geographically fixed, and their clients to interact online.

I developed a system to identify potential participants. First, I reviewed the sex workers’ postings and advertisements in order to locate the specific pool of participants required for the study- sex workers who worked independently and travelled for their work. A main determinant of a sex worker’s potential to be a participant was their use of a website and online boards and forums for their business. In most cases sex workers

include a link to their website on their advertisements on online boards and forums. If the sex worker did not have a link to a website a brief search of their sex worker's name was put into a search engine to confirm that they did not maintain a website. All links to webpages were checked to ensure that the link was still working and that the sex worker did maintain their own website for their sex work business.

Webpages are central to the business strategy of mobile sex workers as they allow the worker to display their touring dates, reveal their services (usually in coded language like "one hour massage" or "dinner date") and place contact information while they are touring. A sex worker's website is similar to a business website in which the site is entirely dedicated to the sex worker. Since touring sex workers are rarely geographically fixed in one location for an extended period of time it is useful for a sex worker to maintain a strong online presence for clients by informing clients of their schedule, posting new pictures, and updating their information. Overall, maintaining a website and having a schedule of tour dates and future cities of travel solidifies the workers status as a mobile sex worker, which served as a method of finding and contacting potential participants for the study.

These filters narrowed the field of potential study participants to around one hundred women in Canada who post on online boards and forums and/or have their own business website. I contacted the potential participants by the email address that I found on their online forum posts, advertisements or webpage. Of this large pool of potential participants, a dozen of the women replied, and of this dozen, nine of the women were

willing to participate in the study. In all, filtering sex worker's websites and advertisements allowed for a small subset of independent mobile workers to be identified.

The participants are all independent mobile sex workers who work in Canada. Some work exclusively in Canada while others tour throughout North America (Valerie) and Europe (Kyla). The nine participants range in age from twenty-three to thirty-six years old, with the average age being in the mid-thirties. All of the participant's self-identify and market themselves as women. The majority of the women come from middle-to-upper class socio-economic backgrounds. As well, some of the women have partners and children, while others are unattached and have no children

#### **4.3 Making Contact and Gaining Informed Consent**

Information about the research, the requirements of participation, and the confidentiality of the research process was provided by email (See Appendix E). The participants and I generally corresponded over a few days in order to establish a more thorough understanding of the research and what was required of them as participants. Some participants requested contact information of the university professors supervising the research or evidence of ethics review for the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) at Memorial University (See Appendix G). No data was collected in the email because the email correspondence was only used to determine if the potential participants were interested in the study, establish preliminary rapport, and answer any questions or concerns of the women. After the participants had their questions answered and were comfortable with the process a place and time for the interviews was established.

Upon meeting with the participant, and before conducting the interview, all information on the consent form was reviewed, and all questions were answered before consent was gained (See Appendix F and G). Receiving informed consent is essential when recording and using the narratives of participants. Therefore, all participants were briefed on the study and given ICEHR contact information that they may use if they have concerns about the ethical conduct of the research. The consent form states the participation in the study is completely voluntary and that the participants have the right to withdraw from the study. If the participant chooses to withdraw from the research, they are offered the choice as to whether or not they will allow the researcher to retain the data collected up to that point, and whether or not all data relating to them should be destroyed. The consent form provides a brief description of the project's general objectives and the time frame of the interview. It ensures confidentiality of information and outlines the use of the information by others.

#### **4.4 Confidentiality**

Respecting the confidentiality of participants is important for researchers, and especially in areas that are highly sensitive like the sex industry. Breaching confidentiality may result in many negative consequences for participants; their safety and well-being may be compromised and even their livelihood could be jeopardized. Even though each of the women used an alias for their work, pseudonyms are employed in the research when referring to specific participants. The master list of participants and corresponding pseudonyms are stored in a secure location, separate from the digital recordings and transcripts. Agency names and specific identifying characteristics are avoided in

discussion of the narratives. These precautions are used in order to respect the confidentiality of the sex workers who agreed to participate in this study.

#### **4.5 Data Collection and Reflexivity**

The methods used in data collection include analysis of boards and forums, websites, semi-structured interviews, and reflexivity. The World Wide Web was a predominant method for collecting data since boards and forums, and websites were an effective of gaining access to and learning about the hidden population of independent mobile sex workers. Semi-structured and in-depth interviews allowed rich data to be collected from the participants. Reflexivity served as a key method throughout the research process as it highlights the importance of introspection and situating oneself in the study, which is important when working with marginalized populations.

I began my search for potential participants online with major cities in Canada, like Toronto, and explored the most recent discussion threads because sex workers who recently posted on the board are likely to be actively involved in sex work. I concentrated on advertisement posts by sex workers. While examining these types of posts I looked for the worker's website, if they had one, if they mentioned that they were on tour, and if they were affiliated with an agency.

Many of the sex workers had a link to their website in their forum posts. I followed up the examination of online boards and forums with examining their website. While viewing websites I read through their description of themselves and their services, looking for key words like "independent" and "touring." I also looked at how the women described themselves and their work, and how they marketed themselves and their

services online. Marketing included descriptive language like “courtesan” or “dinner companion,” and describing their sex worker persona. Many of the potential participants had a website page dedicated to their touring calendar and schedule, which allowed me to confirm their mobile status as a sex worker.

Data collection was also based on semi-structured, in-depth interviews; a technique that allows for the collection of individual’s life stories (Letherby, 2003). This method of data collection is a useful tool in exploring the narratives and life histories of groups that are marginalized in society as it offers “access to people’s ideas, thoughts, and memories” (Geiger, 1986; Reinharz, 1992, p.19). The interviews were conducted in person, when possible, in order provide richness in data that body language and atmosphere can provide. Of the nine interviews, seven were conducted in person and two interviews were done over the phone. Throughout the data collection process, research reflexivity and consideration of outsider status was employed.

A key part of the research design was meeting the study’s participants on their own terms. This means that I went to the participants rather than the participants coming to me in order to break down boundaries and allow the flow of information to be done in a space that felt safe and comfortable for the women. In order to collect the narratives in a safe and comfortable environment, the interviews were conducted where the participants felt most comfortable and at a time that was most convenient for them.

The interviews were semi-structured, based on ten open-ended questions, and lasted approximately one to two hours overall (See Appendix H). Questions concerned entry into the sex industry, independent sex worker status, and touring. The semi-structured

nature creates a balance between the researcher and the participant. Specifically, the researcher can maintain some control over the process, while also allowing enough openness for spontaneity in the interview, which permits freedom for participants to share their stories (Hesse-Biber, 2007). The interviews were tape recorded with the permission of the participants with the exception of one interview which was recorded in note form. All interviews were transcribed by me, and only I have access to the transcripts and recordings that are secured on a password protected laptop and password protected folder using TrueCrypt, an online open-source encryption software.

An important aspect of the data collection process is to be a reflexive researcher. Reflexivity is important in working with marginal populations like sex workers as it attempts to expose the power relations in the research process that arise when the participants and researcher occupy different spaces in society (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002; Hesse-Biber, 2007). Employing reflexivity allows researchers to “become aware of, and diminish the ways in which, domination and repression are reproduced in the course of research and in the products of their work” (Naples, 2003, p.37). Being reflexive requires the researcher to examine their assumptions, beliefs, emotions, and location within the research (Hsiung, 2008). It is especially important to be reflexive in research that deals with sensitive matters like the sex trade. As Hammond (2010) notes, “teasing out people’s sexual stories requires sensitivity and emotional awareness in order to encourage disclosure during interviews” (p. 60). Reflexivity highlights the importance of introspection and situating oneself in the study. As such, my own identity as a white middle class gender studies graduate student affects how I approach the study and



interpret the findings; this includes making assumptions about the interviews based on my own experiences, and finding themes and patterns in the transcripts that reflect what I have learned in my gender studies coursework. Reflexivity is significant throughout the research process, from gathering data to analysis.

A central outcome of reflexivity is recognizing and negotiating outsider status as a non-sex trade worker. A significant criticism of outsider research is that it can be disempowering to the research subjects (Kauffman, 1994). For instance, if the researcher has their own agenda and has deeply entrenched and preconceived notions of the group they are studying, the research may be harmful for participants. “Ventriloquy”, the process of using the narratives of participants to construct an understanding of the situation that favours the researcher’s hypothesis, can be difficult to surmount if the researcher is not reflexive of their work (Bridges, 2010). In order to avoid ventriloquy, it was integral for me to go into this project open to and understanding of the multiple experiences and realities that exist in the sex industry. In an attempt to maintain an open and respectful dialogue with participants, and to lessen my outsider status I employed some of the ideas put forward by Reinharz (1998). She writes,

To listen to people is to empower them. But if you want to hear it, you have to go hear it, in their space, or in a safe space. Before you can expect to hear anything worth hearing, you have to examine the power dynamics of the space and social actors...Second, you have to be the person someone else can talk to, and you have to be able to create a context where the person can speak and you can listen. That means we have to study who we are and who we are in relation to those we study...Third, you have to be willing to hear what someone else is saying, even when it violates your expectation or threatens your interests. In other words, if you want someone to tell it like it is, you have to hear it like it is (p.15).

Putting Reinharz’s idea into practice meant that each interview was done in a space and

time that the participant chose so that they would feel confident and safe during the interview. In order to “be the person someone else can talk to” (Reinharz, 1998, p.15) I used tools from my Human Ecology background such as open body language, minimal encouragers and open questions.

Sometimes there may even be benefits of outsider research. For instance, outsider researchers may enhance the understanding of the community being researched by providing a new perspective on the phenomenon since the researcher is not embedded in the system (Bridges, 2010). Specifically, a researcher from outside the community may be more acute in seeing patterns that are overlooked by individuals in the group (Naples, 2003). This is contrary to the idea that only members of a specific group can add to the literature. In fact, it can be important to move beyond the idea that knowledge is property to be owned and that the research process is only one-directional. Bridges says that “while individuals from within a community have access to a particular kind of understanding of their experience, this does not automatically attach special authority (though it might attach special interest) to their own representations of that experience” (Bridges, 2011, p. 374). In general, knowledge does not move uni-directionally from participants to researcher, but rather research is more of an open dialogue in a respectful environment (Gitlin and Russel, 1994).

In conclusion, data collection for this study is based on analysis of online boards, forums, and websites, and semi-structured interviews of nine independent mobile sex workers in Fort McMurray, Ottawa, Toronto, and St. John’s. In-person interviews allowed for the narratives of the participants to be collected in person, providing a richer

set of data than email or phone correspondence. During the process of data collection it was important to consider and reflect on my outsider status in order to maintain the integrity of this project.

#### **4.6 Data Analysis**

Data analysis first began when examining the content of online boards and forums. These sites include the Canada Sex Worker Review Board and Directory ([www.caerf.ca](http://www.caerf.ca)), Sex workers Canada, and the Canadian Escort Recommendation Board ([www.cerb.ca](http://www.cerb.ca)) and its affiliated boards: Pacific-Prairie Sex worker Board ([www.perb.ca](http://www.perb.ca)), Toronto Sex worker Board ([www.terb.ca](http://www.terb.ca)), and Montreal and Maritime Sex worker Board ([www.merb.ca](http://www.merb.ca)). Content analysis of the online boards and forums was centered on sex worker's posts and advertisements. I looked for clues that would suggest that the sex worker was independent and mobile. Key indications of independent mobile status were words like "independent" and "touring." Also, some sex workers would post a welcome thread in which they would advertise their arrival in the city, state their length of stay, and talk about themselves as a sex workers. Most posts by sex workers would also contain a link to their business website, if they had one, which offered another means of gaining additional information about them and their services.

Content analysis of websites gave an insight into the work of the women. Viewing pictures, blog posts, and descriptions of the sex workers and their services provided a foundation to understanding how they operate their sex work business. A specific example is the use of language in their website descriptions. The women use terms like "courtesan" (Valerie, Gwen, Kyla, Elise, and Addison) or "companion" (all of the

participants) to describe their job, language which is both a marketing tool and a signifier of ideology management, which will later be discussed in Chapter Five.

A couple of techniques were used during and directly following the interviews including interim analysis and memoing. Interim analysis started during the interview process as I tracked overarching concepts and themes in the interviews which include privilege, mobility, emotional labour, and ideology management. Interim analysis is an ongoing and cyclical process of collecting and analyzing the data throughout the research (Knottnerus & Spigt, 2010). Memoing (recording reflective notes) was used as a part of interim analysis after each interview and initial thoughts and ideas about the interview were recorded in my reflective notes (Boeije, 2012). All the codes used were inductive codes that were developed by examining the transcripts, as opposed to a “priori code” that are developed before analyzing the data. The technique of first looking for emerging themes and then subthemes is useful, as scanning for broad themes allows the text to be more manageable, providing a foundation for further coding (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

After the interviews were complete, the next step in analyzing the data was transcription. I was the only person that listened to the recorded interviews and transcribed them. The interviews were uploaded to my computer the same day the interview was completed, and then deleted from the recording device to protect the confidentiality of the women. Once this was done, I used the Microsoft 2007 player playback feature on my computer and transcribed the interviews verbatim. To ensure

accuracy, I replayed the interviews while reading the completed transcriptions. After confirming their accuracy I began the coding process.

Coding was utilized to process and interpret the qualitative interview data. Analyzing and coding is an integral part of the research process, as it is in this stage of the research that the researcher “holds the balance in that they take away the ‘words’ and have power of editorship” (Letherby, 2003, p.117). Therefore, accurate data analysis is essential in respecting the narratives of the participants, which means that the researcher is responsible for processing the data in ways that accurately represent and preserve the overall narratives that were shared in the interviews.

I read all the transcripts to gain a preliminary idea of the main themes that were discussed, and then I searched the transcripts for key words like “Mobility” and “Control”, and synonyms for the words like “Tour” and “Agency” to confirm the major themes. This is a procedure similar to enumeration, which is a process used to quantify data by counting the number of times a word(s) appears in the transcript (Aigner, 2007; Canada, 1951).

After reviewing the interview transcripts multiple times and exhausting all themes and subthemes I determined that there were no more emerging themes in the interviews. The coding notes were grouped into categories of the strongest themes based on the frequency and dominance of these concepts. These themes are explored in the following analysis chapters.

#### **4.7 Considering Research Limitations**

Aspects of the study that should be considered in reviewing the results include the inclusivity of the sample and the sample size. The research process began with the idea of creating a sample that was as inclusive as possible, comprised of women of different educational, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds; however, when working with hidden populations such as sex workers, this is not always possible. The size and boundaries of the independent community of mobile sex workers in Canada is nearly impossible to accurately determine; in such cases it can be difficult to attain a representative sample (Shaver, 2005). Of the nine participants interviewed, two identified as non-Caucasian, and there were no self-identified lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, transgendered or two-spirited individuals who participated in the study. As a result, the research is restricted to a heterosexual, cisgender (i.e. not transgender) and predominately Caucasian women.

Therefore, this select group of sex workers will not offer a complete understanding of the industry in Canada, nor will the research provide generalizable evidence that speaks to the sex trade in its entirety. Still, the experiences of these women offer a much needed glimpse into a segment of the industry that is often overlooked in an effort to garner more public and media attention from women who are exploited and victimized in the sex trade. Since only a few studies have been conducted on the more hidden population of indoor sex work, this confined sample of participants provides further understanding of the experiences of independent and mobile sex workers who tour (Weitzer, 2007).

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

This chapter reviews the basic methodology that underpins the research. The research design is based on examining the influences of mobility on the lived-experiences of independent sex workers, and is founded in reflective research practices grounded in a sex work analytical framework. The research evolved from exploring the tour between St. John's and Fort McMurray, to encompassing a broader network of tours from Canada's Western Provinces to Newfoundland and Labrador.

Through the exploration and analysis of online boards and forums, and sex worker websites, potential participants were found and contacted. These online sites also provided excellent information on the sex workers through the use of content analysis. The participants were all independent mobile sex workers who toured in Canada. As many of the participants were currently on tour in Ontario at the time of data collection, the interviews were set-up in Toronto and Ottawa.

The interviews were conducted in coffee shops, hotel rooms, and participant vehicles, and lasted about an hour. All but one interview was tape recorded, and all the material was transcribed by myself. Throughout the process, confidentiality and reflexivity were taken into account. Confidentiality in this study was reflected in the use of pseudonyms for each participant, safe storage of the master list of participants and their corresponding pseudonyms, and avoiding any identifiable characteristics of participants and agencies. Reflexivity in this study meant that reflecting on and minimizing any power differences among myself as the researcher and the participants was actively pursued

during the research process. One aspect of this was recognizing myself as an Outsider to the population of independent mobile sex workers I was researching.

After the data collection analysis of the information was required. Data analysis occurred before the interviews in the form of content analysis of the participant's website and of online boards and forums. As well, during the interview process, following each individual interview, analysis took place in the form of interim analysis and memoing. Upon completion of all nine interviews, all the audio recordings were transcribed and the data was coded. There were a few limitations and considerations in the study including the heterogeneous sample of participants in regards to sexual identity and socio-economic background.

The next two chapters review the data that was collected in this study and examine the research findings. Chapter five explores the working conditions of the participants, and looks at how independent status and employment-related mobility affect the physical health and well-being of the women. Chapter six expands on this idea and examines how working as an independent mobile sex worker affects the mental and emotional well-being of the women, and the importance of ideology management on managing negative aspects of sex work such as stigma.



## **CHAPTER FIVE: PRIVILEGE, INDEPENDENT SEX WORK AND MOBILITY: MANAGING WORKING CONDITIONS**

The previous chapters set a foundation for understanding chapter's five and six. Chapter four reviewed the research methods and outlined the research process, including contacting participants, gaining informed consent, confidentiality, data collection and analysis, reflexivity, and considerations of the research. With an understanding of the methods behind the research, and how the data was collected and analyzed, we can begin to examine the findings.

This chapter begins with a look at the risks involved when working as a sex worker in Canada. Exploitation and violence are a reality for many sex workers, but the participants in this study are able to manage many of the risks associated with sex work. This chapter argues that independent status and mobility are central in the participant's management of these risks, and that social privilege, cultural capital (like post-secondary education), and economic capital are key factors in allowing the women in this study to access employment-related mobility and independent worker status in the first place.

### **5.1. Working Conditions: Risk**

A shared experience among most sex workers is the experience of physical risk in sex work, and the participants in the study are no exception to this. Risks can be encountered when working alone with the client, and can also be experienced after the appointment when accessing police and health care resources. This chapter will review the ways in which the participants in this study are able to manage risks to their physical well-being based on their work as independent mobile sex workers.

A typical appointment comes with many hazards that are common to all sex workers. An appointment includes meeting a new or repeat client one-on-one, often in a private setting. While touring, the appointment generally occurs in a hotel room or condo that the sex worker has rented for the short period of time they are in the city. When the client arrives at the hotel for the appointment, the worker may text the client her room number, and then greet them at the hotel room door, though some workers may prefer to meet their client in a public space such as the hotel lobby. The payment for the appointment is often addressed at this point, before further engagement with the client.

The worker usually performs the hostess role at the start of the appointment, ensuring that the client is comfortable. As Gwen notes, the client “is your guest” and the jobs “requires being attentive...and being in the moment” (Gwen). Time is dedicated at the start of the appointment to gaining rapport, maintaining an intimate atmosphere, and making the client comfortable. Addison mentions that “in a one hour or two hour appointment we [herself and the client] will spend time drinking a glass of wine or chatting about the weather” before any type of sexual engagement takes place as a way to gain rapport with the client. Like Addison, many of the women in this study prefer longer appointments (two hours or more) as a way to get to know the client and establish a high level of comfort between herself and the client. As Callie explains, longer appointments allow her to “really get to know someone, and spend more time with them” (Callie).

Having a longer appointment not only allows for more time to gain rapport, but it means that the appointment is not rushed so more time can be spent reviewing preferences and establishing boundaries. Often sex worker boundaries and client

preferences have already been discussed during email or phone conversations, but some sex workers may review preferences again to ensure that there is a mutual understanding of what will occur during the appointment time. After the honorarium for the appointment has been given to the sex worker, and conversation has concluded, sex and sex-related acts commence. During some appointments the sex worker may have been requested to go out for dinner with the client, attend a business function, or have a “date-like” experience with the client. These appointments are much longer than a visit that is centered solely on sexual acts, but dinner dates often will also have a time dedicated for sex and intimacy.

When the scheduled time ends, the sex worker skillfully concludes the appointment so as to continue the intimate atmosphere and not make the client feel rushed. Once the client has left, the sex worker may prepare for the next client, or end her day depending on her touring schedule. At all these stages in the appointment the sex worker’s health and safety may be at risk.

A key area of concern for sex workers in regards to their safety is working alone with clients. For instance, abuse from clients is a risk for independent sex workers. Abuse may come in the form of physical, verbal or sexual abuse during the appointment. Physical abuse may include punching, choking, and threatening to harm the sex worker (Types of Abuse, n.d.). Verbal abuse most often involves yelling, swearing, intimidation, and generally using threatening language and tone to invoke fear (Types of Abuse, n.d.). Sexual abuse during an appointment occurs when the client forces a sex worker to have unprotected sex or to do unwanted sexual touching or acts (Types of Abuse, n.d.). These

types of risks to sex worker health and safety can be magnified by saturated markets and out-call appointments. (This idea will be developed later in this chapter in discussion of motivations for sex worker mobility).

Risks to the physical well-being of the participants extends beyond the appointment and contact with clients. For example, when sex workers reach out to workers that are meant to protect and to provide care to all community members, such as law enforcement and health care practitioners, they may not receive the same service and quality of care as other workers. The general failure of police and the legal system to take reports of violence against sex trade workers seriously makes it difficult and dangerous to be a part of the sex industry (Sallmann, 2010; Williamson, Baker, Jenkins, & Cluse-Tolar, 2007; Levin & Peled, E, 2011).

Police protection is a service commonly denied to sex workers. Williamson, Baker, Jenkins and Cluse-Tolar (2007) examine interactions between police and sex workers from 1998 to 2004, and document the general indiscretion and misconduct towards sex workers from law enforcement workers. In their study they suggest that police attitudes towards sex workers may vary from compassionate to nonresponsive to the perpetuation of violence (Williamson, Baker, Jenkins & Cluse-Tolar, 2007). There generally is a high rate of apathy and misconduct towards sex workers by the police, especially in regards to street based sex workers (Monto, 2004; Benoit & Millar, 2001).

Abuse may not be reported by sex workers as a result of their negative perception of police officers. Devon, a thirty six year old participant in this study who works primarily in Western Canada, shares a negative sentiment towards the authorities, noting an

incident where she was robbed by a client. She says, “I filed a complaint with the Brandon police [about being robbed by a client]. There’s a file number, I never told them that I was a sex worker because I was too fearful at the time. But it’s something that I’ve been thinking about a lot. And I’m starting to feel a sense of I should. Because if he does this to somebody else, at least there’s something on record saying that he’s not an upstanding individual” (Devon). However, like other workers, Devon is fearful about sharing her status as a sex worker, and the reaction that the police will have towards her and the incident if they know her status as a sex worker. Addison, too, criticizes Canadian law enforcement in protecting the safety of sex workers, and claims that, “We [sex workers] should feel comfortable calling on the police if a client gets violent without fear. If a client gets violent or gets unruly most girls are going to just try to deal with the situation as well as they possibly can. But you know we have girls getting murdered on the street. And some of these girls were working for upscale services. It really scares me. They were sent to an out call and were found in the ditch the next day. And that shouldn’t happen in Canada in this day and age” (Addison). There is a general threat of danger experienced by many sex workers, and unlike other community members who may contact the police to mitigate threats to their physical safety sex workers do not always have this option available to them.

The relationship between law enforcement and sex workers can be harmful for sex workers as they may not feel confident in reporting violence or client misconduct out of fear of being reprimanded. Callie comments on this idea and claims that, “If the laws were changed and people could be more open about these things and wouldn’t have to

worry about calling the police...why would they call the police to report abuse or violence against them if they are the ones that are going to end up impacted?" Most of the issues encountered with the police, health care providers, and other community services arise from the fact that aspects of sex work are still illegal in Canada, and that sex workers are viewed as criminal or vagrants in the community.

Another area of concern for sex workers is their experience with health care professionals. This often stems from the fact that "as marginalized women, [sex workers] are not afforded the same privileges and protections as other individuals in a democratic society, including the fundamental recognition of value as a human being" (Williamson, Baker, Jenkins & Cluse-Tolar, 2007, p.18). This type of marginalization is highlighted by Lacie when she recalls a negative instance she had with tele-health Ontario, "I had an incident one time when I had to call tele-health Ontario because I had a condom break on me and I didn't know what I should do so I called tele-health. And I told the woman straight up, I'm a sex worker, I'm a sex worker and I was with a client I do not know his sexual history, I don't know this person, I've never met him before, what should I do? Should I go to the hospital? Is it that serious? Should I go to the emergency room? What is your advice? I did not know what to do in that situation, so I called for help. She decided to give me a moral lesson on what I'm doing, why what I am doing is wrong." (Lacie). Situations like this are not uncommon for sex workers. In fact, many sex workers will avoid actively seeking health and community services because of the fear of judgment and being reprimanded for their activities (Weiner, 1996). This compounds the problem of violence and abuse in the sex trade, as sex workers will avoid seeking care for

their work related ailments out of fear of being judged and stigmatized. On the other hand, some of the participants mentioned that they have met with health care providers that have been non-judgmental when the participants' work was disclosed, but the burden is generally placed on the sex worker to locate such a health care practitioner.

Working in the sex industry tends to pose a noticeable threat to sex workers, and affects their physical safety. These concerns include hazards that are very tangible, affecting the physical welfare of participants. Risk is a shared experience amongst most sex workers, including the women in this study. While there are some overlapping experiences between the sex workers in this study and other workers in the sex trade because of risks to sex workers physical well-being and safety, there are also many differences as the participants in this study are able to manage these risks. The next section examines the importance of independent mobile status as a sex worker, the privilege and benefit of having an independent mobile status in an industry riddled with risk, and how the women in this study were able to transition into this line of work after working at an agency.

## **5.2 Worker Status and Privilege**

An important factor in being an independent mobile sex worker is the ability to access resources required for this type of sex work. Resources like financial and cultural capital significantly benefit sex workers transitioning into being independent and mobile. Similarly, privilege has a substantial influence in allowing the women in this study to have a positive experience in the sex industry that is relatively removed from violence,

exploitation, and abuse. This section examines the impact of race, socio-economic background, and education on the work experiences of the participants in this study.

A strong discourse of privilege is dominant in the women's narratives. In this study privilege is defined as a benefit or advantage enjoyed by an individual or group of people that can be assumed as a right and used to maintain the status-quo (Greenwood Dictionary of Education, 2011). Privilege may be expressed in many forms including male privilege, white privilege, and heterosexual privilege (Greenwood Dictionary of Education, 2011). Some of the women directly discuss their privilege while others only allude to the undercurrent of privilege that comes with working as an independent mobile sex worker. For the study's participants privilege results in a higher level of safety, well-being, and socio-economic success while working as a sex worker. This translates into tangible experiences like having fewer clients that are more respectful, pay higher fees, and do not pose a threat to the women's physical safety. Also, privilege is reflected in the women's social position in the sex trade as mobile independent sex workers that allow them to be selective of their clientele, charge appointment fees that they deem satisfactory, and have generally a high amount of control over their working conditions and lifestyle in the sex trade. This type of privilege is a result of different factors. For example, Callie comments on the intersection between being Caucasian, being born in Canada and having an education when she says, "Definitely, I think I am in a more privileged position as a high end independent sex worker... My experience is good, but I'm very privileged, and I recognize that [I am a] white, Canadian-born, quite privileged, well-educated woman" (Callie). Devon also comments on her experience of privilege, focusing on her middle



class status and being financially comfortable: “I think I started [sex work] as more of a hobby for me. And I do feel like that is how it is [now], to a certain extent. My husband does make a very handsome wage. I mean we’re not rich, but we’re definitely middle-class” (Devon). As well, Mina is conscious of the benefit she is afforded in society from being white and educated when she notes,

“I feel like clients are improving and getting into the high-end that I want to be in. And I’m very lucky that I can do this, not a lot of women can, whether it is because of the way their body looks, or if they are a woman of colour. I mean, I am very privileged to be able to move up in the industry... Not to say that there aren’t women of colour who aren’t super fancy sex workers, because there totally are, but far fewer if you look at the higher-end sex workers. They are predominately white and educated” (Mina).

The participants clearly articulate the ethnic, class and education privilege they maintain in the industry, and how this privilege positively affects their work in the sex trade. Devon acknowledges the wealth that is more often afforded to independent sex workers, and Mina admits that the level of client respect and sex worker safety increases as the worker’s status in the industry rises. In this sense, both status and privilege are interconnected: As status in the industry increases so too does the sex worker’s privilege and the more privileged a worker is the more likely they are able to have safe appointments.

Running parallel to the strong narratives of privilege are the stories that are left unspoken in the interviews. Specifically, themes of violence and exploitation are rarely discussed during the interviews, which is counter to the theme of violence in much of sex work literature (Jeffreys, 2009; Melissa Farley, 2003, Dworkin, 1997). When asked about any experience of violence or abuse while working, the majority of the women in this

study answered that they had never had any such experiences and always felt quite safe while working. In all nine interviews only two participants shared an incident in which they felt unsafe or experienced a form of violence, but the incidents were actively reframed. Reframing means that the participants who had a negative experience in the sex trade modified their perception of the event in order to view the experience in a positive way (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Devon mentions that she was robbed by a client once, explaining that “I had a situation where I was robbed. We had the appointment, and then after that my purse was gone. The next day I was going to deposit like \$5000. I don’t normally keep that on me, but I was going to deposit it the next day.... And that was my mistake. I should have gone with my gut [and turned him down] because that was the one that robbed me. I gave him a second chance, I was sucked in” (Devon). Just like Devon rationalizes the violence against her and takes the fault of being robbed, Mina uses a similar technique of reframing a situation of violence against her. Mina talks about a time when a client forced her to perform unprotected oral sex and notes, “That was probably my worst ever experience and it’s funny because that time with the client wasn’t even that bad. Sexual violence happens even with boyfriends” (Mina). While Devon takes the blame for the violence against her when she was robbed, Mina minimizes her experience of violence and suggests that it has nothing to do with her job as a sex worker as “sexual violence happens even with boyfriends” (Mina). While discussions concerning violence and exploitation may have been carefully omitted by the women in this study, even when explicitly asked about safety and violence, in order to present a narrative that more positively represents their work, it may also be true that these independent mobile sex

workers, in fact, do not experience the same level of violence and exploitation as other sex workers.

The imbalance of thick descriptions of a privileged lifestyle paired with a lack of discussion concerning experiences of violence or abuse leaves one to question what forces underpin this seemingly unusual experience of comfort and safety in the sex trade. Indeed, the privilege that marks the women's lives is clear; the curious issue is whether the participants' privilege stems from their lifestyle outside of the industry, in which case the power maintained in society would have translated into their work, or whether their position as independent workers has been the key contributor to their privilege. In other words, does the women's privilege stem from forces external to the sex industry, or has privilege been achieved inside the trade? In the specific case of independent mobile sex workers it appears to be a combination of the two proposed scenarios.

The women suggest that they may be privileged in society as they have fairly comfortable lifestyles marked by safe working conditions, and the ability to make life decisions. As a result, the participants enter into the sex industry from a position that allows them to negotiate their working environments and manage their own business in a way that best reflects their personal goals and values. While seven of the participants began their work in the sex industry working with an agency, they were able to transition to working independently in a matter of months. Similar to other entrepreneurs, it is important for the participants to establish a foundation and general understanding of the sex industry while working at an agency before embarking on their own independent sex work venture. The next sections outline the key ways that the participants are privileged

in society, including identifying as Caucasian, having a middle-to-high socio-economic background, and having a university education.

*i. Race and Privilege*

Callie and Mona clearly articulate the significance of race in establishing their space of privilege in the sex trade. For the study's participants race is reflected in the colour of the women's skin. For example, Mina notes that, "I am a white woman. I'm not a target [of police investigation and legal intervention] just because that's not how the state works. They won't target well-to-do white girls. They want to target public nuisance and Indigenous women. We live in a super racist country. So, that's super disappointing" (Mina). Callie notes that her identity as a Caucasian woman affords her a certain degree of protection, asserting that, "I recognize that I am a white, Canadian-born, quite privileged, well-educated woman" (Callie). In this statement, Callie intertwines her status as a white Canadian-born woman, her high level of education, and her privilege. Indeed, these three factors, with a particular emphasis on the issue of race and social standing, are integral to giving the participants an advantage when entering the sex industry, such as being able to operate their sex work business without constant fear of police harassment.

The issue of race has consistently been shown to create a significantly privileged experience in Canadian society and much literature supports a link between First Nations status and violence against women (Farley, Lynne, Cotton, 2005; Amnesty International, 2004; De Vries, 2008, Culhane, 2003). The intricacies of racism and violence against women, and particularly women working in the sex industry, are too substantial to fully explore in this study, yet, it is important to recognize and have a preliminary

understanding of the connection between violence and racism in the sex industry. Much scholarship has been dedicated to interrogating the line between privilege and race; scholars like Rothenberg (2002), Kimmel and Ferber (2003), McIntosh (1988), and Weekes (2009) have offered substantial critique of racism in society.

Extending beyond general society and looking specifically at the sex industry, the ways in which societal racism pervades sex work culture can be seen. A specific example of this is evident in Vancouver, British Columbia where there is a significant overrepresentation of First Nations women in street work compared to indoor and independent sex workers and the general population of Vancouver overall (Farley, Lynne & Cotton, 2005). While Vancouver is a particular case, the themes of racism within sex work culture are apparent in the sex trade across Canada (Currie, 2000). As Mina affirms, there are few women of colour that occupy a high position in the sex work stratification in Canada, and even fewer women of First Nations heritage. Instead of having the privilege and increased safety in the sex industry that comes with being an indoor worker or independent mobile sex worker, First Nations women tend to work from more unsafe environments, such as on the street, which place them in a more vulnerable position. Sue Currie (2000) concludes that nearly seventy percent of sex workers who work in the lowest paid and most dangerous areas of the industry in Canada, such as outdoor street work, are First Nations women. It is often Indigenous women who work in the lower paid jobs in the sex trade in Canada, whereas Caucasian women often work in jobs that distance them from violence and exploitation, such as being indoor and independent sex workers or phone sex operators (Culhane, 2003). In the case of the participants in this

study, being Caucasian also allows the women to gain access to the independent mobile sex worker segment of the sex industry, which is removed from much of the violence and exploitation that exists in other areas of the sex industry.

There has been government acknowledgment of the overrepresentation of First Nations women in the sex trade and the systemic violence against them. The government of Canada recently pledged 10 million dollars to address the “disturbing number of Aboriginal women who go missing and are slain every year” (Anonymous, 2010, p.1). Indeed, it has been estimated that nearly 500 Aboriginal women have gone missing in Canada over the last 30 years (Welsh, 2006). The importance of recognizing the intersections between race and gender was also reflected by the Federal Minister for the Status of Women when she declared that “the disturbing issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women is one of serious concern and, as Canadians, we know Aboriginal women deserve respect, dignity and the right to feel safe” (Anonymous, 2010, p.1).

Systemic racism in Canada leaches into sex work culture. It is crucial to acknowledge the connection between the privilege afforded to the participants in this study and their identity as Caucasian women. However, two of the women did not identify as Caucasian – one participant self-identified as Métis, and another participant identified as being an integration of many races and cultural backgrounds. While Devon self-identifies as being Métis, she can “pass” as Caucasian with light Brunette hair, pale/tan skin and light eyes. On the other hand, Lacie is not as easily identified as Caucasian with a darker skin tone, brown eyes and black hair. In fact, Lacie markets herself as an “exotic vixen,” effectively using her ethnic identity as a niche in the ever

diversifying sex trade market. The use of skin colour as a tool to market to clients will not be examined in this study; yet further analysis of this topic is recommended for an even fuller understanding of the significance of race in the sex trade. In all, race and ethnic background, as manifested in the colour of the women's skin, differentiates them from other workers and offers them a greater degree of safety in a market that continues to be imbedded in racial discrimination.

*ii. Socio-Economic Background and Education*

University education and socio-economic background are the two other underlying factors that contribute greatly to the work experiences of the participants upon entering the sex trade, and while transitioning to being a mobile sex worker. It seems as if education and socio-economic class standing provide the women with resources, such as financial assets and cultural capital that can be used to navigate the industry and thus set a firm foundation to start their own business. In particular, the start-up costs of independent sex workers can be substantial. The costs of marketing (creating a website, having professional business photos and maintaining an online portfolio), establishing funds for travel, and purchasing goods for work (lingerie, clothing, sex devices) are some of the costs associated with the business.

Moreover, much of the work requires upkeep and continual investment. For instance, Elise notes, "You have to spend money to make money. If you're the new girl you'll be popular for so long, but then after that, they [clients] want something more. They want a website...they are going to want pictures, they are going to want something to go on; you have to keep them interested. However you choose to do that, you have to

keep them interested. You have to get new photos...every four to six months you better have something new to show for yourself” (Elise). As a result, the costs of creating and maintaining an independent business as a mobile sex worker can be quite substantial.

Therefore, sex workers who enter the industry with an already established monetary base to draw from have a better chance of creating and maintaining a successful business. The adage “it takes money to make money,” seems applicable in the case of independent sex work. Most of the study’s participants entered the industry with a strong financial base, reflecting their middle-to-upper class background, and were therefore able to access the resources, some of which include having a website, booking quality hotel suites, and having a range of attire (like lingerie) required for the work, that propelled them upward in the trade very quickly. For instance, Gwen, at 37, was a full time event planner before entering into the industry and began sex work as a side job until she decided to make it a full time venture due to her enjoyment of sex work. With skills in event planning and hosting, and ample financial resources, and previous experience in sex work, Gwen was able to almost seamlessly enter into the market as an independent sex worker. Similarly, Kyla (32) managed a few businesses and continues to manage other side businesses while she works in the sex industry. This experience developed her skills in working with clients and managing finances that can be directly used in her sex work business. Overall, the participants have transferable skills from their educational and past work experience that they can employ in sex work.

Education also factors into the women’s business, as seven of the nine women are university educated. Generally, education provides the women with a variety of tools and



cultural capital useful for their entrepreneurial ventures - language, industriousness, social networking and general knowledge. There tends to be a positive correlation between the number of years of education with overall well-being (Bynner, Schuller & Feinstein, 2003). In particular, individuals with post-high school levels of education generally have higher incomes and better jobs than their less educated counterparts (Vila, 2000).

Education offers social benefits as well: problem solving skills, general knowledge, self-discipline and a diversified skill set that contributes to the attainment of better careers and overall life satisfaction (Nevzer, 1998).

However, though education is a strong piece of cultural capital that can be used as an asset for the women when working in the sex industry, it is not essential for maintaining their independent mobile status. Indeed, the two women who were not university educated were also able to create a successful sex work business while working in a safe and comfortable environment. In all, university education offers the women tools such as problem solving skills and self-discipline (Nevzer, 1998) that may not be as easily accessible to their differently educated counterparts, thus contributing to their success in the trade. However, education is not the defining factor to gaining socio-economic privilege. Rather, it is simply another factor that intersects to produce the socio-economic success experienced by some of the participants.

Clearly, the majority of the participants entered the sex industry from places of privilege based on their racial identity, education, and socio-economic background. By beginning their work at this position in society, they are better able to gain economic success in the sex trade. For instance, by bringing resources into the industry, like

education and money stemming from a middle-to-high socio-economic background, the participants are better equipped to leave agency work and start their own successful businesses. While most of the participants began their careers working at an agency, where they could learn the essentials of sex work like managing clients and providing intimate sexual services, they were able to create their own business within a few months to a year because they had the resources and knowledge to begin such a venture.

If a sex worker has few resources to begin with, including financial and cultural capital, they will often start working from an outdoor street location, a placement that is often associated with more challenges and risks, or working with an agency. Indeed, many studies conclude that women who work outdoors in a street location are at a greater of experiencing violence than are women who work from an indoor location (Weitzer, 2007; Weitzer, 2005; Cunningham & Kendall, 2011; O'Doherty, 2011). With the additional challenges of working in the street segment of the sex trade it may be more difficult to ever establish themselves as independent mobile sex workers and to gain the benefits of greater safety, control, and economic success that come with such a status.

### **5.3 Mobility, Independent Sex Work and Risk Management**

As a result of the societal privileges gained by the women in this study as a result of their education, socio-economic background and race, they were able to transition into doing independent mobile sex work fairly easily. This type of sex work has many benefits that help to minimize the risks to the physical well-being of sex workers. Employment-related mobility is a significant force that sculpts the work experiences of the participants in this study and separates the women's experiences from sex workers who are not

mobile. Mobility effectively reduces some of the negative outcomes of sex work and serves as a form of risk management for sex workers. While other workers may also have many of the benefits of working independently, it is employment-related mobility that essentially differentiates this participant subset from other sex workers. The next section begins by examining a dominant reason for becoming a mobile sex worker, which is saturated markets, and the risks and unsafe work conditions that are often a result of saturated markets. Next, other motivations for mobility are examined, including new experiences, travelling, and being near family. The importance of mobility in having greater autonomy over working conditions and mitigating some of the risks of sex work is also significant. The section ends with a discussion of the work that is required when being a mobile worker and organizing a tour.

*i. Mobility and Saturated Sex Work Markets*

The strongest example of the importance of mobility for risk management stems from the current market conditions in the Canadian sex industry. Many of the participants note that the market for sex workers has become saturated in key Canadian metropolitan areas, like Toronto and Ottawa; the result has been lower prices for services and an increase in unsafe sexual practices. Addison discusses the saturation of the Toronto sex work market, explaining that when she first started doing sex work “Toronto didn’t have such a developed market back then...I was barely keeping up with demand” and “since then a lot more agencies have opened their doors here. There’s a more mature market” (Addison). A more mature market means that clients “have a lot of choice so the prices

have been getting pushed down” (Addison). The chief mechanism driving this shift is the same force that guides other markets for goods and service – supply and demand.

Supply and demand can be explained simply: As the quantity of a specific good or service increases the price per unit decreases (Prasch, 2009). The principle of this phenomenon underpins the theory of demand for commodities. Prasch, an economist, describes the effect in laymen terms, asserting that “should it turn out that, after all relevant prices are considered, a rival good with similar qualities would more completely satisfy the consumer’s wants, or satisfy them more cheaply, then the customer will purchase that other market” (2009, p. 32).

The forces of supply and demand have an effect on underground markets such as the sex industry. Essentially, the general rules are the same: The greater the quality, the higher the price. Reynolds notes that in the economics of sex work “the difference in price is a reflection in the difference in how much the customer is willing to pay and what [they] expect for [their] money” (1986, p. 15). However, when the quality is held constant, price becomes the defining factor. In this respect, mobility lends distinct benefits to sex workers. Mobile sex workers can expand their business to different sex work markets and avoid geographic locations in which the prices for services have been pushed down by market saturation in sex workers. By changing their geographic location, the sex worker can change the market they are in, and have access to better prices for the services they wish to offer.

With an increasing number of sex workers in the market, workers must reduce their rates to remain competitive. Elise, for instance, shares that, “before you could charge an

outrageous amount of money and people would book [an appointment], and now people are bartering” (Elise). Essentially, saturation of workers in cities like Toronto has shifted the power from the sex worker to the client. As there is more supply in the market than there is demand, consumers of the services have more power in the general balance of the market (Reynolds, 1986). As a result, clients frequently request, or even demand, services that were generally avoided in years prior to the market saturation. For instance, services such as “bareback blow jobs,” a service where oral sex is given without the use of a condom, are now more commonly requested. Addison explains this phenomenon:

I know that if I tour I can have nice clients in other cities and be booked almost solid. So, then I don’t have to put up with the local crap. Again, the Toronto market, because there is so much supply, guys are becoming more and more demanding. They want cm, they want coming in the mouth – services that before were rare to see offered. Girls in other cities don’t even offer bj’s [blow jobs] without a condom. In Toronto if you don’t offer bj without a condom you know you’re not going to get a lot of business. And now, the services that were not common like pse, porn star experience, are now more and more being offered continually like coming in the mouth or coming in the face. Just because the market is so competitive so the girls feel like they have to push the envelope more and more. (Addison)

Generally, market saturation increases the risk of unsafe working environment for sex workers. As Addison asserts, as market saturation increases in a location, workers feel pressured to accommodate the unsafe demands of clients in order to maintain their business. Pushing the limits of their work, sex workers may begin to provide services that they had never before considered and start to overstep their own risk boundaries just to stay competitive in the market.

The risks of unprotected sex practices are high. The health costs of not using a condom are great and include risk of contracting Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and sexually transmitted infections (STI) including gonorrhea of the mouth, chlamydia

and Hepatitis B (Health Canada, 2010). Though oral sex without protection is likely to be less infectious than penetration without protection, evidence suggesting possible HIV transmission through oral sex is still generally inconclusive (Campo *et al.* 2006). However, the risk of acquiring other infections, like syphilis, is still a danger (Ciesielski *et al.* 2004). The hazards of transmission of sexual transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS is magnified with unprotected vaginal and anal sex, and there is a rapid decline in infections when the use of condoms increases (Ward *et al.*, 2004).

Curiously, none of the participants expressed a concern for their physical health as a result of their work. Addison directly confronts the issue of sexually transmitted infections in the industry claiming that, “there is so much societal stigma that we’re dirty, that we’re this and that. I know from talking from my vanilla girlfriends – girlfriends that don’t work in the industry – that they have had more unprotected sex in their personal lives than I’ve ever had” (Addison). Most of the women share Addison’s sentiment and are diligent when following safer sex practices regardless of whether they would receive a higher price for unprotected sex. Lois Jackson’s research on sex workers in Halifax (2001) confirms Addison’s belief that she engages in safer sexual practices compared to her “vanilla girlfriends.” Jackson (2001) explains that in North America “it is within the women’s private lives that they may be at greatest risk of HIV” because resistance to condom use is most predominant in this sphere; unfortunately most HIV public health programs erroneously focus their efforts on sex workers (p. 44).

Another consequence of market saturation is a decrease in prices across the market. Following the laws of supply and demand, an increase in sex workers will drive the prices

downward as clients have more power in their selection of a worker (Prasch, 2008).

Though there is a lower risk of losing clients who are regular customers, new clients are generally less likely to choose a worker who provides the same service at a higher rate when the quality is held constant among sex workers. Price wars begin to develop as sex workers positioned in fixed geographical markets compete in gaining new clients, keeping regular customers, and preserving their market share. The increase of sex workers in major metropolitan areas has created a saturation effect in the market.

Generally, independent sex workers who tour are able to avoid the forces of supply and demand that drive down prices in local markets. Mobility allows the workers to avoid cities where market prices are low and to expand their client base to locations like St. John's, where there is a shortage of independent mobile sex workers. In this way, the participants provide a service in markets that require their work. Addison, for instance, highlights the benefits of touring, noting that, "Some of the smaller cities don't really have a market. And in addition to that, the Toronto market has become saturated, for sure we have 4 million people in the city, but there are so many sex workers, so many agencies with all different price point levels. So, guys here have a lot of choice so the prices have been getting pushed down" (Addison). As Addison suggests, touring allows the women to escape unsafe markets and extend their business to cities where the sex industry is lacking. Therefore, employment-related mobility allows the participants to expand their market share and capitalize on less-developed markets where there is a more balanced ratio of sex workers to clients.

Additionally, when sex workers tour in cities that are already saturated they are able to overcome price wars as they form a unique niche of being an independent mobile sex worker. In this way, the workers differentiate themselves from geographically fixed sex workers by appealing to the customer's fascination and curiosity of novelty. As Addison explains, "There's more buzz when you're on tour. And you actually get to present yourself as more upscale. They [the clients] have a better image of you in their heads. Even the fact you go on tour tells them about your business, because only more established sex workers go on tour" (Addison). Valerie also notes the benefits of touring, confirming that, "We [mobile workers] have an edge because when we travel as we are only there for three or four days. The gentlemen have the choice between seeing a lady that maybe he can see the next week or the following week, and seeing someone who might not be back until two months. Usually they go for the person that they are not sure when they are going to see again" (Valerie). In all, mobility provides a unique market niche for the participants that differentiate them from other sex workers in saturated markets as they become a scarce resource in the town they are visiting for the limited time. Employment related mobility provides a useful advantage to workers by setting them apart from local sex workers and giving the appearance of novelty and rarity that many clients desire.

#### *ii. Additional Motivations for Mobility*

The importance of mobility is reflected in additional benefits other than mitigating the costs of market saturation. These include both personal motivations like gaining new



experiences, travelling, and being near family. Lacie details the significance of employment-related mobility for her sex work when she states:

It's nice because you get to travel, you get to see a new city, you get to make some new money, and you're in a new market. Different cities have different prices so sometimes you can charge more in other cities than you do in your normal city. And it also gives you a break from your old city. ... And I love travelling because you meet new people, you get to go to new cities, you get to see things that maybe you wouldn't get an opportunity to see otherwise. I can go somewhere and take a vacation that maybe I wouldn't be able to afford if I was in a normal job because I know that when I go there I am going to make money. So I can say I'm going to spend this money that I need because I'm going to make my rent. I can just send my rent in the mail. I'll make it and send it; I don't have to be back. So travelling has a lot of benefits for sure, I really like it. (Lacie)

Lacie points to both economic and personal motivations for mobility. And, in fact, most of the women suggested that personal motivations were just as significant, if not more so, than economic reasons. The appeal of travelling with business funds, visiting new places while being paid, and expanding their market is often too tempting to be ignored. For Kyla, touring offers her an avenue to explore new cultures and meet new types of individuals; she notes that "I like travelling; I like the new cultures [in each city]" (Kyla). Gwen reflects these reasons and explains, "I like to travel. It gives me an opportunity to explore and discover. I can see new sites and tour the country. Travelling is an experience. I love to do it...I choose cities based on what I would like to see. I visit places that are interesting to me. I use it as a goal. I have cities on my radar that I would like to explore" (Gwen). For Gwen and Lacie, employment-related mobility caters to their need to explore and find adventure in foreign cities. Callie, too, comments "Yeah. It's like I'll go on a little trip. And I love to travel too. So it would be a good way to kill two birds

with one stone I guess” (Callie). These women use mobility as a way to expand their range of experience and cater to their desire for adventure.

Devon, on the other hand, employs a different strategy when selecting cities for her touring schedule. Specifically, she explains, “I go to where I have family. And the reason being, I always feel pulled to go to see my family because I don’t have any [family] where I’m at... I think in the end, there’s some kind of sense of security that I have; a feeling of security going to places where I have family in case something happens” (Devon). In this way, touring serves as a safety precaution for Devon, which is linked more to work related reasons for mobility. Elise, as well, describes her experiences with travelling in work and personal terms, noting, “Hands down [I prefer to travel], because... if clients are bored in the afternoon they can just call, ‘Are you free?’, and they just expect you to drop what you’re doing. When I travel I am only there a few days a month. So if they decide to get needy, clingy, or emotionally attached, they have to wait six weeks. By then they’re not so needy. Do you know what I mean? I don’t want that. I don’t need another husband. I don’t need it. I don’t want that closed in feeling. So travelling gives me variety. I’m not in the same city all the time....Some cities treat you better than others, I guess you could say. So, I guess when you are travelling they are less likely to be wasting your time” (Elise). As Elise notes, employment related mobility may provide a generally safer and more enjoyable working environment for sex workers by avoiding undesirable clientele. For these women, mobility is central to maintaining their autonomy, socio-economic success, and physical safety within the sex trade. Employment-related mobility is a multi-faceted tool skillfully employed by the women.

*iii. Control Over Working Conditions: Eliminating Out-calls and Agencies*

As independent sex workers, the participants are better able to avoid the risks associated with geographically fixed work like price wars and the pressure to perform unsafe services. Another issue is the risk of out-calls. The danger factor that underpins out-calls is the unpredictability and unfamiliarity of the experience. Out-calls are common among agencies whose key focus is on profits. By providing an out-call service the agency expands its client base and increases the monetary returns, often with less regard to the concerns of the women providing the out-call experience. Lacie explains the inherent hazard in out-calls:

If they [the client] rents a hotel room it's an out-call and I can go there and it's legal. And if I rent that very same hotel room, and they come see me, it's an in-call and it's illegal. And it makes no sense because that puts us [sex workers] in danger. You're making us go out of comfort zone; you're making us go into the lion's den, so to speak. In some cities in Canada, where I come from, there's an outcall only law. If you run in-calls, they will bust you and you're going to jail. So that means every client I see I have to go to where they are. They could have anything in that house, they could have a rifle under the chair, or they could have drugs. I wouldn't know. I would have no idea. But in my own space I can have someone there with me to protect me, I know where everything is. I know there are no guns or weapons or anything hidden. And I am in a lot more control of the situation. (Lacie)

In this way, the danger of being unfamiliar with the surroundings is critical when it is paired with a first time client. Therefore, being able to work in cities that have different or more open legislation surrounding in-calls makes it safer for the sex worker. Additionally, using hotels that the worker is comfortable in allows the worker to establish a safer working environment. For instance, Elise notes that she always feels safe when touring: "I feel very safe. And if I'm not sure I'll stay in a hotel with a key carded floor because

then I know no one is getting up there.” Mobility allows the participants to choose a working environment in which they feel safe.

Mobility offers the women a sense of control over their work and provides a distinct experience that contrasts to working for an agency or being geographically fixed. Touring allows the participants to control their work environment and overall business conditions as they create their own schedules, plan which cities to include on their tour, the length of their stay, and from what location they will work. As discussed in chapter two, the workers manage their advertising, select their own clients and set their prices for each city in their schedule as well.

Independent mobile sex workers generally maintain significant control over their working conditions. They are able to shape their work environment in a way that best accommodates their individual needs, interests, and risk boundaries. For instance, some participants prefer to work from a hotel room while others will work from a rented location, like a condo. This is in direct contrast to working with an in-call agency where the sex workers are assigned a room and location that they must work from, or an out-call location in which sex workers go to the location of the client. The importance of control over working conditions is highlighted by Jeffrey and MacDonald (2006, p.322) who explain in their study of sex workers in the Maritimes that, “The flexibility that a number of [their] respondents appreciated about sex work was not simply in terms of setting one’s own hours, or avoiding the structural constraints of the double work day. Rather, there was a sense of being out from under the psychological and social discipline of the workplace, the authority structure of bosses and managers.” Lacie and Kyla confirm this idea

when they note, “I like the freedom I have. I like not having to answer to anyone. I love that. I mean, what other job do you have that you don’t have to answer to anyone?” (Lacie), and Kyla “I like to work and travel, and the freedom it gives me” (Kyla).

When the women discuss the autonomy they have their work, they generally speak of it in direct contrast with working at an agency under the control of others, as seven of the nine participants began their sex worker career doing agency work. Addison had a particularly negative experience with an agency, and she shares that, “My first experience for working for an agency in Toronto was really horrible. They were very unprofessional. I didn’t know anything. I didn’t know what the types of agencies were. For a very short time I worked at an agency. They weren’t getting me enough calls, and I was staying up all night at bars with my fellow co-workers [waiting for clients]. It was a really crappy experience” (Addison). The negative experiences of working at an agency are rather glaring in the interviews. Kyla shares her perception of agencies when she notes “Agencies are a bunch of liars. The whole idea of working with other people, being a part of the team, means that you must accommodate their standards as a team player. And once you accommodate other people’s standards and they go against yours, then you have a conflict of interest” (Kyla). Devon refers to the agency she worked at as the “pussy penitentiary” and Elise describes agencies as “glorified pimps” noting that “they just want their money at the end of the day. And if you say that you’re tired, well that’s too bad. If they have you booked to 9 o clock at night you’re working.” The overall experience of agency work is framed in adverse terms.

For many of the women in this study, working at an agency was their entry into the industry. However, all the women who previously worked at an agency made the decision to leave as a result of the loss of control they experienced in those working conditions. This lack of control experienced at an agency is a dominant factor for transitioning to working independently for many of the participants. For instance, Gwen comments that, “I didn’t like the agency: Clients would show up early or call at 9am for a 10am appointment out of the blue. Sometimes they were really pushy. The agency only did outcalls. Then I wanted to do in-calls because I was tired of cheap hotels with four hour rentals. I would book the room, get the key, wait for the client...I did not like it. It wasn’t good for clients and it wasn’t good for me. It was sleazy and cheap. It was just about the sex. There was no entertaining. Sometimes there were no-shows too. I wanted more. I decided I can do this on my own” (Gwen). Gwen highlights the contrast between agency work and working as an independent sex worker such as the greater control over working conditions gained by working independently. While agencies may provide a certain degree of safety through their own security measures, including client screening, cameras, and checking in with the sex worker after the appointment, and work structure in terms of work schedule and appointment times, the rigidity and limits of personal control may be frustrating for some workers. For example, individuals who prefer more flexible working conditions and want to maintain greater control of their work may have a difficult time working in the structured environment generally provided by agencies. Similar to Gwen’s account, Mina concludes that, “The thought of it [working at an agency] just put a bad taste in my mouth. If you’re independent you have more control over who you plan

to see, where you work. The thought of someone telling me where to go, and me not knowing the name of that client or what they're like, makes me uncomfortable" (Mina). Moreover, Devon describes her consideration of working at an agency, explaining that, "I considered [an agency in] Calgary, but then, you know, I would have to give up some of my money. I would have to give up all my control of power. All of it. And that wasn't good for me...I like being able to decide for myself and making it work on my own, and there are no boundaries. I can make whatever I want to make. I can live my life the way I want to live, to an extent. So, I like a lot of the freedom it affords me" (Devon). Valerie also started working at an agency at the beginning of her career, but chose to go to an independent status in the sex trade to have greater control of her work, she notes, "I started off in New Jersey, and worked for one agency for six or seven months. There were some things that annoyed me. I wasn't too happy. She [the agency manager] didn't let me to choose the clients. So I started off in a smaller agency that did mid to west cities. And I stayed with her for probably half a year. Then I decided to become independent .... So, if I have something to blame it will be on me, not on the agency or nothing else" (Valerie). Valerie shares her decision to become an independent sex worker, explaining that she decided to become independent "because I figured that with my personality I need to be in control a lot." Overall, being in control over working conditions, including client choice and managing their own work schedule, are important to the women in this study as it allows them to maintain autonomy over the very intimate work they perform. This also aids the women in protecting their physical safety. The women are in a better

position to screen out dangerous customers and often have a greater proportion of regular clients that are generally low-risk, as compared to some agency workers (Weitzer, 2007).

The previous examples suggest that the women place a high value on autonomy. This was a driving force for their decision to become an independent sex worker. Workers like Mina, Devon and Valerie enjoy the freedom they are afforded when working for themselves and appreciate the ability to control where they work from, what type of clients they meet, and how much they work. In all, the negative aspects of working for an agency and the benefits of working for themselves are pronounced in the participants' narratives.

The increased control allotted to the women as a result of their independent status is similar to markets outside of the sex industry, where entrepreneurs have greater independence and freedom to control their own working conditions. Of course, as a result of the freedom there are additional responsibilities and duties, such as managing their own websites, booking clients and arranging their own schedule when touring. As Valerie asserts, "It's a lot more responsibility [to work as an independent sex worker] but, it gives me more in terms of being able to accomplish pretty much what I want" (Valerie). In the same way, Lacie talks about the additional responsibility of working independently when she notes, "I have to pay for my own advertising, I have to keep up with my website, I have to answer my phone, and answer my email; I'm doing all my bookings and keeping track of all my money. But on the flip side I don't have to pay anyone, I keep everything I make for myself. So I like that about being independent. It's more work, but you're in more control" (Lacie). Therefore, though working independently offers many rewards,



there are still challenges present that are a result of having to manage one's own business affairs. Essentially, the participants have the responsibilities of the manager and a front line worker in their business. Independent sex workers are responsible for the rise and fall of their business, and like any other entrepreneur they experience the risks and rewards of their ventures.

Altogether, independent working status and economic privilege are interconnected. The women's ability to work as entrepreneurs in the sex industry is dependent on their ability to access the financial resources to create and maintain their business, as the start-up and on-going maintenance costs can be substantial.

This discussion points to the importance of independent status in contributing to the unique experience of independent sex workers. Working independently is central to the participant's experience of the sex trade. Independent status allows the women in this study to have greater control over their working conditions, but also demands a high level of responsibility. Independent status was generally achieved after learning the intricacies of the sex industry through agency work, and was somewhat dependent on the intersection of race, education, and financial resources. The following section discusses a factor that is generally not explored in sex work literature – the impact of employment-related mobility on the participants' lived experiences.

#### *iv. Routine and Responsibilities of Mobile Sex Workers*

While being an independent mobile sex worker offers many benefits and allows the participants in this study to manage many of the risks involved in being a sex worker, there are also many responsibilities required for this type of sex work. Most of the women

in this study started touring after a short period of working at an agency where they gained a preliminary understanding of the sex industry like booking clients, managing their schedule, and advertising. While Valerie and Kyla travel for their work in North America and some of Western Europe, the other seven participants restrict their mobility to Canadian provinces. While touring the participants in the study have responsibilities that include marketing, maintaining an online presence and engaging with their clients online, and continually expanding their client base while engaging their current clients.

Marketing is an important part of being an independent sex worker since independent workers do not have an agency, pimp, or manager to advertise for them. Marketing varies between sex workers, but general strategies include posting on online boards and forums, posting banners and advertisements on sex worker friendly sites and on online boards, and updating their websites material and photos. Maintaining an online presence is also interlaced with marketing as this keeps the sex worker's clients informed and holds their interest. Maintaining an online presence involves many of the same techniques of marketing like updating their website with new pictures and information. However, it also involves being an avid member on online boards and forums, which includes continuously posting about their touring schedule, updating information about their services, and even recommending other sex workers and commenting on their posts. This keeps their current clients engaged while also helping to gain new clients in each touring city.

Overall, independent mobile sex work may be beneficial to the health and safety of the participants in this study, but it also adds an increased level of responsibility since

there is no agency, manager, or pimp to manage the worker. The higher level of autonomy experienced by the women in this study was generally favourable. Most of the women welcomed the increased responsibilities of doing independent sex work as a result of the benefits afforded to this group of sex workers.

#### **5.4. Conclusion**

The participants' narratives suggest that a career and lifestyle as independent mobile sex workers is significantly different from working for a brothel or being geographically fixed. The women in this study have generally safer working conditions and greater control over their work, which is not afforded to all workers in the sex industry. In fact, similar to other market sectors, only a small group is able to occupy such a space of privilege and success. Through the participants' narratives we can come to understand the intersecting factors that influence their experiences.

The first section of this chapter examined the different risks involved in doing sex work. Many of these risks are a result of the very nature of doing sex work, which is based on meeting alone with a client and performing intimate sexual acts. The risks to the physical health and safety of sex workers may occur during the appointment, in the form of physical, sexual or verbal abuse, and can extend beyond appointment hours to include experiencing issues when trying to access community services like the police and health care. Doing out-calls and operating in a saturated market can increase the experience of these risks, and many of the women in this study attribute their transition into mobility because of problems with market saturation in some Canadian cities.

Many of the risks involved in sex work are managed and reduced as a result of mobility and independent sex worker status. However, transitioning into becoming an independent mobile sex worker is not necessarily an effortless change to accomplish. This chapter argues that the intersection of race, socio-economic background, and education made it possible for the participants to more easily transition into independent mobile sex work as a result of the financial and cultural capital base they brought with them when entering the sex trade.

The benefits of doing independent mobile sex work are great. The participants in this study are able to have autonomy over their working conditions and lifestyle choices. This means that they maintain control over the clients they book, how many appointments they have in a day, the fees they charge, the services they offer, and the cities they tour to. More control over working conditions often translates into a reduced risk to sex worker's health and safety. Mobility allows the women in this study to avoid saturated markets, when supply is greater than demand, and thus avoid the risks involved in such markets including pressure to offer services that are unsafe or that the sex worker in uncomfortable.

By working independent of an agency the women in this study have more autonomy over their work, which also means that they have greater responsibilities. Some of the requirements of being an independent sex worker who tours include finding clients through advertising, booking clients, managing their own schedule, creating a website and online presence, and updating online board and forum posts. While there is a great deal of time and effort dedicate to being an independent sex worker, the women in this study

affirm that the benefit of autonomy is more important than the responsibilities required for independent sex work.

Overall, the significance of independent sex workers status and employment-related mobility in reducing the experience of risk in the sex trade is and positively shaping the working conditions of the women in this study is noteworthy. As this chapter explores the experiences of working as an independent mobile sex worker as it affects the physical environment and health and safety of the workers, the next chapter examines the unique social and emotional aspects of the participants' work. Chapter five examines the risks of doing sex work including stigma, worker burnout, and market saturation, and discusses how the women in this study manage these risks through the intersection of their independent status and mobility.

## **CHAPTER SIX: STIGMA, INDEPENDENT SEX WORK AND MOBILITY: MANAGING MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH**

Chapter five examined the factors that contribute to the unique experience of working as an independent mobile sex worker, and how the women in this study manage risks to their physical health and well-being. Chapter six expands this idea to look at the emotional and social aspects of working as an independent mobile worker in the Canadian sex trade.

This next section examines the common experience of stigma, emotional labour, and burnout while working as a sex worker in Canada. Stigma and burnout are not uncommon experiences for sex workers, but how the women in this study manage these experiences is unique. The chapter ends with an analysis of the participants' use of ideology management, including selective social comparisons, reframing and refocusing.

### **6.1 Social Health: Coping with Stigma**

Stigma affects the lives of many sex workers in Canada, including the women in this study. Social stigma threatens the participants' mental and emotional health, and social well-being. In particular, stigma often inhibits sex workers from accessing services such as mental health care and community services which are widely available to the general public, but denied to sex workers. Stigma may also isolate the participants from their support networks in the community and closer to home including friends and family members.

A common thread linking different forms of stigma is a specific attribute that essentially discredits the stigmatized individual or group in society, often reducing them to this specific stigmatizing mark (Goffman, 1969). In the case of sex workers, this specific attribute is their work, or more precisely their participation in what Ashforth &

Kreiner call “dirty” work (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Society creates categories based on what is deemed normal and deviant, and those placed in the deviant category tend to be stigmatized. Indeed, stigma often results in a “mark” that links the individual to an undesirable set of characteristics and stereotype(s) (Jones et al., 1984; Link & Phelan, 2001). The link between the label and the stigma is important because it is not the specific attribute that creates the stigma, but rather, it is the interpretation of the attribute. Sex work carries a high level of stigma as a result of cultural notions about the trade of sexual services in which sex workers are cast as deviants (Koken, Bimbi, Parsons, Halkitis, 2004; Koken, 2010, Vanwesenbeeck, 2001).

The mark that stigmatizes the participants is their work in the sex trade. Since sex workers are outside the established model for acceptable sexual practices, which is based on sexual expression within a monogamous heterosexual relationship, they tend to be demonized by society for violating a significant taboo in western culture (Rubin, 1992). What are considered acceptable sexual practices varies according to historical, political, and social landscapes. However, acceptable practices in Canada tend to be restricted to activities that align with the following factors: “heterosexual, married, monogamous, procreative, non-commercial, in pairs, in a relationship, same generation, in private, no pornography, bodies only, vanilla” (Rubin, 1984, p. 13). Since the participants choose to work in the sex industry they may be judged for actively pursuing a deviant lifestyle in the sex trade (Sanders, 2005b). Michael Warner (1999) argues that today’s restrictions regarding “acceptable” sex practices and sexuality are grounded in conservative historical norms, which condemned autoeroticism, extramarital sex and sodomy. Warner suggests

that shame is a political and societal tool that enforces these sexual norms; sexual shame can create a greater risk of violence and health concerns (Warner, 1999). An example Warner provides for the risks involved in sexual shaming is in regards to the HIV/AIDS crisis. Contrary to beliefs that multiple sexual partners and promiscuity is responsible for the spread of HIV, Warner argues that the political use of shame creates a stigma that marginalizes at risk communities and reduces their ability to seek sexual health resources that could limit their risk of contracting HIV/AIDS (Warner, 1999). Political and social shame for sex workers operates in a similar way where shame fosters a stigma of sex work, which may restrict sex workers access to community and health care services that would help reduce the risks involved in sex work.

The stigma of sex work is widespread in Canadian society, but is important to acknowledge “that it is the stigma attached to the sex trade, not the sex trade itself, that is the cause of suffering for sex workers” (Jeffrey & MacDonald 2006, p. 137). Though the women in this study are able to manage much of the stigma of being a sex worker, they are not always able to mitigate it. The stigma surrounding sex work is invasive and has the power to negatively affect the personal lives of sex workers; some of the key areas that are affected as a result of stigma include isolation from the community, detriment to the safety and well-being of sex workers, and a breakdown of personal relationships. (Sallmann, 2010; Pheterson, 1996; 2001)

Accounts of social stigma are not unusual for active sex workers. In fact, nearly of all of the participants spoke of the stigma attached to sex work. For instance, Elise comments on the misinformation and ignorance behind the stigma when she notes,



“When someone has negative things to say about it [sex work], I let them speak their peace because they have no clue. Some of the visions people have on sex work is that we are all pimped out, that we all have drug problems and nobody is ever going to love us and we’re pathetic and I always laugh because I’m like you have no clue.” Gwen shares her feelings towards the stigma within sex work, and explains that sex work should be viewed as any other job in the labour market, “I wish there wasn’t so much prejudice, though. It’s like a job like any other. It needs to be recognized as a job.” Devon also comments on the stigma of working as a sex worker, noting that “The majority of people will never accept it. But every once in a while, you will come across someone who thinks it is okay, but that is very few and far between. Or if it is okay, it’s okay for other people, just not their friends, or their family” (Devon). Lacie expands on the comments given by Gwen and Devon and explains the impact of the media in perpetuating the stigma sex workers experience:

Society has put this idea in the media, like these movies I watch with sex workers and stuff, we’re always on drugs, we always have some sort of problem, like there’s something wrong in our heads, like we have emotional problems, we have daddy issues, or you name it. And it’s like this idea put out in the media about it, about us as people makes it easier for society to look at us and say, they are bad people. We’re all criminals, we’re shady people, we’ll rob you [or that] we’re full of STD’s. But that’s not the case at all. But that’s put out there about us; there’s a stigma against us. ... Society creates these ideas, and these ideas are perpetuated by society and it goes hand in hand.... And it’s very hard being in a group of people living in a society that hates you, and that judges you. It’s very hard to go through life having to lie to your loved ones and your family members about things because you know what they are going to think, when really they have no idea. They have no idea but they think they know from what they’ve seen on T.V. and what they’ve read in the paper.

Stigma is a strong theme in the women’s narratives. Much societal discourse suggests links between sex work and sexually transmitted infections, drug and alcohol abuse,

sexual and moral deviance, and general victimization (Siedlecka, 2003; Waleed, 2014; MacKinnon, 1998).

There are many factors that create the strong sex work stigma. One of the key aspects in maintaining social stigma is the conservative values that continue to dominate much of Canadian culture. As Jeffrey & MacDonald explain, sex workers tend to refute the rules of what society deems as proper sexual behavior (2006). Much opposition to the trade feeds off myths and misconceptions regarding the industry and sex workers in general. Many individuals assume all sex work is degrading and believe that only desperate women with addictions would engage in sex work (Jeffrey & MacDonald, 2006).

Due to societal stigma many of the women in this study experience a sense of isolation – being denied social support services from the community. Physical isolation of sex workers from community social support services may occur when their identity as a sex worker is discovered. For instance, Addison describes one situation where she felt an overwhelming sense of segregation because of her work in the sex industry:

I was in a certain community and I came out. I was actually removed from this personal development course [offered by the community] because I admitted to working in the adult entertainment industry. I was taking a stand for the industry. I'm not going to name the community organization but it was a place that I felt safe to reveal that. And I was removed from the course and I tried to look up my legal rights and I found out I had no protection under the law for discrimination. Because the human rights code, as it is written, professional occupation is not an accepted legal ground for discrimination. So, legal grounds for discrimination are things like race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, colour of your skin, a whole bunch of things are considered legal grounds; occupation is not one of them. So, somebody could discriminate against me, could deny me rent, could deny me ...you name it, a million things out there and I have no protection against the law. And I felt furious, I felt like a second-class citizen in Canada. And I felt helpless. And the only thing I could have done is go public about the issue. But then I am exposed to all the

consequences of being “outed” on a large level. So, I decided to just give up on the whole issue.

This story reflects what many scholars have noted about sex work – it is a site of deep stigma that is rooted in misconceptions and ignorance about the industry (Pheterson, 1996, Weitzer, 2000). Even the language used by some community service workers when working with sex workers perpetuates feelings of stigma, such as using terms like ‘dirty’ (Whitaker, Ryan & Cox, 2011).

The lack of sex worker rights compounds the problem, as sex workers may actively be stigmatized and discriminated against with no consequence for those who discriminate, which serves to further delegitimize their work and their lives. Living with the constant fear of being exposed means that many violations and abuses towards workers tend to be ignored and overlooked by the sex workers themselves as there is little, if any, space to talk about their abuse. However, in recent years sex worker rights groups and activists have begun to carve out a space for sex workers to speak out, so workers like Addison can begin to feel safer talking about their work in the sex industry without having to feel the stigma and shame of the work.

The stigma of sex work extends beyond strangers making judgments about their lives, and impacts the women in very personal ways. For instance, family was commonly mentioned in discussions around social stigma of the work. Callie shares that “I wouldn’t really want my family to find out – I feel like they would want to save me. There are so many stigmas around it” (Callie). Mina also acknowledges the influence of stigma in disrupting family relations when she confirms that, “My parents don’t know what I do. I have to lie to everyone all the time, which is stressful. I feel like I should distance myself

from my family even though they are pretty left wing. They're lovely. But I feel like I don't take their calls as much or call them as much because I can't stand their questions like: What are you doing? Where's work? So that sucks. In general, social stigma is really shitty" (Mina).

Social stigma forges a gap between the women and their families. For instance, Gwen notes that "sometimes you can get really lonely in this kind of work. I can't talk to family about it. I can't share happy and fun experiences that I have with clients. I can't tell them about the trips and getaways that I get to take with clients. I can't share the good or bad stuff with them" (Gwen). Likewise, Devon shares an incident of the collision between stigma and her personal life:

"I don't share [my work] with family...I have been in a tight spot at one time in Calgary, with these pimpy guys that were after my friend, and it was the first time I worked independently, so I was quite nervous I was quite scared when I knew they were following me around town and threatening both of us. So, I called my brother in a panic, and if I could take that back I would, because he'll never see me the same. I know he won't. I mean, he's the kind of guy that doesn't even want to share a straw with you because he thinks it's disgusting. So, what's done is done. Lesson learned. So I see now that it's too big of a secret for most people to bear. It's like placing a burden on them almost...Most "straight" people, it's too much for them."

Altogether stigma continues to be an issue for the participants, and directly impacts their personal lives and relationships. While each individual will experience the stigma attached to their work quite differently based on their environment, family conditions, relationships status, and general circumstances, most sex workers, including the women in this study, at some point in their career will experience the burden of sex work stigma.

## **6.2 Emotional and Mental Health: Emotional Labour and Burnout**

This sense of isolation experienced by the study's participants extends beyond their

physical welfare, and directly affects their mental health. Since the sex workers in this study are often unable to access community support and are generally isolated from their families, there is a significant gap in their ability to gain emotional and mental support. A predominant result of this isolation is manifested in sex worker burnout from the emotional labour component of sex work. Hochschild (1983) examined workers in the service sector, including waiters and air hostesses, who engage in emotional labour through actively evoking, shaping or suppressing feeling by modifying their thoughts and expressive gestures. Service workers may experience burnout as a result of the emotional labour involved in their work. Burnout is generally defined as “a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced accomplishments that can occur among individuals who do people work of some kind” (Maslach & Jackson, 1986, p.1). Though physical and mental well-being is separated into different chapters here, there is a definite link between the physical and mental health of sex workers. Specifically, as a result of the inability to access social services generally available to the public, the women are put at a high risk of suffering emotional fatigue, and worker burnout.

Like other service occupations, emotional labour and burnout tend to be issues for sex workers. The participants’ work is not solely based on providing sexual services, but rather they must also provide intimate companionship while caring for the clients’ sexual and emotional needs (Bernstein, 2007). The emotional demands of sex work may lead to emotional and physical exhaustion (Koken, 2012). Essentially, in the pursuit of attending to the needs of others, the sex worker may neglect their own emotional and mental well-being.

The effects of emotional labour, as first examined by Arlie Hochschild (1979; 1983), are a significant factor in determining the well-being of sex workers. Emotional labour involves managing emotions during work, usually when working in service professions that deal directly with people. Emotion management is a process where workers must produce a socially desirable performance and limit the expression of undesirable emotions while manufacturing desirable emotions (Hochschild, 1983). The risk of burnout and emotional fatigue is high in jobs that require emotion management, such as sex work. Sex workers, along with other emotional labour professionals, must essentially use emotions to act out a part. In sex work, this often means that the worker must “present a client friendly countenance or image in order to create an ambience in which the customer feels special” – this is usually done through surface or deep acting (Duignan, 2001, p.35). Surface acting involves controlling one’s external behavior and appearance to conceal true emotions, while deep acting is a more intense experience in which feelings are self-induced or suppressed and may require self-deception (Hochschild, 1983). Gwen, for instance, describes the emotional exertion required of sex work, noting that it can be, “emotionally and mentally demanding and draining, especially for long appointments. It requires being attentive, talking, sharing, being in the moment, and having to give 150% percent. It definitely is emotional work. You need to be a good conversationalist and know where you are going” (Gwen). In this way, the emotional and mental drain that Gwen refers to is associated with the interpersonal dimensions of the work rather than the commonly cited moral degradations of the trade.

There is a direct link between worker burnout and empathy (Portnoy, 2011), which can be witnessed in the participants' narratives. According to Portnoy (2011), who studies the burnout in health care workers, burnout can lead to "a loss of meaning and hope and can have reactions associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) such as strong feelings of anxiety, difficulty concentrating, being jumpy or easily startled, irritability, difficulty sleeping, excessive emotional numbing, intrusive images of another's traumatic material" (p.47). Professions that are based on intensive personal contact with others, such as sex work, are noted to increase the likeliness of worker burnout (Vanwesenbeeck, 2001). This emotional exertion was highlighted by many of the women in this study. In particular, Gwen notes that sex work "can be lonely and emotionally draining. You can't share and you have to step back. It can take a toll on you" (Gwen). The loneliness and isolation that is sometimes a part of the job can have a detrimental effect. Devon states, "I'm usually in a suite or room somewhere and it's very lonely. It's very, very lonely, for me" (Devon). Altogether, sex workers may struggle with managing the burnout experienced in this line of work, and this is true for the participants in this study.

There is a general risk to the mental well-being of sex workers as a result of their status as a sex worker. Burnette (2009) found that sex workers generally have greater mental health issues in comparison to their peers outside of the sex industry. Many studies associate symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, including depression, disturbed sleep, substance abuse and somatization, with work in the sex trade (Choi, Klein, Shin, & Lee, 2009; Farley & Barkan, 1988; Jung, Song, Chong, Seo, & Chae, 2008). The demands of emotional labour may lead to loneliness and self-estrangement

(Duignan, 2001), as Devon indicated. These issues pose a significant threat to the mental well-being of sex workers.

In general, societal stigma creates concrete challenges for the participants that manifests in threats to their social and mental well-being. A serious obstacle is the emotional exhaustion and burnout that can be experienced as a result of working as a sex worker. The following section explores how the participants are able to manage many of the negative effects of societal stigma.

### **6.3 Ideology Management**

Though mobility and independent status intersect to create a more autonomous working environment for the women, there are still obstacles that directly challenge the women's working conditions. The social stigma that continues to thrive in Canada poses a direct challenge to the women's well-being. The following section examines how the participants use ideology management to manage the risks to their emotional and mental health.

Ideology management is a tool that is used by individuals who are in professions that are stigmatized as being "dirty" in society's view. Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) explain that sex work is a form of "dirty" work as a result of the physical and moral taint involved in the job. The physical taint is a result of the visceral part of sex work where the worker deals with bodies and bodily fluids (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Moral taint occurs in jobs that are deemed to be lacking in virtue or sinful (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). As a result of the physical and moral taint of sex work, the participants in this



study experience social stigma. To manage the stigma of sex work and limit the negative consequence of it, ideology management is employed.

The key aspects of ideology management used by the women in this study include selective social comparisons (positively assessing attributes through comparisons with similar individuals), reframing (modifying your perception of a negative event in order to view the experience in a positive way), and refocusing (focusing on positive aspects and overlooking stigmatizing portions). While not generally discussed in ideology management literature, the practice of resisting a sex worker identity was employed by some of the participants in this study. This technique of ideology management is similar to selective social comparisons. However, rather than removing themselves from the more stigmatized portions of the sex trade (which aligns with the idea of selective social comparisons) sex workers may disassociate from the industry and from the concept of work all together. Within the concept of reframing are two techniques commonly used—infusing, which involves switching the negative into something that is positive and honourable, and neutralizing, which simply denies any negative values and negates the stigma of the work. Refocusing also has two key techniques that include: avoiding discussion of the stigmatized aspects of the work, and minimizing the stigma by regarding their efforts as contributing to long term goals (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999).

#### **6.4 Selective Social Comparisons**

Selective social comparisons are a form of ideology management that is used by many of the women in the study when telling their stories about work in the sex trade. Selective social comparisons involve assessing ambiguous attributes through comparisons

with similar and salient others, either within or between groups to maintain their own self-esteem (Linde & Sonnemans, 2012; Wood, 1989). Festinger's (1954) theory of social comparisons posits that all individuals need to maintain a stable and favourable self-construct. Selective social comparisons foster a strong sense of community among workers that helps offset the stigma of sex work (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Selective social comparisons are a part of the broader category of ideology management. This is a tool that transforms the stigma into a more favorable light, essentially allowing workers to maintain a strong association with the positive qualities and experiences of their job (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Therefore, obstacles associated with the strong societal stigma, as previously discussed, may be mediated through the use of ideology management. This is central to the maintenance of the positive framework employed by the participants in their narratives of sex work.

Selective social comparisons guard against the threat of societal stigma in damaging the participants' positive self-evaluations. Essentially, by differentiating themselves from other subsets of sex workers, particularly sex workers that work from a street location, the participants are able to distance themselves from the stigma and negative attributes of the work that are more commonly associated with street sex work and satisfy their need for a positive self-construct. However, negative social discourse and stigma threatens to destabilize the positive self-appraisal of the participants; as such, the women in this study use downward social comparisons to protect their identity.

The selective social comparisons of the independent indoor mobile sex workers in this study generally include downward comparisons of sex workers with more negative

outcomes, such as outdoor street-based sex workers. Lacie suggests that the divergence between cultures of street work and independent, indoor sex work is important, noting that, “the street culture is very, very different from the sex worker, call-girl culture. Sex workers do not work the street and street girls do not do sex work like us... we’re totally different groups.” In this statement there is little reflection on what makes the groups different, or the power structure and positioning of the two separate groups. It is further in the narrative where Lacie discusses the segmentation within the sex industry, declaring that, “I’ve never worked a corner in my life and I never will.” Moreover, Lacie challenges any similarities between herself and street workers, emphasizing the differences in the working environments, “I’m totally against girls being allowed to work the corners in any neighbourhood they want to, I don’t want that shit in front of my house. I don’t, and I totally understand where every other Canadian is coming from, saying I don’t want that on my front lawn which is totally understandable. But you have to understand that not all of us are working the corner, and that’s what they think when they hear prostitute” (Lacie). It is here that the stigma behind street-work is depicted and the downward social comparison is established. Callie further emulates this sentiment when she confirms that, “There’s a big difference between someone who’s doing street work than someone like myself who has a sort of ability to pick and choose who I’m seeing and all that.” In all, there is a strong utilization of downward comparisons by the participants. Most of the participants create a clear boundary between the work they do and the work of sex workers in more stigmatized areas of the sex trade, with specific reference to individuals who work from a street location.

Kyla clearly establishes a boundary between her work and the work of other sex workers when she comments, “I provide my time, company, and people pay me for who I am – my personality, my life experience, my knowledge. I am not one of those bimbos that spread their legs. Yes, there are thousands and millions of them.” Kyla effectively creates a boundary between herself and other sex workers as a way to evade the stigma associated with sex work and reinforce her higher place in the structure of the sex industry. This boundary protects the image that the participants construct and removes them from the less desirable aspects of the trade. This is an important tool in establishing an identity that goes beyond being a sex worker. By separating herself from the more negatively positioned aspects of the industry, the worker is able to insulate herself from the stigma that threatens to undermine her self-conception of who she is outside of the sex industry, and thus, allows her to maintain her roles as sister, citizen, mother, daughter, and activist, and other identities outside of sex work. Since the women in this study operate from a high standing in the sex industry, it is likely that there are few sex workers who are above them in the sex work hierarchy in Canada. In this way, upward social comparisons were rare in the narratives as the participants were at the top of their field in the sex industry, so there was little possibility to compare their situation with more successful sex-trade workers. The opposite of downward comparisons are upward social comparisons that typically are associated with motivation and aspirational benchmarks (Major, Testa & Byslama, 1991; Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Sex workers, like other groups that are perpetually faced with stigma, are more likely to employ downward social comparisons as a way to protect their identity from the contamination of stigma (Crocker

& Major, 1989; Forsyth, 1990). Such comparisons are associated with the self-esteem of individuals as they protect a person's ego and self-perception from being aligned with a stigmatized group (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999).

Elise draws on a discourse of downward selective social comparisons regarding another aspect of sex work – the number of clients seen in a day. She expresses her opinion that, “If your hotel room or apartment door is a revolving door and people are coming and going all hours of the day, every hour on the hour, that’s wrong. Nobody needs to see that many people in a day. I’m not being greedy, but you’ve got to love yourself at the end of the day. You have to respect yourself and how you can treat your body like that blows my mind away. Because I couldn’t do it then and I can’t do it now, and I would never do it. I don’t care if I was broke” (Elise). When Elise affirms that she has respect and love for herself and her body, she is suggesting that other sex workers – those who have numerous clients, often the case with brothel attendants or street workers – do not have the same respect and care for themselves. Elise distances her values and ideals for herself and her body from the common notions of other forms of sex work that are highly marginalized and stigmatized. The idea that Elise puts forth is similar to Warner’s (1999) sexual shaming. Negative social discourse and stigma are interconnected with the notion of sexual shame, which has often been used as a tool to reprimand individuals like sex workers who do not follow the predetermined norms of sexuality and sexual expression within the society. Michael Warner (1999) explains the power that citizens have in regulating the sexual behaviors of others through sexual shaming; he notes that, “all too commonly, people think not only that their own way of living is right,

but that it should be everyone else's moral standard as well" (p. 4). Generally this "moral standard" is based on "sexual norms that [have] survived from the Stone Age" (p.7).

When sex workers exchange sex for money in the public sphere, they are challenging many of society's norms for sexual behavior like sex being kept within the confines of a monogamous marriage, and these types of behaviors are policed through sexual shaming (Warner 1999). Elise places shame on sex workers who have clients that are "coming and going all hours of the day," since for her the sexual norm is to have one longer appointment for a day as this is a reflection of loving and respecting yourself. Elise believes her way of doing sex work is right, and she distances herself from sex workers who wrongly follow a different pattern of sex work.

Additional examples of social comparisons in the interviews come from Addison, Callie, Elise and Gwen. Addison notes that age, experience and time in the industry make a difference, setting workers apart from one another. She comments that, "Something very mechanical, like just pure fucking – that's not where I'm at right now. Some of the younger girls entering the industry, that's the kind of level of service that they're at. But at this stage, I prefer a more holistic experience, like companionship with sensual fun" (Addison). In this excerpt Addison separates her sex work from the sex work of other women in the trade who are younger and new to the sex trade. She suggests that because of the age of the workers who provide the "mechanical" and less holistic experience, they have not reached the level of work that she provides. Callie also displays the use of social comparisons when she talks about the work of street sex workers who must run more risks, noting that, "My assumption is that for women who are working on the street is that

it's a less secure industry. It would be a more precarious, less safe experiences possibly. Also, more harassment from police... The clientele would likely not be as respectful ...because they don't have the same kind of back-and-forth before you meet someone" (Callie). Callie emphasizes the risks of street work and suggests that it is less safe than her work. While what Callie says may be true in some cases, it is what Callie does not say that highlights the social comparison here. Callie focuses on only the negative parts of street work and does not balance the risks of outdoor sex work with any positive aspects of the job street workers have, like being able to work independently. As well, Callie avoids any comparisons with street work in terms of the level of risk involved in all types of sex work.

Gwen is focused on appointment styles in her social comparisons when she notes, "I think the 15min/30min/45min specials are sickening. I am disappointed when girls don't think they can do better than a 30 minute appointment. It is sad to see that. They will take a same day appointment, do not screen, or just ask for a phone number" (Gwen). Gwen uses how sex workers manage their appointments to separate her work from other workers. She also negatively evaluates women who book appointments for less than an hour and who accept same day appointments. Valerie also comments on a different form of sex work, exotic dancing and stripping, when she remarks that sex work in a strip club is "usually hidden. It's in the club, usually in a booth. I find it very degrading in some way." In this excerpt Valerie places less value on sex work in strip clubs and notes that it is degrading, which in comparison makes her form of sex work not degrading.

Mobility is another way of using selective social comparisons. Some of the participants focus on the differences between mobile and non-mobile sex workers. Elise comments on the increased responsibilities of mobile sex work, noting that, “Most of the ladies that travel are in a whole different ball park than ladies who are just based in the city because if you live in the city ... your income is fixed; your expenses are fixed. When you travel your expenses are all over the place. And things change, you know what I mean? You can show up and everybody cancels, what are you supposed to do? Nothing. So, we have a different understanding, so ladies who don’t travel don’t get it. But before you travel you’ve already worked from a home base somewhere so you get both sides of the spectrum” (Elise). Elise makes a direct comparison between street sex work and independent mobile work, arguing that it is in “a whole different ball park.” Elise includes mobility to differentiate herself from other sex workers, suggesting that independent mobile sex work is so removed from the experiences of geographically fixed sex workers that they just “don’t get it.”

The differences between independent mobile indoor sex workers and street-based forms of sex work are emphasized by the participants. In general, there is concern and sometimes a sense of pity for sex workers who provide short appointments for minimum pay with strangers. The division between the participants’ lives and other workers is a clear indicator of ideology management as the participants remove their work from more publically stigmatized portions of the sex industry.



Though most of the women in this study participated in selective social comparisons, Mina dissociated herself from this form of ideology management. Instead she notes that:

It's such a hard thing to be in your client's Porsche driving past a woman on the stroll, and we're the same. And they'll [street workers] be like "No we're not, shut up. You are not the same."...It's just a total mind fuck. We are technically doing the same work. We are both putting ourselves out there to get paid for sex. But I have access to so much more. I'm educated. I came from a middle class, middle upper class family. I am a white woman. It's amazing the span of the industry. That must be so frustrating. And it is so frustrating when they talk about sex workers as if it's a monolithic thing when obviously it could not possibly be. But everyone who is in it still deserves to have the choice to do that, and deserves to have options if they don't want to do that. (Mina)

In this passage Mina suggests a significant idea: That when sex work is stripped down to its fundamentals, all forms of sex work become analogous – exchanging sexual services for money. Yet, in an attempt to uphold their self-esteem and maintain a noble self-concept the participants must engage in downward social comparisons with salient groups.

In the struggle to establish themselves as sex workers that are satisfied with their work and lifestyle, they must form a strong boundary between their work and comparable work in the industry. At a basic level all sex workers provide the service of sexually based intimacy whether they are independent indoor workers or street-based workers who are managed by pimps. The work of street based sex workers differs from the activities of the study participants in many regards, yet the differences are emphasized while the similarities are overlooked in an effort to establish the divide. Creating this boundary is a unique and essential aspect of maintaining their self-perception.

The participants actively employ downward social comparisons to distance themselves from the stigma of sex work. The women maintain strong boundaries between themselves and other types of sex workers. Overall, selective social comparisons, a tool of ideology management, allows the women to maintain their positive self-constructs and remain distant from sex work stigma. This is an important tool of ideology management that allows the women to manage the risks of sex work, like stigma, that threaten their mental well-being and positive self-perception.

*i. Resisting a Sex Worker Identity*

A second branch of selective social comparisons not generally cited in ideology management literature is resisting the identity of being a sex worker all together. In other words, rather than simply removing themselves from the more stigmatized portions of the sex trade, such as street work, the women may disassociate from the industry and from the concept of work all together. This phenomenon is strongly represented in a few of the participant's narratives.

Two of the women in this study actively chose to not identify as a worker. Gwen discussed her activities in the sex industry as a hobby and purely a form of enjoyment and pleasure. For instance, Gwen concludes that, "if I didn't have fun, I didn't want to do it," and refers to her activities as "play time" and a "hobby" rather than work or a job. Kyla also mirrors this approach, and when asked about her work and the services she provides Kyla affirms that, "I don't provide any services. I meet human beings. I enjoy my time with them and they enjoy their time with me. I provide my time, company, and people pay me, for who I am – my personality, my life experience, my knowledge" (Kyla). Kyla

goes on to state that “I don’t work, and I have never worked in my life and I never will work.” These two participants actively disassociate from a worker status. Going even further than Gwen, Kyla intentionally removes herself from any conception of work, or being a worker, claiming that, “I like to be in different places. Living in one place, and being stuck there for all my life would kill me. I need inspiration for life, for writing my blogs, for dealing with people, for giving people value. It would stand in my way; it would stand in the way of my attitude for enjoying it. It would be like oh shit it is Monday again! Work carries a very negative connotation unfortunately due to the 95% of corporate population who work six days a week. And they have to go there because they need to keep the job” (Kyla).

Both Kyla and Gwen challenge the dominant narrative of work that is being utilized by both sex workers and activists to claim worker status for sex workers (Betteridge, 2005; Van der Meulen, 2012), and prefer instead to simply categorize their activities in terms of enjoyment and pleasure. This is an effective tool of ideology management, as the women cannot be marked with the stigma of sex work if they construct their work in a way that differentiates them from the sex industry or if they withdraw from the notion of work entirely.

On the other hand, most of the women in this study placed themselves in the category of a worker, preferring to identify themselves in the discourse of worker rights in which they would be able to claim the same basic rights as other workers including health and safety standards, employment insurance and unionization. The women who position themselves as workers assert that their work is a legitimate form of labour

stressing the importance of holding sex workers in the same regard as other workers in the economy and affording them health care, worker's compensation, health and safety procedures. For instance, Elise notes that, "Yeah, I consider myself a worker, but I'm more of an independent worker. I have a good network of friends, we all work together. We share things among each other. Safety is first. So, I treat this like a career, like a job. I treat it with the same respect as you would work at the bank. I show up, I make appointments, I confirm, I'm there. I live life like everybody else. So I would consider myself a worker" (Elise). Similarly, Devon notes that her work is similar to other service professions. She affirms that, "Well, the majority of my other work has been serving. I was a cocktail waitress for much of that time. And it doesn't really differ that much other than the money. Because when I was a cocktail waitress I had to put up with the drunks and flirt with them and be cute, and kind, and look pretty. But then at the end of the night when I went home with somebody it was for free. And that was not a nice feeling after a while. So, I got tired of doing that. I got tired of giving it away for free" (Devon). Addison also identifies with being a sex worker, but is clear to establish what kind of sex worker she is, explaining that, "I think that girls like myself, they are like the courtesans of the old days. They are skilled women who offer high levels of companionship and sexual services to the upper classes of society, so to speak."

Devon and Addison frame their activities as workers in the sex trade as similar to any other form of service work. Therefore, they are able to position their lives in the framework of worker rights – something that Kyla and Gwen cannot easily do by dissociating from the discourse of work. In this way, the women who identify as being

workers must accept their position in the sex industry, and the stigma that inevitably results from that association, but they are able to benefit from aligning themselves with the discourse of worker rights.

How the participants regard their activities in the sex industry influences their ideology management and experience of work. Kyla, for example, disassociates from the sex industry in its entirety, even though she engages in many of the same activities as other sex workers in the industry. This suggests that there is a strong negative undercurrent running through the industry that would make sex workers like her desire to pull away from any identification with the trade. It seems in order to preserve her self-concept Kyla must completely remove herself from sex work discourse.

The women in this study fall within a spectrum of sex worker identities which is inextricably linked to their self-conception and ideology management of their work. Beginning at one end of the spectrum, sex workers like Lacie, Callie and Mina embrace the reclamation of words like hooker and prostitute, noting: “I’m a prostitute. I’m a bona fide prostitute” (Lacie) and, “more often than saying sex worker I say prostitute or hooker or sex worker. I guess it’s a way of reclaiming that language, too” (Callie). Mina also occasionally uses the term “hooker” to talk about her work, and notes that, “I’m a hooker....I use the term hooker because it’s fun.” Towards the middle of the spectrum there are women, like Elise, who acknowledge that they are part of the sex trade, but do not overly identify themselves as sex workers, preferring to refer to their activities in terms of select categories, like “elite” sex workers and “touring professionals.” This

reframing that removes them from the general pool of sex workers. For example Elise comments on the term sex worker, noting that:

To me it [the term sex worker] refers to a street walker. That's just my thought....To me sex worker is just what is on the street. It sounds really bad and really funny. But in Toronto there is a place called Maggie's and it is "sex worker friendly" and it's like government funded. And it's all "sex worker", there's no other word. And the majority of people who go there are ladies off the street. So it makes you think to generalize it in that way, which is really bad. So, when I hear "sex worker," to me that sounds like an ad in the back of the yellow pages. Like the terminology doesn't reflect everybody but it's all generalized that this is you, you are a sex worker. That's it, there's no, you can't be this and this. It's just, you're this – they generalize it. So, I don't like the term, but I fall under it. (Elise)

In other words, women like Elise prefer to place themselves in a distinct category that removes them from the general class of "sex workers." This type of selective social comparison is a useful tool of ideology management as they can utilize social comparisons while also fighting for worker rights.

Finally, there are the sex workers, like Gwen and Kyla, who distance themselves entirely from the sex industry and any identifiable aspects of the work. Specifically, they focus on the activity of being with another human being, and distance themselves from the idea of sex work. As mentioned, this allows them to evade much of the stigma associated with the sex industry. Overall, the ways in which the participants choose to identify their activities suggests different desires that the women have for themselves, and the diverse ways used to protect their identity and self-esteem from the damages that stigma may cause.

## **6.5. Reframing**

Another form of ideology management, reframing, is particularly useful in establishing a strong identity for the women. Reframing instills positive value into the

stigma of sex work, thus transforming it into a badge of honor (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). There are two key methods involved in reframing – infusing and neutralizing. Infusing involves switching the negativity of the work into something positive and even honourable. Neutralizing is the second method in reframing in which the worker simply denies any negative values and negates the stigma of the work. This may include denying any injury or responsibility of the work. The chief way that the women employ reframing is through the method of infusing in which they frame sex work as significantly contributing to society by providing an essential service to citizens. For example, Gwen notes that, “It is very rewarding. I also like doing good for people. You give yourself to those people.” A strong discourse of providing sexual therapy and compassion underpinned many of the narratives. Reframing helps to lessen the negative effects of stigma and burnout, as the women in this study can label negatives aspects of their work as positive.

The narratives generally lead to a discussion of the ways in which the sex work benefits others. For instance, as Callie notes:

I have some clients who clearly have some mental health issues. And, people with mental health issues need to get laid too. And that encounter is really important as well. And it's just a way for them to be able to engage in sexual relations in a kind of healthy way. So, in that way I'm very open minded. I think the majority of other sex workers I know are similar I think. .... And that's what like what I'm talking about the therapeutic aspect because I think it's so important for people [to express their sexuality]....people have sexual natures you know... I mean a lot of the work is companionship, is emotional connection, intellectual connections, having a conversation that is stimulating in a variety of different ways. Definitely there's a sexual-sensual aspect to the work. But it's much more all-encompassing than just sex ... I think, honestly, in many ways it's sexual therapy for a lot of people. It's a very, it's often very therapeutic work. It really is. You know, people talk to you about all sorts of things.” (Callie)

Like the narratives of other sex workers, Callie frames her work as an integral part of society, offering a service for individuals with physical disabilities, persons who lack emotional and intellectual connections in their relationships, and those who generally long for a form of companionship. Kyla notes that, “If I can give something to a person who doesn’t get that, whatever he’s looking for, from anywhere else in life but does get it from me, and comes back for more, that’s the biggest benefit that I can get” (Kyla). Here, the focus is removed from the demonized sex-outside-of-marriage aspect of the services provided and the work is reframed to focus on more honourable features of sex work. Similar to Callie’s use of reframing, Elise explains that: “When you are a companion-sex worker, you are like a bartender, you’re like a shrink. And people will talk to you about anything and everything. And most of them need to vent and they can’t vent to normal everyday people” (Elise). In general, the participants frame themselves as sexual therapists and align their activities with intimacy and companionship rather than sex. As both Miller (1987) and Thompson & Harred (1992) suggest, sex workers may describe their work as providing therapeutic or educational services to clients rather than “selling their body”. The act of reframing and infusing allows the participants to frame their work outside of the dominant societal lens that regards the industry in more negative terms.

Many of the women also employ reframing to focus on the positive aspects of their trade, noting the significance and relevance of their work in society. Devon contends that, “I really do feel like a lot of the people that I’m spending time with, I feel like I’m helping them in some way” and Kyla mirrors this idea, adding that, “I know I add value to people’s lives.” These participants frame their work as being an asset to society, and



affecting the clients' lives in a profoundly positive way. Finally, Addison affirms that, "there are a lot of lonely people out there in this society that need companionship, need that human touch. This is a very valuable service in society." Overall, there is a strong dimension of reframing in the women's discourse.

This focus on therapeutic aspects and helping others is counter to common perceptions of sex workers providing the service of sexual intimacy. Reframing allows the participants to escape the stigma of "dirty" work or sex-outside-of-marriage that exists in Canadian society. However, reframing does not stand alone in aiding the women to reclaim their self-esteem from the stigma that threatens to steal it away. As the next section reveals, refocusing is also an integral tool in establishing a positive self-construct, and promotes a positive emotional and mental state removed from the detrimental effects of stigma.

## **5.6 Refocusing**

The strategy of refocusing was also present in the narratives and is another method that helps to offset the stigma encountered in sex work. According to Ashforth and Kreiner (1999), refocusing shifts attention away from stigmatized qualities and focuses on the non-stigmatized features, effectively overlooking the stigmatized portions of sex work. While reframing transforms the negative aspects of sex work into something that is positive (like a badge of honor or a noble deed), refocusing ignores stigmatizing features of the work altogether, shifting the focus to positive aspects of the work. There are two key ways that refocusing is accomplished: avoiding discussion of the stigmatized aspects

of the work, and minimizing the stigma by regarding their efforts as contributing to long term goals, which are often dependent on extrinsic benefits (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999).

The drawbacks of the work were not emphasized, or at times even stated, in the participants' narratives. The ways in which the women responded to questions concerning the negative aspects and downsides of their work suggest a pattern of refocusing. For instance, when asked about the obstacles and disadvantages of working in the sex industry the majority of the participants' answers pointed out the benefits and positive aspects of their work. For example, when asked about the disadvantages of sex work Callie briefly shares the following: "Oh yeah, there are definitely negatives. I mean, like any work you are going to come across that once in a while. I'm lucky that I haven't had any bad incidents, like really bad. But definitely I've felt people were disrespectful. And I have asked people to leave...So it's not like that I felt that I couldn't do that" (Callie). However, Callie moves on to suggest the benefits of her work, quickly asserting that, "I've met so many amazing women doing this work, both at the agency and independently. I was actually wondering about this, over the past couple days, if there are similarities in other cities because I think my assumption before I started this work would be that people would be a lot more competitive, and I find that especially within the independent scene that hasn't been my experience of the women. They are so supportive and so kind to me as I transitioned to being independent. It's amazing" (Callie).

Elise, too, uses refocusing in her discussion of the negative attributes of her work, saying that, "Yeah, that's probably the worst part [societal stigma]. I guess, ignorant, rude clients would be another one, but I see very few of those because they don't pass the

screening process. So, that I'm going to say is grateful. Other than that, those are the two worst things. And the best part is the people I get to meet. You never know who you're going to meet. And sometimes the people you think are going to be boring are exciting. I learn something from everyone I meet. I've learned so much stuff about the entire country that I never would have known had I not done this" (Elise). The way the negative features of sex work are overlooked and skimmed over are an example of refocusing. Rather than fixating on the drawbacks and challenges of the work, the participants instead infuse positive features into the discussion. Though this phenomenon can be understood in the context of refocusing, it may also be explored in broader and more political terms. Specifically, in the attempt to create a space where sex work can be viewed without stigma, either as a form of work or a hobby, any negative discourse is derailed for threat of contamination of the positive image being presented. In order to challenge the dominant narrative that constructs their lives in a negative way, the women must present overtly positive accounts of their work.

Another important aspect of refocusing involves overlooking negative aspects or attempting to minimize the immediacy of the stigmatized work by regarding their efforts as instrumental to longer-term or extra-organizational goals. The greater the proportion of core attributes that are stigmatized, the more likely attention will focus on features that are extrinsic to the work itself (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999).

*i. Money: Refocusing and Risk Management*

The extrinsic goal most dominant in the women's narratives is money. However, the issue of money is complicated as it is employed as both a motivation for entering and

staying in the trade, and as a tool of refocusing and risk management. Most of the workers note the importance of money in their decision to begin this type of work. Money is also linked to the women's independent status, as agency workers and brothel attendants have their prices fixed by their organization, independent sex workers are able determine their own prices, usually resulting in a larger monetary gain. Moreover, if a worker performs a specialized service that goes beyond the standard appointment situation, such as anal sex or BDSM, they may charge more money in order to compensate the risks involved.

Not only is money a strong motivation for entering the sex industry, it is also intricately linked to many of the women's rationales for working as independent sex workers. For instance, Valerie asserts that "a lot of ladies who start in the industry start for the money." Callie explains the difference between her past work at an agency and her current position as an independent sex worker, noting that "I am working probably less than half the amount that I worked before [at an agency] and making probably twice as much money. So that is huge, right?" Callie also questions, "where else are you going to be able to make this much money in a short period of time, right?" In addition, Devon concludes that, "the money is really good, really good" and that "the money, absolutely, is top." Addison also suggests that, "The income has been better than most other jobs out there. It's been on par with my non-x-rated career, except it's a lot more fun. ... It's hard to give it up because it's a lot of fun. The money is good." Thus, money is a significant factor in motivating the women to pursue this work, and to maintain their job in the industry.

For the study's participants, money was used as an instrumental tool to maintain their socio-economic status. For example, Elise shares her story for entering into the trade, "I had worked previously five years ago, and someone I had dated walked out on me and took everything and I had nothing to pay my bills. I had a part-time job but where I was living that doesn't get anywhere. Someone made a suggestion and I called an ad and I started working for an agency and then I went on my own two months later because I'm not going to work for someone. I would rather do it myself" (Elise). This example demonstrates the predominant motivation of money for entering into the sex industry. Though inadequate finances is a dominant explanation in sex work scholarship for entering the industry, the participants' financial struggle is distinct from the examples of scarcity and poverty that tends to be highlighted in sex work literature (Ehrenreich, 2001; Joy, 2004). For instance, a 2010 study exploring motivations for women entering the sex trade in Pakistan suggests that "poverty, hunger, and limited options for economic survival" pushed the women into sex work (Khan, Johansson, Zaman, Unemo, Rahat, & Lundborg, 2010, p.378). Similarly, Jacquelyn Monroe suggests that "poverty is a breeding ground for many negative and highly stigmatized behaviors, including street level prostitution" (2005, p. 70). Edlund and Korn (2002) assert that "low potential for female labour market earnings is often taken to be an important reason why women go into prostitution" (p.190). In all, poverty as the root of sex work continues to be upheld in much of the literature.

The link between poverty and entry into sex work does not adequately explain the participants' practices. The women generally have not experienced a brush with absolute

poverty, but rather they are more concerned with maintaining a life that correlates to a middle-to-upper class socio-economic status. Relative poverty, as compared to absolute poverty, is something that is experienced by a many of the participants. Relative poverty is “poverty in relation to the economic status of other members of the society,” (UNESCO, n.d). Relative poverty is based more on an individual’s quality of life in their community, and places importance on social and cultural needs (UNESCO, n.d.). A clear example of this comes from Devon’s narrative when she expresses what motivated her to enter into this line of work, “I just lived for a few years and worked really hard, worked three jobs and still had little [to show for it]. And life was getting to be such a struggle. And I was like how am I going to afford to buy a house? How am I going to afford to buy RRSP’s?” (Devon). So, while money is a strong motivating factor for entering into this work, the reason reflects the expectations to maintain a lifestyle associated with middle to high-class socio-economic status, including planning for retirement, rather than more commonly cited notions of absolute scarcity.

The divergence of this study from others concerns the context in which money is discussed. In particular, a discussion of financial reward was directly tied to using money as a type of ideology management. For many of the women money was used as a tool to protect themselves from emotional challenges of the work. As Gwen notes, “the money was a way to not feel guilty. It was a way to create a barrier and not invest in the emotional relationship. Money made it okay to be with others.” In this sense, money was used to avoid accusations of contributing to affairs or being a “home wrecker” as the exchange of money created a clear division between business and pleasure.

Money as a tool of ideology management is further reflected in the narratives that suggest a moral slide. Specifically, some of the participants used money as a way to negotiate breaches of their personal and professional boundaries or mitigate a sense of discomfort that they may experience in accommodating different client requests. As Addison explains, money is often only employed in certain situations to accommodate their self-perception:

If they [customers] want domination/submission scenarios, again I don't really care for that but I understand that some people like it...some clients will ask for it, I charge more for those services because it is more mentally involved for me. It's not like just sitting and having a glass of wine. I have to mentally engage, and it is more mentally draining for me to offer a certain scenario. So as long as it is not a hard boundary for me I don't mind offering and charging extra for those services. But things that are hard boundaries – like cum in the mouth or on my face that just to me is a big no. Or bareback full services....I have been asked by guys that would pay a thousand dollars to fuck me without a condom and I'm like sorry. And they're like I was tested [for STI's]. But they could have had sex the day after. So that's a hard boundary. (Addison)

This quote illustrates the use of money in negotiating more flexible boundaries when providing sexual services, assisting in the rationalization of modifying pre-existing boundaries, or maintaining firm standards regarding health risks. Money does not stand alone as a tool, but rather is linked to the women's independent status and Addison's story reflects this. While an agency worker who refuses to role play with a customer may lose that client all together and be reprimanded by the agency, an independent worker can negotiate with the client and request additional funds in order to perform the service. On the other hand, as Addison asserts, there are boundaries to the utilization of money as a form of ideology management, and the boundary will be carved out differently by each sex worker. For Addison, money assists her in rationalizing performing services that are

more mentally exhausting, but there is no amount that could be offered for her to provide sex without the use of a condom. Overall, the women share their strong motivation of money in entering and staying in the industry – a form of refocusing, which emphasizes the extrinsic benefits of the work.

Intrinsic benefits of sex work were also mentioned by the participants. For example, the women enjoyed many of the requirements and activities associated with sex work. For Addison, the interaction with clients significantly influences the appeal of the job, and she comments that, “I really enjoy the social interaction aspect of [the work]”. On the other hand, Devon and Callie highlight the satisfaction they take from the sexual dimensions of the job, noting that it was a “wonderful outlet to enjoy my sexuality” (Devon), and that “I am a very sexual person [and so] I enjoy the work a lot” (Callie). Gwen talks about a mix of both enjoying interaction with the clients and the sexual intimacy of the work, she notes working with clients and doing sex work “is fun” and she also comments that “the sex is good too; I love sex” (Gwen).

When the women express the intrinsic benefits of sex work they challenge the dominant ways in which sex work is stigmatized; namely, the danger of working alone with clients and having sex outside the societal norms (such as having sex in the public sphere). It is interesting that despite the stigma of sex work, the women still entered into the industry for aspects of the trade that are condemned. Working with multiple clients in a one-on-one setting, and performing sexual acts was a benefit, rather than a drawback for these women.



Refocusing is a useful tool of ideology management that allows the women to maintain positive self-constructs, namely, redirecting their narratives to reflect the positive dimensions of their work, and focusing on both extrinsic and intrinsic benefits of being a sex worker to uphold their self-esteem. Refocusing is a unique feature of the participants' narratives that lessens the negative effects of sex work.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

Sex work has many risks involved, including stigma and worker burnout, which pose a risk to sex workers' mental and emotional health. As a way to manage these risks the women in this study use ideology management, which allows the women to maintain positive constructs of themselves, and avoid self-defeating discourse associated with sex work stigma. Through selective social comparisons, refocusing, reframing, and resisting a sex worker identity the participants are able to manage threats to their emotional and social security.

Societal stigma of the sex trade is a result of sex workers operating outside of cultural sexual norms that determine what normal and deviant sexual behaviors are, and are thus judged for their deviant lifestyle in the sex trade. Similarly, sex workers are often sexually shamed by individuals outside of the sex industry, from politicians to everyday citizens, as a way of reprimanding their deviant behavior and enforcing sexual norms. The effects of stigma can be damaging to sex workers mental health and social well-being. Isolation from their family and community was often spoken about during the interviews. Many of the women in this study acknowledged the negative affect of stigma and shared experiences of discrimination and seclusion.

Worker burnout also negatively impact sex workers and pose a threat to their mental and emotional health. The physical, emotional, and spiritual exhaustion that results when working in a service profession may also be felt by sex workers. The emotional labour part of sex work, including companionship and client care, places the women in this study at risk of burnout. This can lead to experiences of anxiety, difficulty concentrating, irritability, and depression. These negative consequences of emotional labour can be magnified by isolation, which is a common occurrence for mobile sex workers who are constantly touring different cities and being away from support networks like friend and family.

The dominant way of managing the risks associated with sex work is through ideology management. Within the broad category of ideology management are three key techniques that include: selective social comparisons, reframing, and refocusing. Selective social comparisons allow the women in this study to differentiate themselves from other types of sex workers like those who work on the street, which helps the women to keep a positive self-construct. Reframing instills positive value into sex work, which helps to support a strong and positive identity for the participants in this study. Refocusing shifts attention away from the stigma of sex work and focuses on positive features of sex work. These three dominant techniques of ideology management allow the women to maintain positive self-evaluations, manage the stigma of their work.

Overall, the stigma that envelops much of the sex industry is resisted as the women in this study restructure their stories to uphold their optimistic viewpoint of the sex industry. Through the use of ideology management the women in this study are able to

negotiate the stigma of sex work and protect their mental and emotional well-being. The next chapter reviews the previous chapters and brings this thesis to a conclusion. The significance of these findings and ideas for future research on sex work are explored, and the final conclusion of how mobility and independent status influence sex work is discussed.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION**

The previous chapters explore how independent mobile sex workers in Canada experience the sex industry. There are many overlapping practices between independent mobile sex workers and workers that are geographically fixed, managed by an agency, or work from an outdoor street location. However, there are also some key differences. This thesis examines these differences and argues that employment-related mobility and independent worker status are central in shaping a self-managed work experience of the study's participants. In addition, employment-related mobility and independent worker status contribute to the risk management and ideology management of independent mobile sex workers in Canada in many ways, including avoiding saturated markets, creating a unique market niche, having safer working conditions, and generally allowing for economic success in the sex trade.

The research is founded in the work of scholars like Jeffrey and MacDonald (2006), Agustin (2003; 2005; 2006; 2007), and Weitzer (2000; 2005; 2007; 2009) who seek to dismantle generalizations and stigmatizing stereotypes of what it means to be a sex worker, and instead, emphasize that there are multiple realities within the sex industry. From this foundation the participants' narratives have been explored.

Using a feminist framework, which emphasizes the importance of linking theory and practice (Letherby, 2003), and contributing to political or social change (Hesse-Biber, 2007), the participants' narratives were gathered and analyzed. While this research has a goal of filling a gap in the literature, it also seeks to contribute to political and social change in Canada by dismantling grand narratives of what it means to be a sex worker.

As well, this research seeks to add to the current work being done to restructure Canadian legislation to make Canada a safer place to do sex work. Interviews in Fort McMurray, Toronto and Ottawa were arranged and one-to-two hour interviews were conducted. To best accommodate the participants and ensure that they felt safe and comfortable during the interview process, the women chose the time and place to meet. This meant that interviews were conducted in hotel rooms, coffee shops, and the participant's homes and cars. Upon completion of data collection, the findings were reviewed through a coding process, and major themes and subthemes were identified and the research analysis began.

The nine participants in this study are all independent mobile female workers who regularly tour throughout Canada for their job in the sex trade. The majority of participants are in their early-to-mid-thirties with the youngest participant being twenty three years old and the eldest participant being thirty six years of age. They have families, intimate partners, attended university, and some of the women manage businesses outside of the sex industry. While seven of the women in this study tour exclusively in Canada, two of the participants have expanded their tours to the United States and the United Kingdom.

## **7.1 Chapter Review**

The first three chapters introduced key concepts, provided an overview of the sex trade in Canada and introduced the participants in this study. Situating the Canadian sex trade in contemporary society, including current legislation and changing social attitudes, provides a rich context for understanding the detailed nuances of sex work. Chapter one

begins with reviewing the legal system governing sex work in Canada, and examines the changing legal and social context of sex work historically to present day. Canada's legal framework for addressing the sex trade is currently under reformation by the Federal government, and until reforms are complete current legislation is upheld across Canada. Canadian law presently does not criminalize the act of exchanging sex for compensation, but operating a common bawdy house, procuring, soliciting in a public place and living on the avails remain illegal. As a result of this system, the women in this study have to carefully navigate the laws in Canada and safely operate their business within their rights.

One such way of safely operating an independent mobile sex work business is online through mediums such as webpages, boards, and forums, which is covered in chapter two. Chapter two reviews how webpages are a key tool for mobile sex workers who wish to continue to engage their clientele when on tour. Through photo updates, online calendar posts and blog threads a sex worker can keep the attention of clients even when they are in a different city. Similarly, posts and advertisements on online boards and forums, such as CERB and CAERF, allow sex workers to keep in contact with current and potential clients while also engaging in the sex work community through posting and commenting on threads.

Creating and updating a website and posting on boards and forums requires a lot of time and effort. In fact, independent mobile sex workers often have more responsibilities compared to sex workers who are managed by an agency, brothel, or a pimp, some of which include, advertising, booking clients, organizing their schedule, planning tours,

booking airline tickets and hotels, and updating their website information and photo gallery. Many of these responsibilities are classified as unpaid labour as the sex worker is not directly compensated for these tasks and has to account for the work that goes on “behind the scenes” of an appointment when calculating her appointment fees.

Besides the increased level of responsibility for independent mobile sex workers, there are other differences between this category of sex work and other types of sex work. For instance, the environment in which sex work takes place is a key for differentiating independent mobile sex work from other forms of work in the sex trade. Street work occurs outside usually in a street location or inside a vehicle. Brothel workers operate within the brothel establishment and often have a room inside the brothel to themselves. Agency workers, on the other hand, may perform in-calls (the client comes to their hotel room or home) or out-calls (where the sex worker goes to the client’s home or hotel room). Independent mobile sex workers can also perform in-calls or out-calls, but typically work from a hotel room or rented space doing in-calls while on tour. Beyond the working environment and level of independence and responsibility of the sex worker, other determinants that divide the sex industry include the risk of victimization, amount of exploitation, and public visibility. Altogether, these factors are key determinants of a sex worker’s experience and lifestyle in the Canadian sex trade.

Chapter three provides a review of the literature relevant to this thesis, emphasizing the varying frameworks used to address the sex industry, work, and mobility. From notions of violence against women to empowerment in a patriarchal society, scholars continue to examine the multiple facets of the sex trade that make the industry so diverse.

This thesis reviewed three key ways of understanding the sex industry – focusing on societal forces, focusing on the individual sex worker, and a combination of those two which considers both larger societal forces and the individual worker. The last framework is known as sex work theory and is the foundational framework of this study. This theoretical framework broadens the narratives of sex workers and allows the exploration of the experiences and working conditions of independent mobile female sex workers in Canada without minimizing the struggles and obstacles they may experience.

Just as there are different ways of conceptualizing the sex industry, there are also many ways of understanding the concept of work. For example, Kelly (2000) determined five ways of conceptualizing work through focusing on the different ways that work is given meaning and understood by workers, including instrumental, individual, ethical, social, and institutional work. Kelly's (2000) theory is similar to the work of Harpaz, Honig and Coetsier (2002) who examined the instrumental and socio-psychological meanings of work. However, for this study the best way of conceptualizing work is through the concept of "dirty" work, which originated with the Hughes (1951) and was later developed by scholars like Ashforth and Kreiner (1999). The concept of "dirty" work explains concepts of taint and ideology management, which can be used to understand the experience of work for sex workers. Ideology management, including refocusing, reframing, selective social comparisons, and resisting a sex worker identity, is a central concept in this study and is used as a chief risk management strategy for the women in this study.



Along with ideology management, mobility is another key tool of risk management for the participants in this study. Mobility has been theorized and understood in many different ways. However, a gap in work-mobility and work-migration literature is the experiences of mobile sex workers. In the past, mobility for women was believed to only occur in direct relation to an existing relationship with a man; for instance, it was believed that women only moved when following their partner (Schultz, 2000). This thesis sought to fill this gap and examine how employment-related mobility influences the working conditions and experiences of independent sex workers.

Chapter four outlined the research methods employed in this study. The research design was based on examining the influences of migration on the lived-experiences of independent sex workers. I determined that the best way of gathering information that would result in a rich data set was through interviews with the participants in person. As such, interviews were conducted in St. John's, Fort McMurray, Ottawa, and Toronto. Participants for these interviews were found online, primarily through online boards and forums such as CERB and TERB. These online sites also provided data on the sex workers through the use of content analysis of their websites and posts on online boards.

Eight of the nine interviews were audio-recorded, and the ninth interview was hand written. I transcribed all the interviews in order to protect the data and ensure confidentiality was maintained. Indeed, confidentiality was an important part of the research process. Pseudonyms were used for each participant, and the master list of participant names and the corresponding pseudonyms was stored in a safe location. Reflexivity was another important piece of conducting the research. Reflexivity in this

study meant actively working to reflect on and minimize any power differences between myself as the researcher and the participants during the research process. One tool for addressing this was recognizing myself as an Outsider to the population of independent mobile sex workers I was researching.

Data analysis occurred during and after the collection of data through the interviews and their transcription, and through content analysis of boards, forums, and webpages. Data analysis began during the interview process through writing memos and interim analysis. As well, data was analyzed through content analysis of boards and forums like CAERF, TERB, and CERB, and through the websites of the participants.

The first three chapters of this thesis offer a rudimentary understanding of what work is like for sex workers in Canada, and particularly independent mobile sex workers. The next two chapters, four and five, examined how independent sex worker's socio-economic status, cultural capital, and mobility contribute to the physical, emotional and social experiences of these workers, and how independent status and mobility separates their work from other segments of the sex industry and make it possible to manage some of the risks within sex work including physical and emotional abuse.

Chapter five argued that independent sex worker status and employment-related mobility are central in shaping the experience of the study participants' work in the sex industry, particularly in regards to their physical health and safety. Many of the risks of doing sex work result from the nature of the job like meeting with a client alone. The risks to the physical health and safety of sex workers may occur during the appointment, in the form of physical, sexual or verbal abuse, and can extend beyond appointment hours

to include experiencing difficulties when trying to access community services like the police and health care. Many of the women in this study shared stories about the police and health care services, and noted how their position as a sex worker negatively affected their ability to receive care and protection from these community services.

As noted, there are inevitable risks encountered when doing sex work as a result of the nature of the work and societal stigma and shame. A dominant factor that can increase the level of risk to a sex worker is doing sex work in a saturated market. In fact, many of the participants in this study note that they first began touring as a result of the problems inherent in a saturated market. Saturated markets, like Toronto, drive down market prices for services, and increase the pressure on sex workers to offer unsafe and risky sexual services like not using a condom. Using employment-related mobility allows the women in this study to avoid saturated market and tour to cities where they can charge their set appointment fee and offers services that they feel safe and comfortable providing.

While employment-related mobility is advantageous, transitioning to being a mobile sex worker is not available for all workers in the sex industry. The intersection of socio-economic background, and education made it possible for the participants to easily transition into independent mobile sex work as a result of the financial and cultural capital base they had when entering the sex trade. Indeed, the importance of initial societal privilege was a significant factor in determining the independent and mobile status of the participants, as the majority of the women in this study began their career in the sex industry working for an agency, but were able to quickly transition into working independently by utilizing their economic and cultural resources. Specifically, the nine

participants are generally well-educated at a university level, come from middle-to-upper class socio economic backgrounds, and seven identify as Caucasian. These provided an opportunity to become an economically successful independent mobile sex worker by allowing them to better access economic and cultural capital that propels their businesses forward. Similarly, the participants' social locations influence their safety while working in the sex industry. Caucasian identity affords them greater protection and privilege while doing sex work compared to other non-Caucasian workers, specifically First Nations sex workers. The increased violence against First Nations women, and especially First Nations sex workers, is a striking example of the importance of race in determining the safety of sex workers.

Beyond avoiding saturated markets, there are many benefits to being an independent mobile sex worker in Canada. Working as an independent sex worker gives the women greater control and autonomy over their working conditions. They have control over their work schedule, how many clients they see a day, how much they charge for their services, when and where they work, and what services they provide. More control over working conditions often translates into a reduced risk to sex worker's health and safety as they are not forced by a manager or pimp to see clients they are uncomfortable with or perform services that are not safe.

As a result of the increase of autonomy for independent mobile sex workers, there are additional responsibilities that they must handle. Some of the requirements of being an independent sex worker who tours include finding clients through advertising, booking clients, managing their own schedule, creating a website and online presence, and

updating online board and forum posts. These responsibilities demand time and money to be executed professionally and in a timely manner. Despite the higher levels of responsibilities, many of the women in this study note that the benefits of doing independent sex work outweigh the costs of this work. In all, chapter five affirms the benefit of doing independent mobile sex work as the increased autonomy and responsibilities generally equates to safer working conditions and the ability to manage the risks to the sex workers physical health and safety.

Chapter six argues that independent status and mobility positively contribute to the emotional, mental and social well-being of the participants, and is central to their ideology management. The use of ideology management serves as an effective instrument to managing many of the threats to the mental and social well-being of the participants as a result of the strong societal stigma against their work. The tools of selective social comparisons, reframing, and refocusing aid the participants in protecting their self-esteem and social network, and maintain a strong positive self-construct that can be threatened by societal stigma.

Stigma has a substantial effect on the lives of sex workers in Canada, impacting their work and life in and out of the sex trade. Societal stigma of the sex trade is a result of sex workers operating outside of cultural sexual norms that determine normal and deviant sexual behaviors. Sex workers are often sexually shamed by individuals outside of the sex industry as a way of reprimanding them for their deviant behavior and enforcing sexual norms that address how, where, and with whom, sexual acts should take place.

Sexual shaming and societal stigma can be damaging to sex worker's mental, emotional and social health. The ability to access community services and receive the same level of respect and protection as Canadians who work outside of the sex trade is diminished as a result of their sex worker status. The negative effects of stigma can be magnified when sex workers experience of burnout, from the emotional labour involved in their sex work. In fact, the physical, emotional, and spiritual exhaustion that results when working in a service profession can exasperate the negative effects of stigma and lead to anxiety, difficulty concentrating, irritability, and depression.

The negative consequences of stigma and emotional labour tend to be magnified by isolation, which can be a reality for independent mobile sex workers as they are constantly on tour in different cities and away from social support networks. Indeed, it can be difficult for mobile sex workers to seek support from friends and family, and to gain assistance from community services. However, the women in this study were able to use ideology management to mitigate some of these issues of working in the sex trade.

There are three key techniques of ideology management used by the participants in this study, including selective social comparisons, refocusing, and reframing. Altogether, these three means of ideology management assisted the women in managing the risks in the sex trade that threaten their mental and emotional health. First, selective social comparisons allow the women in this study to differentiate themselves from other types of sex workers, which helps them to maintain a positive self-construct. Selective social comparisons are apparent in the interviews when the participants spoke of other types of workers in the sex industry, and compared their job to those who work at an outdoor

street location and who are not mobile. Since a large majority of the stigma and exploitation that occurs in the sex industry is based on outdoor street work, sex workers who work in an indoor location may be able to distance themselves and their work from other segments of the industry. In this study, the participants tend to create a boundary between their work and that of both outdoor street work and the more controlled work environment of agency work. Comparing their working conditions and lifestyles to street workers, agency workers, and sex workers who are not mobile allows the participants to maintain positive self-evaluations despite the damaging effects of stigma.

Though not generally cited in ideology management literature, resisting a sex worker identity is another important aspect of selective social comparison for many of the women in this study. Some of the participants actively chose to disassociate from the sex industry and from the concept of work all together. On the other hand, some of the women in this study preferred to identify as a sex worker and to align themselves with other workers in their right to protection, compensation and unionization. Overall, selective social comparisons based on independent status and mobility are used a method of risk management.

Reframing and refocusing are two other aspects of ideology management used by the participants in this study. Reframing is used to place positive value on commonly stigmatizing features of the work. For example, many of the participants expressed that they were making a significant contribution to their clients' lives, and thereby transforming the stigma into something positive like a badge of honour. A predominant method of reframing used by the participants was to describe their work as therapeutic for

the clients and to explain the importance of their work in improving the lives of the customers. Reframing is an important aspect of risk management for the women in this study as it allows them to view a job that society labels as deviant and shameful and turn it into something that is honourable and essential for society.

Refocusing, on the other hand, shifts the focus away from the stigma altogether. This may be done by either avoiding discussion concerning the stigmatizing aspects of sex work or minimizing the stigma by regarding their efforts as contributing to more long term goals for their lives. For some of the participants refocusing was accomplished by negating any negative aspects of sex work and simply focusing on the benefits of their job such as travel, meeting new people, and earning a good income by avoiding saturated markets. For other participants, extrinsic benefits such as money were a key method in this risk management technique. Most of the workers confirm that money was a key factor in their decision to begin sex work. Money is connected to the women's independent status because agency workers and brothel attendants have their prices fixed by their organization, but independent sex workers are able determine their own prices, usually resulting in a larger monetary gain. Similarly, mobility allows the women to earn greater monetary capital by avoiding saturated markets and becoming rare commodities in cities to which they tour. This means that money tends to be a great extrinsic benefit that the women can focus on when overcome with societal stigma and shame.

Chapters five and six examine the significance of independent sex worker status and employment related mobility for the study participants. These two factors, when combined, construct an experience of sex work that separates the participants from other



workers in the sex industry, and aid in their risk management. Independent status and mobility positively impact their work experiences in many ways, including avoiding saturated markets, creating a unique market niche, having safer working conditions, and generally allowing for economic success in the sex trade.

## **7.2 Implications**

This study examines independent mobile sex workers, whose lives are marked by relative comfort, safety, and success, countering notions that the sex industry is only a site of violence and exploitation. The findings suggest that independent sex worker status and mobility are significant in establishing the unique working conditions of independent sex workers that tour. However, it is crucial to recognize that mobility and independent status are not readily available to all sex workers; in fact, they may be only made available as a result of the worker's access to financial and cultural capital. This does not mean that other sex workers cannot have access to mobility and independent status, but rather it simply may be more difficult for them to acquire as a result of factors including, poverty, race, and socio-economic status.

This is similar to other social issues inherent in Canadian society. For instance, ethnic background and poverty make it difficult for individuals to surmount obstacles and to climb to a place of prosperity and privilege. The link between sex work culture and broader cultural values in our society is integral. Indeed, changing the sex industry will not occur without larger societal changes. For instance, First Nations women who are sex workers tend to be at a greater risk for violence and generally work from unsafe outdoor locations in comparison to their Caucasian counterparts. This is not an issue that is only

characteristic of the sex industry; this is an issue on a societal level. In some ways, the sex industry is a microcosm for Canadian society; the inequalities present in the Canadian sex trade are generally present in society, and are often even a result of broader social problems. Until all citizens are recognized as equals and treated with respect regardless of gender, racial background, social positioning and lifestyle, the issues within the sex industry will not be fully improved. In fact, focusing on remedying the sex industry of its degradations is simply inadequate, as the issues within society will continue to seep into sex work culture.

Returning then to the research, it is arguable that the participants are privileged in the sex industry because they are privileged in society. Their middle-to-upper class upbringing, access to education, Caucasian identity and independent status and mobility directly translates into their success in the sex trade. Scholars like Jeffreys (2009; 2010), Farley (2003; 2004; 2009) and MacKinnon (1998) argue for the abolishment of the sex industry based on the violence and exploitation that may occur within the industry. However, abolishing the sex trade is not going to amend the issues within broader society. Rather than continually focusing efforts on dismantling a historic and deeply entrenched industry, it may be more useful to explore how we can restructure the industry to be inclusive, and more secure for all workers.

The recent reform of the laws surrounding sex work in Ontario is one step towards creating a safer and more prosperous industry for sex workers. The ability to keep a common bawdy house means that sex workers can now feel safe working in an indoor location with other sex workers without fear of arrest and prosecution. Moreover, as the

laws in Canada begin to change, it is possible that the public view of the industry will also change in this positive direction. However, it is important that the community of researchers, activists, and citizens that support sex workers right to choose (and be prosperous) in their work do not become complacent. Continued advocacy is necessity in order to give sex workers the same rights and respect that are afforded to other workers.

While this study points to the fact that risk management is an integral part of doing independent mobile sex work safely and with minimal problems related to societal stigma and sexual shaming, the techniques involved in risk management are not necessarily beneficial to all workers in the sex industry and could be viewed as damaging to any sense of unity or progress within the trade. One particular technique that is disconcerting is selective social comparisons. Many of the participants in this study have unfavorable views of other workers in the sex industry such as those who work from a street location, charge lower than average fees, book short appointments (30 minutes), or have multiple appointments in a day. This is all part of the ideology management strategy of selective social comparisons that helps the women to avoid internalizing societal stigma and sexual shame by removing their work from more heavily stigmatized areas of the sex trade. However, just as the participants of this study are policed by society, they too police other sex workers within the industry. Simply stated, many of the participants in this study view their type of sex work as valuable and other types of sex work as problematic or degrading. It is important to note that not all the women in this study took part in this practice, and some sex workers, like Mina, actually challenge the idea of value placed on one's type of work within the sex industry.

Many of the women in this study do not dismantle or challenge the dominant framework of sex work in Canada and instead use the unequal power structures to their advantage. So, it may be that, in fact, a more equal playing field within the sex industry would challenge their risk management strategies and effectively dismantle the tools they use to maintain their high status in the trade and positive self-evaluations, such as selective social comparisons. Sex workers who are economically successful in the sex industry may not want economic resources and cultural capital to be made available to all sex workers in Canada as a way to protect their share in the sex work business, which returns to the idea of saturated markets where prices are pushed down and unsafe services become more readily practiced. If changes are made that allow more sex workers to be economically successful in the sex trade and have a safe and comfortable working environment then it is possible that the market for sex in Canada could become saturated overall. On the other hand, it is also arguable that there will always be different niches to fill that make it possible for a range of types of sex work to exist in Canada from those who enjoy multiple short appointments in a day, to individuals who want to provide an extended companionship appointment. The key factor is creating a balance between the supply and demand for sexual services for each type of sex work in order to avoid the problems that arise from market saturation, which often results in unsafe working conditions for the workers.

As Canada moves forward with political and legal changes that allow for safer and more economically successful sex work to be available to all workers in the industry, it may not be favourable for the specific set of workers in this study. It is important to

consider that this idea was not a direct focus of the thesis and future research is necessary to have a richer understanding of this phenomenon, which leads us to the next section – the importance of future research in the area of sex work.

### **7.3. Future Research**

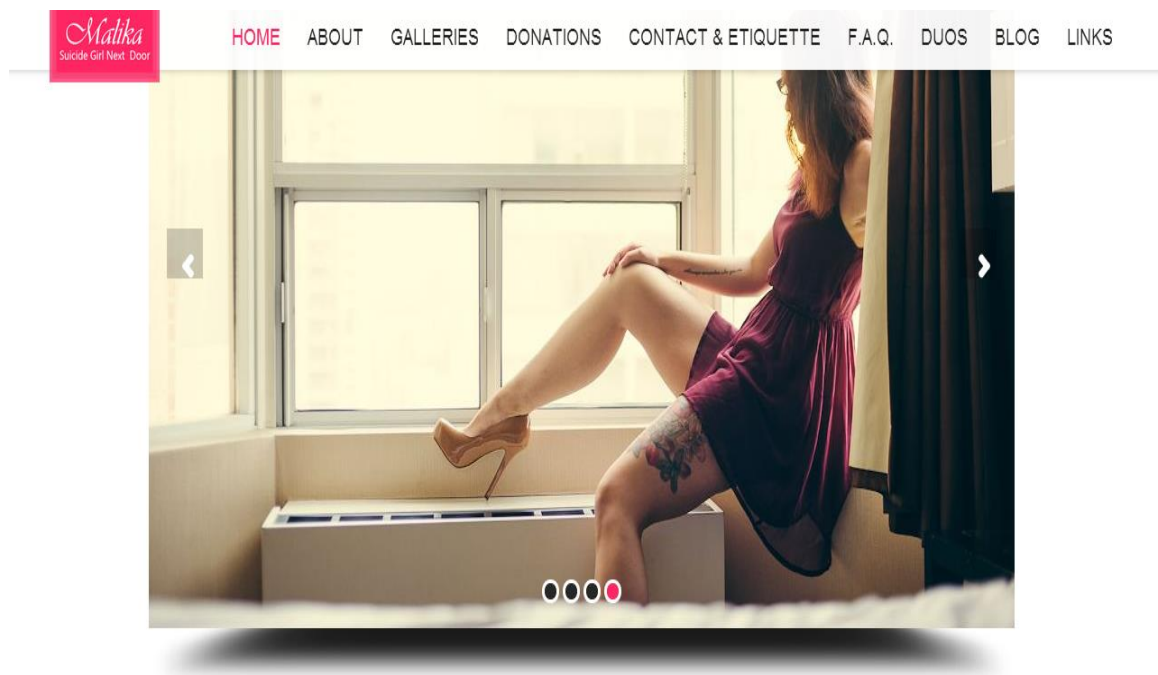
Despite the recent gain in expanding the scholarship on the sex trade, there is still much research that is required in order to advance the well-being of individuals working in this industry. While large quantitative research offers integral statistical analysis that is useful for policy makers and political action, it is more in-depth qualitative research that provides a detailed and introspective understanding of the lives of sex workers that may better reflect the views of those working in this trade. Therefore, additional research is required to increase our awareness of the work experiences of sex workers. Without knowing how and why some sex workers are able to be successful working in the sex trade, it will be difficult to build upon any solutions that seek to remedy the issues within the industry.

Continued efforts by self-reflective researchers who document and listen to the wide spectrum of narratives emerging from the sex industry is required. Moreover, it is important for sex workers to come forth and share their tales that either confirm or critique the findings of this study. Indeed, as sex work scholarship moves forward there will continue to be narratives of victimization and violence that emerge and these accounts should not be discredited. Rather, these anecdotes should be used in conjunction with stories of success within the industry in order to challenge generalization and seek remedies to better the lives of those who meet their needs through sex work.

#### **7.4. Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that the sex industry is not a site of complete victimization and that there are sex workers who are able to employ risk management techniques based on independent status and employment-related mobility to protect their physical, mental and emotional security. This thesis argues that employment-related mobility and independent worker status are central in shaping a more positive work experience and contributing to the risk management of independent mobile sex workers in Canada in many ways, including: avoiding saturated markets, creating a unique market niche, having safer working conditions, and generally allowing for economic success in the sex trade. Further research is required for a broader understanding of the mechanisms that allow for certain sex workers to be successful, and continued research and activism is necessary to create a safe environment in which sex workers can work and thrive.



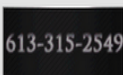


## APPENDIX A: SEX WORKER WEBPAGE EXAMPLE



A "Girl Next Door" look, with an edge.  
Malika Fantasy – Your Suicide Girl Next Door

## APPENDIX B: CERB PROVINCIAL BOARD

<b>Manitoba</b>	⬆	
Winnipeg Manitoba		
Brandon Manitoba		
Escort Listings for Manitoba on Escorts-Canada.com		
<b>New Brunswick</b>	⬆	
Moncton, Saint John & Fredericton		
-> Moncton Classified Ads		
Escort Listings for New Brunswick on Escorts-Canada.com		
<b>Nova Scotia</b>	⬆	
Halifax (and other areas of NS)		
-> Halifax Classified Ads		
Escort Listings for Halifax on Escorts-Canada.com		
<b>Newfoundland and Labrador</b>	⬆	
St. John's (and other cities in NFLD)		
-> St. John's Classified Ads		
Escort Listings for NFLD on Escorts-Canada.com		
<b>Northwest Territories, Nunavut &amp; Yukon</b>	⬆	
Yellowknife and Whitehorse		
<b>Ontario</b>	⬆	
Barrie, Muskoka & North Bay Ontario		
Durham / York / Peel Regions Ontario		
Belleville Ontario		
Hamilton Ontario		
Kingston Ontario		











## APPENDIX C: CERB ST. JOHN'S BOARD

We also have a general discussion area, news area, announcements, and much more! Be sure to check out the social groups, our live video chatroom and each members custom profile pages and photo albums! This really is a great community and remember here at cerb we do not allow ANYTHING negative to be said (Please find other discussion sites for that). We try to keep cerb positive and friendly at all times and do ask people who can not behave in this manner to leave (keeping all the nice people here).

Be sure to check out the [FAQ and RULES](#) area as well. As a new member the info here is very important!.

 [CERB - Canadian Escort Recommendation Board](#) > [Newfoundland and Labrador](#)  
 [St. John's \(and other cities in NFLD\)](#)

Welcome, [pleander](#).

You last visited: Today at 10:45 PM

[Private Messages](#): Unread 0, Total 1.

### Notices

#### NEW MEMBERS - PLEASE TAKE NOTE

As a new member to cerb you posts are moderated. This means when you submit a post you will NOT see it right away. It takes some time to show to the public as one of the moderators will need to review your post and approve it.







This can take up to 24 hours (Excluding weekends and holidays)

Once you have 5 posts or more and have been a member for 5 or more days (without breaking any rules) we will promote your account to a NON moderated account so your posts show instantly.

In the meantime please read the site rules and enjoy this wonderful site.

### Sub-Forums : St. John's (and other cities in NFLD)

Search this Forum ▼

Forum	Last Post	Threads	Posts
 <b><a href="#">NFLD Recommendations</a></b> If you had an experience that makes you want to recommend a specific provider this is the area to do it.	 <a href="#">Cleo Catra</a> by <a href="#">nlwoodchuck</a> 02-28-2014 01:11 PM »	25	109
 <b><a href="#">NFLD Service Providers - Schedules, Advertisements &amp; announcements</a></b>	 <a href="#">A taste of class -...</a> by <a href="#">Diaz</a> Today 07:02 PM »	573	610
 <b><a href="#">Courtesan / Escort Discussion for NFLD</a></b> No negative comments, reviews or fighting please	 <a href="#">anyone seen koren linda?</a> by <a href="#">roamingguy</a> Today 09:16 PM »	160	683

### Sponsors List

  
 416.532.4603  
[CupidsEscorts.ca](#)

  
 Escape the Mundane

  
 Katr ine Cannon  
 ofe mp

## APPENDIX D: CERB TORONTO BOARD













### NEW MEMBERS - PLEASE TAKE NOTE

As a new member to cerb you posts are moderated. This means when you submit a post you will NOT see it right away. It takes some time to show to the public as one of the moderators will need to review your post and approve it.

This can take up to 24 hours (Excluding weekends and holidays)

Once you have 5 posts or more and have been a member for 5 or more days (without breaking any rules) we will promote your account to a NON moderated account so your posts show instantly.

In the meantime please read the site rules and enjoy this wonderful site.

Sub-Forums : Toronto Ontario		Search this Forum ▼	
Forum	Last Post	Threads	Posts
 <b>Toronto Recommendations</b> If you had an experience that makes you want to recommend a specific provider this is the area to do it.	 <b>Victoria Jolie</b> by <a href="#">roamingquy</a> 02-17-2014 11:11 AM »	77	220
 <b>Toronto Service Providers - Schedules, Advertisements &amp; announcements</b>	 <b>Cougar - mature, busty, curvy...</b> by <a href="#">Lisaoftoronto</a> Today 08:01 PM »	11,911	12,689
 <b>Stripclub Discussions for Toronto</b> No negative comments, reviews or fighting please	 <b>Strip Clubs</b> by <a href="#">Amadeus44</a> Yesterday 11:31 PM »	15	38
 <b>Courtesan / Escort Discussion for Toronto</b> No negative comments, reviews or fighting please	 <b>Downtown PSE recommendation</b> by <a href="#">worldtourmann</a> 02-19-2014 06:18 AM »	200	485
 <b>Massage Discussion for Toronto</b> No negative comments, reviews or fighting please	 <b>Downtown TO - Massage Parlour</b> by <a href="#">worldtourmann</a> 02-10-2014 10:02 AM »	33	77
 <b>Toronto Warnings: To Report Bait and Switch, Scams &amp; Dangerous Encounters (NOT FOR NEGATIVE REVI</b> Report Fake Photos, Scams or Dangerous situations here - DO NOT SLANDER OR POST NEGATIVE REVIEWS AS THAT IS NOT ALLOWED ANYWHERE ON THIS SITE PLEASE <b>Ladies - We have a private SP ONLY area for you to post bad date info. Contact the MOD for access</b>	 <b>alltorontoescorts.com bait...</b> by <a href="#">meaghanmcloed</a> 05-15-2013 07:49 PM »	8	36

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**Eupids Escorts**  
 416.532.4603  
[CupidsEscorts.ca](#)

**Hostess Lounge**



CALL  
**6132747073**

**APPENDIX E: EMAIL TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS**

Hello,

I am a graduate student at Memorial University who is researching the sex industry in Canada. I found your ad online and I was wondering if you would be interested in participating in the study? I am not associated with any community or government agency. I am an independent researcher. All material will be kept confidential and your privacy will be respected, and your experiences and opinions will be honoured. Participation would only require about an hour of your time. This may be an opportunity for you, and other workers in Canada, to share your viewpoints about your career. If you do not feel comfortable taking part in the research, but would like to offer information on other workers that you feel may be interested in participating, then please let me know. I would be happy to answer any of your questions about me or my research.

Cheers,  
Nikki

## **APPENDIX F: CONSENT FORM**

**Title:** From Ocean to Oil: Sex Worker Mobility between St. John's and Fort McMurray

**Researcher:** Nikki Leendertse  
 Department of Women's Studies, Memorial University  
 709-763-5275  
 najl81@mun.ca

**Co-Supervisors:**  
 Ailsa Craig, PhD  
 Assistant Professor  
 Department of Sociology, Memorial University  
 709-864-2686  
[acraig@mun.ca](mailto:acraig@mun.ca)

Linda Cullum, PhD  
 Associate Professor  
 Department of Sociology, Memorial University  
 709- 864-8158  
[lcullum@mun.ca](mailto:lcullum@mun.ca)

You are being asked to take part in a research project called "From Ocean to Oil: Sex Worker Mobility between St. John's and Fort McMurray." This form is part of the process of getting informed consent. It is entirely up to you to decide if you want to participate in the study. Before you decide it is important that you understand what it is that you are agreeing to by participating. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or any information not included, please feel free to ask. If you choose not to participate, or if you choose to withdraw from the research after it has started, there will not be any negative consequences for you now, or in the future.

The researcher will:

- Discuss the study with you
- Answer your questions
- Keep confidential any information which could identify you personally
- Be available to you during the study to answer any questions or concerns

### **Introduction:**

I am conducting a study on sex worker migration between St. John's Newfoundland and Fort McMurray, Alberta. This study is part of my requirement for the degree of Master of Women's Studies. It is independent of any government department or law enforcement program and is being supervised by the Department of Women's Studies at Memorial University. The study will be a detailed investigation of the effects of migration on the lived experiences of sex workers. Your participation in this study will include an interview.

**Purpose of study:**

To better understand the experiences of sex workers who choose to migrate between provinces for their work.

**Description of the study procedures:**

You are being asked to participate in an audio-taped interview. Your participation is free and voluntary. If you agree to participate, how much and what you want to say is up to you. If you do not wish to be audio-taped, hand-written notes will be taken. You may refuse to answer any of the questions and are free to withdraw from the research project at any time. If you withdraw before the end of the research project, you have the choice of either allowing the researcher to keep all materials you have provided up to the departure date, or have everything destroyed. If you choose to have everything destroyed, all references to your participation will be erased. Memorial University's policy requires the data to be retained for a minimum period of 5 years, at which time it may be destroyed or held for a longer period provided that the university's protocols on data security and access are followed.

**Length of time:**

The interview component of this research will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

**Possible Benefits:**

**It is not known whether this study will benefit you personally.** However, your participation will help with better understanding of sex workers in Newfoundland and Labrador. This research may offer some useful information to sex workers and other community personnel (i.e., health care personnel, criminal justice personnel, and government) when addressing the needs of sex workers. This study will address gaps in the literature on sex work in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**Possible Harms:**

It may be difficult to discuss your experiences with sex work. Either during the interview or after, you may have feelings of discomfort or anxiety as a result of discussion with the researcher. If you feel that you need to use their services, there is the Mental Health Line: 1-888-737-4668

**Confidentiality:**

The list of participants will be kept confidential and your name will not be used in any of the reports or publications produced from this study. Each interview will be assigned a pseudonym; the list linking these pseudonyms with participants' names will be stored in a separate location from the interview notes, transcripts and tapes. Access to the list will be limited to only the researcher. When the information on the tapes has been typed up, the tapes, interview notes, and transcripts will be stored in a locked location for five years, and then destroyed.

**Anonymity:**

Due to the way you were recruited for this study, it is impossible for the researcher to guarantee complete anonymity. You will be given the opportunity to review and edit any interview transcriptions before the writing of the thesis begins.

**Questions:**

You are welcome to ask questions at any time during your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact:

Nikki Leendertse  
Researcher  
(e) 709-763-5275  
(e) [najl81@mun.ca](mailto:najl81@mun.ca)

Ailsa Craig, PhD  
Thesis Co-Supervisor  
(t) 709-864-2686  
(e) [acraig@mun.ca](mailto:acraig@mun.ca)

Linda Cullum, PhD  
Thesis Co-Supervisor  
(t) 709-864-8158  
(e) [lcullum@mun.ca](mailto:lcullum@mun.ca)

## APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW SIGNATURE PAGE

**Title:** From Ocean to Oil: Sex Worker Mobility between St. John's and Fort McMurray

**To be filled out and signed by the participant:**

Please check appropriate box

I have read the information about the research	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
I have spoken with Nikola Leendertse	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
I understand what my participation in the study involves	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time for any reason	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that it is my choice to be in the study	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in this study	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to be audio-taped	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If I withdraw from the study the researcher may	
- keep all information	[ ]
- destroy all information	[ ]

If you sign this form, you do not give up your legal rights, and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form for your records.

**Your Signature:**

I have read and understood the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project, understanding that I may withdraw my consent at any time. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

---

Name of participant (**please print**)

---

Signature of participant

---

Date

**Researcher's Signature:**

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study, and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

---

Signature of Researcher

---

Date

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's

ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICHER at [icehr@mun.ca](mailto:icehr@mun.ca) or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research please contact Nikki Leendertse  
at  
709-763-5275 at [najl81@mun.ca](mailto:najl81@mun.ca)



## **APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

1. How did you come to work in the sex industry?
2. Describe your job.
  - What are your working conditions like?
  - Tell me about the benefits and drawbacks of your work?
  - How does this job compare to your past work?
3. Tell me about your employment-related mobility.
  - What motivated you to tour?
  - Was there anything that held you back?
4. How has your lifestyle changed from working in the sex industry?
  - How have your relationships changed?
  - In what ways have your social networkers (friends & family) been affected?
5. Do you consider yourself a worker? Why or Why Not?

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