

November 2018

Intelligible Variability: Narratives of Male Sex Work in London Ontario Canada

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Compared to women, there is limited knowledge concerning men working in the sex trade in Canada. London (Ontario) in particular has been the epicentre of campaigns and lobbying against the sex industry for its alleged exploitation of women. In this environment, most policymakers and service providers argue that men-who-sell-sex are non-existent or are so rare that they are not worth consideration, if they are acknowledged in the first place. Yet other gendered configurations of the sex industry *do* exist. Given the city's lack of comprehensive inquiry, this dissertation sets about finding these men and documenting their life histories. This allows for the differentiation of what may be integral to the industry from what is specifically gendered.

From 2015 through 2017, semi-structured and online interviews with 43 men were recorded. The life histories and accounts produced followed linear plots, separated into phases; these offered insight into their childhoods, entrance-into-the-trade, and the fundamentals of sex work. Various details of family life, issues of class, coming-out, sexual abuse, mental health, disability, homelessness, criminality, and addiction weaved throughout different stories. Accounts of choice, female clients, intimacy, friendship, and the non-sexual contradicted archetypes and popular discourse on the nature of the industry.

Mapping the complex relationships men had with social classifications confirms that those in the sex trade face a multitude of stigmas. The subjugation of certain masculinities by hegemonic norms was a major component of this. Accounting for this vulnerability thus challenges assumptions that men are automatically in positions of power based on their gender. While being a man in any one social context made certain things more or less likely to happen, gender affected the interpretations men and others had for their actions. Feelings of oppression were ambiguous; structural vulnerabilities, choice, and need influenced the ways a man felt empowered or powerless.

Regardless of sexuality, hegemonic norms of masculinity also served as tools to counter feminized tropes of helplessness and maintain a sense of dignity. Instead of compartmentalizing the identities and roles of sex workers and dehumanizing them, privileging their stories gave rare insight into their lives and the lives of their clients, proving that seamless and simplistic visions of harm and privilege have been inadequate, where one-size does not fit all.

Keywords: Male sex work; Masculinity; Stigma management; Identity; Intersectionality; Narrative inquiry; Ethnography; Qualitative research; London Ontario; Gender studies; Sociocultural anthropology; Public policy; Social research

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the Ontario Graduate Scholarship program (2016), the Regna Darnell Graduate Award for Fieldwork in Sociocultural Anthropology (2014-2016), and the Graduate Research Award (2015).

Regna, if it were not for your guiding hand I would not be where I am today. I thank you for being one of the very few who are not afraid to look reality in the face and fight for what is right. I am forever grateful that where others see naivete and I see an imposter, you see a sense of wonder.

Douglass, all those years ago you showed me what it is to be a teacher, and what anthropology can be. Thank you for your inspiration and queered insights.

Treena, thanks for your assistance with my comprehensive exams and introducing me to the quandaries of advocacy work.

To the other members of my committee, Chris Atchison, Wendy Pearson, and Gerald McKinley: I am extremely appreciative for your time, support, and guidance.

Thanks to Kim Clark and Karen Pennesi for your references.

Kelly, my fellow Anthro-nerd and sister-friend. Thanks for knowing how to brighten this curmudgeon's day and understanding all my Nathan-isms. You made graduate school a lot less lonely.

Dakota, you are one of the strongest souls I have ever known. I'm sorry this dissertation took so much of my time.

Michael, we survived! It is your love, support and patience that have made this dissertation possible. Thank you for being my champion for half of my life.

Mom, it has been 12 years since you have gone but consider this your 55th birthday present. Thank you for my humility, creativity, and heart.

Special thanks to those men who shared their lives with me. Though we may have only known each other for a short while, I will always carry your stories with me.

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List of acronyms

ACOL – AIDS Committee of London
AIDS – Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
FOSTA – Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act
GPS – Global Positioning System
HALO – The Homophile Association of London Ontario
HIV – Human Immunodeficiency Virus
LAHTC – London Anti-Human Trafficking Committee
LAWC – London Abused Women’s Centre
LFP – London Free Press
LGB – lesbian, gay, bisexual
LGBT – lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*
LGBTQ – lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, queer
LSWAG – London Status of Women Action Group
MAST – Men Against Sexual Trafficking
M\$M – Men who sell sex to men
M\$W – Men who sell sex to women
MSM – Men who have sex with men
NDP – New Democratic Party
NECC – Northeast Community Conversations
NIMBY – Not-in-my-backyard
ODSP – Ontario Disability Supports Program
OW – Ontario Works
PAR – Persons At-Risk
PC – Progressive Conservative
PCEPA - Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act
PEP – Post-exposure prophylaxis
PrEP – Pre-exposure prophylaxis
RCMP – Royal Canadian Mounted Police
RHAC – Regional HIV/AIDS Connection
SACL – Sexual Assault Centre of London
SCC – Supreme Court of Canada
SESTA – Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act
SWERF – Sex Worker Exclusionary Radical Feminist
STI – Sexually Transmitted Infection
UN – United Nations
UWO – University of Western Ontario
YMCA – Young Men’s Christian Association

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Preface

In response to the Robert Pickton murder case in Vancouver, British Columbia where over 69 women, many of them sex workers, went missing over a period of 20 years before an investigation was initiated, the safety of sex workers throughout Canada entered the public consciousness (Bodkin, Delahunty-Pike, and O’Shea 2015). In 2007, three sex workers from Ontario, Terri-Jean Bedford, Valerie Scott, and Amy Lebovitch, began a Charter challenge to strike down prostitution legislation that they believed violated their constitutional rights by creating unsafe work conditions that facilitate such crimes (Pivot Legal Society 2013). The Supreme Court of Canada eventually did agree that the laws that criminalized aspects of adult prostitution were unconstitutional, giving the federal government until 2014 change them to comply with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

This appeal to work safety reflected a change in thinking using labour studies to frame prostitution as a type of labour, instead of an association with deviance, crime, or epidemiology (Parent and Bruckert 2013). The term sex work itself was popularized by activist Carol Leigh in 1987 and used with the intention of reducing negative connotations of other terms such as prostitute (cf. Walby 2012; Bindman 1997). The Latin root of the term prostitute meant to dishonor or to publicly “expose someone to shame and rebuke” (Buschi 2014: 726). Prostitute as a social category excluded women from mainstream society, treating them as outcasts, brandishing them with stigma, and denying them same rights as average citizens (Pheterson 1989). As a form of employment, Marxist leaning researchers could make the case that sex work, like all work, is an example of how “capitalism” exploits labour (Tong 1998; Bell 1994; Pateman 1988). At the same time, some sex workers sell willingly (within the limits of capitalism) and thereby should not be labelled victims (O’Connell Davidson 1998).

In contrast, lobbying by the anti-prostitution movement intensified against this discourse. In particular the London Abused Women Centre¹ had extensive political and

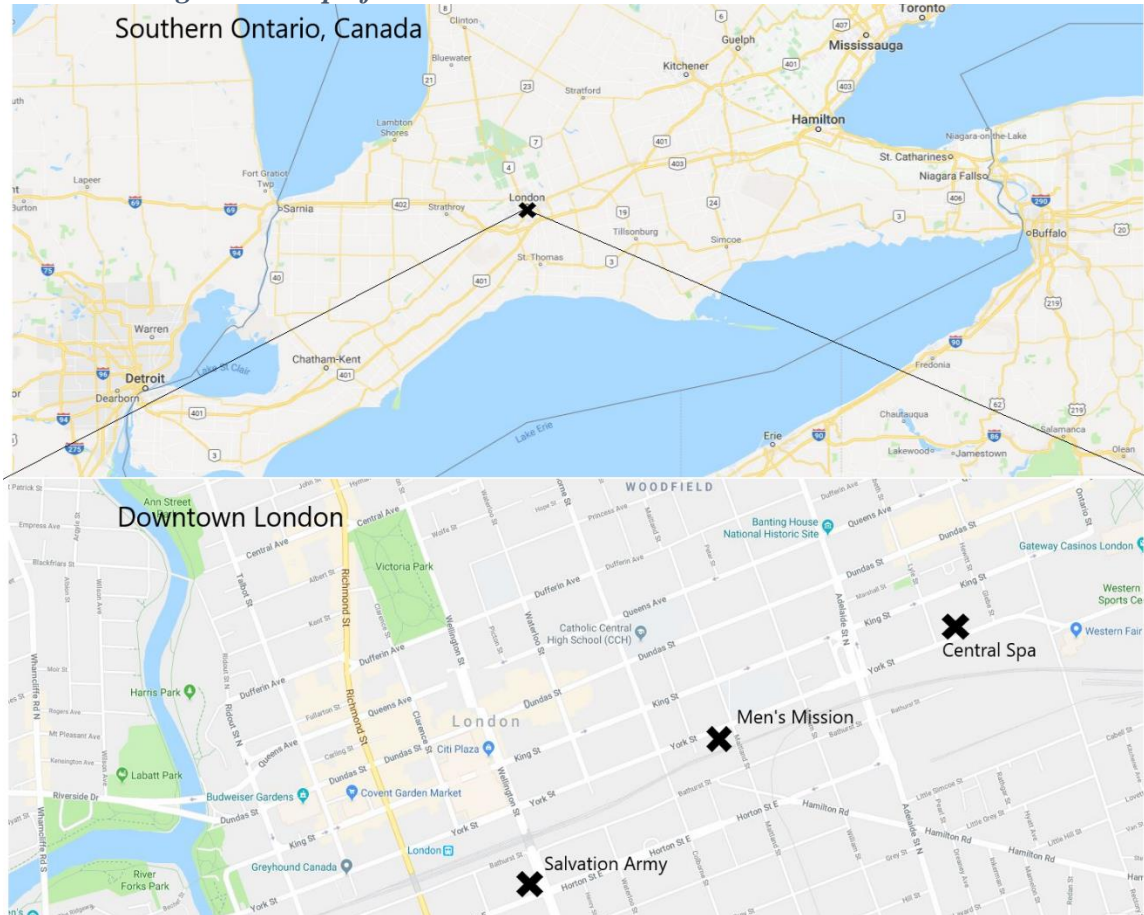
¹ LAWAC alongside the London Anti-Human Trafficking Committee handed out pamphlets at the Central Library in 2015 that summarize the attitude of all involved. These included, 1) one sponsored by the RCMP (n.d.) entitled “I’m not for sale” detailing that “victims are often brain-washed and don’t know they’re victims”, 2) a pamphlet from Men Against Sexual Trafficking (Burditt n.d.) linking pornography with the trafficking of women and children, and 3) a post-card addressed to then Conservative Member of Parliament Joy Smith advocating the Nordic (end-demand) model, targeting men who try to hire female sex workers. Smith while in power put forward 2009’s motion C-153 to create a National Action Plan to Combat Human

public influence not only locally but particularly nationally. London is a mid-sized Southwestern Ontario city located 200 km between Toronto and Detroit along the Quebec City – Windsor transportation corridor (see Figure 1). With a metropolitan population of close to half-a-million people, it is the eleventh most populous municipality in Canada (Statistics Canada 2017). As a self-labelled abolitionist organization, LAWC takes a stance that argues that prostitution is inherently exploitative, the ultimate expression of the inherent patriarchal violence of society (cf. Barry 1984; Bell 1994; Dworkin 1997; Roots and De Shalit 2016). The term abolitionist indexes the anti-slavery movement of the nineteenth century where the abolition of African-American slavery was a push for equality in law, self-ownership, and freedom of body and mind (DuBois 1978). Equating prostitution with human trafficking, men are accused of imposing sexuality, sexual violence, and slavery upon women and girls (Dorais 2005). By emphasizing claims that high percentages of women are assaulted, raped, and otherwise victimized, despite the assertions of sex worker advocates, these “abolitionists” (Farley 2004; Raphael and Shapiro 2004) produce emotive and sensationalist² reports in order to appeal to basic sociocultural values (Ong 2006). Appeals to the state for protection by middle-class feminists or SWERFs, on behalf of their “poor sisters” often cast prostitute and young working-class women as objects of care and concern in need of surveillance and control (Phoenix 2002). Police actions then become part of a wider rescue paradigm which comes from “a paternalistic and imperialist ideology that assumes that protection and removal from morally condemned situations [is] needed, even if it takes place against the wishes of the ‘victim’” (Roots and De Shalit 2016: 73).

Trafficking and recommended that prostitutes be considered exploitation victims under this paradigm. She then established the Joy Smith Foundation Inc., dedicated to the rescue and rehabilitation of victims of trafficking / the sex trade.

² Between 2009 and 2014, there were close to an average 3400 prostitution incidents reported each year by police in Canada. The London police reported close to 100 incidents of prostitution per year during the same time, though in 2014 only 3 charges were laid. “Incidents” does not equate to numbers of people involved. Between 2009 and 2013 police reported an average of 100 victims of human trafficking per year in Canada (with 7% being trafficked males, and 17% of the accused traffickers, female). Yet by 2014, police-reported violations of trafficking had risen to 206 for that year alone representing the paradigm shift. The percentage of these cases of human trafficking that were related to “sex trafficking” is unclear. Despite this, between 2005 and 2014 there were only *fifty-three* completed adult criminal court cases, with over half of them stayed or withdrawn (Karam 2016). By not including how many of these police charges lead to convictions these oft quoted statistics do not necessarily mean that these rates reflect actual crime rates; instead they are manipulated for the purposes of fear mongering.

Figure 1: Map of downtown London relative to Southern Ontario



Many groups like LAWC acted as de facto amici curiae in Ottawa for developing the new prostitution law, taking part in round table discussions and consultations, speaking as experts (Goldenberg et al. 2016).³ These groups advocated for a “Nordic model” which approaches sex work as prostitution through criminal justice and welfare policies that criminalize and pathologize men for “demanding” sex from women. The result was the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act* (2014) which, despite the previous ruling, conflated prostitution with sex trafficking, criminalizing the purchase of sex, communicating for the purpose of selling sex, gaining material benefit from sex work, and

³ Megan Walker, executive director of LAWC and ex-city councilor is quoted by Montanini “I think it’s important that people understand we are experts not because we just do research but because we’re involved on a day to day basis with these issues” (2017).

advertising sexual services.⁴ As a Londoner, it was within this setting I found myself; between countless media campaigns including radio advertisements, extensive press coverage,⁵ whole bus ads, billboards, the raising of their flag at City Hall and symbolic lighting of the building, the local London Majors baseball team wearing special jerseys, numerous advocacy awards, presentations at local high schools, and sponsorship and supports from a long list of restaurants and businesses in the city,⁶ LAWC's propaganda machine made it so no one could go anywhere without being reminded of the "plight of women at the hands of men."

As a cisgender gay male this messaging began to give me pause. I began to wonder how exactly a gay man *sexually* exploits a woman. While I do not deny that there is a problem of misogyny among gay men and that some gay men can and do benefit from systems that privilege the male gender, this is different from sexual exploitation. As Patrick Strudwick elaborates:

Are gay men responsible for producing and consuming pornography... [or] endors[ing] rape [of women]? Are gay men responsible for hiring women's bodies to perform whatever... sex act they fancy? Do gay men stalk women, troll women or follow women down the street, shouting abuse, or shouting obscenities from car windows... Is it gay men forcing women and girls into marriage (2014: para. 8)?

Putting aside the problematics behind what Strudwick considers exploitation for the time being, if sexual violence happens because of the power "men as a class" have over women, how do we explain the reverse: when a female cousin repeatedly molested me as a child, or when I had to fight-off a high school "friend" when she tried to put her hand down my pants? What about men who sell sex and female clients? What about those outside of the gender binary involved in the industry? What about non-heterosexuality? Though this

⁴ 2 months before the 2015 federal election, the LAWC, in a photo op with Justice Minister Peter MacKay (C), a local Member of Parliament (C), the Salvation army, and the London Police Service, announced that they will be receiving close to a million dollars to help women involved in prostitution as part of the December 2014 government decision to criminalize the purchase of sexual services in the PCEPA. This clearly shows the conflict of interest they had in acting as amici curiae and their public campaigning for the law change.

⁵ The executive director is married to a senior writer at the London Free Press which likely gives her privileged access to the paper.

⁶ LAWC's Shine the Light on Woman Abuse campaign received endorsement from Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in October 2016 along with sponsorship from the Planmar Financial Group, Middlesex-London Health Unit, City of London, Harrison Pensa Law firm, McCormick's, Siskinds Law firm, several FM radio stations, CTV, among many others.

argument seems to echo the much maligned “not-all-men” hashtag that is accused of trying to derail female voices (Zimmerman 2014), ignoring the complexity of power and social categories leaves many questions unanswered. If an appeal to patriarchy is inadequate on its own because of these realities, what can we learn about sex work if we include these voices? What stories are not being listened to? Have there been consequences for this exclusion?

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of sex work is diverse, encompassing activities related to the exchange of intimate services for some sort of payment. This can include, but is not limited to: escorting, street-based sex work, massage, prostitution, erotic dance and stripping, pornographic performances, professional domination, fetish work, internet shows and phone chat (van der Meulen, Durisin, and Love 2013). Pressing at the edges of commercial sex are informal hookups for small cash gifts or bar-tabs, and sugar-relationships (Mitchell 2015). There are distinctive sub-cultural norms, patterns, and behaviours within each sector and the constraints of law and order, public attitudes to sex work, sexuality, and safe-sex vary between time, geographical locations, and other structural conditions (Gozdiak 2016).

Research into the sex industry in Canada and beyond largely focusses on women and the interrelationships between sex work and violence, poverty, crime, and disease (i.e., HIV/AIDS) in large cities.⁷ Supported by legal and political lenses that singularly see all prostitution as exploitative, there continues to be a body of research using this paradigm, regardless of what sex workers say or feel (Hua and Nigorizawa 2010). According to Marcus and Snadjr (2013), billions of dollars have been invested globally on,

research, advocacy, and law enforcement efforts around anti-trafficking discourses, socio-legal institutions, and policy discussions... there continues to be very little research that problematizes issues of agency, consent, identity, individual autonomy, and social governance, and even less that... presents the empirical realities and quotidian experience of those who are counted as... victims (191).

Consequently, urgent pleas for protection are only extended to certain feminized types of “victims” who are innocent and naïve (Bruckert and Parent 2004; Manzer 1994; Roots and De Shalit 2016).

This gynocentric framework of the industry (re)produces gendered stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, naturalizes a certain brand of heterosexual behaviour, and

⁷ The possibility of generalizing from research findings is tied to notions of validity based on representativeness and sample size. These knowledge claims then serve as criteria to establish the quality of generalizations “for relevant and rigorous research” (Brewer, Fuller, and Loeb 2010). The privileging of larger research samples as more useful than smaller ethnographic studies leads to overgeneralizing. The subsequent misrepresentation and erasure of individual nuances in policy and practice are part of a political climate that shapes the experiences of minority groups (cf. Ercikan and Roth 2014; Ercikan 2009).

prevents the expression of multiple overlapping interests and identities (Findlay 2015). This ascribes a particular value to sex instead of other bodily mediated activities, such as childcare, nursing, or domestic activities (Oerton and Phoenix 2001). Assuming the sex industry is reducible to sexual intercourse, which is a function of relations between domineering men and victimized women⁸, SWERF paradigms serve to buttress a vision of patriarchy which homogenizes and universalizes heteronormative and nuclear familial and sexual relations, inferring that heterosexuality is the same everywhere and that all men are sexually interested in women (Fanon 2007). It neglects the mutual constitutive nature of sexuality, class, gender, ability, and race and how their interactions shape and structure expressions of autonomy and subordination (Hankivsky 2007; cf. Findlay 1993; Gabriel 1996; Razack 1993; Rubin 1984). With statistics (however contestable) that assert higher rates of women selling sex to men, it is perhaps reasonable that there has been substantial attention towards women in the industry. However not only does painting all women as victims disregard the reality that many who sell sex do it as a choice,⁹ the mere belief that women outnumber men does not explain why men (and others) are so often completely ignored both locally and nationally (Dennis 2008). With London the epicentre of SWERF campaigns, no comprehensive inquiry into male sex workers locally existed prior to my research. On that fact alone, I had ample motivation to investigate the scope of this part of the industry and the activities of these men (cf. McLean 2013).

Following Walby (2012) “I wanted to provide a sense of where men are in their life course,” how they came to sex work, and how it has influenced their lives. Here my aim is not to simply display and comprehend diversity but openly expect and allow for disorientation (Clifford 1988). Since official historical records take little to no notice of certain forms of sex work (and those involved) in chapter two I situate male sex work in a brief history of prostitution, gender and sexuality frameworks within Canada and London politics, alongside research paradigms that reflect the times. The aim here is to better understand the forces, choices, and conditions that influence the present sociopolitical environment.

⁸ This does not mean that violence faced should be denied, diminished or disavowed (Heron 2007).

⁹ Although for some, choices may well be constrained like those in most low-paid or dangerous jobs (Altman 2015); though there is nothing inherently dangerous about sex work nor are all sex workers poorly paid.

In the next chapter I explore the initial stages of field work by briefly explaining my choice of methods, and especially highlighting my use of narrative methodology. How I established interviews, and problems I faced during recruitment, are followed by a discussion of special considerations for interviews and the ways men positioned me and their expectations of the research. Lastly, I present the demographics of the sex workers I talked to.

In chapter four I reflect on intersubjective interview dynamics. This includes the queer sensibility that the interview space created and the commonalities the gay men that I interviewed shared which ultimately encouraged rapport. I discuss what it was like interviewing straight men or men that I had difficulties making connections with. As I was exposed to increasing numbers of stories, I raise issues of compassion fatigue and secondary trauma I experienced as researcher.

Chapters five through seven engage in grounded analysis, deconstructing stories into component meta-narratives, discursive content, and structural meaning. The life histories produced followed a linear plot, separated into four phases offering insight into childhood, motivation and methods for entering the trade, and the fundamentals-of-sex work. Accounts of growing-up were separated into five themes and outlined in chapter five; 1) the unexceptionality of middleclass childhood; 2) coming-out stories; 3) lives complicated by sexual abuse; 4) growing up in a culture of poverty; and 5) youth addiction.

In chapter six we learn how and why men entered the sex trade. While the internet facilitated about half of the men's entry into the industry, a third were introduced to it by male or female friends already in the industry; others had a friend or sibling who served as their broker. In the end most men evaluated the benefits of sex work against the risks they were willing to or had to take. Often sex work was the most favorable alternative in situations where the options for making money were limited (cf. Vanwesenbeeck 2012).

In chapter seven men discuss some of the fundamental aspects of working in the industry. They gave accounts of body and emotion management as part of a negotiation between private performance of self and strategic intersubjective performance of sex work as well as the need to manage the bodies and emotions of clients. Within this setting men reconstruct or deconstruct sexualized scripts of gendered behaviour before and during an

encounter. Lastly the men problematize the boundaries of sex and work by discussing issues of attraction, compassion, and affection.

Chapter eight shows how maintaining a sense of dignity in the face of stigma underlined these stories. While sex work stigma was prominent in men's stories, other types of stigma were common. Participants recounted experiences of 1) homophobia; 2) classed ideas of acceptable lifestyles; and 3) the shame of sexual abuse, criminality, or addiction. As gendered behaviours underline the processes of male sex work (Kumar, Scott and Minichiello 2017), interviewees were at times subsumed by stigma as they violated hegemonic masculine norms; at other times they used tropes of masculinity to shield themselves from potential feelings of shame and to justify their actions.

In the closing chapter, I discuss the gendered structural violence some men experience. Intersectional factors complicate the idea of privilege and marginalization based on one social category. The assumptions and expectations placed on some men do not put them in a privileged position, and as these men have shown often the opposite is true, complicating their transition out of the industry. Rendered invisible based on their gender, sexuality, and involvement in the sex trade, men presented their ideas to the causes of their respective perceptions of equity and inequity and what coping strategies they used. I conclude by summarizing the sociopolitical needs of these men and provide suggestions for further research.

In summary this dissertation provides a complicated view of sex work as it is lived by men. Following a polymorphous paradigm in the field of sex work highlights structural and experiential differences among sex workers, their clients, and their managers (Weitzer 2009). It renders their lives and identities visible in order to explore the complexity and plurality of their actions (Mai 2012) rather than to reinforce notions that aspects of their lives can be treated as stable and homogenous (Smith 2015). It presents the unique knowledge sex workers possess of the issues that affect their lives which needs to inform health and social policies, structures, and practices (at all government levels).

2. Historical perspective

“Erasure is not achieved simply through inattention but by the production of a different kind of history by specific forms of attention” (Das and Kleinman 2001: 9).

As Ramadan and Shantz (2016) state in their edited volume on *The Political Production of Fear*, one volume would not be enough to expose and map what are labelled as socially accepted norms and policies that serve to mask phobic (oppressive) practices. This is particularly relevant when we remember that history is only made linear by our writing of it, that I impose an arborescent frame on a rhizomatic past. That as a complex “assemblage” its component parts and edges are not stable and fixed but made and remade through our gaze (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). In other words, what I write here will be messy, partial and in some places perhaps repetitive as I pull at the strings. This is even further complicated considering the fragments written on men in the sex industry historically. Regardless, it is important to consider a history of social policy and regulation, at least in part, particularly in its complex relationship between female-focused bureaucracy and concepts of social welfare and the production of a gynocentric and misandric present as experienced by men involved in the sex industry. The history of sex work also intersects with the history of queer communities not only because selling sex has been a work option for marginalized men, but because of their statuses at the social and political margins. This means exposing the silences of domination and oppression, whereby types of feminism reproduce and create gendered, classed, and sexually normative discourses in a “fraught cultural, political, and economic terrain” and reveal “realities that shatter easy group fictions about harm, violence, and justice” (Whitlock 2018).

2.1. Pre-1900s

Though male sex work in various forms has been documented since at least the Roman era, historical records take no notice of certain forms of sex work (and those who are involved). With few women and increased bonds of homosociality, conditions were ripe for men to engage in same-sex behaviour or sell sex in the Canadian frontier (Allman 2015).¹⁰ Those men who rejected the domestic ideal¹¹ could embrace a heroic machismo in the isolating

¹⁰ Though history records the prevalence of women in brothels and saloons.

¹¹ Guilford (1995) describes how Anglo-Saxon men who failed to conform to middle-class gender ideals by being unchivalrous or violating morals of protectiveness and generosity were subject to the power of women to reject them as husbands.

fur-trade or other industries like logging and fishing. With an expanding agricultural frontier Colonial Ontario was idealized as able to give a young man hope to rise from poverty to a comfortable independence by middle-life for him and his family. In this environment, as the means of creating wealth increased, the rewards accruing to thrift, hard work, and ability would multiply and be widely distributed. This dogma that success could be obtained by all who lived respectably and worked hard had a direct impact on social welfare that we can see evidence of to this day. Those who do not work and prosper are seen to fail because they are lazy or immoral (Splane 1965). These were Protestant values influencing the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor.

Children, women, and “the disabled” were deserving and innocent but originally had to rely on family or voluntary organizations for help. Some of the first laws in Canada were concerned with reproductive rights for able-bodied white women which was dependent on the sterilization of Indigenous women; miscegenation regimes removed the “legal status” of Indigenous women who married white men and punished white women for marrying Indigenous men (see Thompson 2009); laws were also created to save white women from the evils of prostitution. Able-bodied men who found themselves destitute, however, were considered undeserving of aid (Blake and Keshen 2006). With limited or non-existent social support,¹² some men were forced into survival or supplemental sex work (Ibid). As mechanization increased and factories became more efficient, the need for as many workers was reduced moving some men to sell sex out of desperation. With limited or no insurance or social assistance, periodic depressions resulted in widespread layoffs. The surplus of workers due to increasing waves of immigrants, more women working outside the home, and lax or non-existent child-labour laws, pushed wages down as there were fewer jobs and more people vying for those jobs (cf. Blake and Keshen 2006; Friedman 2003). Some young working-class men also chose sex work over the dangerousness of labor conditions of the industrial age (Walby 2012).

With increased urbanization and the separation of work from the household economy and the process of proletarianization meant that men in cities could live outside

¹² Social welfare was seen as a local concern and municipalities only provided relief on an ad hoc basis in part due to lack of financial resources (Struthers 2003). Here London began to gain its reputation for being complacent, conservative, and priggish; the city, when compared with others, seemed rigidly committed to restricting municipal involvement in social services (Sanction 1986).

or on the margins of the family/household system. With increasing incidence of poverty, industrial accidents, child labour, prostitution and other social “problems” due to the new urban economy, by the end of the nineteenth century there were increased calls for government intervention (Blake and Keshen 2006). Anxieties regarding sexual morality increased; concerns focused on the undermining of marriage and the family, central institutions of socialization and social control (Backhouse 1985; Chambers 2007; Hunt 2002; Strange 1981). Reinforced by the “sciences of population”¹³ and social Darwinism, the emerging middle-class distrust of the working-class intersected with an urban population assumed to be living in dirt, sickness and overcrowding that spawned disorder and contagion spreading not only disease but immorality. While both men and women engaged in sexual practices of which moral reformers disapproved, it was women, the supposed guardians of morality, who were blamed and regulated¹⁴ (prior to the development of a concept of homosexuality). Prostitution in this light was increasingly understood as an urban condition and so gendered that it was disruptive to “natural” social hierarchies and institutions. When prostitution began to change from a temporary job to a more permanent occupation because of legal reform and police persecution, prostitutes who had been part of the general working-class population became increasingly isolated as members of an outcast group. The solution to the problem of prostitution was to “contain and control,” restricting its visibility to the private realm or geographic margins of cities and towns.

For over a century, media and social discourse has painted the downtown area of London, east of Adelaide Street, with the tropes of despair, danger, and cultural insignificance of the inner city (Orchard et al. 2012). Historically, the area was surrounded by train tracks that isolated the neighborhood from the rest of the city, acting as a physical and psychological barrier. After WWII, the increasing decline in industrial factory jobs that once made the area an economic powerhouse further ostracized the neighborhood (Searle 2014). In 1971, the area saw the opening of London’s first strip club as well as a burlesque club, provoking community and police concern (Florczyk 1971; Johnson 1971).

¹³ Registering and recording individuals and subjecting them to normalizing judgements that allowed for authoritative categorization and medical intervention (Foucault 1978).

¹⁴ Institutions for the “reclamation of fallen women” such as Magdalen asylums were founded and funded as a method of control.

By the end of the decade some restaurants hired table dancers and held amateur strip contests in efforts to bring life to their businesses (Orton 1997; see Plate 1). To better control these businesses and their association with Biker gangs, the City implemented a by-law, which is still in effect today, limiting in what manner and how many strip clubs could run in the city at one time. These laws were enacted “for the purposes of protecting the health and safety of the attendants, to ensure that the business is not a nuisance to the surrounding properties and neighbourhood, and the consumers protection of those individuals who attend and partake in services of the parlour” (City of London 2016: 4).¹⁵ As a nuisance, clubs were restricted from being within 100 metres of a school, day-care, or church (Ibid 21). Ironically, the city has limited these clubs geographically, further reinforcing the negative tropes of the area. Prior to the closing of the Kellogg’s factory in 2014, it was still common knowledge that tired workers looking for “relief” only need go out to the street. Along with the location of city police headquarters, outreach organization and drug treatment centres provoked public outcry for local government initiatives for gentrification which has included the designation of the area as a heritage district, “cleaning up” the streets, anti-homelessness measures, business grants, and increased surveillance and policing (Backhouse 1994; Pedro 2013).

Plate 1: Beef Baron Gentlemen’s Club, East of Adelaide, London Ontario, August 2016Error! Bookmark not defined.

¹⁵ Advertising is still strictly regulated and the assertion that advertisements not show “areas uncovered of a male or female person; or the act, whether actual or simulated, of sexual intercourse, cunnilingus, fellatio, buggery, bestiality, masturbation, urination or defecation, or the bonding, flagellation, mutilation, maiming or murder of one or more human beings” (Ibid 13), speak volumes to what is considered offensive alongside stripping and erotic massage.

2.2.



Homosexuality

For every hundred girls peddling their wares on street corners, there are a hundred unobtrusive male prostitutes, of all ages, offering their services to both heterosexual and homosexual clients. Students, university graduates, some married, some with other jobs, they are almost invisible, and the police hardly know of their existence (Taylor 1991: 97).

Because of the implicit taboo of homosexuality, De Cecco (1991) asserts that the existence of male prostitution was neglected as it threatened the conceptual integrity of male heterosexuality (cf. Ringdal 2004). Males were socially constructed as “all-powerful, potent and macho when it comes to sex” (De Cecco 1991: ix), thus for a man to sell, or purchase, sex from another man or a woman to purchase sex from a man, threatened this conceptualization, as “men are not supposed to be the objects of lust” (Ibid; Phoenix and Oerton 2005; Satz 1995). Non-masculine behaviour, appearance and mannerism were thought to be homosexual, and hypermasculinity, heterosexual (Ginsburg 1967). Friedman (2003) suggests that the tradition of sexual repression and the connected need for secrecy occluded much of gay and prostitute history. It was the formation of large-city same-sex-attracted communities from the in-migration of young, rurally situated gay men and lesbians after the war that caused renewed concerns of a decline in traditional values (Duberman 1986; Nash 2006; Weston 1995). In these urban spaces were public sex environments or commercial areas with bars and other services, and men who sold sex to men could blend into the scene (Crofts 2014; Whowell 2010).¹⁶

¹⁶ With male sex work relegated to “the closet” alongside homosexuality, men were forced to present themselves falsely in almost all situations to avoid stigmatization (Goffman 1963).

As sexologists and psychoanalysts began attributing psychopathologies to male hustlers (Walby 2012), the emergence of a particular language surrounding sexual identity allowed for “normative assessments and judgements to be made concerning particular classes of male prostitute” (Scott 2003: 179). Historical views of homosexual deviance thereby began to frame those men who had sex with men as psychologically damaged in general (until 1974) and crossed with discourses that debated which kinds of pathological dysfunction lead to prostitution; “he only can be seduced who is capable of being seduced” (cf. Bimbi 2007; Browne and Minichiello 1996; Kaye 2003). By 1947, Freyhan conducted a case study with men who sold homosexual sex voluntarily. Their lack of remorse was diagnosed as deviance and lobotomy the solution. Research also supported the rhetoric of the temptation of the city as a space of danger and corruption for the naïve and ignorant, with a profit-oriented street corner recruiting, training, and selling heterosexual boys and men to older affluent male homosexuals (Scott, MacPhail and Minichiello 2014; Butts 1947; Caulkins and Coombs 1976; Harris 1972).

Eventually this led to a “lavender scare;” the systematic persecution and marginalization of those considered sex perverts and moral degenerates. These deviants included those with disabilities and disorders, gay and trans* individuals, the homeless, rebellious youth, and prostitutes. Cleaning up “vice” and the dangers of unrestricted sexuality meant increasing Criminal Code provisions aimed at restricting sexual relations to private, heterosexual, monogamous marriage, and procreation. After decades of oppression, the Homophile Association of London Ontario was founded in the wake of the radical collectivity of the Stonewall riots of 1969 to further the social and political needs of gay people in the community, challenging the injustices they faced. As gay men came to perceive bonds extending beyond their immediate circle of friends and acquaintances, some developed a communal consciousness as a means of protection (Higgins 1999). As a later founded and smaller organization, for most of the 1970s HALO was restricted to social demands through the operation of its bar / disco. Riddiough (1979) describes that at that point in history, bars, baths, and clubs were the most stable institution in an unstable world; a territory the LGBT could call their own. While it was effective in building the foundation of the community, it did not reach out to most of the queer population and needed to refocus increasing community presence and affecting change of public attitudes.

Dealings with institutions and bureaucracies, hospitals, police, coroners, banks, public officials, proved to be difficult.¹⁷

In concrete policy terms, in a national context, this area included issues such as censorship of LGBT bookstores, pornography, criminalization of anal sex (deemed a “gay” practice), attempts to regulate public sex, and age of consent laws. Increasingly many LGBT communities were on the receiving end of police repression and violence¹⁸ (see Janoff 2005) despite the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1969 and the 1974 declassification of homosexuality as a mental disorder; gross indecency laws still criminalized sexual activity¹⁹ between men until 1985.²⁰ Laws that were originally developed for the regulation of prostitution, became extended to the regulation of gay men and spaces (Guidotto 1981: 74). Strothard of HALO reported that the problems of gay people went deep into issues of the “community, communication and ignorance, and bigotry” (1979: 7).²¹

By the 1990s the oppression of London’s queer population had reached its climax. At this point, because of the stigmatization of the LGBT they were often construed as “deserving victims;” mediated by their behavioural responsibility for risk and their own social characteristics (Richardson and May 1999). In 1993, London’s vice squad instated “Project Guardian”, a moral panic based on the premise of a kiddie porn ring linked to the

¹⁷ Robert Wellan of the Homophile Association at UWO (aka HALO) in a 1971 letter to Reverend Goth detailed the local situation on one level. With limited social outlets, due to the purging of gay friendly or at least tolerant pubs or drinking places by city officials, gay men were desperately lonely and had a higher suicide rate than the rest of the population. Though attempts were made to discuss homosexuality and the law with the Superintendent of the London City Police, bureaucratic red-tape and bullying tactics left requests unfulfilled.

¹⁸ In Toronto’s “Operation Soap” in 1981, the police physically and verbally assaulted and targeted gay men and gay male spaces. These “irresponsible” gay men were disposable “or at least the police suggested they were when they beat the men up and pinned for showers hooked up to gas” (Guidotto 1981: 74).

¹⁹ Sexual activity was loosely defined: two men were arrested in 1976 for kissing in public in Toronto (Winsa 2015).

²⁰ As recently as November 2016, Etobicoke police, after years of complaints and “toleration of lewd and indecent behaviour,” performed a crackdown of men having and soliciting men for sex in Marie Curtis Park in Toronto (Reason 2016).

²¹ Numerous incidents of beatings and robberies were reported but many people did not press charges due to the threat of being fired or outed to family and community during a trial, or further violence from the police themselves.

gay community (cf. Hannon 1995).²² The child porn ring turned out to be a group of teen male prostitutes who introduced one another to male clients and most of the so-called pornography did not actually exist. During the same time frame, London police ignored heterosexual clients who hired teen female prostitutes and never charged them for their involvement “with children” (Janoff 2005: 233). By 1995 London’s mayor bolstered anti-gay rhetoric by refusing to issue a Gay and Lesbian Pride proclamation and by claiming that there was no queer-bashing problem in the city despite HALO’s accounts to the contrary.²³ By 2000, sporadic episodes between the police and the gay community continued (such as the arrest of large numbers of men for cruising in bathrooms and parks). However, by 2002 relationships changed especially with the rise of the internet, gay consumer and legislative gains in civil rights. Same-sex marriage became legal in Ontario in 2003 and in Canada in 2005; City Hall received federal funding to set up a hate crime hotline; the London Police began actively supporting and sending police officers to take part in Pride festivities (Ibid 234).

Unlike larger cities with gaybourhoods and diverse LGBT community organizations, London’s gay community is now limited in scope and breadth (Pride London 2017). While the city tries to maintain a discourse that equates certain local industries like the biosciences and education with cosmopolitanism and tolerance (Bradford 2010),²⁴ other dominant sectors such as finance, manufacturing and military-industrial have been associated with heteronormative and sometimes homophobic work cultures and environments (Lewis et al 2015; McDowell et al. 2007). Located within a rural regional bible belt, London still acts as a magnet for younger, rurally situated LGBT people moving from homophobic

²² Bell and Couture (2000) note that after a witch hunt of two thousand interviews sixty men were arrested, one was charged with making child porn and only a handful were charged with possession, and several were also outed (Sas and Hurley 1997).

²³ The Ontario Human Rights Commission ruled that this action and City Council’s failure to intervene was unlawful discrimination.

²⁴ Pride London Festival provides the most visible expression of London’s LGBT community and serves as an example of exceptionalism and homonormativity. The official by-line is that it provides an opportunity to generate celebratory, cultural, artistic and educational events to affirm LGBT lives. Numerous local and regional businesses use the parade as an advertising ploy, emphasizing their own exceptionalism. The inclusion of the London police acts as a way to erase a history of their place as oppressors; along with its broadcast on local access cable, the 2016 painting of rainbow crosswalks at the beginning and end of the parade route (Park and Helmer 2016) show how “accepting” our community has become towards a depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption and subjected to insidious forms of surveillance (see Duggan’s homonormativity 2002).

environments (Bruce and Harper 2011). At the same time, because of London's location, groups such as gay students and white-collar workers often travel to Toronto for nightlife and services or eventually move there (Lewis et al. 2015; Lewis 2012; Rowe and Dowsett 2008). Perhaps it is no surprise that HALO closed its doors by 2005, and gay only spaces (except for the Central Spa London; see Plate 2)²⁵ and bars have given way to so-called all-inclusive venues that are only generally appropriate for a certain type of clientele.²⁶

Plate 2: Central Spa London Ontario, York Street, August 2016



2.3. Typologies

By classifying what is unclassifiable, naming what is unnameable, we are able to imagine it, to represent it (Moscovici 1984: 30).

Operationalization of what was once abstract into something measurable using subjective social science was a manifestation of the governmentality of the larger state (cf. Jonker and Pennink 2010). To control the population, define its boundaries, make that within visible, and assemble information, typologies are ways to devise techniques of regulation (Rose 1999). Despite the continual lumping of sex workers into a larger unified and mythological entity “it became possible to speak not of ‘male prostitutes,’ but also of specific ‘types’ of

²⁵ Central Spa London is a bathhouse designed for discrete sexual encounters for men who have sex with men, located in a semi-industrial space, East of Adelaide Street, in central London. It had a connected licenced bar which closed by 2018 and there are rumors that it may be closing as it is hemorrhaging money as increasingly fewer men access this space. Often the Regional HIV / AIDS Connection holds events and free anonymous HIV testing.

²⁶ In London, this is in-shape college aged men. Opened in 2008, Lavish Night Club is now London's only outwardly queer-accepting nightclub, but it emphasizes the facilitation of a comfortable atmosphere for all people.

male prostitute” (Scott 2003: 187). Morse, Simon and Burchfiel (1999) ask what is actually gained from trying to fit behaviour into inflexible boxes. The need to create mutually exclusive categories of sex work was important for research especially when using multivariate analysis to reach a large majority of sex workers with programmatic interventions (Jain and Saggurti 2012). Discussing the depictions of male sex workers researchers historically, Scott (2005) outlined that men selling sex in public places are generally portrayed as masculine/heterosexual, while those in private spaces are presented as effeminate/homosexual (McLean 2013). This gendered binary is based on stereotyped behaviours and implicit assumptions regarding the relationship between the site of work and sexuality.

Raven (1960) grouped male sex workers in London (UK) according to behaviours as men of the armed services or homosexuals in need of money, drifters who steal, crooks who see homosexuals as easy marks, and full-time professionals. John Rechy’s (1963) exposé *City of Night* describes similar behaviours in the US during the 1950s but also shows the “street hustler” as more complex and in negotiation with sexual identity. Caukins and Coombs (1976) defined four types of sex work focussing on activity: street hustler, bar hustler, call boy and kept boy. Prus and Irimi (1980) authored the first ethnography on Canadian prostitution and categorized a community of hookers, strippers, and others based on their occupational roles. Van der Poel (1992) argues that researchers had largely focused on categorizing men as problematic. He accounts for the “successful prostitute” and categorized workers as pseudo-prostitutes, hustlers, occasionals, and professionals. Dorais (2005) identified “life patterns” of Canadian male sex workers: 1) Street-based “Outcasts:” with experiences of sexual abuse, poverty and homelessness; 2) Supplemental “Part-timers:” heterosexual men who engage in sex work when in periods of debt; 3) “Insiders:” who see sex work as a natural lifestyle choice; and 4) Highly-educated “Liberationists:” who enjoy the sexuality of the work and perceive many privileges to the career. Harcourt and Donovan’s typology includes both location and recruitment method; “direct” sex work worldwide, regardless of gender, includes street, brothel, escort, private, public display, club / bar, all-male venues (e.g., bathhouses, mining camps), hotel, transport, CB radio, and via advertisement (2005: 202). “Indirect” typology includes bondage and discipline, lap dancing, massage, travelling entertainers, beer girls, street

vendors, opportunistic, femme-libre, individual arrangements (e.g., sugar daddy), swingers' clubs, geisha, sex-for-drugs, beach-boys, and survival sex (Ibid). Bimbi (2007) points out that the knowledge gained by past research was often a product of the places men were sampled, relying heavily on street workers although other venues existed. What has been learned through this narrow focus has often been generalized to all men engaged in sex work when the precise boundaries are impossible to define (Marques 2011). The dynamic nature of sex workers, their numbers, area of operation, turnover rate, etc. render typologies imprecise (Shahmanesh et al 2008). This speaks to the phenomenon being rhizomatic; sex work as a phenomenon has no true centre, it spreads continuously without beginning or ending, weaving, and entangling (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). It is the process of documenting experiential observations through social scientific methods that a researcher may exclude those who do not fit in tidy boxes; nor do typologies account for transience and mobility in and out of the industry nor the complexity of lived experiences and blurred boundaries of behaviour.

2.4. Prostitution law

Prior to 1972, undercover officers made arrests based on a mere wink or nod or other low-key communications and charged liquor licence holders for allowing prostitution on their premises, driving many out of traditional locations and onto the street, and those on the streets were labelled as committing vagrancy (Martin 2002). The Criminal Code of Canada (1954) s.175(1)(c) deemed every woman a vagrant (and therefore arrestable) who was “a common prostitute or nightwalker... found in a public place and does not, when required, give a good account of herself.” When these laws were repealed and replaced with those that made it an offence to solicit in a public place, police could no longer arrest based on a mere willingness to prostitute; there needed to be evidence that they were pressing or persistent. This amendment removed the gender distinction, making it possible to arrest purchasers of sexual services and to recognize that men and boys also work as prostitutes (Ibid). In a tactic to maximize their claim that they need stronger laws, the police, under the newer law, allowed street prostitution to flourish leading to mounting community pressure. The concern now was with the nuisance effects of street prostitution, the adverse impact on property values and concerns of child prostitution and the high-risk and demeaning lives of street prostitutes (Ibid). Street prostitution challenged the notion that a

woman can express her sexuality only at home; to remove it from public was to enforce its separation from good society – namely innocent women and children (Hubbard and Sanders 2003). In the early 80s, in political response to public pressure to “do something” about the problem of street prostitution, Parliament set up a Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution (Fraser 1985) and a Committee on Sexual Offences Against Children and Youths (Badgley report). The Fraser Report named prostitution as symptomatic of women’s inequality and recommended partial decriminalization and strategies to reduce social and financial inequities between men and women. The Badgley Report (Robertson 1988) named young prostitutes as victims of individual abusive homes but favored criminal law strategies that would “help” fallen women and girls. In both cases, no attempt was made to acknowledge or explain why men sell sex. In the end, the Fraser Committee was ignored, and all aspects of street prostitution were criminalized. This regime treated street prostitutes very harshly, but also in the name of equality and concern for well-being, extended a broad net (Ibid). The communication law was amended in 1985²⁷ to create a separate offence for soliciting a minor; however, to obtain a conviction it was essential that the youth testify against their customer – and few did.²⁸ Though technically gender neutral, most law enforcement devoted to prostitution had been expended on the conduct of women who sell sexual services to men.²⁹ Considered squalid and subversive, prostitution is about sex, almost exclusively heterosexual sex. The popular images are vivid: fallen or debauched women, rakish or compulsive men (Cossman 2002).

Sexual freedom via sexual citizenship has been defined as the freedom to engage in various forms of sexual practice in personal relationships (Richardson 2000). However, popular ideology holds that families are not supposed to produce or harbor erotic non-conformity (Rubin 1999). This meshes with assumptions that all bodies could occupy the role of good and safe citizen. Heteronormativity describes how society presumes that people are heterosexual, and gender is binary; it privileges heterosexuality as normal and

²⁷ A large increase in police-reported prostitution incidents under the communicating offence was noted following the implementation of Bill C-49 (O’Connell 1988).

²⁸ This was corrected in 1997 that made it an offence to solicit one believed to be under 18; undercover operatives posing as youthful prostitutes became a law enforcement tool.

²⁹ The trend appears to have reversed in the late 2000s when males (those buying sex) represented a greater proportion of persons charged with prostitution than females. Said otherwise, women represented 55% of accused charged with a prostitution offence in 1998. By 2013, this proportion decreased to 35%, and in 2014, only 9% of accused charged with a prostitution offence were female (Rotenberg 2016).

natural (Warner 1993). Thus, the heteronormative organization of public policy is particularly visible in the areas concerning sex work in which policies are predicated on a heterosexual nuclear family model, which ignores the complexities and diversities of “heterosexual” populations let alone of the LGBT population (Smith 2007). This is also interesting in light of indications that hiring a sex worker may be more common among men who have sex with men than other populations and may be an integral element of the sexual landscape of gay communities (Scott, MacPhail, and Minichiello 2014; cf. Koken et al. 2005). For example, a community-based survey of 660 sexually active non-monogamous MSM in New York City found that 43 percent of participants had either paid for sex, been paid for sex, or both (Koken et al. 2005).

2.5. Vectors of disease

The discourses of criminality, dirt, and disease that frame prostitution intensified with the HIV epidemic in the 1980s (cf. Aggleton and Parker 2015; Brock 1998; Coates et al. 1988; Estep, Waldorf, and Marotta 1992). MSM also inherited these frames and both groups have been subject to the same laws and policing such as forced STI testing, police stings described as “cleaning up” and fears of condom litter.³⁰ With those men who resist a homosexual identity while having sex with men and still maintaining sexual partnerships with women, male sex workers served as a triple threat (Bimbi 2007; Coutinho et al. 1988; Pruss-Ustun et al. 2013; Shaver 2005).

These (mis)conceptualizations became a cluster of metaphors and a means for articulating many of the fears and anxieties of life (Sontag 2001). By connecting the physical to the moral and by figuring illness as a mysterious and malevolent predator,³¹ metaphors mythicize disease (Sontag 1978). Sontag (1978) warned against the potentially dehumanizing and damaging effects of these metaphors. Governments exploited the disease to create a new moral framework for society. Through baseless fearmongering, officials looked to police to regulate the behaviour of the public; The spectre of an AIDS epidemic terrified the public into behaving “responsibly” in sexual and social matters (O’Neill 2008). This caused a specific concern towards men who had sex with men but did not identify as gay because they potentially kept sexual partnerships with women

³⁰ Raids in 2003 of bar and bath houses in Montreal and Calgary were undertaken under federal Criminal Code bawdy house laws (Smith 2007: 92).

³¹ Embodied in a male sex worker who committed homosexual acts.

thereby exposing the broader public to contagion (Aggleton and Parker 2015). To this day, sex workers are considered a "high-risk" population for contracting sexually transmitted infections. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the US, high-risk behaviors include "having unprotected sex; having multiple sexual partners; using drugs and alcohol; and engaging in commercial, survival [prostitution to earn money for food, shelter, or drugs], or coerced sex" (Petro 2011: para. 6). Contemporary research retains a strong focus on sexual health with varying reports of HIV infections among 6.5% and 27% of male sex workers (cf. Dandona et al 2006; Escourt et al 2000; Michiello, Scott and Callander 2014) and claims that male sex workers have higher rates of HIV and STIs than their female counterparts (Estcourt et al 2000). Yet, "there's nothing about charging money [for sex] that makes [it] any riskier... and the ways for sex workers to reduce their risk for ST[I]s are the same ways that anyone else having sex ought to protect themselves" (Petro 2011: para. 7). In fact, Bimbi (2007) reports that many studies found male sex workers were using condoms *more* frequently with their male clients than with their other sex partners (cf. Belza et al 2001; Boles and Elfison 1994; Davies and Feldman 1999; Escourt et al 2000; Estep, Waldorf, Marotta 1992; Hickson, Weatherburn, Hows, and Davies 1994; Pennbridge, Freese, and MacKenzie 1992; Pleak and Meyer-Bahlburg 1990; Rietmeijer et al 1998; Snell 1995; de Souza et al 2003; Weinburg, Worth, and William 2001).

Sex workers' contributions to medical research, to pioneering harm reduction education, and efforts to challenge laws criminalizing the lives of HIV-positive citizens have worked to disrupt dominant stereotypes regarding AIDS (Chateauvert 2013).³² As such it helped facilitate shifts in understandings based on more sophisticated accounts of male sexuality and questioning of binaries evident in previous paradigms (Minichiello, Scott and Callander 2013). HIV research has also helped problematize the idea of universal solutions for so-called "world-wide problems." Culturally diverse populations, samples that vary in representativeness from countries in various stages of the epidemic, and assumptions that the label "prostitute" or "fe/male" can be used as a universal sociocultural

³² Unfortunately, more contemporary research still emphasizes the threat of HIV in sex work research. A content analysis of 166 sex work articles published between 2000 and 2007 found that 26% of articles associated with female sex work emphasized the risks of HIV while 57% focussed on the risks for male workers (Minichiello, Scott and Callander 2013).

category that reflects specific biological or structural aetiologies, is “dubious and unscientific” (Davies and Feldman 1999). Bimbi (2007) notes that many studies are problematic due to multiple biases in method and a priori assumptions.

Male Australian workers appear to have comparable or slightly higher rates of overall condom use (Bimbi and Parsons 2005). Yet research in Kenya reports extremely poor understandings of HIV transmission and condom use between men who have sex with men (Geibel et al 2008). Other studies are increasingly showing the level of sexual health knowledge among sex workers who offer their services in the street and internet. In Rowe’s (2011) study, out of a sample of 145 workers, only one was shown to be HIV positive; In Estcourt and colleagues (2000) study, only 6.5% tested positive for HIV. Female indoor sex workers in Vancouver show STI rates much below national averages and had zero incidence of HIV (Handovsky, Bungay, and Kolar 2012).

In applying singular constructions to HIV research conducted in cross-cultural contexts, any data obtained is rendered meaningless, as we miss the “realities of people’s lives, how they see the world and themselves, and how they survive” (Kahn 1999: 197). This queered³³ realization has extreme implications for sex work research and politics, especially as SWERFs espouse the need for “the Nordic model” to liberate “trafficked” women world-wide.

2.6. Trafficking hysteria

By denying prostitution the status of work, criminalization helps patrol the boundary between sex / affective labour routinely assigned to and expected of women, and practices deserving of the financial and status rewards of “work” (Zatz 1997: 287).

With 2014’s criminalization of sex workers’ clients in an effort to “end demand” for sexual services under Canada’s interpretation of the “Nordic model,” three rationales have dominated: 1) an interest in protecting or saving prostitutes from men; 2) the redemption and prosperity of women and youth as evidence of the goodness of liberal society; 3) and the need to express moral outrage at the activity (Martin 2002; Newman 2016).³⁴ We are

³³ Queering is the necessity of a constant questioning of assumptions about the subject (Warner 1999: 20-21).

³⁴ In March 2018 the US Congress followed suit and passed FOSTA-SESTA, intended to minimize human trafficking and prostitution in the internet era. The legislation targets websites that promote or facilitate

positioned as the site for authoritative condemnation of certain human rights abuses elsewhere³⁵ ignoring abuses within our borders (Grewal 2005) and by being selective about which abuses are a priority. Unmarked³⁶ Canadian culture is by implication open, knowledgeable, and willing to engage with the rest of the world (Heron 2007). This exceptionalism is a process whereby a nation's population comes to believe in its own superiority through narratives of excellence. According to Puar (2007) this moral superiority has become part of an emergent global feminism, constructing the middle-class woman as savior and rescuer of "oppressed women" here and abroad.

Since at least 2000, fiscal austerity, deficit reduction, and public service downsizing were the drivers of public policy. "If the federal government had abided by a neoliberal cost-benefit analysis alone, it would have made little sense for it to create a multimillion dollar budget for anti-human trafficking activities" (Roots and De Shalit 2016: 67). Instead, it is more likely that the federal government "realized that the social and ethical costs of not regulating outweighed the costs of regulating" (Epstein 2008: 67). With increasing international focus on human trafficking, the anti-trafficking subject position "allows nation states to prove global cooperation often through regulation" (Roots and De Shalit 2016: 67). As with contemporary anti-trafficking legislation, early twentieth century laws targeting white slavery were implemented in response to international mandates and to external pressures from moral reformers. Thus, Canada's desire to belong to an international system of anti-trafficking states added to the pressure for criminalization and targeting of sex workers, their customers, and indirectly, women who did not abide by existing norms of femininity. When the UN adopted the *Trafficking Protocol* in 2000, it was the first international definition of human trafficking. As per Article 3(a) trafficking is defined as "recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of... coercion... of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person... for the purpose of exploitation" (Roots and De Shalit 2016; United Nations 2004: 42). The aim of this

prostitution. The operators of these sites face up to ten years imprisonment. Online messaging boards that used to allow personals advertisements such as Craigslist responded by closing those sections of their sites.

³⁵ Vis-à-vis orientalist constructions of foreign sexuality and universal gender rights.

³⁶ Our discourses of multiculturalism reproduce the biopolitical mandate to live through the proper population statistics; channeled through the optics of gender, sexuality and class and their attendant attributes and valuations of longevity, illness, health, environment etc. (Heron 2007).

definition was to achieve consistency and consensus on the issue and for member countries to develop and enact domestic anti-trafficking laws as well as legislative definitions of trafficking (Roots and De Shalit 2016; United Nations 2011). The United States was tasked with monitoring anti-trafficking efforts by carrying out an annual evaluation of each countries' performance (US Department of State 2013) based on a three-tier ranking system; Tier One status countries must have complied with the US's minimum anti-trafficking standards, Tier Two countries are making an effort to comply with the standards, and Tier Three status is for those whose anti-trafficking efforts have been substandard and can be subject to US Imposed sanctions (US Department Of State 2013b). With the threat of sanctions "compliance is important and, in the case of Canada, is also tied to its economic and political success" (Roots and De Shalit 2016: 68).

Thanks to government sponsorship there is a large body of research that focuses on the exploitation of women and girls. In the context of the male (gay) sex worker, an individual who is simultaneously afforded certain rights (homonormative sexuality) yet has other rights oppressed (the right to sell one's labour; the right not to be exploited) or ignored (vis-a-vis neoabolitionist hegemony), there have been hints of the exploitation paradigm emerging. The "Under the Radar" series by Susan McIntyre (2005; 2006; 2008a; 2008b; 2008c) is important for giving some insight into male experiences and perspectives. Dealing with what she calls the "sexual exploitation trade," as early as 1994 she became attuned to the fact that there were more than just young women involved. In the following 15 to 20 years she produced research under The Hindsight Group, an "independent" research consulting firm, in which she founded, and was supported by Covenant House Vancouver, anonymous donors, and many government ministries and bodies among others (McIntyre 2008c). As "grey literature" these types of studies lack intellectual rigour despite being presented as such. This includes the absence of peer review, in depth disclosure of method, nor ethics review board approval and oversight. Though McIntyre (2008c) states that she used grounded theory and feminist research principles in designing the research method, this evidently meant "finalizing" a questionnaire, previously used with young women, with "three young men formerly involved in the sexual exploitation trade" (13). The lack of disclosed ethics protocols etc. is of concern as the pretext in which the consent of research participants was obtained can have an extreme impact on the

responses a researcher will receive. Additionally, there is no information on the recruitment process nor who was excluded from taking part in the study. The study gives the reader decontextualized, one-line soundbites from teens and men involved in the trade alongside quantitative data compiled from the questionnaire of multiple choice and yes and no questions. Here the data is presented in ways to support the concept of sexual exploitation. For example, McIntyre says that 73% entered the industry when they were under 18. Though legally, buying sex from the 22% who started selling at 14 or 15 years of age and 29% of the participants who started selling when they were 16 or 17, counts as a criminal offense and child exploitation, calling them children has been debated (Phoenix 2002) as it conjures images of young children and preteens. 34% of the total population had worked on the street, while 57% had done (compensated?) pornography. Viewing youth prostitutes as “always and already victims” obscures the conditions that make selling sex a viable option for some (Phoenix 2002). Even with 42% identified as gay, 14% as bisexual and 16% as trans*³⁷, McIntyre’s (2008c) list of 18 recommendations, only briefly addresses this phenomenon by suggesting staff working with men in the sexual exploitation trade be provided with gender non-conformity training; completely ignoring the possible cultural, systematic, and familial factors contributing to these individual’s lives. Despite this, the studies’ recognition of the needs of some of these individuals is important. This includes such things as drug rehabilitation, safe supportive accommodation, and standard employment skills and experience.

In 2014, McNaughton-Nicolls and colleagues completed exploratory research on the sexual exploitation of young males in the UK. This included an assessment of relevant literature (Brayley, Cockbain, and Gibson 2014) to assess the knowledge base; a comparative analysis of nine thousand cases of eight to seventeen-year-olds supported by Barnardo’s³⁸ for, or at risk of sexual exploitation; and qualitative interviews with 50 professionals from sectors that respond to issues of exploitation. Some studies highlighted women’s role as abusers (aka clients) and that these incidents were seen as less stigmatic then when clients were men; service providers noticed that males had disability rates significantly higher than females (McNaughton Nicolls, Harvey and Paskell 2014). When

³⁷ Why the study continues to call them young men is unknown.

³⁸ A UK charity that cares for vulnerable children

males are discussed in the context of commercial exploitation, they are often depicted as having more agency than females. Brayley, Cockbain, and Gibson (2014), recognize that literature was extremely varied making analysis difficult. Often sample sizes were very small, limiting their generalizability and large-scale quantitative studies showed the potential to lack external validity; detailed exploration of male victims' experiences, risk factors and support needs were not found. As such they also recognized the need for participatory-based research, but funding constraints limited their ability to do this. Comparing age of entry was difficult as different ages were categorized differently in different studies, and absolute numbers were not always reported alongside percentages. Though rigorous regarding methodology, supervision by an ethics committee, recognition of limitations of the analysis, and researched by a multidisciplinary team, Barnardo's acted as publisher, making it grey literature. In 2017, the US Institute Against Human Trafficking held a symposium on the sexual exploitation of boys and men recognizing that they have been left behind by society with a lack of reporting and services dedicated to them. Unfortunately, while this attention is extremely important and necessary, the director of advocacy and research at the National Center on Sexual Exploitation was cited conflating adult male escorting and sex work with the sex trafficking of children (Brown 2017).

We must continue to be critical of studies like these as they overestimate the role of pimps and mask the difficult and complex choices faced by some who sell sex (Marcus et al 2014). A comprehensive approach is required that accounts for the experiences, vulnerabilities, and needs of sex workers; research should be done in situ and respectfully; and policy needs to recognize the dignity and autonomy of these individuals (Ibid).

2.6. Post-modern sensibilities

Identities are multiple, contradictory, fragmented, incoherent, disciplinary, disunified, unstable, fluid – hardly the stuff that allows a researcher to confidently run out and study sexual subjects as if they are coherent and available social types (Gamson 2000: 356).

Some sex workers are exploited by agents and clients; the media, law, and policy have perpetuated stereotypes and stigma; men who sell sex are actively oppressed by heteronormative discourse and gendered stereotypes vocalised by SWERFs and politicians; and the LGBTQ population is societally marginalized. As part of the demand

for feminist equality, Dorothy Smith (1992) called for a women first approach to (de)subjugate female knowledge by privileging female standpoints and deprivileging a “universal” male standpoint. Though Smith alongside other feminists made vital (albeit generalized) claims to make political gains, they largely ignored that it was being achieved by silencing certain voices; privileging some and deprivileging others served as the cause of or exacerbated oppression (and in some cases created an overbalance of power).³⁹

Research focussing less on the sex industry as a social issue and more as complex social phenomenon allows for the exploration of the sexual identities and subjectivities of sex workers (and their clients), “the social networks that they construct and in which they operate, the systems of power and domination that structure these social fields, and the ways in which these practices have developed and changed over time” (Aggleton and Parker 2015: 5; Browne and Minichiello 1995; Padilla 2007). Complex subjectivity and standpoint also point to intersectionality, in that one category of belonging cannot be used alone to understand a person’s experiences. Black feminist scholars raised this in an attempt to conceptualize their particularity which was being erased by the (white middle-class) women’s rights movement and the male-dominated African American rights movement. The latter development of transgender studies as outlined by Susan Stryker also took up the call for intersectionality advocating that “no voice in the dialogue should have the privilege of masking the particularities and specificities of its own speaking position through which it may claim a false universality or authority” (2006: 12).

Jo Phoenix’s *Making Sense of Prostitution* (1999) engaged with contemporary work on identity with a focus on the way in which women in street prostitution negotiate and struggle to maintain a coherent sense of self. Phoenix acknowledges subjects’ agency but also recognizes that access to material resources and the weight of structural forces limit opportunities for performative resistance. She talks of the “profound contradiction of involvement in prostitution as both a means of securing material and social survival and as a relationship that threatens that survival” (Phoenix 1999: 2). This tension makes for an ambivalent identity and provides a leveler to unqualified and de-contextualized notions of the utopian artisan (Ibid). In a similar vein, Maggie O’Neill’s work *Prostitution and Feminism* (2001) used ethnography to highlight the socio-economic processes and

³⁹ See for example Grant 1998; hooks 1984

structures that lead women into prostitution, yet she avoided viewing prostitution as either inherently oppressive or as an expression of sexual freedom.

By uncovering how everyday structural practices shape the experiences of *gendered* individuals, researchers can apply Smith's insights to men (and others) in the sex industry world-wide. In the context of non-female sex work, there are quite a few examples of studies that take-up the complexities inherent with the phenomenon. For example, Kulick (1998) studied gender performance and stigma among Brazil's travestis, biological males who alter their bodies to look feminine through funds earned by engaging in sex work; Frembgen (2008) described how culturally stigmatized, hetero-identified Muslim masseurs in Punjab offer a space for straight-identified clients to experience homosociality and sexual pleasure.⁴⁰ Rees' (2010) qualitative study on transgender youth from New York City found that despite desires and attempts to leave the sex industry for whatever reason, limited social and economic options brought them back into the scene. Situated within a broader array of international socioeconomic relationships Allen (2011) described the lives of Afro-Cuban men who trade sex with male tourists and wealthy urban Cubans in order to fulfill desires for commodities and upward social mobility (Dewey and Zheng 2013). Sociologist and criminal justice scholar Kevin Walby's (2012) ground-breaking work with male sex workers in the UK, Canada, and the US gained a greater understanding of discourses of sexuality as sensed through processes involving concrete interactions and gestures. Drawing from Blumer and Goffman, he explored labeling, stigma, and bodily encounters between male escort and client, providing a comprehensive interactionist account of sex and sexualities. A further example is seen in 2015, where Dank and colleagues conducted interviews over three years with 283 black, Latino and interracial LGBTQ New York City youth who sold sex, often after being kicked out of their familial homes due to their sexual or gender identities. The researchers gained deeper understandings of the negatives and positives of the trade from their perspectives "doing what they needed to survive" in the absence of LGBT appropriate housing, health care and job opportunities. Mitchell's (2016) research focused on the individual experiences and identities of male sex workers in Brazil's sexual economy to unravel the intersections of

⁴⁰ Other notable examples include Lorway, Reza-Paul, and Pasha 2009; Thompson, Kitiarsa, and Smutkupt 2016.

sexuality, race, and economics as experienced in everyday life. These examples all attempt to move beyond binary lenses that erase; it helps us to confront,

one legacy of social research that constructs, legitimates, and distances Others, banishing them to the margins of the culture... Whether Othering is produced “on” or “for,” qualitative researchers need to recognize that our work stands in some relation to Othering... [No matter] when we look, get involved, demur, analyze, interpret, probe, speak, remain silent, walk away, organize for outrage or sanitize our stories, and when we construct our texts in or on their words, we decide how to nuance our relations with / for / despite those who have been deemed Others. When we write essays about subjugated Others as if they were a homogenous mass (of vice or virtue), free-floating and severed from contexts of oppression as if we were neutral transmitters of voices and stories, we tilt toward a narrative strategy that reproduces Othering on, despite, or even “for” (Ibid 74).

Intersectional analysis allows for the move beyond the essentialist notion that all members of a population are equally and automatically subordinate (or privileged) just because they occupy a particular social position (Bowleg 2012; Berger and Guidroz 2009; Rolin 2006). On one level it exposes these power dynamics in practice and the ways systems of oppression “interlock to create inequality and re/produce relationships marked by domination and subjugation” (Razack 1998). On another it shows the divisiveness of identity politics and allows for the questioning of the meaning and consequences of belonging to multiple social groups.

2.7. Summary

The 1970 Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women documented women's inequality in Canada under the law. It enabled women's groups to bring to public consciousness the historical discrimination women faced. Despite at least 50 years of policy, programming, and millions of dollars of funding, we continue to be told that the fight for women's rights and equality needs to continue because we are in a “crisis.” An elevated level of corporate and state support is made available to campaigns that focus on women's role as victims (Martin 1998). This is reinforced by further campaigns (cf. #metoo movement) that sensationalize and obfuscate complex issues.

According to Baranek, Deber and Williams (2004), the control of individual action is subsequently justified by a reduction of harm to others. Here politico-historical criteria of harm define which activities are or should be forbidden; what kinds of harm are

privileged, and which are punished. Women in conflict with the law are rendered invisible and impotent while being objectified and eroticized (Faith 1993).

At the same time, women as good citizens and good mothers participate as partners in the criminal law reforms which strengthen the coercive power of the state. These “good” women and “innocent” children framed as victims are posed appositionally to the perpetrators of crime and silenced as allies to those constructed as criminal: the poor, the young, members of a minority, and the male. Despite neoliberal restructuring and the reduction of social supports for men, women are allocated more resources. In a region where manufacturing jobs have dwindled, for those with disabilities, criminal records, or lack education the resulting widespread uncertainty, in public and private realms of employment, and the social anxieties about “downward social mobility” (Ferris 2015), are not a concern about a loss of male status, privilege and power but a concern of survival. Men already pay for their “privilege” with poor health, exposure to violence, shorter lives, and less time spent with loved ones (Messner 1997). In the absence of social supports the provision of sexual services may be one of the few employment opportunities available; especially for those who do not want to or are not hired for jobs in customer service or manual labour.

3. Research praxis and recruitment activities

Understandings of sex work are historically and culturally contingent as well as socially and politically contested. As such, its conceptualization is a set of meanings and practices which have no inherent truth (Laing and Gaffney 2014; Smith 2012). This fluidity places research in an awkward place and subsequent research has been as diverse and complex as the sex industry itself. As such, the methods used, and conclusions made can be conflictual, dated, or inadequate to apply to research on men involved in the sex industry.

Despite the impulse to order, much of cultural anthropology today reveals the disorderly, messy, and unstable social terrains upon which our research often unfolds. Precarity, insecurity, disorder, and uncertainty are common themes in recent theorizing on intersubjectivity and sexuality, politics, economics, and culture on every scale – personal, local, national, transnational, and global (Goldstein 2016: para. 1)

If human behaviour, social interaction, and cultural production are all characterized as lacking normative consistency, the question becomes: What approach would accurately represent incoherence without imposing artificial order and completeness?

How do themes of injustice, capricious cruelty, dehumanization etc... become embodied in specific experiences? What ideas about [sex workers'] lives and place in the world get expressed symbolically through their words and actions? [How can I] unravel the psychological, cultural and political roots of those ideas (Waterson and Rylko-Bauer 2007)?

The heart of my inquiry then is an attitude of wonder or *étonnement*, an attitude of inquisitiveness with regard to the world (Stocker 2014). This goes beyond simple curiosity. Curiosity is the urge to explain the unexpected or the urge to know more (Piaget 1955; Engel 2011). Wonder however is the desire to know the unknown as well as the already known. It is an invitation to challenge preconceived and self-interested notions of reality; “to appreciate the always changing and conflicting world, in all of its complexity, richness, and sublimity” (Cicovacki 2014).

Being as holistic as possible while cautiously addressing individualized nuances, sensitive and culturally-specific issues such as identity, sexual practices, and working relationships is key to this project (Browne and Minichiello 1995). For deeper understanding and conceptualization of a phenomenon (and subsequent policy analysis, evaluation, and decision-making) an overarching framework that accounts for heterogeneity was needed. This framework required a blend of qualitative praxes:

grounded analysis, intersectional standpoint, phenomenological inquiry, critical ethnography, and narrative methodology.

Grounded analysis is a method that focuses on the study of experience from the perspectives of those who live it in order to develop theory. Similar to ethnography, it helps to provide thick descriptions but is more explicit in its systematic inquiry and constant interpretation (Charmaz 2000; Glaser and Strauss 1967). In that regard, it is a particularly appropriate method for areas of study where established theory is lacking or data is limited (Strauss and Corbin 1998). As a participatory approach, it allows stories to inform the research process rather than preconceived notions of what the population might experience (Jones 2013). Blumer frames this process as,

... a flexible procedure in which the scholar shifts from one to another line of inquiry, adopts new points of observation as his study progresses, moves in new directions previously unthought of, and changes his recognition of what are relevant data as he acquires more information and better understanding (1969: 40).

The use of intersectional standpoint allowed for the move beyond singular frameworks to focus on power dynamics from the personal perspective or “standpoint” of an individual. Because a person occupies multiple social locations not only are power dynamics individually *perceived* quite differently this intersection is constitutive of an experience greater than the sum of its parts (Bukoski and Hatch 2016; Crenshaw 1989). Alcoff (1988) describes this as positionality; markers of relational positions that change contextually and shape knowledge in any given situation. From here, intersectional analysis allows for the questioning of the meaning and consequences of belonging to multiple social groups. Subsequently I explore how male sex workers’ social positions have influenced their interpretations of their lives. As per Cowburn, Duggan, and Pollock,

It is important to ensure that research participants were not characterized as speaking for their particular demographic... but as speaking from that specific [intersectional] background in theorizing their own experiences (2013: 4).

The use of phenomenology, the philosophy of experience, allows for the move beyond considerations of cultural discourse, social relations, and political economy as well as beyond psychological considerations of selfhood, psychodynamics, and subjectivity (Abu-Lughod 1991; Crapanzano 1992). Experiences, social, eventful, or physical interactions with the world, are always interpreted and mediated through the body (Jackson

2009; Ingold 2000; Geertz 1973). From there distinctions between subjective and objective aspects of reality are shaped by the attitude a person has toward the world, as well as by the historical and cultural conditions that inform their values, assumptions, ideals, and norms. This is what Husserl (1962) defines as the lifeworld, the (mostly) unquestioned, practical, historically conditioned, pre-theoretical, and familiar world of our everyday lives.

Although the lifeworld is always necessarily structured in particular ways... it is not to be mistaken for a static, objective entity. It is instead a dynamic, shifting, and intersubjectively constituted existential reality that results from the ways that we are geared into the world by means of our particular situatedness as existential, practical, and historical beings. While necessarily serving as both the basis for, and the object of, scientific scrutiny, the lifeworld is never reducible simply to theoretical efforts at fixation and typification (Desjarlais and Throop 2011).

This fluidity places research in an awkward place; how can I know the world as it really is? Husserl's (1962) followers believe that we can uncover a single essence of a phenomenon, otherwise we are left with doubt, ignorance, and a lack of clarity. Heidegger and Stambaugh (1996) followers however believe there are an endless number of realities and that all we have is interpretation (Rapport and Wainwright 2006). I take the stance that there are indeed multiple essences of a phenomenon, but our interpretations and the ways we can interpret them are limited. To describe the phenomenological then is to explore these interpretations and destabilize those assumptions that organize our pre-reflective interactions with the world (Scheper-Hughes 1992). This allows for a discussion of the range of possibilities permissible regarding sex work, at given times in history, for specific individuals, as captured in interviews.

On a basic level I ask what is it that makes one person see their experiences in the sex trade as exploitative and another find them liberating? The assertion that there are multiple ways of interpreting the same experience is profound in itself in context of sex work research and policy as there are a multitude of voices straining to be heard and certain voices privileged (i.e., SWERFs) over others in the media and monolithic laws. Anthropologists drawing from phenomenological methods use "bracketing" to temporarily suspend their assumptions in trying to understand more accurately and fully a multitude of cultural and experiential phenomena. Bracketing is Husserl's (1962) term for the act by

which such a shift in our orientation to the taken-for-granted occurs. As research is an intersubjective affair, ethnographers need to confront otherwise unrecognized aspects of their own assumptive worlds (Throop 2010). In other words, this is a call for reflexive cultural relativism where I exhibit empathy and a degree of understanding of why someone feels and acts in certain ways while describing my pre- and in situ conceptions.

Lastly, traditional ethnographic research advocates for participant observation, for the researcher to be involved in the lives of the population studied and to record what is seen and heard (Bourgois 2003). It seeks to produce thick description that accounts for context, to understand and describe the cultural and the meaning ascribed to social behaviour and situational reality by both the anthropologist and those being studied (Geertz 1973). A queer(ed) ethnography questions the assumption that lived experience can be captured and directly represented by a researcher; to observe the entirety of a person's life is unfeasible and in the case of sex work to engage in participant observation is problematic for all parties involved. Lastly, critical ethnography acknowledges how academic research is implicated in the oppression of many groups and attempts to account for these injustices (Tuhivai Smith 1999). The aim is to get people to think about important questions in complicated, grounded, and thoughtful ways. The world sex workers live in needs acknowledged through their own voices (Smith 1990; cf. Namaste 2000).

People's own creations and articulations of mind best offer the ethnographer an entry into their worldview (Boas 1916/1970).

Tying these praxes together are life stories. Narratives are specific parts of the longer story a person tells about their life. The narratives and stories can be used to gather and produce raw data and subsequent insight into a speaker's lifeworld, personal perceptions, and culturally available discourses (Brown 2013; Bruner 1991; Turner 1996). It becomes my task to work at "the border of reality and representation" (Gubrium and Holstein 1997); to adopt a standpoint between individual narrative of their lived experience and the intent of the narrators themselves. This entails finding those with lived experience, asking them open-ended questions regarding these experiences, and conducting as many interviews as needed until saturation takes place. Saturation occurred when I began to notice the emergence of patterns of experience, story-telling, and reflection. At this point, using the same recruitment methods, the likelihood of further interviews revealing new patterns was

reduced. From here, I was able to generate narrativized interpretations of what took place in their lives, drawing out complex narratives of structure and agency (Abu-Lughod 1991).

3.1. Narrative methodology

Echoing the narrative turn in research requires I move beyond description, towards the interactional nature of knowledge production. As a critical starting point, narratives are acknowledged as being communication between people, and through narrating and telling stories, experiences are being shared, trust is created, and group-memberships maintained. To account for this reality, my focus shifted to the textual and linguistic practices through which subjectivity took shape (Gamson 2000).

The narrator can use stylistic devices to accentuate certain features of the story. The interviewer and the subject conspire to construct a version of the self, and the strategies they employ... will probably derive from the shared unspoken regularities of interaction expectations in their culture (Angrosino 1989: 104; cf. Walby 2012).

This positioning of self and identity-making through narration works at two levels: situated interaction and content (Riessman 2008). Bamberg (2005) elaborates:

Here we attempt to spot descriptions and evaluations of the characters and analyze the time and space coordinates in the way that these relate to social categories and their action potential. From there we move into a closer analysis of the way these referential and representational aspects of story construction are assembled in their sequential arrangement among the participants of the conversation. The assumption that governs this step is that particular descriptions and evaluations are chosen for the interactive purpose of fending off and mitigating misinterpretations. The descriptions and evaluations rhetorically function to convey how speakers signal to their audience how they want to be understood (225).

It is important to remember that narrative research is not as simple as sitting down with someone and asking a series of questions (Trahar 2009). Although I am curious about certain aspects of their lives in particular, narrative interviewing necessitates following participants down their own trails (Riessman 2008); I have to reflexively build a dialogue, pulling out threads of a narrative for more detail, explanation, and exploration. This means what I say must resonate with what was last said. In a typical semi-structured in-depth interview, pre-set open-ended questions are used, and the interviewer guides the participant. My aim was to allow for mutual guidance of the story, following these tangents that prompted informal conversations where I generated questions instantaneously (Gray

2009). When the dialogue strayed into a different set of issues, this turn, and the themes generated help to paint the larger picture of what the interviewee thinks is important (Walby 2012). This is a positioning of individual elements within a larger whole, forming a hermeneutic circle (Heidegger and Stambaugh 1996). This “interpretable wholeness” is not necessarily inherent in the discourse but is negotiated between me and the man I am interviewing (Linde 1993). As such, when I manipulate, analyze, and distill the interviews after the fact, in order to preserve their authenticity, I use multiple forms of analysis to assist in providing validity. By examining narrative on different levels “we ground the work closely to its source(s) and include both researcher and informants’ meaning in the story of our findings” (Mello 2002: 241).

Initially I transcribed my first two interviews which was a time intensive process as I was also completing class work. Other interviews were sent to a transcriptionist in Athens Alabama to minimize the risk of confidential information being used to expose and identify research participants.⁴¹ Upon receiving each transcription, I would compare them with the original audio file in order to correct any errors. This was a dialectical process of reflexiveness where I relived each interview moment, went over my field notes, kept track of any insights, and highlighted any important soundbites. If I had questions or wanted further clarification from an interviewee, I made note and contacted those who had consented, and we had a follow-up conversation via Facebook, email, or text message. The next stage involved rearranging any tangents in each interview into the main life narrative. Though this countered any naturalistic or conversational maneuvering between past, present, and future, it helped with thematic comparison and further analysis.

On one level of analysis, *how* stories were told offered insight into a level of “cultural knowledge;” the common norms, values, history, beliefs, and behaviours an interviewee expresses in the way they tell the story but also that they explicitly identify when describing their experiences (Bamberg 2012). The stories we tell about our relations with others are variably narrated because the way we interpret the past is always shifting (Scott 1996). Additionally, narratives are not always linear but are re-ordered according

⁴¹ Privacy and security were also secured contractually via a service agreement from PAX Transcription. All audio files were removed by the transcriptionist once invoices were paid and completed transcription files were backed up and then removed after 3 months. I paid a rate of US\$1.00 per minute.

to interpretive acts of remembering (Harding 2006). Yet some narratives do order characters and events in space and time. Turner (1996) sees the development and positioning (the execution, recognition, and imagining) of narrative a/chronologically, along with the linguistic form, words used, and images elicited as able to provide insight into shared cultural knowledge of how narrative is composed (Riessman 2008).

Moving beyond the way narrative is spoken, a thematic analysis looks at common meanings and understandings of the “point,” the underlying larger story. This approach gave me insight into the speaker’s lifeworld and individualized perceptions allowing for theorizing across a number of cases. By identifying common thematic elements shared by research participants, the events they reported and the actions they took were used to show commonalities within the group of men or regarding a specific phenomenon (Riessman 2008). Lastly, blurring the boundaries of theme, interaction, structure, and individual, narrative inquiry involved dialogic (performance) analysis that helps to show how narrative and story are used to construct a shifting intersubjective sense of self (Bamberg 2012).

Analysis began by coding the data after the first interview, breaking narratives into small chunks of concepts and key phrases (Soulliere, Britt, and Maines 2001). From here I grouped concepts together, comparing and contrasting to form larger inclusive concepts. As more narratives were told to me and connected over the course of fieldwork, I coded and linked concepts case by case as well as across all interviews (Bernard and Ryan 2009). This meant focussing on the narrative at varying scales of magnitude and specificity. On one level there are meta-narratives, characterized by broad theme and function that reflect particular ideologies, assumptions, and values. My mid-level analysis was concerned with discursive content, what was actually being talked about, and the temporality contained within vignettes (Riessman 2008). Lastly, through micro-level analysis I explored how meaning was derived through structural elements including some paralinguistic elements. This was often done when responses were seemingly ambiguous, conflictual, or hard to interpret because of their partiality (Georgakopoulou 2007). It involved deconstruction to discover hidden meaning and expose the dynamics of the conversation in order to account for my influence on the interviews (cf. Yamasaki, Sharf, and Harter 2014).

Overall, analyzing dominant social discourse and the produced stories allowed for alternative stories and possibilities to emerge (Brown 2013). My questions facilitated the

unpacking of internalized cultural conversations where people measure themselves against the external world using social discourses (Madigan 2003; White 2001). This unpacking provided a greater opportunity for the stories told by M\$M which have been ignored, to become known; to be brought out of the shadows. The stories then become a political counter-narrative in their own right and my task was also to explore “how locally situated narrating practices are either forced to be complicit or able to open up territory to bring about... liberation from” master-narratives (Bamberg 2004: 361). Exposing these counter-narratives opens up questions of how the men I interviewed interpret the sex industry and their place in it as well as allows me to follow in Walby’s (2012) footsteps by telling a story that does not fall-back on longstanding tropes about sex work.

3.2. Establishing interviews

The recruitment process requires seemingly mundane methodological and analytical considerations. To find men who sell sex, I needed to use and further develop specialized knowledge. During this time, I faced structural and social barriers that stemmed from stigma, ignorance, and a lack of resources. After receiving approval with Nonmedical Research Ethics Board at UWO (Appendix A), I began my research with hopes of recruiting interviewees who were currently 18 years and older. Since sex workers often adopt pseudonyms to protect their privacy and anonymity, ensuring confidentiality was crucial to the interview process (Sanders 2005). While there were no physical risks in participating in my proposed research, I identified discussing sensitive topics such as marginalization, as a potential emotional trigger for participants. Personal memories of forced displacement as well as loved ones lost, sexuality, drug use, economic hardship, and current concerns may be uncomfortable for those participants who had any of these experiences. If any participant became distressed, I was prepared to provide contact information for professional counselling and consult with my supervisor if necessary. To minimize the potential for coercion or exploitation, participants could choose to end an interview at any point as well as refuse to be audio recorded (Carrera et al 2018).

The length of time a man had been in the industry was considered irrelevant as I wanted to capture a wide sample of experiences. Additionally, to account for flexibility, seasonality, and transience, it was irrelevant whether they were formerly in the industry or currently active (cf. Prestage 1994; McLean 2013). Lastly, with my focus on London I did

want to interview current Londoners who had sold sex in the city. This was to facilitate face-to-face meetings, but soon I found men who had more recently moved to London who had sold sex elsewhere or in addition to here in London.⁴² I was contacted online by a few men who had never sold in London but came from the city and sold once they moved away. These online interviewees volunteered to share parts of their stories without remuneration when I disclosed that I could only pay in cash for face-to-face interviews.

Previous research has emphasized the "underground" nature of male prostitution.⁴³ As such my prior knowledge of men engaged in *street-based* sex work in the city was non-existent. Weitzer (2015) notes that at the onset a researcher;

must have sufficient knowledge of local conditions to be able to (1) know where to find the needed data, (2) gain access to data sources... and (3) comprehend the meaning and nuances of the data collected.

I initially tried to access male sex workers by looking for any program that offered outreach to sex workers in general. Working with community groups or other stakeholders can allow for more effective participant outreach strategies due to the legitimacy provided and already established rapport (Kumar 2016; Cox 2015; Schensul 1985). Most London-based programs state in their mandates that they are oriented toward women⁴⁴ or for rehabilitating johns.⁴⁵ Contact with Mission Services of London (see Plate 3) and the Salvation Centre of Hope, organizations that offer support with addiction, mental health, and homelessness, with special outreach programs for men, was met with ignored emails or forwarding me to the London Police Service's Persons at Risk Program. On February 6, 2014, I contacted Officer Lorna Bruce at PAR; she disclosed that she had only come upon one male on the street and her area of expertise is with women involved in street-level sex work.⁴⁶ When I attempted contact with the Regional HIV / AIDS Connection in early 2014, multiple emails and phone messages to various staff members and follow-up attempts to set up meetings were ignored, though they did say that they would put up a research recruitment poster in

⁴² Because I did not explicitly seek out or advertise for former Londoners who have since moved, there is a bias in the recruitment design.

⁴³ See for example Cheng, de Die, and de Kroon 2011; Minichiello and Scott 2014.

⁴⁴ Such as Safe Space London; My Sister's Space, LAWC

⁴⁵ Salvation Army Correctional and Justice Services

⁴⁶ This is counter Dr. Bodkin's statement that her and Sgt. Bruce had contacted over 218 male and female sex workers on the streets and in jail since 2011 and had provided outreach primary care (Bodkin, Delahunty-Pike, and O'Shea 2015).

their lobby for me (see Appendix B). As London does not have a red-light district and at the time I had no knowledge of any areas where men who sell sex consistently frequent, I began to recruit M\$M for interviews using escort advertisement websites (e.g., Backpage; Squirt; CanadianMale) and Gay/MSM⁴⁷ geo-social mobile applications and websites (e.g., Grindr; Scruff).⁴⁸

Plate 3: Mission Services London, York Street, London Ontario, August 2016



In Hughto et al. (2016) study on gay men, social networking technologies, and small cities, though technology had fostered a sense of belonging, it also facilitated the loss of physical gay spaces and queer visibility (Rosser, West and Weinmeyer 2008). The impact of the internet and mobile phone on male sex work and the shift from street-based to off-street locations is well documented as men no longer need to cruise public spaces to find partners (Minichiello 2015; Bimbi 2007; Cameron et al. 1999; Connell and Hart 2003; Jamel 2011). Scott, MacPhail, and Minichiello (2015) outline areas in which the internet has had a significant impact in the organization and identity of men who sell sex. First it serves to challenge traditional client-sex work relationships by blurring between commercial and non-commercial encounters. Mobile phone apps like Grindr offer flexibility in that men who are selling sex do not have to exclusively identify themselves

⁴⁷ Men who have sex with men is a descriptive term for sexual behaviour or practice that moves beyond socioculturally constructed concepts of identity (that may or may not match behaviours a man is engaged in). See Wellings, Mitchell and Collumbien 2012.

⁴⁸ For a contextualization of the websites and mobile applications used see Appendix C.

as escorts, but rather present themselves as regular users of the application (Scott, MacPhail, and Minichiello 2015) often blurring their professional and personal lives. This allows for some to not identify as “sex worker” contributing to feelings of isolation; with a lack of community, their existence, let alone needs, desires, and rights go unacknowledged (in city politics, social service mandates, and policy and law). The flexibility of the internet also allows for those who only occasionally sell sex to post or remove advertisements and profiles as desired, changing what services they are willing to provide, or when circumstances require relocation. As an economic tool the internet is an effective method of buying goods and services as there tends to be a greater sense of anonymity and security in purchasing things online (Blevins and Holt 2009; Castle and Lee 2008). This anonymity can be beneficial for those commercial transactions that are highly stigmatized (Kille 2015) and has increased awareness of sex work by distributing information of sexual services to a wider socio-demographic audience (Ashford 2009), though increased policing of the virtual world threatens this liberty.

Using these websites and applications, I briefly partook in covert, invisible, non-participatory observation⁴⁹ in 2014 to gather data such as where men were selling and advertising their services. This was essentially an online version of “lurking” (Strickland and Schlesinger 1969), a process whereby the researcher “hangs out” in a public place, watching and listening without intruding. It allowed me to perceive if there was a sense of community, the nature of social relationships (norms, how people presented themselves), and values of importance (forwardness, honesty etc.). This led to eventual overt, visible, participatory observation starting in 2015 where I set up a profile on Squirt, Grindr and Scruff including a head-shot, disclosing my role to the researched, visibly initiated conversation and recruited individuals for research, posted to escort message boards, and responded to private conversations initiated by M\$M and non-M\$M alike. I tracked advertisements as I found them for the London region (see Table 1), filtering out those that appeared replicated on multiple sites or had multiple advertisements per month (Morrison and Whitehead 2007) and documenting when a website no longer existed. As I gained greater knowledge of new or other advertisement sites from interviews, I began tracking these as well. On some websites and applications my profile (that explains my recruitment

⁴⁹ For a discussion on the observation of online communities see Nørskov and Rask 2011.

/ research) was flagged or deleted as per non-solicitation policies or auto-flagged because of the use of the term sex work; I had to modify these ads to have people contact me for more information about my work instead of directly providing details.

Table 1: Online Advertisements of Men offering Sexual Services in the London (Ontario) Region, 2015 to 2018.

Date	Squirt	Backpage	Canadianmale	Craigslist	Men4rent	Locanto	Skipthegames	Rent.men	Boyscout	Seeking	Yourlovers	Leolist	Total
February 24, 2015	56	13	7	5	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	81
May 20, 2015	55	15	7	4	1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	82
Sept. 11, 2015	56	29	6	5	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	96
December 4, 2015	NA	23	5	3	NA	NA	45	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	76
January 23, 2016	NA	28	5	1	NA	NA	26	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	60
May 4, 2016	NA	48	4	4	NA	NA	23	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	79
June 14, 2016	NA	26	2	5	NA	NA	27	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	60
August 31, 2016	NA	6	4	3	NA	NA	29	1	20	NA	NA	NA	63
January 18, 2017	NA	17	4	2	NA	NA	25	0	19	68	NA	NA	135
May 2, 2018	NA	NA	4	NA	NA	11	6	2	NA	8	7	7	43
Oct. 25, 2018	NA	NA	10	2	NA	24	3	1	NA	1	NA	29	70

Whenever I saw that someone had put some indication⁵⁰ on their profile or header that they were selling sexual services I would message them; this was in addition to perusing advertisements and sending out recruitment emails / messages that provided the purpose and description of the project (Parsons, et al 2005). These were often left unanswered or I would receive curt or aggressive messages, that I was not offering enough remuneration for an interview. Most who independently contacted me either self-disclosed or asked for more information and then did not continue a conversation. I received one message from an individual from an undisclosed location saying that they had “made \$30,000 this week so far. Just got back from a tour in Dubai.” After asking if they would be willing to share their stories, there was no response. In a few cases, individuals were especially concerned about anonymity despite reassurance of the research contract with the university’s

⁵⁰ To get around internet filters this included adding spaces between letters, using symbols or using code words like “generous,” and “completion.”

Research Ethics Board. One individual was worried about outing himself as he is very masculine and straight to everyone. Another was just “very private” about his actions.

The arbitrary decision to move beyond MSM websites to other sites with “hidden” sex work advertisements, such as Craigslist’s “therapeutic” services section (another classified ad site that had removed their escort section in 2010 and this section in 2018), as well as to post recruitment posters (Appendix B) throughout the city that did not categorize the men based on who they sold to was quite productive and diversified my interviews to include M\$W and street-based sex workers. At random times and at random places, I would hike the city with a stack of fresh posters and my concealed staple gun and staples – plastering the city with recruitment flyers while giving me (and often my standard poodle) a sweaty work out. I was always sure to put up posters near shelters, the Health Unit and RHAC, massage clubs, downtown, on University and College campuses and safe injection sites but also included random areas of various class, or economic use. With the heat baking off the pavement one afternoon I followed a long stretch of Oxford Street. Along this artery live diverse segments of urban society, the well-to-do, the middle class, the working poor and the extremely poor. In 2015 I also made sure to follow the Pride Parade route. I avoided areas next to schools, churches, and day-cares to be proactive about NIMBY politics.

3.3. Recruitment problematics

Unfortunately, putting up posters and recruiting men for interviews was not as easy as it sounds. Due to the sexual nature of escort and queer websites, I could not access them in my shared office unless I was alone; web-filters implemented at city libraries blocked my access to these sites. If I happened to be in the same area of town where I had originally put a poster, it was rare to find any remaining (even the next day). There were times I thought it was because of the weather or even perhaps because bored kids; at other times, my gnawing suspicions that I was being actively sabotaged were confirmed. Often, I would see other individuals’ posters remain in the area or even returning after replacement on the third day, the new poster would be gone. It was only in certain locations that posters remained such as the downtown core, major thoroughfares and anywhere else outside of suburban areas. This sort of response likely correlates to associative stigma surrounding

sex work (Goffman 1963). My recruitment posters force those who see them to confront their ideas of sex work and who counts as a sex worker.

An interaction I had when I was a member of the YMCA gymnasium illustrates this further. Seeing other research posters at the Central (downtown) YMCA, I decided to post one on the Men's 14 years and older change room bulletin board. It is also common knowledge in the gay community that occasionally men who have sex with men would meet for sexual encounters at this gym. One of my interviewees also had commented that he had recruited a client there too. The night I put up that poster, I received an email from the manager of membership services saying my poster had been removed as it was "not appropriate for a family facility such as the YMCA." Though a polite enough email I took exception; part of my response was as follows:

I disagree with your assertion that "it is not appropriate" as many of your members are in fact people who sell sexual and intimate services (of various genders) who happen to have families. This was posted in a 14+ change room... This kind of discrimination just further marginalizes members of our community who have nothing to be ashamed of (Dawthorne 2016).

The General Manager subsequently responded apologizing for making me feel discriminated against. I responded reiterating that this was not about me and received no further response. NIMBYism is a project of othering and fear mongering that attempts to exert moral authority onto others. Here the YMCA is explicit in its appeal to emotion by misdirecting me "to think of the children" as if posting a research poster that mentions male sex work will somehow encourage sexual behaviours and violate "the innocence" of its members. This NIMBYism is a form of censorship that stifles any discussion of underlying issues or rational analysis (Doctorow 2011; Hubbard 2004).

On my recruitment posters I was explicit that I was looking to talk with men who have provided "intimate" services. I also highlighted that I meant male sex workers and included the examples of strippers, hookers, prostitutes, escorts and rentboys. Taking a cue from Gamson (2000) and Warner's (1993) concept of queer, who and what counts as sex work can be defined by multiple boundaries that make the question of who is and who is not one of them a perpetually and necessarily contested issue that has impact on recruitment. I therefore ask who is possibly excluded when I start with a defined social category, regardless of my attempts to keep it broad as possible. Only 5 respondents

identified with the label sex work or at any rate used it as an identity marker or description for their participation in the industry. Despite this, those who engaged in conversation with me after seeing a recruitment advertisement shared a basic idea of what “intimate services” and “sex work” were. Others however may have found the label problematic thereby precluding their participation. Since there is a hierarchy among sex workers, some groups of workers look down on or avoid associating with other kinds of workers (Simon 2018). It is possible that certain individuals such as male professional dominatrices, exotic dancers, cam performers, or porn stars could see an advertisement recruiting sex workers and consider it irrelevant to them since on one level they do not actually “sell sex” as part of their primary job.⁵¹ There are also those who do not consider what they did or what they do as sex work due to the frequency of interactions or a change in the nature of the relationship. This could include someone who sold sex once out of desperation; someone who does not receive money but receives payment in another form; someone dating a rich man who pays for everything; dating former clients. Mitchell (2015) ran into a similar issue with his research with sex workers in Brazil. He noticed that a lot of the seemingly non-commercial hookups and relationships between foreigners and locals included presents, shopping, cash given as a gift, and access to fine dining and pricey venues but they did not consider these interactions as sex work.

While male sex work itself has not reached a point of over-research, areas of concentrated inequality and marginalized populations which some of these men belong, have been subject to academic, journalistic, and governmental gaze prompting research fatigue among these populations. Research fatigue occurs when individuals and groups become tired of engaging with research and is identified by a reluctance toward continuing engagement or refusing to engage with new research (Clark 2008). This fatigue is an example of the material effects of research. As per Hammersley (1995),

People’s lives may be affected by being researched and by being in a context that is affected by research findings. And these effects may be for good or for ill and can run through the hole gamut of more complex combinations and possibilities that lies between those two extremes (112).

⁵¹ Though these venues can act as gateways to other aspects of the industry.

Not being associated with any local outreach organization likely gave me the opportunity to talk to those who otherwise would have avoided being connected to those organizations.⁵² For others, researchers can be seen as an unwanted intrusion, as members of the bureaucracy who have contributed to stereotyping and unjust social policies and practices thereby fostering a mistrust and unwillingness to participate (Watters and Beinacki 1989). Many people who experience marginalization and stigma will also conceal their membership in order to avoid scrutiny by the police, judgment by the public or politicized groups, and by family, friends, and employers (Bungay, Oliffe, and Atchison 2015; Rickard 2003). This means despite any efforts or reassurances of privacy, concerns about confidentiality and fears of consequences could have been limiting (Jamel 2011). The sensitivity of the topic and those with traumatic experiences may have found it too painful to share their stories with strangers.

The various reasons people sell sex or the nature of their involvement in the industry could have also contributed to a lack of engagement with this research project. Jane S. of *The Sex Worker's Outreach Project Las Vegas* notes that it takes a considerable amount of privilege to be able to self-identify as someone who has sold sex (Dewey, S., and Heineman 2013). Some sex workers are quite transient complicating their ability to participate. This fluidity includes: 1) newcomers who worked in the sex industry before and/or after migrating to London; 2) those here seasonally (e.g., for the school year, September to April) or only for the span of their degree; 3) those wanting to leave or had once lived and sold sex in London or after they left; 4) men who travel for work or leisure; 5) those men who stay in the city but do not live at a set address or move to different areas of the city; 6) those who immigrate and emigrate throughout the region; 7) those who live in London but perform on cam shows for world-wide audiences; and 8) men who travel from city-to-city depending on clientele and opportunity (e.g., travelling stripper troops; filming porn on location; on-call services; travel-companions).

Shaver (2005) notes that recruitment issues are common in studies of off-street workers in particular; others may have availability or flexibility due to competing demands on their time (cf. Rickard 2003). Some individuals may have been apathetic to the

⁵² Though the lack of gatekeeper organization that could have helped me access participants also served as a barrier in the recruitment process.

potentialities of research in general, perceive limited personal outcome, or that research about men in the industry is of limited benefit. To at least provide some sort of benefit, I did offer CDN\$40 in compensation for research participants in effort to acknowledge the time and efforts they took to meet for the interview but also as an incentive to take part.⁵³ I was able to do this in part due to winning the Regna Darnell Graduate Award for Fieldwork in Sociocultural Anthropology.⁵⁴ After all, some could have used the time spent with me to earn better money with a client or work more hours at another job which on its own could have been a barrier to participation. Ethically responsible and entrenched in principles of justice, participation in research should be accessible to everyone, regardless of socio-economic status (REPAC 2011). Though I planned for around an hour per interview, times varied from 20 minutes to 6 hours. For the longer interviews I would usually give "tips" such as bus tickets, condoms, and upwards of an extra \$20. On a few occasions I was able to offer transportation to interviewees at their discretion using my personal vehicle.

3.4. Interview considerations

As a gay man I share the experience of being marginalized and othered institutionally and discursively based on my gender and my sexuality, as well as through my work, so I felt compelled to ensure that participants were not subject to further injustices through my research (McLean 2013). Because of the stigma and criminalization of the sex industry, and the possibility a participant may disclose whatever they wish, confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy was of utmost importance.

When I first met an interviewee, I reiterated that I was the only individual to have ongoing access to written and audio recordings and other personal information and all electronically stored data was password protected on my personal laptop. I allocated pseudonyms for each individual and attributed all quotations and identifying information to this name. I then explained the purpose of the study, my contact details and the risks involved to the participants on the consent form and orally. Individuals could then decide whether they wished the interview to be recorded, or whether they wished to withdraw.

⁵³ Rios and Sands (2000) however call out remuneration as part of a materialistic world and that the monetary and material compensations re/placed the researcher in a position of power.

⁵⁴ For the years spanning 2014-2017 I received a total of CDN\$5000.

They could sign with their real name, a pseudonym of their choosing, put a X on the line, or just provide oral consent. Asking for consent via signature did feel invasive due to the anonymity many of these men required. Dealing with consent in this manner may have served as symbolic act to position me as a professional academic who would be held accountable to ethical standards.

Some sex workers meet potential clients in a public place as part of their screening process to ensure their own safety. I needed to find public spaces that allowed for some degree of privacy for an interview. Most often I would suggest we meet at a private study room or quiet alcove at the Central Library but depending on what area of town they lived this was flexible to for convenience and accessibility. Other places were coffee shops, parks, tutorial rooms in the Social Science Building and Mustang Lounge in the University Community Centre at Western, a patio at a frozen yogurt shop, Victoria park, and on two occasions I did meet at an interviewee's apartment in the east-end of the city.

As I was a lone researcher, meeting strangers in public spaces is a matter of common-sense. I carried a cell phone and notified a friend, colleague, or family member when I would be conducting interviews. The location was at an interviewee's discretion but for recording purposes and sensitivity I did find city libraries and tutorial rooms the most favourable; unfortunately, their starkness and stuffiness often made an interview feel too formal. Lastly, I dressed semi-casually in order not to overemphasize an institutionalized or privileged persona but also professionally enough to emphasize the legitimacy of my research. Though past research had recommended business attire to present this professional image (Walby 2010) my outfits consisted of a long-sleeve buttoned shirt with rolled-up arms, a fedora, and dark blue jeans.

3.5. Recruitment positionality

During online recruitment, my positionality as a researcher, the sexualized anonymity of dating and cruising websites and applications, as well as the agency of the men on these sites provided some intriguing interactions for reflection. Seeing my profile or advertisement, some people messaged me to tell me that my work was interesting or thanked me for dealing with an under-represented population but provided no further conversation; others would try to elicit "stories" from my fieldwork or make generalizations. I would get asked "what do you do as a researcher (;p)." The addition of

the emoticon indicates a flirtatious “tongue in cheek” comment inferring that I partake in sexual activities with participants. Some would ask me to recount the kinkiest story shared or asked me if I ever got aroused listening to the stories. These requests would receive a curt reply reiterating my research agenda, no reply at all, or depending on my mood I would try to educate them on some of the negative sides of the sex industry I had been told such as addiction, homelessness, and violence. Despite this I welcomed cordial conversations about my life, sexuality, and academic career though I had to field overt sexualization, as I received propositions for paid and unpaid sex from men of differing ages.

In September 2015, I contacted an eighteen-year-old sex worker on Squirt. He got back to me interested in the study and proceeded to ask me about the local bathhouse. After I shared my opinion of it he asked to meet there; “perhaps go somewhere else for the interview and maybe end back at the bathhouse.” Reaffirming my purely academic role, I convinced him to meet at the Central Library and there were no further hints of sexualization. When I confirmed with him the scheduled morning, he asked if he was my last interview of the day as he “just thought you might want to go to the spa” (September 26, 2015). At this point, even though I was disappointed at the idea of having to exclude a voice in the study, I declined meeting him and ceased communication. He responded, “Ah ok” and 15 minutes later, “So would you like to do the interview? I swear I won't suggest anything again.” Here it is evident that before being immersed in the field, the power dynamics between the research population and researcher were at play. I was insisting on establishing boundaries and being the one to define them. I start off ambiguous, he crosses an undisclosed line and I establish the line; when I feel like I am in control he then crosses the line again and sexualized me. By having to account for “the ethical” as defined by the Research and Ethics Board, this obligation pushes me towards a Butlerian performance of “researcher” or at the very least gives me an “out,” to pass the buck, and save face as I did not have any desire for this individual regardless nor was I comfortable with the environment of the bathhouse. It is also possible that his “swearing not to suggest anything again” was his own way to gain some power back; to return himself to the position he was in, to still get something of importance (such as the \$40 remuneration), or to proposition me again later in person.

Early in the recruitment process I received a message from a potential interviewee saying that he did not feel comfortable answering questions but said he would be ok if I did not touch and interact but just watched his sex work encounters. In this case I did not reply. In May 2014, I received the following (unedited) response to my craigslist advertisement; it included unsolicited photos of a man in a wig, wearing a black dress, stockings, garters and stilettos; two of these were photos of his dress lifted, exposing his unclothed crotch, fashioned to appear feminine (with his penis and testicles “tucked”):

i can entertain here in west london right now if you have an hour or so right now. im a very sexy cd and am dressed up fully right now and would look very sexy sitting cross legged as i speak to you, i may want you to remove your pants as we talk though... is that ok (May 20, 2014).

I replied, “I am doing purely academic research into sex work.” There was no further communication. That same day I received another email replying to my craigslist advertisement from someone who called himself a male service provider for men. He proposed we meet for an interview and made no sexual advances but included a naked photo. I chose not to reply.

Like Smith (2013) I was often invited to engage in participant observation (in my case by being paid to have sex; participating in or watching a booking) but I hastily turned these offers down. Throughout the recruitment period I was resistant to being sexualized and attempted to emphasize an identity as an asexual “ethical” researcher; I did not want to be perceived as a potential client or be taken advantage of nor appear to be wanting to take advantage of any potential interviewee. The sending of unsolicited sexual images in direct message also violated posted etiquette on most sites and apps which led to my further discomfort. Like Walby (2012) “I was trying to portray an identity as a professional... conducting a rigorous study about... escorting” (77). Being offered money for sex and following through I could learn about the social nuances of sex work encounters, body management, negotiating skills, identity, and stigma management; what I would not learn is the desire or need to sell sex, nor navigation of the contexts and institutions that got me there.

Considering I used the same generic recruitment email and recruitment advertisement, I often was puzzled by why they were being interpreted differently; I disconnected from the possibility of being a sexual object and as soon as I expressed or

reinforced my role, some men would cease contact with me. Respondents read a different identity onto me as a researcher before I said / wrote anything. Here Walby (2012) reminds me that no matter what self I present, it does not follow that my self-presentation will be accepted as I wish. This also occurred in non-sexualized ways. On another occasion, I had a potential participant express interest and seemingly understand what I was looking for with my research. When we finally attempted to set a time to meet, he changed his mind; he wanted me to ghost write his biography, which is outside the scope of what I am doing.⁵⁵ He proceeded to get quite defensive and told me to, "Have fun feeding my son with shreds of my dissertation." Here this potential interviewee called out the power differential between my dissertation and his life where telling me his story would bring him little or no benefit (Rios and Sands 2000).

While the \$40 payment was a motivation for some to engage in my research, and no one refused to accept payment for their time, some interviewees told me that altruism was a large factor in them coming to share their story. These men hoped by telling their stories not only would they help my research to be successful "by doing me a favor" but they would help other men in the industry considering the limited research that exists. Who precisely they thought would benefit directly and in what way was unclear. Like Carrera et al (2018), other participants expressed mundaneness as why they chose to be in the study, acting like it was unexceptional, as they had "nothing better to do," or were curious about my results.

3.6. Demographics

Despite the methodological challenges of recruiting a difficult-to-reach, stigmatized, and often transient population, I was able to interview 27 men in-person and 16 online (n=43). At the time of interview the men were between the ages of 18 and 51 years old. About one-quarter (n=11) of the men grew up in lower-income families while more than half (n=27) reported coming from middle-class backgrounds. Seven men never completed high school yet almost one-third (n=13) had completed or attended university.

Of the those I met in-person, the majority identified as white-Canadian or Caucasian (n=18). One participant identified as from the Horn of Africa / "Arabic-

⁵⁵ Not to mention I felt my caliber of writing was not at a level that would be useful to him.

Muslim,” another as Indigenous-Cree, and one as Black-Rwandan. The others were of mixed ancestries: 1) three identified as Black / Caucasian, two unspecified and one Afro-Trinidadian/Caucasian; 2) two identified as Indigenous / Caucasian, with one unspecified “Native” / Italian-Canadian and the other Algonquin / Caucasian; and lastly 3) one identified as Black / Ojibwe. Of the 16 online engagements, one identified as Southwest-Asian, while the rest were Caucasian.

The mean age of entry into sex work was 19.8 years, spanning the ages of 14 to 34 years old. This includes nine men who started in the industry before they turned 18, but only two had started before they turned 16. Most men interviewed never worked on the streets, with 43 percent (n=15) finding their first client using the internet, while 34 percent (n=12) had a friend in the industry facilitate their entrance; seven of these friends were female. Another 14 percent (n=5) were introduced by a family member or friend outside of the industry. One man found his first client at a bar, and another did street work.

The length of time and level of participation in the industry was varied. Some had sold sex only one time, while others worked in the industry full-time, part-time, or intermittently for upwards of 20 years. With this variability some had worked in multiple sectors; 20 had worked as or were currently escorts who offered more intimate⁵⁶ experiences; seven were hustlers or rentboys who provided sexual or fetish acts only; four had worked as strippers or pole dancers, and three had worked as erotic masseuses. One had worked in the porn industry while another did cam shows.

Twelve were motivated to sell sex solely for self-preservation while two were high-end escorts. Survival sex workers either were homeless and stayed at shelters, group homes, or couch surfed; only one had worked on the streets out of pure desperation; three others just used the street to find clients. Lastly, three men sold sex solely as a form of sexual expression, not out of financial need.

The vast majority of participants self-identified as gay (n=30); as the interviews progressed some did disclose their sexual identities were more complex than that with some further framing themselves as “two-spirit leaning,” “queer,” “flexible,” or saying that they did not find any of the labels represented them accurately. Six men self-identified as bisexual and six men were straight or heterosexual. Lastly, one man identified as straight-

⁵⁶ Not necessarily sexual

questioning. For the majority, the genders of those a man sold his services to corresponded to his reported sexual identity. In other words, if a man was bisexual he was more likely to service men and women; if he was straight he would only sell to women. Only one straight man found himself having to sell sex to men and women. Though he points out that he would not have chosen to have sex with any of these clients regardless of their gender as he and many other sex workers are not necessarily attracted those they service. He complicates ideas of generalizing sexuality based on gendered body parts; just because he is straight does not make all women attractive to him or potential sexual partners.

4. Intersubjective interview reflections

It is an anthropological axiom that ways of talking about the Other are ways of talking about ourselves (Woolard 1989).

Given the complex, sensitive nature of the research and the possible social, economic, and cultural differences⁵⁷ between myself and the men I interviewed, moving beyond descriptive ethnography towards something more critical was valuable as a praxis as it encouraged the consideration of the political and ethical implications of my work (Manning 2018; Scheper-Hughes 1992).

As a researcher is not necessarily always a welcome presence, the “deep hanging out”⁵⁸ advocated by Geertz (1998) “would have brought much unwanted attention to the men, the majority of whom are not out about their work to their families or communities” (Mitchell 2016: 17) or would have interfered with a sex worker’s ability to work, keeping them away from potential clients. Spending time with the research population traditionally has also meant the anthropologist must travel to a “foreign” locale. Critical ethnography recognizes that some populations cannot be isolated into homogenous groups that live in specific locations. This is true for this population as most of the sex workers I met were scattered in different class-based neighborhoods throughout London and had divergent levels of transience. The internet also negated my need to physically travel because navigating the digital world where some workers advertise, or interacting with research participants on Facebook, or text messaging, problematized traditional concepts of the field. I did not have to physically meet sex workers but was able to learn culturally-specific terms used by the demographic and acted alternatively as a detached observer, or as a “participant observer embedded into the social reality of the site” (Case 2011). Many of the men were also able to find out personal details about me due to my online presence before we even met.⁵⁹

Doing one’s fieldwork close to home also problematizes the idea of the field-afar. As a Londoner, sex workers are my neighbors, colleagues, family, and friends (whether-or-not I know them personally) encountered as I live my own life. The “field” then was

⁵⁷ though similarities exist...

⁵⁸ spending time and getting involved with sex workers in their lives

⁵⁹ This can help build trust if the ethnographer’s online presence corresponds with their in-person personae.

familiar to me as I interacted with research participants online, and in various locales in the city.⁶⁰ The exception was when I visited a sex worker's apartment for an interview for a few hours; here I was in uncharted territory on the "other side of the tracks," but I could immediately return to familiar people and places afterward.

The anthropologist then must have a degree of emotional competence in order for trust to develop.⁶¹ Emotional competence is "the ability to convey genuine interest, express care, and respond appropriately" (Rooke 2009). My dependence on building trust not only encouraged an interviewee to tell their stories freely (Moghaddam and Studer 1997) but also was a gateway for accomplishing my agenda (Raheim et al. 2016). Though this sounds contrived I was genuinely interested in their lives and kept an attitude of wonder trying to avoid judgmental or evaluative language (Van Manen 1997). I showed my attentiveness by providing culturally-dependent feedback which included maintaining eye contact and backchannel responses such as nodding my head, "uh huh," and "I see" (Finch 1984). This is also an affect of a therapeutic stance where I was positioned to be empathetic to emotions as they arose and encouraged reflections on what was being expressed (Burger 1996: Westby 2016). This facilitated stronger bonds of rapport as my relationships with some of the men I met developed symbiotically (Orchard and Dewey 2016). Yet fieldwork is a messy business and intersubjective realities ground our understanding and explanations of people's lifeworlds (Stodulka 2015).

By discussing my research experiences, I aim to explore the processes and circumstances under which my ethnographic knowledge was produced and informed and the related emergent vulnerabilities I experienced (cf. Raheim et al 2016). Making my social involvement and pervasive affect in the field transparent also solidifies the ethnographic data improving the validity of claims I make about other peoples' experiences, behaviors, and speech (Stodulka 2015). A key factor in any research that relies on interviews is the ability of the researcher to connect with an interviewee and get them to "open up." My positionality worked to facilitate and impede my access to

⁶⁰ I was born in London and though I grew up in a small town 20 minutes west and a small village another 20 minutes west of there, my parents worked in the city and I moved back in 2001. Beyond that, some branches of my family tree have been in the region since the 18th century.

⁶¹ Ethnography is a form of emotional work with its own hazards and difficulties. Emotional labour describes how certain kinds of workers manage their own feelings in order to induce feelings in others (Hochschild 1983).

knowledge and provided limits and consequences for both researcher and researched. Abu-Lughod's (1991) concept of the "halfie" anthropologist where the ethnographer at once straddles the line between insider and outsider is useful to frame these dynamics. A member of the community being researched is in a better position to collect and analyze data, but this data is shaded in personal and experiential bias; an outsider may have a fresh perspective that an insider has not considered but also can be a hinderance to trust-building (McLean 2007; Weitzer 2015). To build rapport based on similarity and comparison, to aid in a deeper mutual understanding, and serve as a conversation point, I attempted to create dialogue by sharing my own experiences during interview (cf. Wahab 2003). Though I risked privileging my life by sharing too much instead of co-constructing their story (Leibing and McLean 2008), sharing could indicate my honesty and openness. By finding some commonalities my hope was to create a safe space where they might reveal further information that they otherwise may have felt was irrelevant (Cowles 1988).

4.1. Queer sensibility

Valentine (2010) argues that an ethical stance on the assumed experiences of study participants is deeply complicated by what those experiences are. According to Foucault (1978), in mainstream culture talking of one's sexuality is treated as if one was sharing a secret treasure of self-identity. What constitutes the innermost private, harmful etc. is not universal; it is the anthropologist who draws on normative codes and conventions to establish what is shameful or threatens the integrity of others (Lovell 2007).⁶² During the initial phases of my research I was tasked in an anthropological methods class to create questions I could ask the men when I interviewed them, instead of keeping things completely open ended.⁶³ The feedback I received from this professor was that she felt the questions were too personal and that they would be alienating. As she was not a member of the queer community she did not understand that the intimate, personal, and sexual are part of a homosocial sexual ethos. As gay men we share some commonalities: we enjoy the sexual pleasures of our gender; for many, the coming out process and story while deeply personal and somewhat invasive, is a key step in identity formation where the so called

⁶² The notion that stories are going to be shocking implies a carnivalesque world that does not make sense and relies on previously known tropes that other (Heron 2007).

⁶³ I would defer (and paraphrase) to these questions if I was having difficulty getting a respondent to share or if the conversation did not allow for a natural transition into certain areas of their life. See Appendix D.

private is thrust into the public, the sexual disclosed to family (which violates mainstream norms of silence) or normatively shared (cf. Leap 1996, 2007). Though there are individual variations, since sex workers regardless of sexual identity and queer community are gendered and sexualized populations, there are intersecting histories of marginalization and a need to navigate issues relating to body image, mental health, addiction, family estrangement, and other similar concerns (Shah 2012). As such the sexual and intimate can be considered fundamental aspects of these speech (sub)communities and in the case of sex work specifically could be classified as trade-talk.

Regardless, for stigmatized populations engaging in stigmatized behaviours the thought of revealing the intimate and personal to a stranger / outsider *did* make many interviewees uncomfortable until they got a sense of who I was. Like Smith (2013), interviewees confessed that even after my preparations to prove my legitimacy as a researcher, before meeting me they had wondered whether all of this was an elaborate ruse. Some had friends express concern that they were falling into a police trap or that I would be a pervert. Interestingly, when asked more about these fears, they admitted that they had never heard of something like that happening nor was it something they had experienced. These fears indicate their positionality in *Canadian* society as they managed feelings of shame, concerns of vulnerability, or a fragile sense of control in their lives. For those involved in illicit activities, secrecy is a form of legal protection so being exposed becomes even more disconcerting. Once we developed a rapport these fears had somewhat abated.

At the end of most interviews, many men told me that they found the ability to talk to someone openly and honestly without fear of repercussion a cathartic experience. Other qualitative researchers also found interviews a therapeutic or cathartic experience for participants (Hyden 2014; Bondi 2013). Often, I was the only person they had ever been open with. They enjoyed the comradery I offered in part because I was equally open about my life, attempted to be nonjudgmental, or I had made a positive impression on them in some other way (e.g., giving a compliment or expressing my gratitude). Some camaraderie

occurred when some men would point out attractive men to me or elicit discussion of our sexual preferences.⁶⁴

The interview as a queer space of fluidity, mindfulness, and tolerance for difference, pushed up against the normative constraints and gender roles produced in the rest of our lives (Edgecomb 2017);⁶⁵ we shared mutual understandings of feelings of shame, isolation, and oppression. As a man, we have been told how we should and should not feel because of our gender. We are told that we can never be victims. Some of these men and I were able to connect on what it was like growing up as gay in the country, sharing our coming out stories, how we felt alienated by the gay community, dating or relationship status, and with one-man body image issues we had as bears in a gay culture that privileges youth or muscularity.⁶⁶ Even before we know what gay is we are told by the world that we are “less than;” We are told of all the ways we fail at “being a man.” We have to worry that we will experience violence because of our sexuality.

4.2. Rapport building as an outsider

A different dynamic occurred when I was positioned as outsider with straight-identifying men who sold sex to women. Despite my rather liberal outlook on sex and sexuality, there were times where I was out of my element or found myself feeling uncomfortable when discussing certain heterosexual practices or graphic descriptions of bodily functions. This included things like penetrative vaginal sex, clitoral stimulation, vaginal smell, STI symptoms as well as scat and blood. Here I may have missed subtle nuances in meaning or opportunities to explore these aspects of the industry. In an effort not to disrupt rapport I tried to remain neutral but was not always successful. On one occasion I met with a female sex worker and her boyfriend. These two have various experiences selling sexual services independently but since falling in love they had left the industry. I found them to be personable people and our conversation was open and flowed naturally. As the dyadic

⁶⁴ This is similar to Smith’s (2013) experiences in her interviews with queer sex workers in London and Amsterdam. She found herself, when it felt appropriate, talking about specific bodily experiences and her relationship with embodiment. Also see Lambevski (1999) regarding participating in queer (sub)culture. There were hints of flirtation from some which I most often deflected playfully while with others I was not receptive to any sexual innuendo; I pretended to be naïve and continued the conversation (cf. Ozbay 2017).

⁶⁵ This includes public sex work discourse, institutional structures, and broader social interactions.

⁶⁶ A bear is a larger and hairier gay man that exhibits secondary sexual characteristics such as facial hair, body hair and sometimes baldness. This community is subdivided into chubs (those classed as fat), wolves (medium-built), otters (slim-built), and muscle-bears as well as by age and race.

interview progressed issues of homelessness, addiction, sexual abuse, gang membership and crime had already proven to make for quite the dramatic story. Their discussion of sex dungeons, drug-induced tantric sex, pegging,⁶⁷ and fantasies of necrophilia meant there was no hiding my uneasiness and I experienced a flood of emotions. My reactions became visceral as I could feel my stomach churn. I became fidgety and I shifted in my seat. At one moment I sat in disconnected disbelief that I was hearing this, the next I felt sympathetic to their various struggles previously described. Other times I sat in absolute disgust as lines I was not even aware of were being crossed. On relistening to the interview my emotions were obvious, as my affective response was to curse “Jesus!” with increasing intensity. I am unsure what kind of reaction they may have expected from me, but they responded to my astonishments by opening-up about some acts and desires they had not disclosed to each other before as well as gave details of the sexual practices they performed for clients. Despite trying to be respectful and understanding and telling interviewees that they could feel free to share what they want with me (or not), I thought I was prepared to expect the unexpected. Nonetheless, no “how-to” book of ethnography or methods class prepares a researcher on what to do when faced with discussions of necrophilia.

The norm in contemporary anthropology has been to avoid tactlessly judging or confronting our informants in the name of cultural relativism, especially as we decipher what may seem unintelligible or objectionable not only to not do harm but as not to damage rapport (Falcone 2010). Hewitt (2007) emphasizes that moral questions can arise due to the unintended consequences of the trust and closeness that makes up rapport. Though I was aware that being forthright about my views could impede rapport as much as it could foster dialogue, there were times that I needed to directly question views and other times when I moved past them. In one of the few interviews held at an interviewee’s apartment, I met Matt, a man who sells sex to women. As I sit in his living room he tells me of some of his “insensitivities” to other people.

I am extremely homophobic; if a gay person is sitting on the bus, I won't sit next to him; I treat them just like a woman, I don't sit near them. I don't want them looking at me or talking to me. I use the word ‘faggot’ a lot, [though I recognize] a lot of people find it derogatory and hate the word. Most of the time I wouldn't bash other people, but after three or four dudes hitting on me, it would be more like, “Yo, I'm not a faggot. I respect you if that’s your life

⁶⁷ This is an act where a female wears a strap-on dildo and engages in penetrating her partner anally.

choice, but like I'm a female-only kinda guy." After awhile I started thinking, like and maybe I'm wrong because I don't know a lot of gay people. You've talked to a bunch of guys like that so maybe you'll know, but don't they all talk, like, isn't it like black people, don't they all kind of act the same?

Here I was faced with many options. I could have used this as an opportunity to explore his relationship with women, who he meant by "black people," or further explored his history with gay men. Alternatively, I could have remained silent and moved on to something else. Yet there were times like this that I chose to move beyond being a researcher and abandon my concern for building rapport.

When I was immersed in natural (unstructured) conversation, where I was open and free to interact with the stories I was being told, I felt more able to connect critically and build an interactive dialogue (Fabian 2001). In this case I decided to confront Matt.

Nathan: [laughs nervously] Okay, well I'm going to come clean, I'm gay, okay?
Matt: Oh, really dude?
Nathan: Yeah.
Matt: No way.
Nathan: I am.
Matt: Dude, you're the first gay dude I've met that has not acted like all gay. You're just being normal...
Nathan: I'm just a dude.
Matt: That's hard. Dude, that's - yo, that's, straight up man. That's nice.
Nathan: Well I figured I'd come clean because I know the stereotypes you're talking about. So... surprise there's a gay guy sitting in your living room.
Matt: Well, I - dude, you honestly are the first person that has kind of shifted my opinion of gay people.
Nathan: I had to tell you - I had to come out to you because what you started saying about black people - no we don't all know each other or even all like each other. We are not the same... I told you I'm being open with you...
Matt: Well I respect that, man, you know, like I thought I was going to have to tell you a lot of shit that was going to be hard, but now you're telling me shit too, so it's kind of making me feel a little better.
Nathan: Well, yeah, I mean I got nothing to hide so...
Matt: Respect man, thank you.

It is here that the results of my honesty proved to be fruitful not only to delve deeper into his history but for rapport as well. We ended up talking for several more hours and further opportunities opened in the conversation to explore his views on women, gay men, and those he considered "black."

In other cases, generational and class differences made connecting more difficult. Differences included language use, pop-culture references, technology use, economic privileges, lived sociohistorical events, intrinsic and values (Twenge, Campbell and Freeman 2012) and different life stages.⁶⁸ In some cases, my own biases affected my personal feelings about some individuals and how I interpreted their stories despite attempts at remaining non-judgmental. Though I am aware of individual and systematic barriers that people face, I privately judged one or two participants as having “deadbeat” attitudes especially in relation to those who had similar experiences but had a different outlook. While they loathed selling sex and complained about their current situations, they refused to use available social supports, nor were they willing or able to reflect on any problematic choices they had made in their lives. Their loci of control largely attributed events in their lives to external factors (Rotter 1954). Because I was raised with a middle-class sensibility of taking initiative and at least some responsibility for one’s own life,⁶⁹ as an anthropologist, like Stafford (2018), I could suspend judgment while trying to understand the circumstances that have led them to act and think the ways they do. However, as members of the same society who did have some similarities, the process was complicated. Overall, it was those men who were able to critically reflect on themselves, people in their lives, and the world around them that I enjoyed talking with the most. This ability on its own was not strictly limited to factors such as psychological health, class, maturity level, or education but appeared to be a natural aptitude or personality trait that some men possessed. It was with these men that I was able to develop a stronger rapport and became comfortable crossing certain boundaries, being more up front and honest about my own thoughts, pushing them farther or challenging them to enter unexplored territory in their stories or asking them to clarify contradictions (Waterston and Rylko-Bauer 2007).

No matter who I talked to or how I felt about them, it was the ability to find a mutuality in discussion despite potential differences that allowed us to build any kind of rapport and perhaps allowed for greater access to the life stories I was being told. For some it was discussing our personal relationships, for others the adoption of my son provoked

⁶⁸ For example, leaving home for the first time versus getting a mortgage versus owning your home.

⁶⁹ This sensibility is reminiscent of a protestant ethos of individualism and self-sufficiency (cf. Heron 2007; May 2003; Makinen 2016).

conversation; my relationship with my parents, past jobs, the world of academia, or personal struggles with mental health served as stepping stones into other parts of their lives. It was autobiographical accounts that served to show the ways my private life impacted the research. During the time of my fieldwork I had traversed between an “epistemology of intimacy,” absorbed by my experiential insights and connection with a research participant, and an “epistemology of estrangement” (Keane 2003), which provided the distance to critically reflect on what was said and experienced (McLean 2007). The tensions between insider and outsider, friendship, and professionalism, like and dislike, were key to what stories were told and in which manner (let alone my subsequent interpretation).

4.3. Emotional considerations

“Scholarship has a human face and a living voice” (Featherstone 1989).

A researcher’s reflexive self-analysis can easily become excessive at the expense of the research aims. Yet to avoid reflexivity altogether is itself problematic. A lack of critical awareness about the impact of the research context, perspectives chosen, methodological choices made, and the researcher, could seriously hamper the knowledge claims made (Hume and Mulcock 2004; Lather 1986; Raheim et al 2016). Research involves inter- and intra-personal processes of perception which include looking and thinking, queering the familiar, making and suspending judgements, being creative, drawing conclusions, taking action, and working with others (McLaughlin 2003).

The emotions evoked while I engaged in rapport-building, confronting the tensions of my positionality, and listening to emotionally charged stories unsettled my well-being and caused anxiety. Despite trying to prepare for the possibility that I could meet people who would share disconcerting stories and that not all interviewees would be pleasant to work with, graduate coursework had not prepared me for the complexity of emotional responses I experienced, nor the intense emotional work I had to undertake (Hochschild 1983; Mitchell 2015). Some men shared stories of disturbing, heart rending and frightening events and their consequent suffering, misery, and heartache. I was told stories of alcoholism, drug use, imprisonment, psychiatric hospitalization, disability, sexual and economic exploitation, physical abuse, poverty, institutional violence, displacement, intergenerational trauma, crime, loss, social precariousness, and even war and murder.

While I do not wish to exoticize these stories, some were novel and shocking (McCosker, Barnard, and Gerber 2001). At the same time in one form or another these are experiences I have encountered in my immediate or extended family and social network, either through direct experience or as emotional legacy (Lovell 2007). Being told these stories however, often being told for the first time, and turning towards their uncomfortable realities came at a cost (cf. Leibing and McLean 2007). It is this story of my own embodied vulnerability, particularly as a white male anthropologist, that not only shapes my experiences in the field but is an important story in its own right, countering a (toxic) masculinist mentality (cf. Huang, Lu, MacDougall, and Steffen 2018).

The stories of my second interviewee, 19-year-old Blake, were my first exposure to tragic narratives in the field. Though I attempted to keep myself emotionally distant I found myself experiencing visceral reactions. I let out audible sad sighs, statements of “this is intense” and “I’m so sorry this happened to you” as he recounted his life of familial sexual abuse, suicidal attempts, and cocaine addiction alongside struggles with various mental and emotional disorders. For several weeks afterwards, I found myself crying at the thought of his life as well as thinking about my son who was 15 at the time and his own mixed-bag of struggles. As I interviewed more men the weight of the more tragic stories began to haunt me. I started getting flashbacks of interviews while I was doing everyday tasks; I felt disconnected from others and the things I was doing.

As I started to read, listen to, and analyze the transcripts, and write my dissertation or class work, I found myself procrastinating more than customary. These emotions, according to Raheim and colleagues (2016), are symptoms of compassion stress or secondary / vicarious trauma (Pearlman and McKay 2008); a sense of emotional exhaustion from the overwhelming nature of interviewees experiences (McCosker 1995). One of the unforeseen consequences of rapport building was that I became more empathetic to the stories of plight because interviewees were no longer abstract characters in a book or acquaintances I knew nothing about. Caring and in some cases associating with the pain of those men who have endured terrible things meant I brought their grief, fear, anger, and

despair⁷⁰ into my own awareness and felt burdened, overwhelmed, and hopeless.⁷¹ This was exacerbated by the burnout and stress in other areas of my life as I was juggling course work, completing my duties as teaching assistant, writing comprehensive exams, and conducting interviews simultaneously while raising a teenager with Dual Diagnoses of autism and intellectual disability. I also struggled with immense feelings of guilt that I was being egocentric or self-indulgent, feeling the way I did considering they had experienced the trauma, not me.

During this time some of the men I had previously interviewed kept in-touch, randomly updating me on their lives. Though I enjoyed our online chats and they provided evidence I was successful in building rapport, a few men seemed to position me in a mentor position. While we did talk about our general interests these specific men would ask for relationship advice (I have been married since 2003) or we would talk about what was stressing us out. Sometimes I would be in the middle of class, or dinner with my family and get a random text asking for a ride, telling me about how they did not have money or did not have enough food for the week, looking for suggestions on places to get a job, or asking for advice on selling some of their limited possessions for food. Though I did direct them to some resources or job postings, I knew if they were not successful some would have to sell sex to someone they would rather not, compounding their feelings of despair. I am also aware that these inquiries may have been gentle feelers to see if I was interested in becoming a client or if I could hook-them-up. Nonetheless I resisted any other form of possible intervention (e.g., providing charity) despite my compassion not only because it was not my role as anthropologist but also because it is not my place to “help” financially. I had to learn to let go and meditate on neutrality in cases where I felt instinctively compelled to intervene (Friederic 2010). I am not the saviour of the less fortunate (Heron 2007) nor do I want to be taken advantage of. In other words, I was split between self-interest and altruism. If I kept my focus tuned only to suffering and its alleviation, then I would be ignoring the complexity and diversity of the experiences, in danger of creating

⁷⁰ No matter how recent these events were or if they were on-going, most of the men with these experiences told these parts of their stories as if they had told them before; no one asked for or took the opportunity to stop and compose themselves and no tears were shed. Yet discourses of anger, resentment and sadness to those who had hurt them abound.

⁷¹ See Appendix E.

and perpetuating a homogenized knowledge about sex workers. Though I still find these stories disturbing, temporal distance has shifted my focus from these stories of pain, back towards doing my best to depict their lives as they shared, showing both their agency and lack thereof, and their relationality to privilege and penalty.

With the colonial legacy of anthropology inscribed in my reactions, I experienced a tension between wanting to “do good” by “giving back,” since I felt they had given me so much. Those who sell sex have been voicing their concerns about research performed on their communities, and both those who sell sex and academics express concern over the power imbalance researchers have over study participants (Bowen and O’Doherty 2014). Researchers use our positions of power and privilege to access a community, extract knowledge, and “produce publications that are translated into prestige in the academic economy” (La Salle 2010: 406); meanwhile the researched community receives comparatively little to no benefit. In other words, as I am implicated in a position of dominance, and wish to shift “the nexus of power” (Heron 2007) I must be held accountable to the participants in my study in multiple ways. If academically my researching “with” those who sell sex was limited, then other opportunities for engagement and self-representation are necessary as part of the philosophy of participatory research. Unfortunately, my attempts at advocacy work exacerbated my own levels of stress.⁷²

Who we stand for, whose view of the world we are trying to have represented, and whose views are being unfairly ignored, silenced or marginalized, are all matters that are deserving of receiving an airing, and they are profoundly political questions that have to do with working with and for those whose lives are being actively immiserated and helping them to bring policy pressure to bear in interrupting their situation of exclusion (Smyth and McInerney 2011).

4.4. Conclusion

In general, though one of the roles of an anthropologist is to incite confession and to control access to discourses of truth, this does not indicate an absence of agency (Foucault 1978). As captive as the men were to my researcher’s gaze, I was beholden to what, how much, and in what ways they were willing to share and listen as well as their own agendas (McLean 2007). Despite my efforts to emphasize my desire for the interview to be casual and relational in nature, some men resisted my attempts at keeping the conversation

⁷² See Appendix F.

unstructured. They often would catch themselves, apologizing for going on tangents despite my assertions they were not wasting my time and that anything they had to say was useful. These tangents could bring contextual insights to understanding their lives as a whole. Though I had disclosed that they were welcome to ask any questions about me since they were sharing about their lives, few were interested and when I tried to relate similar events to my experiences I felt brushed off or treated as if I were interrupting their narrative. In these cases, by listening to their cues by the end of these interviews I slowly limited myself to a more traditional performance of one-sided interviewer. These interactions were indicative of the art of the interview, “a dance mediated by social distance, rules of politeness, and the anthropologist's ethical concerns about exploitation and rudeness” and the interviewees’ preconceived notion of how an interview should go and what we should be talking about (Waterston and Rylko-Bauer 2007).

5. Growing Up: Diverse Commonalities

I grew up the same way any other person would. **Bill; Escort-for-women.**

I don't know where to start because it's like a huge chain of reaction - like a huge chain of things that happened. **Ted; Escort-for-men.**

I feel, depressed about my past a lot. It actually really bothers me. It haunts me... I actually had a very troubled childhood. **Grant; Sex worker-for-men.**

The world is disorderly, messy, and unstable. According to Mitchell (2015), “we understand prostitution better when we approach it as highly intersectional, fluid, and subjective” instead of trying to compartmentalize the multiple identities and roles of sex workers. He continues, “a sex worker’s work life, personal life, family life, spiritual life, upbringing, and class background all interrelate and shape one another – just as they do for everyone else” (127). Despite this we know almost nothing about how families function in the lives of male sex workers.

When meeting an interviewee, we would exchange pleasantries and I would explain my research and deal with matters of privacy and ethics. At this point I started to probe a little into the information they had already shared with me, asking about their age, what their specific involvement in the sex industry was, often asking about their personal sexual identity versus who they sold sex to and then asking open-endedly for them to “start at the beginning.” Here most people would ask if I meant how they started in sex work or if I meant their childhoods. Telling them my interest in both and that they could start where they felt most comfortable, shaped how the conversation went ahead. The men held their own notions of what my research was about and what they wanted from it, being highly selective and strategic on what they shared, thereby actively shaping the research process (Luttrell 2005). Even though I made it explicit in my recruitment advertisements that I wanted to know more about their lives and stories, some shared more than others both in general and specifically about their childhoods. Since this is a “study about sex work” it is possible some did not see the value of talking about parts of their lives not associated with their time in the sex industry. What stands out is the lack of mundanity, of childhood, of street-life, of time in school, of life. For those with atraumatic middle-class childhoods, it was the mundanity that was considered so unexceptional that I could not get them to

elaborate further. Without more time to build deeper rapport, this likely limited how many details they were willing to share at the onset of our interview but also kept disclosure structured in a narrative template that highlighted the exceptional. Those with narratives of trauma and poverty held true to their claims that “I would be in for a shock,”⁷³ telling sagas rife with tragedy, intrigue, and survival. These were most often “narratives of chaos,”⁷⁴ with one terrible thing leading to another and the protagonist crushed by forces they cannot control, and a plot that leads to no resolution; these stories are anti-narrative⁷⁵ leading us to an adulthood that is just a continuation of the chaos (Frank 1995). Coming out narratives highlighted either enhanced communion with family, agentive recovery after enduring hardship, or chaotic (a life of negatives) or contaminated (with themes of victimization, betrayal, and loss). These were all situated performances, told and modified as our conversation progressed and their perceptions of me changed (Thorne 2006; Gergen 1991; cf. Goffman 1959).

Looking at life narrative through a lineal and thereby staged lens requires a few caveats. Though many of the emergent themes may fit our own preconceived notions of what causes people to become sex workers, there is a hidden value judgement in making these connections. When we look at life as if it is a voyage through discreet developmental stages then we imply that if we can show a cause, then we can change the outcome. After all no child grows up dreaming on being involved in the sex industry; though many forget the same could be said for many other nonidealized occupations (dirty-work). Framed another way, sex work is often predetermined to be a negative outcome, something to avoid, a pathology we retrospectively wish to diminish. This is the hindsight bias; thus, it would be simplistic to pick and choose which experiences we have as adults that originate in what happened to us as children; it is deterministic to assume all behaviours are rooted in early stress and attunement problems. This counters sociological risk studies which

⁷³ The notion that the stories are going to be shocking for white middle-class subjects already implies a carnivalesque world that does not make sense and is not quite real; it calls into play previously known tropes that are othering (Heron 2007: 59).

⁷⁴ When people are overwhelmed by the intensity of their lives, the ability to speak coherently becomes impossible. Only when there is a tentative ability to stand outside the chaos can the story begin to emerge (Kilty 2000: 18).

⁷⁵ The anti-narrative is time without sequence, without being able to fully reflect on oneself (Frank 1995: 98).

inform trauma-informed practices implemented in communities, education, public health, social services, and criminal justice.

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study is the landmark in this field and looks at the incidence of ten categories of painful circumstances; family violence, parental divorce, drug or alcohol abuse in the family, death of a parent and physical or sexual abuse, and compared them to “negative” outcomes as adults (Felitti et al. 1998). The more traumas a child experiences, the greater risk for disabilities, social and health problems. The correlations found are then used to counteract the effects of trauma and stressful experiences on later development as well as develop preventative measures (Sousa et al. 2011). Longitudinal studies on delinquent and at-risk youth by Werner and Smith (1982, 1992, 2001) however illustrate how these predictions are problematic; most of these youths did not develop into career criminals, nor did children exposed to risk factors develop serious disabilities or persistent problems. They anticipated endemic failure and bore witness to human resilience. At each developmental stage, there is an opportunity for protective factors (personal competencies and sources of support) to counterbalance the negative weight of adverse experiences (Werner and Smith 1992). Risk of course exists and the risks for the exploitation of certain populations of any age are real. We must remember that: 1) many people have had similar experiences and not ended up in the sex industry; 2) these stories are mere tidbits and interpretations of an individual’s past; 3) people of diverse backgrounds become involved in the industry; and 4) as seen through my interviews, not everyone views their involvement in sex work as exploitation. In other words, not everyone who is a sex worker has suffered from traumatic childhoods and not everyone who has experienced trauma as a child becomes a sex worker.

My last caveat involves my arbitrary decision to classify those eighteen and younger as children and youth. Considering the legal distinction within the *Convention of the Rights of the Child*, in law, mandate, and policy in Canada, buying sex from anyone under 18 is deemed exploitation; eighteen is considered the magical age that separates a child from an adult. The blanket application of this legal distinction can be unhelpful as factors such as levels of maturity and ability to make informed decisions must be taken into consideration regardless of age (Ditmore 2013). Some media outlets, research studies, politicians, and support organizations manipulate the age cut-off and concept of child for

political and financial gain. This reproduces a false binary between adulthood and childhood. My choice of classification is also problematized when the difficulties of youth extend into adulthood unchanged; this blurry line also does not account for lived experiences, acquired skills, or intersectional factors such as (dis)ability, class, race, or gender. Lastly, childhood is not a universal concept; the experience of growing up has differed in all societies at different times and is informed by parents' cultural ideas (Harkness and Super 1992).

If interviewees started telling me about their start in the industry, their narrative would jump between time periods, often between the more recent past, to their memories of growing up, back to present day, to future goals, and back to the past. Once the thread was pulled, the stories were unraveled often for the first time, and we would co-construct their narrative going on tangents, trying to connect cause-and-effect, and return to a chronological form. If we started talking about their childhood, their narratives took a standard linear form where they would connect memories and stories to make a larger socially coherent narrative. This relationship between storytelling and time is related to how experiences of self and events are understood (Ricoeur 1984). Hallowell (1955) called this self-continuity, where an individual has the capacity to relate temporally distinct experiences through memory within an organized structure. Life stories are a taken-for-granted interpretive device furnished by Canadian⁷⁶ culture so I expected a normalized story-form of the self (Luttrell 2005; Bruner 1991). The stories we construct to make sense of our lives are, according to McAdams (2008), supposed to be about who we “imagine we were, are, and might be with who we were, are, and might be in the social contexts of family, community, workplace, ethnicity, religion, gender... class, and culture writ large” (242-243). Such elicited autobiographical accounts emphasize the humanity of the teller as they collect memories to share and organize them into terms of lifetime periods, general events, and event-specific knowledge (McAdams 2008). Finding and emphasizing this humanity was no accident of research design, as ethnography explores the links among social structures, culture, identity, and self-understandings. There were five major themes to men's stories of childhood and youth that emerged during the fieldwork period; 1) The

⁷⁶ Middle-class, Anglo-centric

unexceptionality of middleclass childhood; 2) Coming out stories; 3) Lives complicated by sexual abuse; 4) Growing up in a culture of poverty; and 5) Youth addiction.

5.1. Unexceptional middle class

The culture of the Canadian middle class is consistent with ideals of being able to make choices, pave our own paths, and voice our ideas and opinions. For individuals from this background, these norms make sense and are often taken for granted. They tend to live in a relatively certain world where their basic needs are met; food and shelter are rarely an issue. Compared to the other reflections, those men who did not experience hardships as children had little to say about growing up. This unmarkedness of middleclass childhood may parallel the unspoken entitlement that allows whites to protect their privilege through denial of said privilege of not having to think about race (cf. Fitzgerald 2014). For the middleclass, experiences as a child have been constructed by some as separate from adulthood and seen as irrelevant (Orellana and Phoenix 2007). However, anonymity may have still been a concern as there may have been the potential for details of their childhoods to be connected to the person they are today, especially when family often did not know about their involvement in the sex trade. As “white” and affluent myself, it is possible that interviewees felt they did not need to explain to “an insider.” With the white trauma-free middleclass being the Canadian idealized norm, for those men who fit the standard privileged narrative with their identity, there was seemingly little to tell. Interestingly, one man, Doug, who identifies as Cree and another who identifies as “an East African Muslim” did not share much about their middleclass childhoods either.

Doug, 25, was born in Edmonton, escorting for men and women in Vancouver and London to explore his sexuality and supplement his income. Not sharing much about his childhood, he starts telling me about his secondary school years. During this time, he took part in a bridge program earning his culinary arts certificate from “a Native college in Edmonton” as he identifies as Cree. He also worked as a dishwasher and other job building experiences during this time. When he turned 18 and finished high school, he headed to Vancouver, surprising his mom.

Bashir, a 21-year-old former Hollister model, stripper, and two-time escort meets me in a tutorial room on campus, with gym bag in hand. In the Muslim tradition he was raised in, he says “women have a higher standard.”

Men can go fuck themselves, but women have to have a sense of respect. Women are supposed to just stay home, it's good they work and everything, but they are supposed to just stay home – they should know their limits.

This misogynistic discourse of how he was raised is all he tells me about his youth, not even disclosing when or why his family immigrated to Canada.

Steven is a bisexual 38-year-old man who was introduced to sex work through a female friend (a sex worker herself) in Victoria, British Columbia and cruises the downtown area of London as a “street ho.” Originally from a town 45 minutes to the east, he enjoys the pleasure he receives from the sex and the money he uses to “do whatever he wants.” Steven will use the money he earns on drugs which he finds does not cost a lot. He has been incarcerated for possession of stolen property. I suspect there is much he is not telling me about his life. He does not mention if he has any relationship with his parents now but despite his father and mother divorcing he says, “his childhood was great.” Keeping it short he tells me that his dad worked in a factory and his mum was a nurse. He is not the only person to tell me what their parents did for a living when I ask about their childhoods.

Rick is a 34-year-old man who classifies himself as gay for pay and has a Bachelor's degree in Anthropology. He had reoccurring kidney stones and was prescribed Oxycontin repeatedly until he became addicted. His wages will not cover his living expenses and his drug habit. He has sold sex on the streets in Ottawa but since moving to London a few years ago he has been going to local bars to recruit clients. It is July 2014 and he chain smokes as we chat on the patio of a local frozen yogurt store. Rick mentions that if his parents knew what he was doing to make his own way they would have a stroke. Like the other men who considered themselves to come from a “typical” privileged middle-class background he did not spend much time reflecting on his past; he was an only child with two parents in a suburban house. “I was a brat. I was a spoiled little shit.”

Telling me what kind of class-background they grew up in, or the occupation of their parents, was a common-thread throughout the interviews and I rarely prompted specifically for this information. Sometimes this was the only information I could elicit. This parallels a common conversational norm when talking with strangers, asking what they do for a living. Often this is done as a way to find common ground or to generalize about the kind of person an individual is. By telling me about their class backgrounds,

interviewees were setting the scene for their overall story, illustrating levels of agency, contamination, or identification between past and present selves (McAdams and McLean 2013). Though I did interview other men who grew up with privileged backgrounds and their stories are similarly brief, I grouped these recollections separately as they were told to highlight a sense of loss or transition; for some talking about their childhoods in detail may have reminded them of the childhood they lost. Others focus on specific events from their pasts such as coming to terms with their sexuality, abuse and neglect, or mental health and addiction. For those less privileged, their framing was not to highlight a loss or transition but contextualizing abuse, crime, gang-membership, neglect, mental health, and addiction as characteristic of the lower-class contexts.

5.2. Coming out stories

The coming out story is understood as a turning point in a gay man's identity and is an essential theme in narratives gay and queer men told me. In response to the good heterosexual / bad homosexual dichotomy that was amplified with the rise of the AIDS epidemic, activists such as ACT UP and Queer Nation mobilized and transformed cultural politics allowing LGBT groups to retaliate against mainstream oppression and discrimination (Rimmerman 2002). Coming out became about reclaiming an authentic self as a response to discrimination, concealment, and double lives (Seidman 2002; Brown 2011); a way to normalize homosexuality by integrating one's sexuality into all aspects of life and society (Jagose 1996). It also forces sexuality into a position that asserts its salience as central to identity. Those with economic privilege (white, male, middleclass) could be free and open, moving to gay communities, safe spaces of abundance (Brown 2011). Coming out of the closet also assumes disclosure is difficult for some and easy for others, focusing on psychological responses, family reactions, religious and community support (Herdt 1992; Savin-Williams 2005). Three interviewees, Phil, Ryan, and Robert came from white middleclass backgrounds and accordingly gave only brief accounts of their childhoods. Being gay men however, they did share their stories of coming to terms with their sexualities. These too were brief and met with relative acceptance by their families.

Phil, 43, is one of the oldest escorts I interviewed and also one of the longest in the industry, supplementing his income for 18 years. His parents owned restaurants in a small

town 90 minutes to the southwest of London. As a gay kid in the closet, he felt trapped living in a small town with no visible gay community, until his early 20s when he moved to London. When he accidentally did come out because his brother found his porn stash and told his parents, “nobody was particularly surprised” and he did not have any issues at that point.

Ryan, 28, supplements his income by giving massages with happy-endings. He enjoys the sensuality and his ability to make people feel good. He came out at 17 in high school in Chatham (90 min southwest of London) and to his parents at 19. Other than a former (perhaps resentful) girlfriend who told him no one would ever love him, his family was very supportive, he says “despite being members of the United Church;” even when he was younger he was allowed to play with girls toys and even dressed up as Snow White as a little boy for Halloween.

Robert, a 39-year-old Londoner, does what he calls professional dating from the street; He does not tell me much about his past but for him the companionship from his sex work seems linked to his sexuality. Sitting in a Central library interview room of worn chairs, stained carpets, patched walls, and scuffed paint, while Robert is talking I found I often got lost in his blue eyes; there was something disarming about the way he talked and carried himself. His brief coming out story again is framed by religion; “I never came from a religious background or nothing like that, and my mom - I don’t have a father - but my mom is not very judgmental of me at all, she just wants me to be happy.”

By coming out, an individual goes through what has been described by Schneider (1997) as the most difficult and socially isolating phase of a person’s life. Coming out is much more than a re-evaluation of self, it involves the breakdown in traditional notions of the self (Plummer 1995). For queer youth, it is a process which means “learning to cope with stigmatization; coming to understand all the different ways their lives will be affected by this stigmatization; learning to feel good about themselves in spite of the way society and culture feel about homosexuality; and... it means having the courage to disclose their sexual orientation to their family” (Schneider 1997: 20). All these tasks and more are essential for an adolescent to understand their sexual minority identity (Dame 2004). For some being horny, young, and wishing to explore their sexuality, sex work was an exciting opportunity for a teenager to do so – especially when they could choose their clients.

Others found coming out a relatively relaxed experience, protected from the negative outcomes coming-out historically entailed, with one or both parents being extremely supportive. With Paul, Ryan, and Robert not experiencing hardship, they were able to avoid the trauma and social isolation told in other stories. Ryan and Robert's comments on religion reflect the threat and fear of abandonment or rejection by family members based on religious principles that condemn homosexuality (Pietkiewicz and Kolodziejczyk-Skrzypek 2016). As we shall see, for those from extremely conservative and religious backgrounds, coming out was traumatic and lead to severe repercussions. Often sexual minority youths feel rejected from their religion or spiritual beliefs (Cotton et al 2006). Religions that are outspoken about their intolerance of homosexuality, and if religious families adopt this viewpoint, youth can be at risk for difficulty in establishing positive sense of self and psychological distress (Wilkinson and Pearson 2009). As outlined by Page, Lindahl, and Malik (2013), those with religious parents were less comfortable with their sexual identities and were less likely to disclose their sexual orientation to others (Schope 2002).

Jean-Paul, 25, has been selling sex to men and men and their female partners for four years in order to supplement his income and pay down his student loans. We sit in the library coffee shop, momentarily interrupted by the squawking of the PA system. Jean-Paul was born in Rwanda to strict parents in a heavily Catholic community. His family migrated as refugees to Tanzania until the genocide ended; He tells me his journey to Canada;

Now I think it was a mix of okay, like this country's kind of getting back to its feet but there's still a lot of political issues happening so it's not safe to raise kids... Once my mom applied for it [an immigrant visa] and she got it, it was the idea that mostly in African countries - I guess should not say African countries - but unlike in my country, Rwanda, America is the country where everything can happen. It's the American dream. So, it was a mixture of those two I think that made up their mind that made my parents move. And also, education. My parents were big on education so they wanted different [better] education, - I guess, which is weird because then what does that mean about Africa and Education in Africa? My parents came to the States and were working in Washington D.C. and it's very busy and it's a larger city, so they wanted something that was slower paced. But French was easier for my parents than English - I've been speaking English for only like 12 years now, they

wanted something that was more French and they wanted a place where education wasn't so expensive, that was accessible to everybody.

Jean-Paul says his coming out was a bittersweet experience but expected it to be worse. Experiencing a conflict between ethno-religious and gay identity can significantly affect health and well-being (Pietkiewicz and Kolodziejczyk-Skrzypek 2016). He often had heard people talk about being gay as a phase related to coming to “the West;” that nobody in Rwanda is gay; that being gay is not “African.” This homophobic stance comes from a discourse of neocolonialism and the responsibility to uphold and protect a concept of moralistic Pan-Africanism (cf. Bajaha n.d.). When Jean-Paul came out it happened in “stages of acceptance;” at the beginning he describes the relationship with his parents as rough emotionally;

I still remember it to this day, when I came out to my dad, he said, “I'm now going to love you more than before.” I came out when I was graduating high school and... I realized this is my life and it might not be as easier as it may be for straight people, but for my dad to say that like it just showed me, yeah, I have this other thing that might be working against me at certain times and I have to always navigate life around that.

Here Jean-Paul is describing the notion that stigma management is a life-long endeavour for those outside of the norm (Chaudoir and Fisher 2010).

Link is 24 and had been online escorting with men for only a year to supplement his income. We sit in a circular interview room at the Central Library occasionally interrupted with the sounds of giggling teens. His childhood story revolved around going to a First Baptist church every Sunday “in a really small town up north” until he was 14. His family had a falling out with a new pastor, so they stopped going but “even before then I just kind of lost faith. I wouldn't associate myself with Christianity at all. But my dad like, I mean depending on the topic I think my dad will start pulling the Christian card...” It is this Christian card that has caused much grief for Link, but his mom has been there for him all along.

My mom's a phenomenal person like she will come up to bat for me and this was all before she, like before like I - well I didn't even come to her she kind of just told me, I know... I knew I was always interested in men rather than women, from a really young age. I would probably say anywhere around 3 or 4... It was just; my mom's just really cool but I've tried coming out to my dad... the times I did come out one time he threw a suitcase at me and told me to pack

it up. He said, pack it up we're going to Toronto and I said, oh? He says yeah, so what you pack your essentials because you're not coming back. So... That happened. Then another time uh, like this has happened about 3 or 4 times. About the 4th time he said, just get out. Like give me the car keys, start walking and uh, it was dead of winter, minus 30 out. I've never - no my mom's always come to my defense for me. At one point, the last confrontation we had about the whole thing my parents almost got divorced.

Parts of Link's and other interviews often brought back memories of my own coming out story in grade 12 and being able to relate built a sense queer comradery. I often saw myself in the interviewees shoes as children coming to terms with our sexualities in a heteronormative and homo-hostile world. Like Link I had a phenomenal mother though I worried about rejection by my father as he came from a background of hetero-machismo and youth sports. He used the word fag in casual conversation and I had also heard him, and my grandfather discuss their distaste for my uncle and his boyfriend. I also grew up feeling trapped in a small town and I worried about bullying. Link and I both overcome these tensions with the love and support of our mothers. In a dual parent household, if one parent reacts badly to the coming out of their child, then the other parent can try to shield them. Not everyone is lucky enough to have acceptance of both parents, nor are dual-parent households universal.

When Edward was 16, his step father kicked him out because he was gay. With older siblings whom he did not feel comfortable reaching out to, no contact with his bio-dad, and his mother not approving of his "choice of lifestyle" he had to move in with his boyfriend at the time. Here in London his mother would only cover his bus passes and since Edward was still in school he had to cover everything else, so he became an online "mouth-whore" so he could survive. This chaos narrative is representative of the queer youth who are overrepresented in the homeless youth population in North America; 25 to 40 percent of homeless youth in Canada identify as LGBTQ (Josephson and Wright 2000). One of the main causes of youth leaving home or for being kicked out is family conflict which is broken down to abuse and homophobia (Abramovich 2012; Clatts et al. 1998). Both Grant and David tell me similar anti-narratives of suffering.

Grant is a 21-year-old male for male sex worker; he tells me that one of his regulars dropped him off for our interview and it becomes obvious that he is really sick with a deep chest cough. His coming out is complicated with childhood trauma, mental health, and

struggles with the group home system. He starts by telling me that he feels depressed about his past. “It actually really bothers me. It haunts me.” Growing up in a Perth County village about 50 minutes north of the city, he continues,

I actually had a very troubled childhood. My father kind of beat me a lot, not even my real dad, he's my brother's dad. My mom was doing a lot of drugs so wasn't there. But he still has custody of my other two brothers and it bothers me because he doesn't stop, he hasn't stopped hitting them.

Grant was diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder which he says he developed from his father's abuse. As a teenager, he also abused pills to attempt suicide “quite a few times.” This fits with risk studies that evaluate the interrelationship between mental health, familial neglect and physical abuse, and victimization due to sexual orientation (e.g., discrimination, isolation, depression, negative family interactions). Grant puts a face to the increased risk and prevalence of suicidal behaviour of queer youth (Dame 2004).⁷⁷ When he went to court because of his dad, he says the courts “ate that up” (his mental health issues) and he left home at 13 for the group home system. At this point Grant felt completely abandoned and “disrespected” by his family and became estranged. Until he was 18 he was in group homes in London, a farm in Ailsa Craig, Burlington, and Kitchener. Grant realized his sexuality at an early age after discovering chatrooms and told his parents at 11 years old. This did not seem to matter to them, perhaps due to their indifference. By the time he was in the group homes in London and Ailsa Craig, he calls the staff “cold-hearted;”

I rented out a bunch of books on the, the topic, because I didn't know, I was still younger. And yeah, they told me I couldn't have them. They were about like gay rights, and they were like, one was for teens... they count it like it was pornography.

For queer youth like Grant, positive feelings of self need to be developed and encouraged through understanding and acceptance (Schneider 1997). Though limited and dated research exists, Mallon, Aledort and Ferrera (2002) found that 78% of queer youth and 88% of child welfare professionals reported group homes and other care settings to be

⁷⁷ The lifetime prevalence of suicide attempts among LGB adults in the US, Canada, and Western Europe was 17 percent. By comparison the lifetime prevalence of suicide attempts among heterosexual adults was 5 percent (Hobbes 2017). At least 10 percent but as many as 40 percent of LGBT people will attempt suicide at once in their lifetime (Marshall et al. 2011).

unsafe for openness of one's sexuality. Many youth report resorting to the streets after a long process of leaving an abusive home life, repeated inappropriate foster placements, and facing rejection and discrimination at city shelters (Dame 2004). Grant kept running away to avoid this oppression and to find people to go have sex with as a teenager until he was brought to Kitchener where they treated him better and there were fewer places he could run away to.

David, now 23, spent the first 17 years of his life in Edmonton. We sit on ripped grey pleather chairs on the second floor of the library, momentarily glancing out the window when a siren echoes down the street outside. He starts by recounting his parent's divorce when he was 7 years old due to his mother's infidelity. David admits that he has constructed this story from talking with his dad. He skips ahead to when his dad remarried 7 years later.

This woman would literally yell at us over nothing, the littlest thing. So as soon as I... was 17, I moved to Ontario back to see my birth mom. I'm like at this point in time I was like anything that would get me out of this abusive relationship between me and my stepmom. Um. My family life was like really, I hate to say it but unstable because my parents, my step-mom and my dad were Jehovah's Witnesses... I'd say if you are gay you are basically hated from the Jehovah's Witnesses. You are like shunned. Like none wants to talk to you. I've known since grade 3 that I was gay. I just didn't like come-out or like know what my feelings were, feelings were until I was like 17 or 18. So when I came out [as gay/bisexual] they were like there is the door and you can leave. I was like ok I'm surprised you are doing this to your own son but whatever... there's still some days where my brain is trapped in a cage because of like my upbringing and my parents as well because I still want to talk to them but they don't want anything to do with me.

David's account of familial conflict causing him to feel trapped, parallels participants in other studies who report depressive moods, self-loathing, suicidal ideations, and feelings of exclusion (Barton 2010; Coyle and Rafalin 2001; Schuck and Liddle 2001). Unfortunately, with his "brain trapped in a cage" his time in Ontario in those early days was less than ideal. His birth mother's brother made him get a job "so I had no say over the matter about it." He continues,

It was kind of irritating that way and umm I kind of snapped I guess. There was a point in time where me and my mom would argue for days and I was like I just can't do this anymore. I moved out and went to a shelter in Kitchener and

then from there I went through Project Come Home through OW [Ontario Works] telling them that I had family in Toronto even though I didn't.

When David was in the shelter in Kitchener he lied to Ontario Works, telling them he had family in Toronto. Dishonesty aside, this tactic was quite ingenious. Project Come Home paid for a Greyhound trip to Toronto, where he was homeless and entered a world of drugs and what he labels as prostitution. Though the rate of homelessness among queer youth who are or have been involved in the welfare system is significant (Clatts et al. 1998; Johnson-Reid and Barth 2000; Mallon, Aledort and Ferrera 2002), many LGBT youth will seek other options due to hostile or unwelcoming shelters or group homes (Dunne, Prendergast, and Telford 2002). These include sleeping in the rough, couching surfing, or having sex for a place to stay. Toronto however gave David the opportunity to meet other LGBT youth and access resources unavailable in a smaller city. At the time of the interview, David is in London, couch surfing with his boyfriend Ted, and trying to pay for his addiction and supplement his Ontario Works income.

John, now 31, was a former stripper and escort for men. We start off at a frozen yogurt shop, then go for a walk, checking out guys in Victoria Park downtown. For him sex work was linked to coming to terms with his sexuality and becoming independent;

I was young. I was good looking. I like to have sex and I wasn't in a situation I could tell my parents that I was gay and I wanted to get out of my parents' house. So I was looking for options as to how I can survive - a good life - and not have to work... and still finish school and do all these things that I wanted to do and make money - and not live with my parents. Because I wasn't able to express myself with my parents until awhile ago about my sexuality... you are required to make judgements that you wouldn't necessarily make... If I was able to tell my parents I was gay - I would be able to say oh I'm going on a date with my boyfriend and I wouldn't have had to hide it - so yah when I moved to Toronto to do it for the first time I was like - it was awesome. I was just that - where I could have sex anytime I wanted to. I didn't have to hide it from anybody. I didn't have to tell anybody that I was going on a date with anybody.

His story emphasizes his ability to be self-sufficient and explore his sexuality. As a horny teen who wanted to be himself and spread his wings, at 18 sex work was a way for him to leave home but still focus on his studies while embracing his now liberated sexuality. Regardless of sexuality, moving from a small town to a larger city such as London or Toronto is a common component of coming of age narratives not only because of school,

availability of work or resources, but to escape the tedium of small town life. For coming out stories (regardless of age), those from small towns emphasized urban/rural divides of liberation/oppression and cosmopolitanism/ignorance. The city stood for open sexuality, and even in the internet and mobile app age, the availability of cultural and sexual outlets in the larger city are not offered to the same degree elsewhere (cf. Weston 1995).

23-year-old Tom from London emailed me about his time “having sex with older gentlemen in exchange money” starting in grade 9 (age 14-15) until sometime before the end of high school. His sexuality predominates his account. Tom feels that if he had come out sooner, perhaps things would have been more “typical” for him. Once at 15 he got gonorrhea from one of the older men; he told his mom it was from a girl;

She doesn't know I'm a big fag. It's just so much more dramatic. I'm not comfortable with my parents knowing about my sex life. lol I live with my bio dad now, he doesn't know either lol. They might suspect, my dad has made comments about how I've had all these beautiful female friends but never dated them. If my mom knew she'd be like - I love you blah blah blah but then fear for my immortal soul.

Though Tom does not classify his time as engaging in sex work because it was always a "gift" and not a transaction per se, he recognizes that it was implicitly a form of prostitution;

I had become so horny all the time that I decided to hit the personals sections of Kijiji (when they existed) and Craigslist. I also used Plentyoffish. I quickly discovered that the only people interested in having sex with a fat kid were lecherous ephedophiles aged 30+. Among them was a doctor in his mid 40s. I'm not really sure how and when it came up, but he started offering me money. In doing so he created a paradigm where I sort of came to expect it, and would ask him if he had a little bit of cash to spare every time he came over. Soon I didn't really have to ask.

Perhaps recognizing that currently the age of consent is 16 (it was 14 until 2008, about the time he was receiving “gifts,”) Tom wanted to make it clear to me that this was consensual;

It was not out of desperation. I didn't need to do it or anything. And if you were to reduce our roles into predator and prey categories, I would definitely be classified as the predator in the relationship. I did the coercing etc. Some needed more goading than others. I would ask them for money. Not as payment, but something like "Hey, my friends wanted to go to the mall with me this weekend but I don't have any money. Do you think you could help me out?" Some of them enjoyed giving it to me and would do it without being prompted, others were just happy to 'help' when I needed it. One of them would flat out state that I was his little whore and would rub bills in my face while I

sucked his cock. Which I found extremely arousing so you know, win/win. Other times they would bring me booze, cartons of cigarettes, and one bought me the Aeon Flux animated series box set. They would usually give me whatever it is they had bought before any sex took place.

Tom's account of his "sexual awakening" fuses the taboo of selling sex, with the inverted power relations of boy-man sex where he counters a discourse of older men exploiting youth. Instead Tom "does the coercing;" he is "the predator;" "goads" them into giving him money. He capitalizes on the image of sexually vulnerable youth that has served to reinforce a fetishization of innocence (Kaye 2010; Kincaid 1998). He positions himself as an agentive self-constructor (Bamberg 2012), strong, in control, and self-determined.

5.3. Lives complicated by sexual abuse

As Tom's story illustrates, the lines between sex work and sexuality, and exploitation and empowerment are difficult to unravel and are especially complicated when discussing youth. In relation to gay identity development and coming out experiences, the addition of sexual abuse as children even further predisposes some gay men to negative mental and physical health outcomes (Brady 2008; Guarnero 2001). Some studies also suggest that gay males are at increased risk for sexual abuse as children (Brady 2008), or at the very least they are more likely to report it. Very few men speak publicly about sexual assault, largely from shame or the popular perception that it is a women's issue (Millard 2016). Regardless of sexuality, one in six men have been sexually abused before the age of 16 (1in6.org 2017; Gartner 2011).⁷⁸ This seems to echo with the men from my research, with one in seven reporting abuse.⁷⁹ For the men who were abused, a story of survival or victimization predominates their recollections of childhood.

When some told me that I was the first person they have told their trauma stories to, I was overwhelmed with an urge to reach out and hug the hidden hurt child and am left with gnawing angst that I cannot assuage their pain.⁸⁰ Many had never been given the space to heal. Though these narratives were not told to me in order of extremity, the immensity of the torment expressed by some of these men in reflecting their youth began to feel

⁷⁸ Sexual violence is notoriously difficult to measure, and there is no single source of data that provides a complete picture (Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network 2017).

⁷⁹ This is important for risk studies, implying that men who sell sex as adults have approximately the same rates of childhood sexual abuse as the general population.

⁸⁰ Or my own discomfort

cumulative for me as I heard more and more stories; especially as for some, this period of time was not all that long ago, or through the rest of their story it is clear they have not moved past this time in their lives. Even as I reread and analyse their stories for the umpteenth time, I do not find it any easier and it has taken me longer than it should have to write this section as I procrastinate to avoid these feelings. These captured moments in time haunt me like the ghosts in documentaries of Auschwitz and Hiroshima, etched in my memory and stuck on repeat; I experienced a form of vicarious trauma (cf. Davies and Spencer 2010; van Dongen 2007). Of course, this generalizes all of the men's stories into one overarching narrative of trauma which ignores the nuances and diversity of their experiences. This makes presenting and analysing their accounts even more vital.

Mike is 28 and has been a “professional companion for men” for a decade, since he was 18. He's lived in North Bay, Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, and Ottawa. He uses his earnings to supplement his Ontario Disability Supports (ODSP), though I suspect it helped during the few years he was an addict. I sit on a brand-new leather couch in his small sparsely decorated apartment in the far east of the city. He has lit incense and as we talk he chain smokes. He seems conflicted about his childhood and coming to terms with his sexuality;

I'm a homo. I've been out since the age of 15. I experimented when I was younger when I was 10, and with a boy. Well, *I guess* it wasn't really an experiment, I was sexually molested *I guess*. I was 10, he was 13. So, like, it wasn't really... It's like - yeah. I didn't want to do it, but after I did the first time, I kind of did. But, like, really, I think it's the reason I'm a homo but that's my opinion. Most people that I talk to that are gay have been sexually molested or have experimented. I guess if the kids are the same age - playing doctor, not forcing it into your ass. I had it forced upon me a little earlier than I was ready.

For Mike, these experiences were more complicated than sexually traumatic or abusive. According to Clancy (2009) this is common for those who have not experienced traumatic and violent forms of sexual abuse, or those who admit to sometimes enjoying the experience (either due to involuntary biological response or even emotionally). Because he compares what happened with the depictions of abuse in cultural scripts, the ambiguity he felt led to some hedging or modalizing (Fairclough 1992) of his narrative with “I guess”

expressing feelings of guilt and shame.⁸¹ Mike also repeats a historical trope that says sexual abuse turns boys gay despite a lack of evidence to that effect (Gartner 2011). Mike's narrative seems to blur the line between what is "normal" childhood sexual exploration and development, and molestation or being forced sexually. He goes on to tell me his coming out experience within a matter-of-fact narrative of emotional detachment;

My relationship with my parents is a very off one. My mom rejected me for about three months when I came out. My dad was a bit more accepting and he stopped with all the gay jokes. I've never been close to my parents though, but I had a peachy keen childhood, though I lived in low income housing all my life; like I was around drugs all the times in the neighborhood and stuff but my family did what they could do.

Here, like others, Mike frames his narrative of childhood in economic terms. Assuming I know what a "peachy keen" childhood looks like, he sees this as antithetical to growing up in poverty.

Ted, 21, started escorting and panhandling at 16 in Toronto to pay for his crack addiction, but continues selling here in London to supplement his income from Disability Supports. I make a special trip and we meet in a huge boardroom in the newly renovated library in the East end. He sees his past as a chain reaction of things that happened to him that lead him to today. Ted grew up as a military brat living near a military garrison northwest of Ottawa. His mother died in a car accident when he was seven and his grandparents and father fought for custody, with his dad eventually winning. "It was two ends of the extremes there. My grandparents are like super hardcore Christian family that was super stable and super structured, and my dad is a soldier with PTSD, drug addiction, and alcoholism that gave me absolutely no structure at all." Ted goes on to tell me more about his dad's instability;

I'm just kind of looking through foggy memory glasses. But as like a four or five-year-old, like, I remember my mom and dad fighting. And I remember there was this one time, this is just before their divorce. My mom, she took me to school. We did some shopping or something, we came back home, and the refrigerator was unplugged. All the food was dumped out of the fridge, the deep freeze was unplugged, all the food was dumped out of the deep freeze.

⁸¹ Of course, as we know, children do not have enough information to understand or respond to sexual situations they may be put in; you cannot consent if you do not have enough information to make an informed decision. When it comes to a victim's experience of abuse, what is technically legally correct is irrelevant (Clancy 2009: 133).

My mom's bank accounts were drained, and he just took off because he thought she was cheating on him. Who can say, I don't know, I was young, but, yeah.

I wonder how much of this memory has been built from second-hand accounts from his parents;

It definitely got worse over time though. Like when I was living with him, just me and him, he never got really physically abusive, but just the emotional distancing and just the negativity towards me and just, like, you know, because I was different. Right? Like I liked playing video games, I liked reading, I liked art, I liked music, right. I didn't like sports. I wouldn't play sports, I wouldn't do any of that and that was like, you know, he always talked about this other son that he had when he was younger, when he was like 14, that he had this kid. And whenever he would get drunk, he would talk about that's the girl I should have married, that's the son I should have had, blah, blah, blah, and it's like double stab to the heart, right? Because not only did you not care about my mother that I'm traumatized about over her death because I loved her so much, but you don't even give two shits about me either. It's like I wanted his affection, I wanted him to be there for me.

After experiencing a few years with him, Ted's aunt got involved because she did not like what she was seeing; She saw the neglect; he would only stock the house with junk food; he spent the majority of his time upstairs in his room on his computer playing war games and smoking and drinking. Ted would skip school and then go to the library all day. "It's like I failed all my classes grade five and six and seven, I failed them all. He didn't even care. The first time I got suspended from school, he took me to Canada's Wonderland as a reward, saying, oh, I guess you had another day off." Some of his father's behaviors such as avoidance and numbing are characteristic of PTSD. Children can interpret this as the parent not being interested in them or loving; irritability and low frustration tolerance can make a parent seem hostile or distant (Price 2016). Ted's truancy and later issues with addiction at 16 parallels risk findings of other children of veterans with PTSD; where they are at higher risk for behavioural, academic, and social problems (Price 2016).

Ted talks of his aunt as giving him a nice balance of freedom and support. When he moved in with her he came out without any issue. He also had a gay uncle who helped him through his journey. However, Ted's coming out narrative is complicated with an experience of sexual abuse that he does not describe as especially traumatic when it occurred.

When I was 14, I was lured into someone's basement. There was this guy that was offering me a job. He leads me down to his basement, he has porn playing on the TV, you know... I've never had sex before, like, I've been wanting to have it, right, like, puberty, you know, so I went with it. I was 14. He was 69. It's like I know I was taken advantage of but I didn't do anything to stop it, I wanted it at that point, so it's like -- it's just regret on my part that I just allowed myself to do that as opposed to waiting, you know?

But a couple years later, I found out that he got charged and arrested because there was child pornography on his computer. He had 10 and 12-year-olds actually working at his store in the basement naked stocking his room. And he's in jail now, he's been in jail for the past ten years, I think he's still there. Apparently, I was at the age like if you're a pedo, you start to lose interest. Which is kind of disgusting, but so that kind of opened me up to the whole sex business. And then it was like, okay, well sex is fun so then I started using apps like Grindr and gay.com. I got a little slutty.

I started drinking and smoking pot after the abuse happened just because it was really hard for me to deal with after, I don't know, I just felt, like, a lot of shame I guess for it. And I don't know, I was talking to my friends about it and a lot of my friends thought I was fucking disgusting for doing that and all that. Yeah, because I was 14. So, I started drinking, I started smoking marijuana.

Ted's conceptualization of the event shows a clear pattern of conflictual language; he "wanted it," "went with it," "didn't do anything to stop it," "sex is fun," shows Ted negotiating with his pubescent sexuality; "I know I was taken advantage of," "*I don't know*, I just felt, like, a lot of shame *I guess* for it... *I don't know*" is said as if he is still not entirely convinced. After being shamed by his friends as "fucking disgusting" for having sex with someone so much older, he describes his later regret for "being lured" and "abused." He self-medicated with alcohol and marijuana to deal with his shame, not necessarily because he experienced any in the moment sexual trauma. Ted's case shows what Clancy (2009) details in *The Trauma Myth*, it is the retrospective interpretation of the event that mediates subsequent impact. Ted at age 14 was of an age where the definition of child and adolescent blur and are contentious legally, morally and culturally as the concept of "innocence" after the onset of puberty itself is no longer clear. Even if Ted had consented it does not exclude recognition of the developmental and cognitive factors that point to his (and others) emotional immaturity and in "no way removes any of the

opprobrium for these crimes from the perpetrator” (Clancy 2009).⁸² When men and boys are assaulted their socialization into a toxic masculinity that denies victimization can lead to psychological repression and denial of sexual abuse; men are simply socialized to experience sexual assault differently (Bera 1995; Gartner 1999; Bogin 2006).

By the time Ted was 16 with his aunt he had fallen into the same routines when he was with his dad; not calling home, not coming home, just going out doing whatever he wanted without any repercussion. He stopped letting his aunt in on his life. When she had a mental break-down and violated his space it pushed Ted over the edge and he packed and moved in with a friend.

Then I got a call from my school saying that they found out that I wasn't living in a home and I was under 16, so they called Children's Aid and they put me into a group home for 7 months. I was in one for troubled teens with lots of rules I couldn't go out, I couldn't do certain things, we couldn't use the internet... Like the staff cared, like you actually get a genuine sense that they cared, you know? I'd go out for cigarettes and then run off all the time though, I'd be gone for days. So as punishment, they're like okay, if you're going to keep doing this, we're going to stick you in a homeless shelter for a week and see how you like it. So they stuck me in a homeless shelter, it's called Turning Point. It's a gay shelter downtown Toronto. And I liked it there and I told the group home, fuck you... At my group home, you have to do a shit ton of chores, you get paid \$10 a week. At the shelter you don't do anything, we get paid \$33 a week. I had my freedom, that I could go out during the day, I was right downtown, I could see my friends, I could do whatever I wanted. I could do things, I could hook up with people if I wanted to.

O'Grady and Gaetz (2004) detail that the longer youth are on the street the more likely they are to become involved in street culture, prostitution, survival sex, and drugs. It was at the shelter that Ted was introduced to the sex trade.

This kid named Rocky found out I had turned 16, he's like, oh, want to make money? Like, like you're already using Grindr... I can show you how to do that and make money at the same time. So he showed me a website called CanadianMale.com. And then I signed up an account for that, you know, uploaded photos, got some people to take photos of me, put them on there and then I was getting clients like instantaneously. I advertised myself as 18 even though I was 16 at the time, but a lot of the clients that I'd see, I would mention

⁸² That being said the moral compass between right and wrong is complicated by the age of the perpetrator. Why is it more acceptable for a 14-year-old and 18-year-old to be sexual more than an 18-year-old and 35-year-old? 65-year-old? For more discussion on the issue of power dynamics and age see Gill 2016.

to them that, you know, I'm underage and then they'd end up actually paying more.

The way Ted sees it, it was the perfect trade-off. He wanted sex and he wanted money. He was “incredibly” horny and broke so it was a win-win. The clientele were the kind of people he was attracted to, older men, which he feels overlaps with his first sexual experience at 14. He says he is attracted to older guys because he has “daddy-issues.” What he means by this is a reverse-Oedipal complex, where he seeks the love and affection of older men who can take on the father-role that his own father never fulfilled. With such an age difference, I asked if he felt exploited by the clients or Rocky, Ted responds,

To be honest, my opinion on it is that I was exploiting them, because I was a minor. I liked the sex, I knew they were rich, I knew they had money. I would use their emotions against them, I know what they wanted, I know what they would do. I would manipulate them. I would manipulate them and I would try to milk them for all they had.

This is a counter-narrative to the dominant assumption that those youth, already culturally constructed as innocent, are coerced, and exploited. Tom also shared this counter-narrative when he was “receiving gifts” for sex with older men. Both Tom and Ted capitalized on the taboo appeal of their youth, in Ted’s case, to help him survive on the streets.

Eventually it is on the streets of Toronto where Ted met David. Both homeless and self-described junkies, Ted eventually was having sex with people just for drugs, not money. Within two months, someone in the shelter had introduced him to crack. He did not get high on it despite trying to smoke more and more so he was introduced to crystal meth.

I got fucking hooked immediately. It was such an intense, pure, overwhelming sense of just, like, I'm the king of the world, like, I can do anything I want. It just made me feel more attractive. Like I was - once I started doing it more, like, I was losing weight... it's like my scene also opened up immensely, because now in my escorting, I put party and play. So, then it's opening up all these other opportunities that I didn't have open to me.

This description is precisely why methamphetamine use became a huge issue in the gay community. According to Cimino (2005), one of the pulls of meth is a feeling of hypersexual excitement, lower inhibitions, and feelings of invincibility that feels empowering, giving a false sense of high self esteem, countering experiences of stigma and self-doubt. One of the “opportunities” Ted describes, lead him to a HIV scare. When

high, a kid named Randy convinced him to go to a video store and they engaged in unprotected sex in a back-video room. “I was extremely lucky because apparently he was [a bug-chaser]⁸³ trying to get himself HIV... by barebacking with everyone in the community so he could get on ODSP.” Ted’s narrative reads like it came out of a comorbidity study and he is right that he somehow lucked out. His social and structural experiences of early trauma, homelessness, sexual behaviour, and drug use increased his risk of many negative outcomes (Rapid Response Service 2014).

Stuart is a 33-year-old who sells sex, models, and acts in pornography. He is now based in London but travels frequently for his porn career often doing what he calls “crip porn.”⁸⁴ He starts by telling me that he was raped at a really young age by a family member. He lets that hang there for a few seconds, says “That was always haunting...” and moves on to the rest of his story. We do not explore that any further. Similar to Rick’s story of becoming addicted to prescribed Oxycontin, Stuart started “Oxies” when he had multiple surgeries for a painful bone disease he has in his shoulder. He stands up and shows me how his one arm is shrunken compared to the other. For Stuart, unlike Rick, his addiction started in high school at 13 and lasted until he was 31.

All through high school I was just zooming because I was jacked, like, to the point where I burnt my uvula off because I was snorting so much. I was snorting fifteen 80-milligram tablets a day. I did everything under the sun because of parties. I’ve had four raids [by police]. Never been arrested or charged or anything, because my name was always on the bottles and it was good.

Soon after his drug abuse started, Stuart came out to his parents.

I told my mom I was gay. And then she's like, “Don't tell your father,” and I told him. I was born and raised in a Mormon family; Came home to three backpacks on the front porch. My parents kicked me out.

Similar to Edward and David, Stuart was rejected by his parents and left to fend for himself. These youths become another stat; highly religious parents are significantly more likely than their less-religious counterparts to reject their children for being gay (Morris 2014).

⁸³ Bug-chasing is the pursuit of sexual activity with HIV-positive individuals to contract the virus (cf. Gauthier and Forsyth 1999).

⁸⁴ “Crip” comes from the term cripple. It has been reclaimed by disability rights activists and in this context “crip porn” is porn that explores disability as desirability. Stuart says he has seen an increased demand and there is also fetish community for those strictly attracted to those with various disabilities (cf. Sweeny 2009).

Children who turn out to be gay are especially vulnerable to harm from homophobic parents because by the time they come to terms with their sexuality they have established close emotional and cultural ties with them (Brennan and Macleod 2016). Already at higher risk for experiencing psychopathologies such as depression, anxiety, and substance abuse due to society's stigmatization and discrimination of sexual minorities, LGBT individuals who experience family rejection are significantly affected (Herek and McLemore 2013). With nowhere else to go and a lack of LGBT youth shelters, most end up on the streets. Stuart did not end up on the streets however, as he had been saving up from working as a dishwasher in a small rural town about an hour drive north of London. Because he was in a small town, he was able a bachelor-apartment at CDN\$160 a month, significantly cheaper than in larger cities. His narrative then changes to a story of redemptive entrepreneurship, which in retrospect has some holes. He says he was scared as hell but as an independent horny fourteen-year-old, just as he was coming out and living on his own he wanted to meet someone offline and make some money. This was his first experience with the sex trade, though he says because the client was only 19, it did not phase him; "It was just like going to work." It is unclear whether or not he was scared of being on his own or if he actually was nervous about this sex work encounter. Jumping through time he tells how he had saved enough by the time he was 19 to buy a restaurant, and move to Guelph, a city of about 125,000 people half way between London and Toronto. By the time he was 26, he says he had owned 4 different businesses. Stuart continues, "If I wasn't kicked out I wouldn't have done all this entrepreneurship because I probably would have gone to school." At this point it does not occur to me whether he means high school or college, and now I wonder why Child Protective Services never got involved regardless if he had dropped out or not. I also wonder, knowing my own son and many other teenagers (and if I am honest many adults), it is rare to find someone at that age who would have been able to budget and accumulate enough money. Regardless, whatever truths may exist, Stuart emphasizes his resilience.

Jeff, a gay 23-year-old escort who sells sex to feed his addiction, however, sees his life in a different light. He replies to my profile on Grindr, starting his message without even a hello;

My dignity was chipped away at by a child rapist for most of my life several times a week for almost 15 years and COMPLETELY destroyed when the court did nothing. Court system let him walk free. He will never go to jail. I didn't even get to speak in court. I don't blame any specific person or agency. But I resent the system that runs this country. My whole family abandoned me when I told the police about the abuse. Haven't heard from them since. It's been 8 years. Took me over 10 years to tell anyone because I was terrified someone would be displeased with my uncle.

This fear of getting his uncle in trouble is similar to the bidirectional relationship that characterizes Stockholm Syndrome. This emotional bond Jeff feels for his uncle is precisely what enabled the sexual abuse in the first place (Julich 2005). Jeff also describes being further traumatized by the disbelief, blame, and rejection by his family and courts. According to Summit (1983) this abandonment drives children into deeper self-blame, self-hate, and alienation. Portraying an anti-narrative that embraces the role of victim, he feels he never had a chance in life and sees his time in escorting as an extension of his “fucked up” past. “I was used from birth. At least now I get paid for it.” Jeff does not tell me much more about his past or coming out and what little else he tells me about his current life is couched in trauma and conflict.

For Blake at 19, “childhood” was not that long ago. We meet at the University Centre’s Mustang Lounge and become so immersed in conversation that we talk for 5 hours with no breaks. Born and raised in London, he and his mom are “Status Indians” but feels outcast and looked at with suspicion by “Native” communities due to his “visible” black heritage. Though only 19 he is more reflexive on his life and society than many people I have met regardless of their age, education, or background. As Blake was my second in-person interview I was unprepared for the visceral and tragic life he has lead. Even though I had constructed an emotional brick wall, during many parts of his story I let out audible sad sighs, statements of “this is intense” and “I’m so sorry this happened to you.” For several weeks, I found myself crying at the thought of the thought of his life. He starts his story with a narrative of intergenerational trauma; his mother was a product of his great-grandfather raping his grandmother; another relative would give the kids loonies and toonies to stay silent about sexually abusing them. In Blake’s own words, his mother was “fucked up” and he has memories of her discussing her sex life including BDSM when he was 11 years old. She had 3 children with 3 different men (Blake does not know anything

about his bio-father other than he is Jamaican) and stayed with a man who sexually abused Blake and his siblings. He tells me that his sister was abused more than he was and “at one point she gained weight, cut off her hair and started dating women.” His older brother by 5 years who was sexually abused, also abused him. “I feel contempt for him; I will never forgive him.” Although he does not explain how people at school found out, he says he experienced a lot of shame especially when kids made incest jokes. Blake also resents that his mom would tell her friends about what his brother did to him; it was part of a pattern of attention seeking from her. Coming out in grade 8 was an uneventful experience at first but eventually his mother thought it had something to do with the abuse.

Throughout his childhood, Child Protective Services was involved. Blake tells me one story of his mother going to the grocery store with the kids and getting caught stealing and ending up in jail. Around 14 he moved out and lived with friends but spent 2 months at a local mental health centre for rage issues and started using drugs. Nearly half of childhood-onset psychiatric disorders are associated with sexual abuse (Kendall-Tackett, Williams and Finkelhor 1993), including but not excluding what the many psychiatrists⁸⁵ Blake has seen over the years diagnosed him with; ADHD, Conduct Disorder, depression, anxiety as well as anti-social personality disorder.⁸⁶ With the pharmaceutical industry’s influence on mental health treatment, surprisingly the doctors will not prescribe him medications “for his own good.” This is sadly ironic as he began doing cocaine and drinking as a way to cope instead. Stewart and Israeli (2002) stress that this is a vicious cycle involving sexual and substance abuse. At 17, he began selling sex using all his earned money on alcohol and cocaine, even at the expense of not having food. Blake’s first client, “a toothless old man,” disgusted him so much, he says it took him 5 months to get over it. Compounded with the shame and disgust from selling sex, and concurrent mental illness, Blake seems to have a desire to deaden his emotional burdens.

Dylan, 23, had been an escort for men and women for 4 years in Eastern Ontario, particularly the Ottawa region. We meet in the library coffee shop and I have my son’s

⁸⁵ We engaged in a conversation about the subjectivity of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* and he says that he prefers to discuss “traits” not disorders.

⁸⁶ Blake thanked me several times throughout the interview saying he had found our meeting more therapeutic than he had with any of the professionals he had met in the past. Where they failed and I succeeded can only be speculated upon.

Autism service dog with me for our interview thanks to an issue with his school. This gives us a point of conversation about my life before we start talking about his. Dylan moved to London in the past 6 months and had left the sex industry 6 months before that, after he had recovered from a three and a half year cocaine addiction. He recounts a story his dad told him why he was not part of his life and why he was taken by Children's Aid,

Apparently when I was really young, while my mom and dad were dating, right after my mom had me, she was apparently going through like a phase of anger and emotions. And my dad had come home one night to this shady apartment that they lived in, in some crack neighborhood. And, of course, me and my mom were home. I was only a little teeny little thing, a teeny little thing. And she had put a knife in her right leg and then called the police, stated that my dad had come home in anger, stabbed her. He was put in jail until I was about 13 and a half. And my mom, that night, my mom left the apartment with me still in it. CAS had found me about a month and a half later. And they said that at the time I was like at about 10 months and I was completely malnourished and everything when they found me sitting in the apartment. And when they came into the apartment there was like some guy smoking crack beside me and everything. So, they brought me into CAS and then I went to go live with my grandmother until I was about 11.

Dylan paints a picture as if he were telling me a movie, setting the scene for the tragedy of his youth.

What I will never understand is that within a year my grandmother pretty much just said that she couldn't do it anymore and dropped me off at my mom's, which was like the biggest mistake she could've ever made, because my mom was like, well, I didn't want you in the first place, so why are you here? So, I went from – at my grandma's it was like, you know, rich people, an Italian family, lots of food, lots of presents, like everything you'd want. And then when I moved to my mom's it was like a small two-bedroom townhouse with six people living in it who smoked, smoked weed, and drank all the time and yelled at each other, and fought with each other. And it was a very big culture shock when I moved from my grandmother's where it was quiet, to my mom's, where it was just like drama 24/7. And I guess she still had me far in the back of her mind. So when I moved in there, the three other kids that lived with me, all their problems became mine. You know, my step dad and my mom arguing because of me, and you know, now ever since he's been in the house like you've been hating me and, you know, they just, they started this blame on Dylan thing, so.

With a sense of loss for the stability of his grandmother and combined with the neglect and blame of his mother, his home situation continues to degrade, and he continues to retell his story matter-of-factly (Crowder 1995);

I actually have quite an interesting mother, who has decided to have three kids with three different guys and only care for one. My uncle had molested me when I was 12. And then a year later he did it to me again, so I went through a lot of that. And after that situation happened is kind of when my mom stopped like paying attention to me and really giving any care to me. Yeah. So, when I was 12 I attempted suicide twice. She kind of just put up a wall and said, "you're not mine." When I was about 14 she told me that she wished I was adopted and that she'd rather not breathe my air anymore. So, when I was 16 she drove me downtown, said that I was going to a meeting for school, and then left. And I was not allowed back in the house after that.

That Dylan tried to die by suicide is no surprise; in meta-analysis Devries et al. (2014) found that the odds of association between sexual abuse as a child and suicide attempts were higher in male populations. Without a supportive family or counselling, Dylan has spent a lot of time trying to come to terms with the abusive neglect he has suffered at the hands of his mother, especially after the sexual abuse.

It was very confusing and very like why did my mom do this? And I've been asking this my whole life. Yeah, I completely call it the what the fudge theory. It's the whole WTF with my mom. It's what the fudge every time I think of her. It's like, what the fudge? What is she doing? Why is she acting this way? Why does she treat me like this? Why doesn't she talk to me? Why can't she just call me? And it just seems like there's obviously something wrong with a parent like this because they just have it in their head that they just don't need to give any care to their child or she doesn't have the capability. The weird thing is she's had my little sister at home full time... She gets a dad at home, a mom at home, and she's living at home and going to school and working. My mom doing this to me definitely caused me a lot of mental issues, like anxiety, and paranoia with people.

On the streets of Ottawa at 16, Dylan eventually left school. When he was on the streets, he experimented at parties with straight guys that would "let him do things to them." He would also get hit-on a lot. When he was 17 he had the first guy he really liked hit-on him so he tried it and ended up in a 6 month relationship. Dylan's time on the street becomes pivotal to his coming out story. Eventually when he was 18, Dylan came out to his aunt,

though he does not especially identify with a gay label.⁸⁷ Starting in high school, before he had come to terms with his sexuality, Dylan shares his experiences standing up against homophobic bullying;

People would make fun of me and they'd call me a fag and stuff. Makes me wonder if it takes a fag to know one. And they'd always look at me and be like, what are you talking about? Well, you always claim that I'm gay, and you know so well that I'm gay, like how do you know that? I went up to the one guy who would pick on me a lot in high school one day, and I said, you know, you spend about five hours of your school day harping on me because I'm gay. Like is there not something else you can do with your straight, cool lifestyle other than focus on the gay guy? Or do you just like me? He'd go red in my face and blah, blah, blah and then walk away. Exactly. So, then you go to other people and you're like, I think he's gay. He spends so much of his time for no reason focusing on the fact that I'm gay and they think they're cool. But it's really, I think they're just gay and they're too afraid to admit it and they're just uncomfortable with themselves. So, they harp on somebody else for it so that everyone else will focus on me and then he can go off and then do his thing and not be seen, so. You know?

Dylan's experience illustrates a 2009 study where 42 percent of Canadian male sexual minority students in 2009 reported verbal harassment about their sexual orientation (Taylor and Peter 2011). Dylan did spend some time in Ottawa's shelters but spent most of his time on the street. Here after a few days he was quickly introduced to drugs, partying, and drinking and would wake up in the morning not knowing where he was; "When I first ended up on the streets I basically went from A to Zed. I tried heroin, I tried crack, ecstasy, acid. I tried, you know, pretty much everything. I tried OxyContin, speed, and mushrooms. Mushrooms I actually went into a coma for three and a half weeks. So, I never did that again." Dylan's experience shows that, depending on the individual, involvement with drugs can happen within the first week of being on the street. For many that I interviewed, either as adults or children, substance use is a part of life engaged in as a way of forgetting and escaping the pain, sadness and stress faced daily (Kidd 2003). Dylan's insight into his addiction reinforces this;

⁸⁷ Dylan talks about his ambiguity when it comes to sexuality but his "Native" father thinks he is two-spirited; Yeah, it's kind of, it's weird, I kind of get the sense of both male and female, and I relate to both males and females. So being in a relationship with a woman doesn't bug me. Being in a relationship with a guy doesn't bug me. But it seems that I can be more in a relationship with a girl and kind of just have like more fun and sort of fast relationships with guys. So, I don't know what it really is exactly.

I think it was an emotional downfall. And I definitely do think it was boredom. I mean when you're on the streets what is there to do besides sex and drugs and sleeping with god knows who? And I think it also too was like just a longing for something. I have figured out in the last like couple of months that I look like, on the inside, I've been really longing for my mother. And I think just like, oh, I could have crack and it won't leave me behind. You know, it's kind of like I replaced my mother with the drugs, because it gave me that same feeling. You know? When I had it around it felt really good and I felt really happy. It was kind of interesting.

Dylan also linked his introduction to sex work to street culture and his drug use at the time; though he says the first time he sold sex was right after his eighteenth birthday (about 2 years after being on the streets), his narrative makes me wonder if perhaps it was earlier.

I was making friends, which I never had before, like making friends was new for me. People talking to me was new for me because I was very like a closet kind of kid. I always hid in the corner at school and stayed by myself. And being on the streets the big thing was kind of like "oh, you're cool if you have drugs and alcohol and money and stuff." And I thought, well, like money, well, I can't get a job. So, what do I do? And a girl that I was actually living with on the streets had introduced me to what she did. And I was kind of fearful at first. She had hooked up a profile for me online instead of texting people. And one guy wanted to meet with me, so I just went to go meet with him. And it was kind of creepy, I was a little nervous at first, it took about a half an hour to get settled in and then, you know, he started like touching me and stuff, and stuff happened, and then he gave me like a big lump sum of money, you know, like \$350. And I was like, wow, this is crazy, like I can make money so easily and I don't care about myself, so it's kind of like I can just put myself on the table and make money, you know? And it, it was very hard, because the first time was a guy that owned like an 18-wheeler, like the big trucks, so he brought me into this tuck and then like drove off somewhere. And it was scary because it was like I was getting shipped off to an adoption agency or something. So, it was pretty scary.

Here Dylan speaks about both positive and negative effects of sex work in his life. Sex work gave him easy money which allowed him to maintain a higher status on the streets. At the same time, he sees sex work as something for those with low self-worth. Also, of interest is his friendship with a female escort who facilitated his entrance into the trade; a counter-narrative to gendered cultural norms of sex work.

Jack, 23, and Jill, 29 have both been involved in the sex trade since they were 16. Both identify within gradients of bisexuality and had worked independently as chat line

workers and escorts. Jill had worked in London on the streets, in a body rub parlor, and as a shooter girl and as an escort; Jack used to be a “baby pimp” working with his dad who was a gigolo here in London. He also mentions his sister used to be an escort as well. When I meet them both for an interview, Jack seems quite shy though they both are excited as they are planning for their upcoming wedding. I decided to include Jill in a study on male sex work as there is a dearth of research on couples who are involved in the sex industry. This was an opportunity for me to see if they could lend some unique insight into each other’s lives, that an interviewer would not get from interviewing each of them separately. Jill’s presence also seemed to comfort Jack and I wonder if he would have been less forthcoming let alone had agreed to the interview without her as we had been in contact on and off for at least six months before he was willing to arrange a meeting. Lastly, interviewing Jill allows me to directly examine any similarities between her perspectives as a woman and those of men. Her childhood in fact shadows some of the traumatic sexual abuse experiences discussed by some of the other interviewees.

I’ve gone through hell. I’ve been sexually molested by uncles. It’s really bad that I can remember the one time, I was five years old, and it was Easter at my aunt and uncle’s place and it was my uncle, he’s like, suck my dick. And then he tried paying me off and everyone in my family suddenly shut the fuck up, go sit the fuck down, and the only person who did anything that I could talk to was my grandfather. And he went back to where he was and knocked him the fuck out. He’s the only one in my family that’s ever believed me. And now he’s gone. Mom died when I was 14. I’ve been raising myself since.

If the act of abuse on its own was not enough to deal with, the responses of family members predominate the stories that survivors tell. Jill is hurt that her family ignored her; Blake felt betrayed by the attention seeking gossiping of his mother; Dylan suffered from resentment and abandonment of his mother; and lastly, Jeff was completely abandoned by his family when he told the police of his uncle’s abuse. It is parental, especially maternal, support following disclosure that buffers against the harmful effects of sexual abuse and promotes emotional and psychological adjustment (cf. Hershkowitz, Lames, and Lamb 2007). However, the accounts of Jill, Blake, Dylan, and Jeff reinforce the negative reactions to disclosure of sexual abuse that have been reported in other studies (cf. Summit 1983; Palmer et al 1999); where some parents are not necessarily supportive, and victims report disbelief and rejection by family to be common (cf. Roesler and Wind 1994). Such

abandonment by those adults who are most crucial to recovery and protection drives survivors deeper into self-blame and further victimization (cf. Summit 1983). When Jill's family ignored her abuse, she was forced to continue to be abused by her uncle. When she left her family, she left school moving from a ranch in a town 90 minutes northwest of downtown Toronto, into poverty in London. At 16 Jill started dating and escorting. In retrospect, she describes her involvement in the sex trade, blurring adolescence and adulthood, as a way of feeling wanted, which until meeting Jack continued into adulthood;

I wanted to feel appreciated for a little bit of time. Like everyone says that I'm no good for nothing. That I'll never amount to anything. It makes me kind of, you know, it makes me feel somewhat wanted. The guys I was dating, they treated me like shit. I was getting paid a lot by all these guys. At least someone with like, there were dinner dates some of them. So it was like I was going out and having fun, not necessarily having always sex with the guys.

Like Dylan's account of selling sex's relationship to his low self-worth, Jill frames sex work with her own self-worth. She uses sex work as a tool to *increase* feelings of self-worth, enjoying the positive attention and companionship clients give; those feelings she had been missing throughout her life. This counters assumptions that sex work has a strictly negative effect on self-esteem, causing low self-worth, despite the complexity of individuals and the diversity of persons, positions and roles within the industry (Benoit et al 2018).

That these individuals had particularly marked stories of their childhoods framed by their sexual abuse, speaks to the impact these experiences have had on their lives. By co-constructing or retelling accounts of their pasts, the men violated culturally defined norms where sensitive topics should not be discussed in public or with unknown persons (Hyden 2013) and countered stereotypes of masculinity that inhibits disclosure of sexual victimization. Their stories also highlight that there are consequences to the ignorance, stereotyping, misunderstanding, and erasure they experienced as boys and teens.

5.4. Growing up in a context of poverty

Contrary to the unmarked middle-class narrative of childhood (or lack thereof), those who grew up in a context of poverty had a story to tell that focussed on their trials and tribulations. They told me stories relating to how they adapted to or responded against interpersonal and structural violence. Structural forms of violence are "invisible" (unacknowledged?) manifestations of violence built into the political and economic aspects

of society that create and maintain social inequalities (Scheper-Hughes 2002). The common retrospective for the majority of these men are that their childhood experiences diverge from mainstream institutionalized notions of how children and parents should act and what children should be allowed or expected to do (Orellana and Phoenix 2017). This has created what Bourgois (2003) and Gilligan (1997) describe as contexts of shame, stigma, humiliation, loss of respect, and violation of self-integrity, which in turn affect health, well-being, and interpersonal relations, and sometimes lead to self-destructive behavior, extralegal activities, and physical violence.

Bill, a 28-year-old escort-for-women, as a heavier-set fellow, does not fit with stereotypical images of what a male escort looks like. He sells sex because he no longer supplements his income by selling narcotics and is trying to pay off his debt and contribute to a college fund for his daughter. When I ask him to tell me about his childhood, he gives me very few details, telling me “I grew up the same way any other person would.” It is not entirely clear whom he is addressing here; Is “any other person” me as the person being told his story, or does he mean a general audience?

I grew up in low-income housing. I've always had like a strong family, but it was more or less, “We won't really help you with this or that because we weren't really helped with that.” So, I can understand where they're coming from but I do think that maybe I would have a different mind set than I do now if they helped me out a lot more.

The idea of family not helping because they were not helped when they were growing up counters a narrative of wanting to give your children better than what you had growing up. When Bill was still living with his mom she became heavily addicted, selling anything she could get her hands on. “Like she'd start selling my stuff, grandmother's stuff and all that.” It was at this point he moved out on his own and begins a story of agentive recovery as he transitions into adulthood. At 17 he started working two jobs; on retrospection of turning to narcotics and entering the sex trade at 19, he talks of what would have made life different today;

I think I would be more or less not turned towards to go down that route if at 17, my mom had just said, “Okay, well you know what? You got accepted to university or whatever I'll help you with tuition.” Maybe I wouldn't have gone that direction.

Whether Bill truly sees his childhood as unexceptional (normal) or not, he does recognize more help from his family or mother may have had an impact on whether he would be selling sex today.

Howie, 25, sells sex to older women that his brother sets him up with, to pay for his addiction and repay his debts, including putting his girlfriend through university. His childhood fits with the mainstream tropes of the Limberlost neighbourhood he grew up in. Limberlost is one of the largest low-income complexes in the city of London (London Community Chaplaincy 2017). This community consists of row housing built in 1973 during a period of increased public housing spending by the federal government (see Plate 4). Today, the London and Middlesex Housing Corporation (LMHC) provides subsidized public housing (rent-g geared-to-income) to 7 different complexes across the city. The average income as of 2015, is approximately fourteen thousand Canadian dollars a year; compared to the adjacent suburban community of Hyde Park (see Plate 5) with an average income of about one-hundred-and-ten thousand Canadian dollars a year, highlighting the inner-city and suburb divide (Smuck 2015). The majority face the challenges of living in poverty daily. Many are single parents, working poor, some are immigrants; Struggles with mental health, addiction, or abuse are common; lack of food, crime, and financial insecurity are the norm.

Plate 4: Two housing units at Limberlost, June 2018.



After I told him I lived in the White Hills neighbourhood just north of Limberlost and that my son has had his own share of trouble in the neighbourhood, Howie recounts

his elementary school days. “The black guys, a bunch of niggers and shit used to beat me up and try to rob us and shit; We used to throw down all the time on both sides. You know what I mean?” Signifying a racial divide within the community, he separates himself from the non-whites. His use of the n-word causes me to take pause and I wonder how he would have treated me if I was black. Before I have a chance to process an immediate response, Howie tells me how he was in trouble with the police since he was fifteen;

I didn't smoke pot, I never fucking touched a cigarette, I barely drank. You know what I mean? I was a good student and everything like that. And then one day in grade 11 my uncle was drinking and doing blow... he was fucking doing lines, I fucking did a line, and the fucking next thing you know I found out my uncle was selling ounces and shit. And fucking, you know what I mean, I was getting it dirt cheap, bringing it to school, fucking one thing led to another, got kicked out of school, and...

Yeah, like when I was 15 my dad got me and my brother our own place where he would pay the rent, but we had to cover groceries. And then at 14, 15 years old me and my brother were robbing houses for food. My other cousin lived with us and shit. And we were just running around robbing houses and shit to eat, you know, people come home, their fridge is empty, but their DVD player is sitting on the fucking table, right?

Me and my brother were out doing home invasions and shit... It was other people who grew pot and like sold blow and hit, you know what I mean... I didn't feel bad; if there were women and children in the house we wouldn't do it. You know what I mean? Morals, you know what I mean? But we actually got caught. And that's the reason I was kicked out of school because one of the students in the school was the one that we robbed.

Here the school system and legal system failed him by not dealing with the underlying causes for his crimes; being neglected by his family and left to fend for himself lead to survival crime for food. At the same time, Howie does not tell me whether he reached out to anyone for help. Speaking fatalistically, he sees his families' bad influence, addiction, and neglect as leading him down the “wrong path,” a path he had no choice but to follow, that he was a victim of;

All my uncles and my dad we were just kind of fucking in and out of jail doing dope their whole lives, so. It was inevitable, it's just in the family, you know what I mean? Everybody wants to grow up to be like their fucking parents, right. I did blow with my dad. My dad, you know what I mean, he's told me stories of him banging blow and shit when he was younger. You know what I mean? His dad died when he was 11 years old, so he just kind of went astray

and did his own thing. I have 5 drug charges on my record, two as a young offender. So, growing up and stuff, like I've seen my dad cheating on my mom and my mom cheating on my dad. And I've seen my uncles cheating on my aunts, and you know what I mean, I really, you know, don't have a really good concept of relationships.

It bums me out, you know what I mean? I'm 25 and, you know what I mean, I was kicked out of high school and shit, I wanted to go to college, I wanted to go to college or university and just one thing after another it went downhill. You know, I figured I'd be a little more well off instead of working at a fucking factory, and fucking pigs you know what I mean? I'd rather be somewhere else.

Overall, Howie tells a story where he has limited agency, is socialized to fend for himself, and shields himself from the actions of his past or at least blame. Drawing on Foucault (1980), it is likely that his story reflects an effort to make sense of his childhood through a lens of normalizing judgment, where Howie is trying to negotiate between his experiences with the legal system which assigns blame on the individual (him) and the structural violence he experienced. The impact of his grandfather's death when his father was eleven, does hint at a form of intergenerational trauma. With his accounts of household substance abuse, incarcerated family members, and physical neglect, Howie's childhood also serves as an illustrative case study for the ACES as his addiction, multifaceted criminal activity, and expulsion from school correlate to this past.

Plate 5: A mid- to upper-middle class London neighbourhood August 2018.



Tim, 29, has been selling sex to women in London and some surrounding towns since he was 23 to pay for his addiction, and variably as a primary income source or to

supplement his income. Growing up in the Southdale housing complex in the south end of the city, I ask him about this time in his life.

When I was three years old my aspirations were to grow up and rob a bank; I was going to buy my mom a limo and I was going to buy a spaceship and a Harley; Put guns on the Harley and shoot the aliens on the moon. And like that's, when I was three, that's what I thought was normal, you know what I mean? I always, I thought the cops were bad... I thought I was a gangster, you know what I mean? I had long hair down to my ass. All I wore was Harley Davidson track suits, you know what I mean? I thought I was big and bad.

Calling himself "a little bastard," Tim criticized the child he was based on a concept of an idealized (middle class?) "normal childhood."

My mom and dad, they divorced, and we lived with my mom growing up in London and I'd go to my dad's in the summer and stuff. My dad was like a biker. And he wasn't, you know what I mean, he wasn't very tolerant of other people. He like grew up in Georgia that infused his racism, because the neighborhood they lived in was predominantly black. And if they left their, you know what I mean, if they walked out front they would get beat up by everyone. So like that skewed his view. But like me and my brother were into hip-hop and stuff, so my dad started like buying hip-hop albums and listening to it, and it was just, you know what I mean, he was racist, but he just, you know, he wasn't as ignorant as most people would think. But my dad died when I was in grade 10. And like my dad was a good guy, but he was racist, you know what I mean? And my dad's he's schizophrenic, though, so like when he was off his medication he would like to threaten to kill my mom. He loves his kids and, you know, he feels like my mom is the one who took them away.

This narrative seems to be an attempt to rationalize his father's negative behaviours with the love Tim felt for him. Certainly, reducing black culture to a type of music is not anti-racist. Threatening to kill your spouse, regardless of your mental health, is not the actions of a "good guy." He further illustrates this with a story that paints his dad as a victim;

Actually, when I was three years old I watched him get beat up by her ex that molested my sister. He was over, I woke up in the middle of the night to my stepbrother's dad, my mom's ex boyfriend, he, there was all this banging and stuff. And I woke up and like all I saw was my dad's head as he just fell down, he was unconscious in a big pool of blood on the floor. I watched this boyfriend beat her for nine years of my life, you know what I mean? And my, my mom was beaten with a baseball bat - it traumatized me, obviously, you know what I mean? It didn't traumatize me to the effect where I was psychologically damaged, but it scared the shit out of me. And then like my mom had grabbed

my sister and he was like punching my mom in the head and like hitting my sister.

Though, I would argue Tim is in denial regarding the psychological impact this violence had on him, the discourse of domestic violence continues to paint a picture of traumatic childhood memories. Instead of telling me about everyday things in a child's life like school or friends, or even special times and events, these snapshots in time have influenced "who he is today."

Like that was the type of stuff that made me, that's part of why selling sex affected me so much is because I'd seen the way my family was. All my mom and dad's friends were all like gang members and like drug dealers and murderers and stuff, you know what I mean? My one aunt smoked crack for years, my other aunt's an alcoholic and like they all have their problems. I learned a lot of things when I was young. Like I started drinking recreationally when I was nine years old. The first time I got drunk me and my uncle split a 40 of rum, you know what I mean? And we drank that all day. My family pretty much all have been to prison and stuff, except for my mom. She's the only stable, normal person and my one other aunt on her side of the family. Actually, my uncle is on that side, are good people, you know what I mean, they work fulltime, they have good lives. I always hung out with my cousin, my brother and stuff, and I missed a lot of high school. I never wanted to be like that, you know what I mean?

Here, Tim places himself in the role of victim, working through his pain but like Howie coming to blame decisions as a teen or adult solely on his upbringing. He also acknowledges the influence of systematic contextual factors through his use of a local history narrative. In the 1800s an Irish family who immigrated to a township just north of London was murdered by an armed mob (Fazakes 1997). The Donnelly family made many enemies in the township and there were many accounts of assault, theft, arson, attempted murder, robbery and the like in which they were often wrongfully (and rightfully) accused. Like the Donnelly's, Tim feels his family never had a chance, "if something goes missing, blame the crackhead." He continues, "because of the way they are, even if they didn't do something wrong they were still, like my family, we'd still get accused."

Tyrell, 22, uses his proceeds from pole dancing in London and Toronto, stripping in Toronto, and occasional escorting in London to supplement his income. We meet at a Tim Horton's in the far southeast area of the city, a few blocks from LMHC's Marconi neighbourhood of public housing. The rain is bucketing down, and I almost cancel our

meeting as I am suffering from a bout of laryngitis. Tyrell tells me that he came out at 15, and that his mom had to struggle to come to terms with it over time, and his father definitely does not. I glean this from the rest of his childhood narrative which focusses on the horrifying story of his father trying to kill his mother.

He tried to -- he tried to suffocate her. Him and my mom were drunk and he - - like they were just fighting. I intervened so that's really what messed me up. I was like five. He, like, abducted us a couple times. I was actually born in Trinidad and he's the reason we came to Canada and then he followed us to Canada and did all that stuff. He got deported but some how he got back. He was charged and now is in prison. I went to therapy for almost a full year. Because my biggest symptoms where I was really depressed, first of all. And then I had nightmares and sweats. I think a lot of people self-medicate in general. I had to use booze, marijuana. I tried cocaine but when you put it under your tongue, it's disgusting and absolutely rancid.

Perhaps considering his time in therapy, Tyrell tells me about this event unemotionally, and with very few details. Here he stops his story to tell me that he has brought his doctor form detailing that he has PTSD. Confused at why he thinks I need to see it, Tyrell tells me it is because he has had to “prove” it before. I assume he must be talking about proving it to doctors or case workers⁸⁸ and I remind him that I am just a student listening to his story for what it is. Though he is sharing intimate stories, looking at this document would have crossed a line for me. Tyrell also says that when he meets a guy that he is getting to know he always shows him the paper because he wants guys to accept him for the whole him and not surprise them later. Moving on, Tyrell links his PTSD with a low sense of self-respect, which is why he finds pole-dancing physically and emotionally therapeutic which counters a normative narrative of pole-dancing as degradation.

⁸⁸ It also turns out, at court as an adult.

Plate 6: Tyrell on the pole (picture used with permission)



Jack, the bisexual escort, and fiancé to Jill, tells me a few tidbits of his past, not painting a complete picture, or is interrupted by Jill telling her story. Overall, he feels his parents do not care about him because they focus on his siblings. Jill counters this telling Jack why she thinks they do, Jack just shrugs, and we move on. Though he took cosmetology through trade school, his sister was the only one in his family that graduated secondary school and Jack tells me he was diagnosed as having Attention Deficit Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, and Dyslexia presumably explaining to me why *he* dropped-out. Why or how or if he was treated for his disorders is unsaid. Describing secondary school, he talks of feeling unsafe once kids pulled a gun on him in the bathroom in grade 10. Ever since, he's carried a gun with him. Asking where he got the gun since he was too young to buy one, Jack goes on;

My Dad's a biker, my brother's a biker. My whole family, all my uncles and my dad are all Outlaws. And one of them, he's a Fed⁸⁹ and an Outlaw still. Dad started off as a Satan's Choice and then patched over to HA.⁹⁰

With a family with connections in various Biker gangs, a sister who used to prostitute, a gigolo father, and his mental health, it is perhaps unsurprising Jack started self-medicating

⁸⁹ Working as a police officer or for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

⁹⁰ Hell's Angels

and selling sex himself; though he does not share any further details on his drug use at that time other than he needed money “to get a hold of any pill [he] could get a hold of including Oxycontin and Ritalin.” Jack’s story emphasizes the choices he made during his youth, avoiding any sort of victim identity. Even his entry into sex work is agentive; after seeing a TV advertisement about sex chat lines at 15 he decided to try meeting women. Jack tells me he found out the hard way that a 25-year-old woman he was “dating” was a prostitute too; “She gave me a key to her house and I walked in on her having sex with a guy. Since I needed money for pills, that’s when I started doing it myself.” Jack’s last story from his past, shocks both me and Jill.

Jack: When I was 16 I used to be a pimp for 25- to 40-year-olds.

Jill: Wait, what?

Jack: It was my dad’s connections, they didn’t really listen to me, they listen to my dad. I was just the one making the money; the baby pimp.

Jill: [Laughing]. There’s no way I’d fucking ever listen to you!

Nathan: Is it true that pimps aren’t necessarily as evil as some people make them out to be?

Jack: You got to keep your girls close, you can’t abuse them and all that because then you end up with them just running to another pimp.

Jill: Oh! I wish you were my pimp!

This counters a narrative that paints pimps as abusive sex traffickers who do not care and force women to sell sex; Men that women need to be protected from, not men who are protective. Bruckert and Parent (2018) in their latest research on third parties in the sex industry also found that these workers fulfill important roles and provide vital services. Jack also talks of sex worker choice, assuming an abused woman could or would run to a kinder pimp.

I meet Matt, 23, in his apartment in a brown brick four-storey walk-up in the Carling neighbourhood, east of Adelaide and just north of the barracks. As we deal with formalities he apologizes several times for the condition of his place; though the few pieces of furniture are a mishmash of worn second-hand goods, everything else is meticulously clean and well looked after. Matt describes himself as being a whore for women since he was 16, paying for drugs and the cost of life.

I've always been poor my whole life. But our family is pretty much, except for my one aunt and uncle, our whole family has been ghetto our whole lives, you know, we've been “well-y” [welfare] people, we've been food bank people.

Here Matt is eliciting an image of ghetto culture before highlighting specific memories. Being on welfare and using the food banks are symbols of hitting bottom and of urban immobility; being of a stigmatized ghetto, trapped in a cycle of poverty, perpetually in survivor mode or breeding criminality, dysfunction, and addiction. This is a negative assessment of a lower-class culture and his later narrative shows an idealized assessment of the middle-class (Tierney 2009). Floating between London and towns nearby during his childhood, Matt was taken out of his mom's custody at one and his grandmother raised him. Chain-smoking, Matt continues,

In St. Thomas [a city 20 minutes south of London], I'd always go to the hospital there and I'd walk in and just take something and just walk out. It was like shopping except you didn't pay. And because it's a hospital, it was a smaller town, there was not cameras really anywhere at all except for that front room. But once you get actually in the hospital and start walking around, it's so big and there's, it's empty and there's stuff everywhere. In Strathroy [a town 20 minutes west of London] I used to go out there quite a bit too actually for crop hunting.⁹¹ When I had just turned 16, me and my buddy had just done a B and E and got caught for it. He got let out on bail, no problem, his parents went and got him. But my grandmother didn't come get me. She wasn't there that time though, she said, you know, you got arrested so you can stay in there a couple days and learn a lesson. And while I was in there, you know, I just - I don't know, my mentality changed, and I guess, you know, I didn't have someone always there, I didn't have someone always looking out for me. I wanted the hell out of there, I was terrified, my grandmother wouldn't come get me. So, it made me realize, because after that point, I got to do things for me. I started panhandling whenever I was in London.

No longer protected, Matt felt vulnerable and alienated. It is at this point Matt started selling sex in an effort to gain self-sufficiency. Before this time, he says he was very open with his sexuality, enjoying sex with different women he found attractive when he wanted. "Probably that's why I did it in the first place... I was already kind of a whore... I didn't charge, but then again, I was also very picky before." So, Matt's friend began pimping him from his trap house.⁹² The first time, one of the girls said she'd give someone twenty dollars to lose her virginity. "I wanted to go to the bar that night, so alcohol was the first thing that made me slip down like that. That was the first way I got lured because of \$20 worth of booze." After that anytime there was an older larger woman that was feeling lonely and

⁹¹ Looking for marijuana growing in farmer's fields.

⁹² A house, usually in "the ghetto," that sells drugs and hosts parties.

depressed, his friend would walk up and tell her to go see Matt, give him some money and “he’ll show you a good time.”

So, it kind of changed where, as I was still doing what I knew how to do, what I was good at, what I enjoyed, but I changed the rules a little bit and the enjoyment had definitely gone a little bit. When I was first being a prostitute, I had no shame in it, you know, the girls weren’t good looking, but I didn’t feel bad about it. I felt, I was like look at this money, this is mine now. That’s all it took, you know, like most people do this for free, like I got cash for it. If I wasn’t getting money out of it, I wouldn’t have slept with any of the women that I did at that point for money or for cigarettes or for food, any of that, I wouldn’t have done it, you know what I mean? I think that if I had money, I wouldn’t have been motivated to take that path. If I would have had more opportunity. If we weren’t -- wouldn’t have been ghetto. If we would have had a house and a car. If I would have gone, like, in sports when I was a kid and been in clubs and made friends, you know, go on vacations and, you know, like that’s what normal kids do. They go on spring break with their parents, or they join like the soccer team and every Wednesday, mom has to take you and watch you not score a goal for an hour. You know, that’s what kids do. That’s what you see in the movies and media all the time, I never had that. I grew up, you know, playing, hanging out by myself, walking around the gulley, getting myself into trouble, you know, drinking and stuff like that. Like when I was a kid, I didn’t have a lot of opportunities or options. I feel like if my family was loaded, that I would have never been that desperate for money; I would have never had to go on welfare at 15 years old, you know? I wouldn’t have sold sex.

In the first part of this account, Matt frames selling sex with a sense of entrepreneurial pride but retrospectively feels that he was “lured,” had “slipped down,” and missed being able to choose mates he was attracted to. He then mourns for what he describes as a “normal” childhood, longing for after-school sports and family vacations. Matt here has internalized the belief that extracurricular experiences are essential to well-being (Swift, Balmer, and Dineen 2010).

These men have framed their lives in contrast to an idealized state of middle-class privileged “normalcy.” Within this common cultural and normative framework, a person needs to own a minimum of goods⁹³ and participate in a minimum of activities in order to generate social and cultural capital; this then supports dominant social norms while

⁹³ Eydal and Jeans (2006) find that children from less affluent families often expressed a greater longing for things than children with more affluence which is a response to stigma.

protecting children and youth from the stigma of living in poverty (Brusdal and Fronese 2014). Education was idealized as a way to avoid the hardships of poverty; Howie wishes he was never kicked out of high school and had been able to go to college while Bill wishes his mother would have been the kind who would have paid university tuition. Tim desires a similar life to that of family members he considers to be normal; non-addicts who are “good” people with full-time jobs. Those who described living in poverty as children often started their stories by highlighting the neighbourhood they grew up in or the type of housing they had. Contrary to Smuck’s (2015) research on the lived experiences of residents in London’s public housing who dismantle the stigmas attributed to them by highlighting a narrative of positivism and resiliency, the men I interviewed told stories that support tropes of crime and decay.

5.5. Youth addiction

The drug and the act... become the relationships he doesn’t have, the substitute for needs he can’t meet... It condenses all of which he is deprived, it counteracts the institutional violence inflicted on him. It buffers, it fills in the void in his relationship to his family and community, where his place as a man in a very virile, male-dominated culture has been taken away, depriving him of a compensatory mechanism in a community that itself has experienced constant displacement and exclusion (Lovell 2007: 71).

Studies of drug addiction find high percentages of various sorts of childhood trauma. For each adverse childhood experience, the risk of early initiation of substance abuse increased two to four times (Mate 2009). Twelve (44%) of the twenty-seven men who I interviewed in person became addicts as youth. This is significantly higher than youth in risk studies of the general population.⁹⁴

People with a mental illness are twice as likely to have a substance use problem compared to the general population and at least 20% of those with a mental illness have a co-occurring substance use problem; similarly, those with substance use problems are three times more likely to have a mental illness than the general population and 15% of those with substance use problems have a co-occurring mental illness (Rush et al. 2008). For Austin and Jimmy, their depression, social isolation and for Nick his grief response, correlate to their self-medication through drugs.

⁹⁴ 13% of 130200 Ontario students (grade 7 to 12) report symptoms of a drug-use problem (Paglia-Boak, Adlaf, and Mann 2011). My sample is likely too small to generalize an accurate comparison, but it is still worth noting.

Jimmy, identifying as straight, now 25, has “prostituted” for men and women since he was 20. He tells me he comes from a well-off family in a small town on Lake Huron, 1 hr northwest of London; his mother was an administrative assistant and his dad worked for the schoolboard. Though his story is otherwise a childhood of unmarked privilege, his struggles with addiction predominate his narrative. For Jimmy, growing up in a small town there was nothing to do. “In the summer, it's party town, bars and all that. In the winter, there's nobody, but you and your buddies. There's nothing to do. The police station isn't even open in the winter. Tim Horton's is the only thing that's open.” He believes this boredom is what led him to start smoking pot in grade eight.

One thing went to another. Then it was a bit of cocaine. Well it was weed, then some mushrooms on the weekend, those are just occasionally. Then I started doing cocaine, which I was in high school then and I worked then and I'd steal some money from my parents or make up the odd excuse, whatever. My parents knew and sent me to rehab. They had no problem telling me that you're getting no money since they know what it's for. In high school, I didn't want to let them down.

After rehab, he started using pills everyday, “When you miss it, you'll do anything.” This sets up his transition to selling sex when he moved out after high school. Jimmy emphasizes the responsibility for his actions throughout his life saying “I did this to myself. I'm not a victim.” Though norms of masculinity dictate that men are not supposed to express vulnerability, this discourse echoes the moral model of addiction and ignores that drugs offer a way of coping with stress, pain, and other life miseries that may be outside of our own control (Pickard 2017).

Austin, a 25-year-old escort for men in London, grew up in a town 20 minutes west of the city. He does not tell me his sexuality though it seems complex since he “fooled around” after spending time in jail for robbery and ended up having a daughter. Growing up with a single-mom who worked two jobs, he felt trapped inside his room, so he did not get out much. This social isolation and depression had a deep impact on his life;

Just growing up, I was different. You know, I was always pushed aside, always teased. By the time I hit high school, I was already addicted to drugs. I had my suicidal tendencies when I was younger, and growing up, even when I was still on the drugs, it was harder because people hate me. I just kind of fell out of high school, I started skipping school, I didn't care about an education, started doing a lot more drugs. I started getting depressed over that, fell back into that deep state of emptiness. Trying to fill that void is so hard. I have done

mental health programs through the YAC⁹⁵, YOU⁹⁶ and everything. I wanted to talk to a therapist, but I don't feel comfortable opening up to a therapist. I think they're paid to judge me, and I'm not that type of person. Just trying to figure out me and it took me a while, but when my mom passed away a few years ago it was even harder.

Austin's complicated sexuality is reflected in his lack of coming-out story or expression of a definite sexual identity. His story is told matter-of-factly, stringing events together but not offering any deep insight into the past. What is missing are the ways his mom and school responded to his bullying, addiction, truancy, and depression, or coping strategies attempted before reaching for drugs.

Nick, at my best guess is a juvenile 24. His age seems to be missing from my records which in retrospect is not surprising considering the paucity of our interview. He sells sex “to live the good life” and to feed his addiction. He starts by telling me that he grew up in Byron and “had a great life,” his mom was a head nurse though he says his father was unemployed. Byron is a middle-class neighbourhood of low-density detached housing in the southwest of the city with an average family income of about CDN\$65,000 (City of London 2014). When I ask Nick what a “good life” and “great life” means he impatiently says it means “buy what I want” and “do what I want.”

If my mom was still alive, I wouldn't be doing what I do today, so, I try to pretend like things aren't real. I lost my parents at a young age. I was depressed, not suicidal. I only did my grade ten. I was subjected to the streets for most of my life. I was with relatives, but they were all abusive, so I ended up leaving. The police and school boards tried to get me to go but I said whatever, you guys aren't - I don't feel like going to school, I'm not in the mood, I'm too depressed and I don't want to go. Just tried to just avoid them most of the time because I didn't want to deal with their shit.

Nick's story gets confusing and he is unwilling to elaborate or clarify further. Though he says he lost his parents at an early age he says after his mom died his father moved in. This statement is contradictory. Here Nick says that his father was an abusive alcoholic until he turned 19; that he died while Nick was incarcerated. What the abuse of his father and relatives entailed is not elaborated upon. I did not have any further success getting him to

⁹⁵ YAC is the Youth Action Centre, a resource centre offering outreach and support for at risk, transient and street youth.

⁹⁶ YOU is Youth Opportunities Unlimited, it provides employment resources for youth

explore this so as far as I can tell, he was introduced to sex work and drugs when he was on the streets. By pretending things are not real, Nick is dissociating in order to minimize the pain he feels and may explain why I had such difficulty getting him to open up and explore the life he wishes he did not have.

These stories illustrate that addiction in youth can affect anyone regardless of upbringing and class. Of the 12 narratives of childhood on-set addiction, half came from middle-class backgrounds (Austin, Jimmy, Stuart, Ted, Nick, and David) and the other six grew up poor (Blake, Howie, Jack, Tyrell, Matt, and Dylan). Nick's addiction correlates with grief due to his mother's death, and his time on the streets. Stuart's addiction began due to his physical disability but was complicated by getting kicked-out for being gay as well as being sexually abused. Ted suffered the neglect of his father and ended up immersed in the drug culture of the streets. David was also kicked out for being gay and was introduced to drugs on the street. For Blake, the neglect of his mother, complicated by sexual abuse by his brother led to his drug use. Howie was introduced to drugs by an older family member, Jack through his Biker family, while Matt seems to have been introduced to drugs through his friend while they were committing crimes to survive. Tyrell's PTSD after being kidnapped and seeing his father try to kill his mother, led to his self medication with marijuana and alcohol. Dylan, sexually abused by an uncle, was introduced to drugs on his first week on the streets after being abandoned by his abusively neglectful mother.

The accounts provided by these men were diverse and complex stories of resistance, resilience, and agency, alongside stories of dysfunction, abuse, and poverty. These stories provide insight into life experiences rarely told in sex work literature. Like women in the industry (Abramovich 2005; Birkhead 2011; Coy 2007; Dalla 2006), some of the emergent themes from men's stories show the need for appropriate and accessible social services for those under 18. As such, it could be argued that it is irrelevant whether these experiences served as catalysts for a man's involvement in the industry. Some men identified the need for safe, non-judgemental supported teen housing; appropriate addiction and mental health services; and more accountable justice, educational, and social support systems to help those who have been sexually abused, kicked-out because of their sexuality, or lack emotional or financial support from family. Other men told stories of their time growing-up which they considered mundane and privileged. These accounts are

inherently important for sex work literature as they serve as a reminder of the diversity of experiences; this in turn problematizes one-sized-fits-all conceptualizations of the industry and assumptions that people only enter sex work because of problems in childhood.

6. Methods of and motivations to enter the trade

A girl that I was actually living with on the streets had introduced me to what she did. **Dylan; Escort-for-men and women.**

I don't like taking orders from a random person I don't really know. I have a problem holding down jobs a lot because I think I should be the boss. Being my own boss is important. **Jack; Sex worker-for-men and women.**

I got addicted to the fast money. I didn't see any options at the time. I look back at it and wish I could slap myself and say no. **Edward; Mouth-whore-for-men.**

Stories of sex work were typically coherent in that they were described as part of a longer narrative that reached back into a man's past and forward to his future (cf. Ezzy 2017). In this way it interweaves differing moments of one's life. Asking a man to "start at the beginning" of his story often meant starting with a story of family life growing up and a transition story of entering the trade. As I mentioned previously, I arbitrarily chose to classify the age eighteen and younger as one's childhood or youth.⁹⁷ While there was a shared general schema of life stages amongst the group, the lines between adult, teen, and child were blurred when each man gave their own accounts of their pasts. My classification was not an effort to set a benchmark of presumed capacity or to make moral judgements about their lives.

Regardless of age, the motivations for engaging in sex work can be the same, blurring implications we could make with such arbitrary classifications. With an average age of nearly 20 (n=19.78), approximately 40% (n=18) of my interviewees entered the trade between fourteen and eighteen years old. Cimino (2012) describes the myriad of possible reasons for entering the sex trade in two ways;⁹⁸ Push factors that include poverty, an unstable home life, childhood physical and sexual abuse, and neglect, while pull factors can include glamorizing the trade or dangerous or risky behaviours, seeking control over one's life or empowerment, being convinced by others, or desire for financial freedom. This echoes Luckenbill (1985) who argues entrance into sex work occurs as a solution to desperate living or as an exciting adventure. Benoit and colleagues (2017) surveyed sex work literature, finding studies that see motivations as due to predisposing factors such as

⁹⁷ The what makes an adult versus a child depends on intersectional factors such as gender, maturity, responsibility, self-sufficiency, laws, culture and so on

⁹⁸ Again, there is a danger of reducing experience into concepts of "risk"

childhood victimization, parental neglect, or social isolation (Dodsworth 2012; Pheterson 1993) and socioeconomic factors including poverty and the retraction of welfare state support. Other research shows the exercise of rational choice similar to service workers in post-industrial society (Smith 2012; Weitzer 2009). Precarious employment has also made the sex industry an option for students pursuing higher education (Roberts, Bergstrom, and La Rooy 2007) and the middle-classes (Bernstein 2007). There is also research offering insight into non-material reasons why people engage in sex work including finding meaning in the job (Murphy and Venkatesh 2006), or professional choice (Abel 2011; cf. Benoit et al 2017b). The men I interviewed describe environments that reflect many of these factors but in complex configurations, and the overlapping reasons for entering, or making certain choices, even more so. Alongside these motivations to enter the sex work, an individual must know about its possibility and the means of entry. As per Smith et al. (2013), one had to first become aware that men engaged in this type of work and learn how and where to do so. A key component of this story was what facilitated their access or who acted as their gatekeeper to the industry.

6.1. Income: Social mobility or basic need

Earning money is the main motive for most when it comes selling sex. In a situation of limited moneymaking options, often sex work is simply the most favorable alternative (Vanwesenbeeck 2012; McLean 2013). Particularly younger sex workers can obtain earnings in sex work that they could not obtain anywhere else (Davies and Feldman 1997). The flexibility in working hours also makes combining it with other responsibilities relatively easy (Vanwesenbeeck 2012). The part-time and insecure nature of jobs available lead many to work multiple jobs and change workplaces frequently (Benoit and Millar 2001). As of February 2015, London's labour force was comprised of about 263,400 people. This represented a participation rate of 62.6% and an employment rate of 58.6% of the total population. There are about 16,800 people who are unemployed and 60,310 of Londoners are low-income earners (City of London 2015). Smith and Grov (2011) found the theme of coping with unmet or blocked economic goals was ubiquitous among the escorts they interviewed. It seemed to be a key situational precondition for men starting to consider prostitution as a viable form of employment. The desirability of sex work as an income opportunity increased as one's financial situation grew increasingly discrepant

from important material goals. Occupational choice, the decision to enter particular kinds of work, lends the appearance of extensive agency (Benoit et al. 2017). For more precarious or low-prestige jobs, economic need may be disconcerting, but individuals seek out jobs more likely to offer dignity, opportunity, escape from violence, and avoidance of criminality (Newman 1999). Since the majority of the men I interviewed were not on the radar of the police for selling sex nor did they experience violence to a large degree,⁹⁹ maintaining a sense of dignity in the face of sex work stigma underlined entrance narratives. Perhaps due to a masculinized work ethic of self-sufficiency and breadwinning (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005), earning money by “doing what you have to do” was a prevalent explanation for entering and/or remaining in the sex industry; perhaps by affirming their sense of masculinity they were able to cushion themselves from feeling bad or guilty. For those making choices in their own self-interest or empowered to use their sexuality as they see fit, as Rosen and Venkatesh argue,

Sex work offers just enough money and flexibility to make the job worthwhile, and just enough autonomy and professional satisfaction to make it more attractive than other options and provides a meaningful option in the quest for a job that provides autonomy and personal fulfilment (2008: 417-418; cf. Benoit et al. 2017).

In other words, labour market decisions were embedded in specific narratives of power and exploration, as men attempted to make meaning of the spatial and temporal choices made. Others cited the desire for luxury goods as motivation to sell sex. This included going to the strip club, collecting old films, buying designer clothes; others discussed trying to “live a good life” that allowed them to do what they wanted when they wanted, such as eating out or going to the movies when they felt like it. This performative consumerism acts as buffer between a policed world of poverty and the mainstream middle-class (de Castro 2006; Mitchell 2015). In the absence of substantive and promising education and work opportunities, these luxuries force participation in society and men distance themselves from non-consuming peers, family, and those sex workers seen as desperate (Ibid). While earning money did underline most accounts, other reasons do overlap their motivations to sell sex.

⁹⁹ That is not to minimize the violence that has been experienced

Coming from a relatively privileged upbringing, **Phil** was able to graduate college and pursue a career in film and television production. Working for 10 years in post-production for television in Toronto, he says the nature of the industry was *sporadic* and he would be in between jobs.

I got a job at the old Spa on Maitland. My first time I'd ever been in a bathhouse or anything like that ever in my life. That place then wasn't such a pleasant place. I was so naive when I went in there. A lot of drugs and a lot of ... There were a lot of, hustlers, we used to call them. There were a lot of guys in there selling themselves too. Of course, I worked there, I started to get to know some of them. I knew from TV and stuff I knew what a hooker was. I knew a woman could be a hooker. It never occurred to me growing up that a guy could do anything like that. I had never heard of that before you know?

Phil does not elaborate what drew him to work at the bathhouse but considering the terms sex worker and prostitute refer to women who sell sex (so the modifier “male” must be added to make the distinction) that he never considered the possibility of men selling sex is not surprising.

Anyway, I got to know them a bit, not too closely. They all had drug problems and they were probably thieves. I don't even know if these guys were actually gay. They were just up for crack money. I didn't really have a desire to be an escort but I watched them do their thing for a while. I was like I could probably do that better than they could and not spend my money on drugs.

Here Phil is espousing a common “discourse of respectability” (Weeks 2011) which by its nature is placed as opposite discourses of shame and degeneracy. High- or middle-class escorts are seen as more genuine and capable of exerting agency, while junkies and “crack-whores” sacrifice their own self-integrity and live in a “culture of poverty” filled with crime, violence, and addiction. By othering them, he attempts to escape stigma and mark himself with a middle-class respectability (Skeggs 1997).

I was watching how much money these guys were taking in on an average day and I'm like, I'm standing behind this counter making *minimum wage* which back then was 8 dollars and something. I'm going hmm. I was *young, popular, horny* and I got prepositioned a lot. I was a young little newbie.

Youthfulness is correlated with muscular development and athleticism as highly valuable and thus marketable in segments of gay culture and consequently male-for-male sex work, but also mainstream popular culture. Phil also replicates a discourse of hegemonic

masculinity (Connell 1987) that positions men as in possession of insatiable sex drives. Lastly, he goes on to discuss his rationale through a risk-benefit analysis;

So finally, one time someone who was a regular at the spa, someone I knew, he's a friend of mine. He used to take the employees and give them 50 bucks to blow him you know what I mean? We weren't supposed to do it when we were working but it was well known that everyone did it. So finally, one day... he said, you want to come to my room? And he waved a 50-dollar bill in my face at the time. I thought, well everybody else did it, what the hell what do I care? So, I went in there and gave him a blowjob. There wasn't much to it. It didn't take long. He left, and I had 50 dollars. Not bad. No harm done, I wasn't hurt... I didn't feel badly. I didn't feel ashamed at all. As far as I was concerned I was doing him a favor and he enjoyed having me there for the time I was there.

By emphasizing his ability to “do a favor” by meeting his client’s emotional, physical, and sexual needs, Phil rejects a victim perspective, reifying his position on the hierarchy of sex work levels (Niccolai et al. 2013).

Then I didn't really get into then after that. Once or twice something like that would happen. Anyway, to make a long story short few years go by, now I'm working at Spa Excess. In between TV gigs and... I had a boyfriend. I didn't realize this, we'd been going out for a couple months and his behavior was beginning to get a little shady and - I didn't realize it. I later found out - he was about the same age as me - that he was really turned on by street hustlers. He would go to Sneakers on Younge Street. So finally, when all of this started cluing in on me I didn't want to see him anymore and he was going on - there was a website, gaytoronto.com it used to be called. It was a message board - this was pre-Facebook pre-all of that. He was on there escorting on there and seemed to be doing pretty well. So, I really did it sort of out of revenge, out of spite. I was mad at him and I thought fuck you! You know what I mean? I'll show you who can do this thing. So, I went on there and put an ad on. By the end of the day I had a few hundred dollars. That was really when it took off. As soon as I put the first line first ad on the internet. It just took off within 2 or 3 days I was making a few hundred dollars a day. Within 5 days I had like over a thousand dollars. Yeah that was it. I went off in that direction and didn't really quit, though I did spend sometime in LA and did a porno movie there once.

Phil shows how sex work is a transitory occupation, with sex workers transiting in and out of the industry, as Abel, Fitzgerald, and Brunton (2009) explain, with some remaining for only a short period of time and others entering and exiting the industry a number of times over a longer period. As an aside, Phil identifies his vengeful motivations to re-engage in

sex work due to the infidelity in his relationship with his ex-boyfriend; this is not necessarily a new category of sex work per se but more likely a form of revenge sex to cope with feelings of distress, anger, and diminished self-esteem (cf. Barber and Cooper 2014). It is also likely that Phil used sex work as a means to feel desired/desirable; if someone was willing to spend money to have sex with him, then he must be attractive enough.

Doug frames this part of his larger story recognizing those who get pulled into sex work “involuntarily.” For Doug, it is part of a journey of (self-)exploration.

For me it was voluntary. It was a cycle of living. I was done high school, summer time, so I was like okay I'm done. Had my backpack - only had a backpack with me because all I needed was clothes. Everything I needed, my hardhat hanging off the side. Steel toes on or whatever. I was ready for work, ready to go and I just left and I couldn't really make it. I was working for temp agencies and what not and it was going good. I got my apartment and then I met one of my friends - she was an escort and then one day I just kind of got pretty buzzed at the temp agency and I got *fired* from my job so I started hanging out with her and I fell into the whole circle.

Though getting fired is an act you cannot necessarily control, it is interesting that Doug still considers sex work to be a voluntary choice. What he is doing is separating himself from a victim narrative to take responsibility for being “pretty buzzed” (high from marijuana or inebriated). He could also be differentiating himself from those street-based sex workers who are homeless, addicts, or abused. In other words, he had choices and he made them. Doug continues,

Because she was a female and she had a bunch of other friends, we'd work out deals and what not.... You do this and I'll give you that. Just kind of went from there - when I was 18 kind of a big secret my family and what not. Then after a while I started getting a lot of money and was able to pay my rent in a week. That was like 1700 bucks for like, a high rise - all glass and everything in Vancouver. So, I was able to pay my rent in like a week so I just kind got addicted to it, right? I went to the strip club. I thought it was going like this and after a while it was like... bam. Of course, I'd go down get my hair done, get piercings, contacts and everything all that. Live life. Acne formula so people thought I was like, really hot or handsome or sexy or whatever so I kept going on with it. I kept buying like headphones, scarves and what not. I would get like 5 or 6 clients a day sometimes.

After making friends with a female escort, she facilitated his entrance into sex work by referring him potential female clients, usually friends of hers. When one's friends or relatives are already involved in sex work, a growing familiarity and desensitization to the industry helps a newcomer to normalize their involvement in the business (Katsulis 2009). There is very little research that explicitly discusses who facilitates a man's entry into the sex industry other than in regard to the availability of the internet. In Smith and colleagues (2013), learning from friends or family who worked at an escort agency or friends who had friends working in the industry was a common perception of just over half of those men who worked at an escort agency. That study does not differentiate the gender of those friends or family members, but there is one account of a female escort in this role. In Katsulis' (2009) ethnography of sex work in Tijuana, Mexico there was one account of a male sex worker learning about the trade from a relative, and 32% (n=13) of male sex workers interviewed also had a friend that served as their primary route into the industry. Amongst the men I interviewed, twelve (34% of those interviewed in person and online) reported a friend engaged in the sex trade facilitating their entry into the industry; seven of these friends were *women*, an important finding that will need to be studied further in light of patriarchal discourses of the sex industry. I did find accounts of female pimps or "madams" in anti-sex trafficking documents and research (cf. Helfgott 2008; Roe-Sepowitz et al. 2015; United Nations 2009), though despite recognition that a disproportionate number of women are "traffickers," a perception that "former victims" have become perpetrators may inform future studies reifying misandric and infantilizing ideologies. What differentiates "a facilitator" from a pimp however is that a pimp makes profit from the individual they found clients for. For the men in this study, none of the twelve escort friends took a finders-fee, and of the five friends and family members who were not initially involved in the industry but did facilitate entry, only one man and one woman were identified as taking the role of a pimp. Doug continues,

For [male clients], female [clients] would ask, "I have a friend who's a guy..." And at first, I was like no. I'm good but then after a while I'd seen the guys they hung out with and they're actually really good looking I was always kind of curious about men and women.

West and de Villiers (1993) describe how some young men sell sex as a means of exploring their sexuality. In addition to the sex he has with women, Doug uses sex work to explore

homosexual desires; a form of self-expression and a context within in self-understanding can be consolidated (Boyce and Isaacs 2014). This is contrary to the idea of feigned intimacy (Reiss 1961; Boles and Garbin 1974) where sex workers desexualize the sexual acts they engage in with clients; they split the work self from the private self (cf. Walby 2012). By engaging in sex with men strictly through sex work encounters, Doug can avoid the stigmatization inherent in proclaiming non-normative singular identities such as gay or queer (Moscheta, McNamee, and dos Santos 2013).

Once familiar with the websites and apps, sex workers who used these technologies were able to use their flexibility to make rapid changes to the “mode of operation” (Petit and Singer 1985; McLean 2013) of their work. Some had profiles and advertisements on multiple sites and updated them often to strategically reach clients or to remove them when they felt it was necessary. Though using cruising and dating sites are the most common method used to find clients, different methods can be used simultaneously or change over time. After getting a female client-base, current clients would refer new clients to Doug. This “snowballing” was described by four (n=11%) sex workers in total; this contrasts Prestage and colleagues’ 2014 study of male sex work in New South Wales and Queensland Australia, with 38% receiving clients through personal referral, but coincides with Minichiello and colleagues’ findings of under 12% of male sex workers in the pre-internet days of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane (1999). Between word of mouth and these referrals, Doug reflects on moving from Vancouver to London;

I was actually surprised when I came here, and it started off that easy. I was [briefly] here for court because I was cutting through the highway hiking. When I moved here, I was surprised by how many people actually do it and how discreet it is.

Link’s narrative continues the archetype of sex work as a method to secure supplemental income;

I work 2 jobs and without escorting there’s no way I’d be able to make all my ends meet. I don’t have enough money. My *availability* doesn’t let me get a third job... Well it just depends cause at one store I work on a commission, so my paychecks vary in size all the time. You have *no guarantee*. At one particular store... my hourly wage at that particular store is less than minimum... I almost blame the government for the reason I’m doing this but... Um... Just because I do work on a commission-based job, I mean I do have an hourly rate but um, I get paid like 9.25 an hour plus 2% of every sale.... I think the one store it’s such a specific line of work that, it doesn’t do well during

some points in the year... Yeah, I mean I have picked up the second job and I mean it is just minimum wage. I mean it does, it has made quite a significant improvement but it's still not enough that, because unfortunately they've got... the lack of hours... All these companies are promising that I'm going to get all these hours and then it's not the case at all... they said you need to be available at least 25 hours a week and I'm going oh that's perfect I can make that work. I've given up my life for that and I thought maybe I can stop escorting and then I'm between 2 stores I'm lucky if I get over 25 hours.

Sex work when seen in this context makes sense as an option when wage difference and economic instability are prevalent (Katsulis 2009). When life responsibilities constrain an individual's availability, the flexibility of sex work makes it attractive.

Without someone to facilitate his entrance into the industry, Link discusses how he had to explore online sites;

I mean when I first started getting into it I wanted to see you know, um how much do people charge, how do they go about looking [for clients] because I mean the only thing I knew from it was from Squirt. I would see people on there that were advertising and I went, well I could do that... do they have any issues with the law and uh, so... I mean there was no real reliable sources at all. I mean its pretty all under the table.

Through online observation and trial and error Link was able to gain social capital to recruit clients while making the most money safely (cf. Kille 2015). Despite preparing himself, the internalization of the stigma of sex work was something Link has had to negotiate;

I never saw myself [having to] resort... to doing sex work... to make ends meet. I don't know just the idea of it, um. It - it - it... at first it was almost degrading... it really made me think about what my self-worth was. um, well um, I was really really nervous. [laughs] My anxiety was like through the roof. It was a gentleman that wasn't so good looking. I uh, it at the time I was living by myself so I actually had him come over to apartment and that's kind of when I learned you know...

Link's experience echoes narratives in Smith and colleagues (2003), where the first time seeing a client made many escorts feel like they were doing something "dirty" or "wrong." Like Link, new escorts also had difficulty having sex with clients due to a lack of attraction and arousal.

Ryan works a part time job that pays just enough for rent and regular expenses but does not give him a cushion. Only entering the industry a year ago, I asked why he just does not find another job instead of sex work. Ryan replicates the male sex drive discourse, stating his enjoyment of sex in general, reaffirming how the sex with clients is a vital part

of his overall sex life. Other benefits of selling sex included the flexibility, the high pay relative to the hours worked, and ability to be his own boss. Working more hours elsewhere would interfere with the time he spends as an unpaid actor in local theatre. Ryan had friends at the University of Windsor who were escorts that introduced him to the industry. He used to give massages to these friends and was told he was “really good.” He tried to only sell sex twice but did not like the clients so now he offers intimate massages, sometimes with happy-endings.

Cody, 21, responds to an email inquiry I sent to his profile on Canadian Male¹⁰⁰ an advertising site for male escorts. In his brief response email, he tells me that a year ago he had lost his job. For over a year, and countless interviews he was never hired. Like Doug, he made friends with a female escort;

I met a girl who claimed to be a cleaning lady. Several months later into our friendship I discovered she was an escort. Within a few short weeks I had a website and advertisements and was turning tricks left and right. The money was great, I was able to support myself and my [boyfriend] and then some.

With no opportunity for dialogue, how his friend convinced him to start selling sex is unclear but like Phil, the turnaround between posting an online profile and advertisement, and procuring one’s first client was virtually immediate. Also absent from his short account is any evidence of negatives he may have experienced such having to manage stigma, or how he dealt with problematic clients. Nevertheless, he continues;

I eventually ended up going to college, continuing to work. After college I got a job in my field which literally paid minimum wage. Faced with debt I continued to turn tricks, until a few months ago I finally go a decent paying job and no longer rely on sex work money. I still do work from time to time, regular clients of mine, the extra money is always nice.

Cody’s experience as a student is not unique. As Maher, Pickering, and Gerard (2013) found in narratives of Australian sex workers, the good rates of pay offered by sex work allows the flexibility to pursue an education by balancing paid and study-related activities. In light of the lack of viable alternate employment options, sex work was seen as enabling by sex workers in Lantz (2003). Cody’s story also exemplifies how entering and leaving sex work are not unidirectional, but people will move in and out of sex work at particular times because of changes in circumstances (Hunter and May 2004).

¹⁰⁰ www.canadianmale.com

Bill and Howie share narratives of entering sex work by accident, but once they did, they took advantage of the situations they found themselves in. After leaving home **Bill** was working two jobs;

I started through like a couple of friends you know and was introduced to a couple of people and they became like regulars. Eventually more or less not towards sexual terms, like a lot of times older women would call me to vent and this and that or whatever. And I had no problem chatting with them. I would just notify them, hey I'm going to charge you however much an hour or this and that, and if they wanted to do that, then that's what they wanted to do. Um I offer dating services also whereas if - like it doesn't have to always entail sex, like if they want a night out on the town or whatever like that. I can try to facilitate it as much as I can.

Having an uncle that used to be a pimp in Toronto for male and female escorts, Bill was able to decide on setting his fee at \$250; this is what he calls "easy money."

At 18, **Howie's** entry into sex work starts with his girlfriend's mother hitting on him; "one thing led to another and, you know, I finally got into it... I maintained a relationship with her, and then my brother was like, you know, let's make some money off it. So, it was actually her friends that I started seeing and stuff." Howie does not mention whether his girlfriend knew of either his cheating with her mother or the sex work but the entrepreneurial and opportunistic nature of him and his brother-turned-pimp prevail in his narrative. When his brother was incarcerated, Howie began looking after his nieces and nephews, changing the nature of his involvement in the industry. Not having a square job at the time, sex work provided him the money he needed to survive, raise children and as he discloses later, his addiction.

6.2. Libido and pleasure

Given the discourses that men have available to them about their own sexual agency, the discourse of men's sexual pleasure in sex work is not uncommon (Vanwesenbeek 2012; McLean 2013). Nurena et al. (2011) have documented similar motivations of why some men become involved in sex work including curiosity, as a hobby, or to find a sexual pleasure. This complicates a binary that separates work sex from home sex or that sex workers do not experience pleasure from work sex (Smith 2017), also countering a radical feminist discourse that sees sex work as oppressive (Farley 2004).

For **John**, sex work allowed him to have sex and earn enough to sustain independence. He wanted to leave home and spread his wings, so at 18 sex work was a way for him to leave while still focusing on his studies and embracing his liberated sexuality.

Instead of getting a job - you - sell your ass. I was interested in travelling and that's what I pretty much spent my money on. I'd go from one spot to the next, rent a hotel or an apartment and I stay there for a short amount of time and I'd move on. So, it's kinda like backpacking across Europe but... The site I was on was called rentboy.com and men4rightnow.com. I was on those two sites. So they seek me out. Um and I also worked at strip club so. I got recruited there as well - I got propositioned as well.

For men like John, sexual fun rather than victimization is sometimes stressed. Many men and women do find it enjoyable to be paid to have sex. For some money becomes eroticized and they derive a sense of value from being admired and paid for performing sex acts (Kort 2017). Gay men in different stages of coming out may also experience their commercial exchanges differently, notably as more pleasant when also functional in this respect (Vanwesenbeek 2012).

Robert describes his involvement in sex work as professional dating from the streets, complicating a hierarchy that differentiates between desperate street prostitutes, escort interactions, and “sugar” relationships. “I haven’t sold more than 10 times, because I’m new [to] stuff like that, and just getting to know the guys on kind of semi-personal, not a professional, but more of a personal level and stuff like that. It’s more intimate compassion.” Robert does engage in contract wage labour not only to cover most of his expenses for the month but also “to make it look good.”¹⁰¹ As for the rest of the money, he spends it on clothes, “I like to keep fashionable. As far as surviving in this world, it’s expensive, I tell you. Just trying to live the everyday struggles of life and still trying to save at the same time is a little tricky and stuff.” Though he does describe that coming to terms with his sexuality took him some time; from what I can gather, his relationships with men have always had him in the position of looking for a sugar daddy. How he specifically began to find these kinds of relationships is not quite clear as the way he tells his narrative is somewhat convoluted.

¹⁰¹ Though he does not elaborate I took this to mean that it keeps him from looking unemployed to the government as well as avoids the stigma of being a gold-digger (a person who dates for money, not for love).

Like I said, you meet some people, and there's guys willing to help you out and stuff, but you've got to do things to make these things happen. I'm not greedy by any means. That's the thing. If somebody comes up and stuff and asks you to go for coffee and stuff, it usually starts like that. It's not so, for the male sex workers and stuff, it's not so much of coming out blatantly and saying it. On Friday and Saturday nights after the bar, sometimes then, but on a regular day's basis or whatever and stuff, it's mostly just getting to know a person. You meet a few people here and there.

My interpretation is that Robert and the men he meets do not explicitly meet under the intention of engaging in a sex work encounter but in a more casual dating atmosphere. From there he gauges strategically if they would support him.

It's just as far as a companionship thing is, too, I get to hang around somebody and give them companionship. The intimacy and the companionship are far and few, I guess one of those things too, it's more, when you meet a guy and stuff like that, and you can tell right from the start how far it's going to go and all that, and if you'll have feelings and a relationship and stuff.

Robert uses clients as a way to express his sexual identity and develop emotional connections; he seems less focussed on sexual pleasure. **Tom's** story of his sexual awakening exemplifies the narrative of agentive sexual expression and lust. At 14 or 15 he was so horny that he accessed sites such as Kijiji, Craigslist, and PlentyofFish to seek out sexual encounters. Those interested in him were what he calls "lecherous ephrophiles aged 30+." When one of the men he met started enticing him with money and gifts. "In doing so he created a paradigm where I sort of came to expect it... Some of them enjoyed giving it to me and would do it without being prompted, others were just happy to 'help' when I needed it." As Tom detailed previously, despite the age difference, he frames himself as the sexual predator, adding to the eroticism and with some, it became part of a performance of money, taboo youth, and sexuality. Like Phil, this may also fit with Minichiello, Scott, and Callandar (2013), where male sex workers are bound by discourses about masculinity, including hypermasculinities. Within this context, framing sex work interactions via an expression of libido produces a performance of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987) in order to counter the stigma of sex work as a "feminine occupation."

Ted, on the streets at 16, starts selling sex after another "street-kid" taught him how to use the internet to meet men and make money at the same time.

So he showed me a website called CanadianMale.com. Told me like the average prices and stuff and he's like, oh, but you're underage so you need to

charge more. I was getting clients like instantaneously. I advertised myself as 18 even though I was 16 at the time, but a lot of the clients that I'd see, I would mention to them that, you know, I'm underage and then they'd end up actually paying more.

Capitalizing on the value of his youth, Ted emphasizes the entrepreneurial aspect of selling sex.

The way I saw it, it was like the perfect trade-off. It was like I *wanted sex* and I *wanted money*, so why not do both at the same time, it just seemed like the most logical thing at the time. Because yeah, I was incredibly horny, and I was incredibly broke, so it was a win-win.

So far, stories of gay men selling to other men have predominated narratives of pleasure and libido as partial or full motivations for entering the sex trade. **Bashir** however epitomizes hyper-heteromascularity. His time modeling and working out at the gym five or more days a week while he worked there part-time while completing his studies at Western put him in prime physical shape. This is how he was introduced to stripping;

I was actually working out at the gym, and that's when the Russian guy [who owns the strip club] came, so he sees my buddy who was at the strip club, and he says, "Oh, who's that guy?" He looks like a hard worker," and stuff, bring him in, and let's see what he's got, and I did. I got lucky. A couple of my buddies, they did it too. "You should try it and see how it is," I used to be against it... I just felt like it was not normal, it's just not for me. If you look good, you look young, and you look like you can handle things. As soon as I gave it a shot, I was like okay, this is good.

At this point, the adrenaline and the money he was earning help him to overcome the stigma, further motivating Bashir to work in the club;

I wanted [money] for school at the same time, to make money and everything. Modeling, you don't make any money, man. I did work in a strip joint in Ottawa. I worked here downtown. It's easy money - way easy. The easiest. Well, you know, it's not easy, man, you have to have a good body. If you don't have a good body, you won't make any money. Yeah, you have to be like charming, and you have to know how to talk to girls. Magic Mike is actually quite similar to some of my experiences.

Here Bashir references Warner Brothers' *Magic Mike* (2012). The movie, subsequent films, and dance troop celebrate urban, muscular, and hypermasculine male strippers and the rowdy women who buy their services. As a referential trope it has replaced references to the bowtied Chippendale dancers of the 80s and 90s. As a "hot" commodity Bashir was

often approached by women for a “private dance.” The first woman wanted sex from him as part of her bachelorette night.

I got approached by four girls, and from that, I only picked two, because I was only attracted to two of them, but the other two, I was like, “No, I don’t do that, I’m sorry.” Because I was at my prime and not completely broke I got to choose. She looked hot, and she looked clean. I just don’t go after like random girls. I will actually look at them and talk to them first, right, and see how they are and everything at the same time.

Here Bashir emphasizes his position as a high-end sex worker because of his market-value and relative income. He also reverses the already reversed gendered power dynamics, instead of seeing himself as the end object of women’s desires; he “picked,” he “chose;” he objectified them as hot-or-not, clean-or-dirty; if they had personalities he liked.

I never used to sleep with any women out there, and like once, this lady was like, she was I think like 28, and she was getting married, and she was like, “I’ll pay you \$1,500 for a night,” I’m like, “Yep, sounds good.” I knew what she wanted, because that’s basically it, like, nobody would pay that much for just a private dance.

Painting the scene Bashir elicits a discourse of safe sex, but penetrative sex was unexceptional (or deemed too private) enough to give details.

Of course, using protection, and I did. I just did a private show for her, and I got paid that much. I had to go to her house when her husband was away, because her girlfriends were there too. Three of them, they were watching, so I gave her a private dance. She was naked, and I was wearing how strippers have this thong thing. I just gave her a private dance, and ended up just, she was like all over me, like giving me oral, and I was doing the same thing. After that, we just got it on from there, and we did it, and then I just left.

Here we also get a glimpse into a space where heterosexual women can exhibit sexual behaviours with an aggressiveness usually associated with the societal stereotypes of men (Peterson and Dressel 1982). The consumption of Bashir’s sexuality helped encourage group solidarity (Montemurro and McClure 2005) among the women while Bashir performs masculinity for all four women, aware of their desiring gaze, with his penetrative act (and climax) as the ultimate expression of his (and their) heterosexuality. The second woman he connected with was a businesswoman.

She was just looking for some fun, and she was on holidays. Yeah, no, like, it was almost like similar to the first person, the first lady, but this one was just like nobody was watching, it was just me and her in a hotel room. Then she

just gave me her number, and she was like, "Call me after your shift" Then that happened, and she paid me double the price.

Bashir's encounter shows sex work within a context of purchasing power and luxury; purchasing the services of a sex worker seen as a fun thing to do while a businesswoman was on holiday. In the UK at least, there is research that has shown that the motivation for some women in purchasing sexual services is that their professional ambitions interfere with their time to have a relationship, or that they simply do not want a relationship (Goddard 2015).

Unlike John, Robert, Tom, Ted, and Bashir, **Tyrell's** narrative is less straightforward. When he was introduced to pole dancing by a girl at the gym, he took to it and started learning more advanced skills. Over time he realized he could make money stripping / pole dancing;

I got so advanced and it was a passion of mine at the same time, so I said why not make money from that? I mean when you're stripping, you have to be sexual and you have to touch yourself and be good at it. I also gave lap dances. It's very niche, it's like a circus. Like I'm gaining experience, or even like the intense adrenaline. Maybe deep down it was kinky, but I don't think like on the frontier it was my objective. It was mostly financial. But it was also a sexual outlet in a way.

As a sexual outlet and money-maker stripping was beneficial to Tyrell and I assume it was the girl at the gym that also facilitated his being hired though he does not explicitly say so or what his first time was like. Tyrell suffers from PTSD ever since seeing his father try to kill his mother and being kidnapped by him at an early age.

When I was struggling with my stress I escorted 8 times. It's kind of intense in that way... When I was in that situation, because of the post-traumatic stress disorder I have low self-respect, low tolerance... It was at a time where I couldn't really function anymore. It's hard to work in that same way as I was a server at a banquet hall.

Tyrell's mental health became a barrier to working in mainstream jobs and is what motivated him to escort and he put an advertisement on SeekingArrangement.com. Though he does not explain why he never accessed ODSP, he does say stripping and pole dancing was therapeutic for him.

6.3. Ability to work

So far men have told stories of the multiple and overlapping reasons they are involved in the sex industry including a decline in secure employment and an increase in precarious

work. Some men demonstrated how sex work was an active choice related to sexual pleasure and libido. For others however, it is not a lack of jobs that was the issue, but the lack of structural accommodation and flexibility in mainstream jobs that posed a problem. Traditional means of employment typically consist of long hours and low wages and can be mentally and physically exhausting. This serves as a barrier not only for students who need the time and energy to attend classes and study¹⁰² but those who are already at a mental or physical disadvantage.

My body isn't capable of working a 40-hour week, nor will it allow me to become qualified at something that pays well. I'm disabled from working, and I'm part of a society that doesn't take care of people like me (Anonymous mother 2017)

6.3.1. Mental health, wellness, and mindset

Being mentally unable to or resistant to other kinds of work was a reoccurring theme in some of the entry narratives. Most research that does discuss issues of mental health, mindset, or wellness does not examine it longitudinally but focuses on current situations or insinuates simplistic aetiologies. Earlier studies have sought to examine the reasons for entry by citing some form of psychopathology or negative upbringing (cf. West and de Villiers 1993). Some of these studies examined personality and social characteristics of male sex workers using various standardized measures (cf. Earls and David 1989) while others theorized on this subject using a clinical focus (Caukins and Coombs 1976). In other studies, where the majority of participants were engaged in sex work of their own volition, many symptoms of mental illness are reported (Rossler et al. 2010). For example, 1 in 5 female sex workers report symptoms of clinical depression (Chudakov et al. 2002). Though there is difficulty in identifying the cause or predictor of mental health outcomes, the male sex worker population has also been described as “vulnerable” (Koken and Bimbi 2014); half the men sampled that work at a rural escort agency in the northeast US reported high rates of psychiatric distress (Smith and Seal 2007). It is unclear, however, whether these findings are a result of being in sex work or if such problems with psychological health existed prior to entry into this line of work (Uy et al. 2004). Mimiaga and colleagues (2009) found one-third of street-based male sex workers in the study had been diagnosed with depression and were more likely to report an inpatient psychiatric stay. Compare this

¹⁰² and also face reduced government financial support and increased fees; See McWilliams 2002.

to the one-third of Ontario high-school students who indicate moderate to serious levels of anxiety and depression (Boak et al. 2016). Without context or comparison stats, sex work is framed as the problem when other factors associated with being a member of a minority such as managing stereotypes and limited access to resources likely are key contributors. The constraints influencing some people's trajectories into sex work need to be set in the context of available options (Bruckert and Parent 2006).

The lower emotional, social, or cognitive output of certain sex work encounters combined with the flexibility of hours, and shorter hours with higher pay situates sex work as a preferential environment for those who struggle with or are not accommodated by traditional employment. In a study of Swedish sex workers with intellectual disabilities, focus groups of "key professionals" who work with these individuals were surveyed and identified that the motivation to sell sex was the same regardless of dis/ability; they would sell sex to earn money to purchase what they could not afford on their own but that they nonetheless desired or in order to upgrade their living conditions (Kuosmanen and Starke 2011). What did separate them from others was the strained economic situations of living on social assistance and how their disabilities limited their possibilities for finding employment. For those with mental health problems, the sex industry may be considered one of few options available to them (Ditmore 2013).

In Walby (2012) a life narrative of a male escort offers insight into mental and physical health and the inability to engage in traditional work or receive enough money. This particular escort could only work part time because of depression and anxiety attacks (related to being in and out of foster care) when he used to work part time. As he began to develop gastrointestinal problems and bouts of fatigue, he had to access disability supports but was not making enough to survive. Escorting paid well and allowed him to work for an hour or two instead of full-time (Walby 2012). This story shares some similarities with **Fred** who came to London from Northern Ontario to attend university. Fred had worked in the food service industry since he was 14 and his mother was the landlady of the shared condominium he lived in. Still in-the-closet at 24 he suffered from extreme depression after being let go from a management position when he did come out at work in the late 90s. Having an untreatable gastrointestinal disease that kept him isolated in early high school had also contributed to this depression. Staying in bed and avoiding the world, his

university grades suffered, and since he did not seek financial support from his family or elsewhere he went broke and needed food for his cat. Since “it was not the best time” in his life, he was hesitant to tell me much more other than he used gay.com to solicit men twice.

Other men frame their entrance into sex work as a pragmatic decision where they had found greater satisfaction than in previous jobs they had worked. **Mike** tells me the only reason he is selling is because he was a poor 18-year-old college kid who was offered money “because I’m white and they seen that I was new meat;” as he continues, his story reveals it was not as straight-forward as he made it seem to be. He repeats the common narrative, “to be honest with you, it's the money. It's the money, the main thing. But yeah, once you're in it, you're in it for life basically. The money makes you addicted. It's very good money.” Working at a bathhouse out West (he does not tell me why he moved or how he found this job) a friend of the owner recruited him. After this he started picking up clients there. Jumping forward to living in Ottawa he was at a gay bar and was recruited by a woman who ran an escort agency that mainly employed female escorts.

I started off doing dinners in Ottawa with doctors and lawyers and politicians. \$300 to go out for dinner; they pay for the dinner, they pay for my drinks, there was nothing sexual. If they wanted it, it was extra, but it was mostly strictly companionship for dinner because they didn’t have time to go out and find anybody.

When his boss was sent to jail for procuring (pimping), he had to switch to working as an independent online worker using Squirt, to find a new client base. Making the case for *not* working independently, Mike continues;

It was a lot more difficult because there's certain things I will do and certain things I will not do. Having a boss - they're finding the clients and they're providing me [a screening process] - to be honest, I don't know who they are, I don't know, I haven’t talked to them before. Like, as I do now, I talk to them. But I take chances of them coming here [to my apartment]. Most of them, if there was a boss, most of them would be a guaranteed regular customer coming on a regular basis. And you can protect yourself from doing what you don't want to do.

Mike’s story of having a female boss (aka a pimp / madam) counters models in which sex work is inherently violent and degrading to women and supports studies that found narratives of pimps offering protection and screening clients in New York and Atlantic City (Kennedy et al. 2007; 2014). This also contradicts Mike’s assertion that he does not

want to work for other people when I ask why he does not work at a traditional job. “It's just my ADHD, I get bored. I get bored and I can't do the work. I can't do repetitiveness.” Here he idealizes the self-control entrepreneurship allows; “If I was running my own restaurant, I could do it the way I wanted to and I wouldn't be doing the same thing over and over again, right?” Unveiling yet another reason he sells sex, Mike tells me he is on ODSP because of a stomach disease and a learning disability that has affected his reading and writing ability (he also says his father has the same issues). “I make \$1000 a month in disability. That pays the rent and that pays my bills. That doesn't buy me groceries, that doesn't allow me to live.”¹⁰³

Jack's entry into the industry is relatively unique in that it starts with being a “baby pimp.” His dad was a gigolo and pimp, so he “was the one making the money, but they listened to my dad since they were older than me.” Reinforcing the narrative of pimp protection, he continues “you got to keep your girls close. You got, you can't abuse them and all that, because then you end up with them just running to another pimp.” When he was 16 and then again at 18 he worked dating chatlines;

I just saw it on the TV and thought, oh, let's try this; Maybe I'll find a girl. Turns out [when I did] she was a prostitute herself, I found out the hard way - she gave me a key to her house, walked in on her having sex with a guy and that's when I stated doing it myself. I used like Quest Chat, Live Links, Cruiser. I just never realized doing I could recruit women [as clients] and all that, because women are usually the ones on the chat line working. So I found it was hard to find a woman who is willing to pay [so I sell to men].

Perhaps because of his previous exposure to sex work, his explanation of his transition from using the chat lines for dating to selling sex is told as if it was commonsensical. When I asked why sex work instead of something else, Jack elicits a discourse of a disposition of independence and entrepreneurship. “I don't like taking orders from a random person I don't really know. I have a problem holding down jobs a lot because I think I should be the boss. Being my own boss is important.” He tells me that he had worked in landscaping in Windsor and the Budweiser Garden event centre and arena here in London, but now only gets \$200 a month from welfare to live. Digging deeper, perhaps his entrepreneurial discourse is told in an effort to save face as Jack admits that he never finished high school,

¹⁰³ The relationship between the inadequacy of the social support system and sex work will be further explored later in the chapter.

due to cognitive and mental health diagnoses. “I’m disabled. I have ADD, ODD, and Dyslexia.” Even further complicating his entry narrative, Jack also dealt drugs and feels he sold sex “because I needed my drugs... I used to do Oxies, Ritalin, any kind of pill you could get a hold of I did it.”

Steven also has a complicated story but replicates a discourse of independence;

I have worked in many good jobs... For [sex work] I just think it’s more of, I hate to say it but it’s like, it’s something you can enjoy doing. There’s nobody that talks bad to me, there’s nobody insults me, there’s nobody that puts me down, there’s no name calling, there’s no bullying, there is no behind the back talk. There is nothing that goes on sort of like the things that go on in group-like work environment. I guess it’s gossip and all that stuff that goes on, I never have to put up with any of that.

Steven compares traditional work environments where he had to navigate workplace politics to the freedom independent “street hoeing” allows him. Like Doug and Cody, it was a female sex worker friend that introduced him to sex work in the first place. After working one session alongside her as her male client requested, Steven began selling sex on his own. Befriending other female escorts in the city and asking them their price list as well as seeing a few magazine advertisements, Steven acts the entrepreneur, determining how much he would charge for his services.

Most of the girls that I know will do it for \$40, you know, suck somebody’s dick for \$40, sex for \$100. And then I read the articles in the magazines girls from Fanshawe, first year college students, \$75, for one hour. Because we have a market full of women, I had good reason to charge more as a male.

At this point he explains that he had “nothing else to do” Thursdays through Saturday nights so he started cruising what he calls “the strip.” This was “anywhere from the Salvation Army to the Casino, Lyle and Dundas to the Bathhouse.”¹⁰⁴ Since a male sex work stroll in London was thought not to exist by researchers, service organizations, and the majority of the men I talked to, it is unclear if Steven found this area out by chance or some other means. As the conversation continues, Steven starts telling me about his drug use and I ask him if that served any motivation for him to sell sex;

Steven: I like marijuana to calm down and I’m on methadone – methadose, speed is what it’s called... cocaine once in a while. No smoking, um, no acid, ecstasy once in a while, um, drinking once in a while.

¹⁰⁴ Central Spa

Nathan: Does a lot of the money that you earn from your 'hoeing' go to the drugs then?

Steven: Not really because they're not that expensive. It's very cheap... Yeah, it's very cheap. For something like a piece of crack about the size of your finger nail, that would be like a \$100 and you can chop up a couple of lines of speed that would cost you maybe \$20. And a \$100 worth of crack would probably last you maybe an hour where the speed might last you eight hours. And it's lot more concentrated. You can concentrate a lot more in speed whereas "coke" sometimes throws you off your game so to speak, especially if you are on the street, you don't want to be thrown off your game at all when you are going around. Because that's when bad things can happen. You like to be a step ahead of the game or at least side by side with people that you can see what's going on all around you all the time. I mean I get anything I want all the time when I need it. *It's not about that, it's more about the money and the service, and the pleasure really.*

Though it is worth noting his evocation of the motivation of sexual pleasure, here Steven is telling me an incomplete story; why does he feel the need “to calm down” by self-medicating with marijuana? Why does he use other drugs and why did he start in the first place? His cost-benefit analysis is framed in levels of functional mental control and street safety, suggesting he engages in a rationalized thought process regarding his drug use. This supports research like Boys, Marsden, and Strang (2001) that for many the decision to use a drug is based on a rational appraisal process (cf. Boys et al. 2000; Wibberley and Price 2000). Emphasizing that the relative low cost of drugs did not motivate his need to sell sex, Steven counters the assertions of the other sex workers and researchers (Erickson et al. 2000) who say the need for and cost of their addictions played a large role in their entry into the industry.

6.3.2. Addiction

According to Maté (2008), addiction is any repeated behaviour, substance-related or not, in which a person feels compelled to persist, regardless of its negative impact on his life and the lives of others. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (2013) and *Ontario Human Right's Code* (2014) classify alcoholism and drug addiction as disabling conditions that substantially restrict working ability. Addiction can be debilitating for some, and for those with a co-occurring disorder it can cause further physical and emotional/mental problems that make it difficult or impossible to stay on the job. This inability to acquire and sustain formal employment is a double-edged sword since

the high costs (e.g., financial, social, legal) associated with obtaining illicit drugs require individuals to find other means of generating income (Cross et al. 2001; McCoy, Comerford, and Metsch 2007; Ditmore 2013).¹⁰⁵ For example, common income generation strategies include street-based sex work, drug dealing, panhandling, and recycling / salvaging / vending (Bose and Hwang 2002).

According to the Canadian Addiction Survey (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse 2004), one-in-six Canadians has used an illicit drug other than cannabis in their lifetime; When we account for gender this number changes to one-in-five men.¹⁰⁶ The co-occurrence alcohol and drug consumption *and* sexual intercourse is widely documented (cf. Minichiello et al. 2003; Westermeyer et al. 1989). As for sex work, there does appear to be a correlation between selling sex and drug use (Minichiello et al. 2003; De Graaf et al. 1995; Pleak and Meyer-Bahlburg 1990). With over one-fourth of the men interviewed identifying drug use as part of their motivation for selling sex, further exploration of the etiology of their addictions could be important. This compares to interviews with street involved female sex workers interviewed by the City of London (2015) who identified that addiction was the most common theme discussed by all and substance use played a significant role in their initial and ongoing involvement in sex work. Other researchers have sought to identify motives for illicit drug use. Boys, Marsden, and Strang (2001) compiled diverse narratives that move beyond explanations of passive reactions to context; reported reasons vary from broad statements (e.g., to feel better) to more specific functions for use (e.g., to increase self-confidence). Some of those I interviewed did provide limited insight into their motivations to use drugs; often their addiction was secondary to their narrative of sex work entry. For others, sex work was subsidiary to their addiction stories as they tried to justify their actions. Roxburgh, Degenhardt, and Copeland (2006) emphasised the use of drugs as a coping strategy for working in the sex industry; in this study, female street-based sex workers used drugs to get through the work and needed to work to get the drugs. Also, being under the influence may also lead to higher-risk behaviours such as being less able to negotiate condom use or assess clients.

¹⁰⁵ The legislative environment affects those who use drugs, limiting access to education, employment, custody of children and housing, encouraging some to sell sex (Ditmore 2013).

¹⁰⁶ Drug use is not the same as having an addiction.

Tim's traumatic childhood memories, and a family of “gang members, drug dealers, and murderers in-and-out of prison” who were addicts who encouraged him to drink at nine-years-old likely contributed to his ongoing drug use.¹⁰⁷ He sees that selling sex was a straight forward way for him to “pay for his habit” and to avoid “getting sick;”

That’s pretty much what kept me in, you know what I mean? Because if I didn’t have sex with someone to make the money then I’d be feeling like shit. You know, I’d just kind of wait it out. Like I’d feel like more shit if I don’t have the external source of endorphins than I’m used to, you know?

With an already established addiction, a friend he worked with offered him pills and \$100 for sex;

And I was like, okay... Because I was into drugs. And then I went over there. After a while she started getting me to have sex with her friends for money... she was pretty much pimping me out... and (chuckle) she wasn't making any money, but I was.

Tim reflects on this, feeling at first that this was revenge against them for ignoring him when he was fat (he went to secondary school with these girls), but now, because the drugs had caused him to lose weight, *they* were paying him. Then after a while he felt like he was being used.

In some ways I didn't feel like I had much choice in the matter. Because of the nature of the habit... they knew I had bills to pay. Schedules would conflict, and I could make \$100 in a half an hour to an hour, whereas I would have to work an 8-hour shift. If I lost a job, you know what I mean, I’d end up choosing [sex work] over work and then I’d end up having no employment. Ever since I moved to London I haven’t found reasonable¹⁰⁸ employment at all... That’s why I started [selling sex] here too.

Tim describes his rationale for staying in the industry by conducting a cost-benefit analysis, identifying push and pull factors, ultimately framing sex work as an income generation strategy in light of his difficulty finding jobs he likes and difficulties working as an addict.

After dealing with depression and ennui during high school, and years of stealing money from his parents to buy drugs, **Jimmy** moved to London to attend college at 20-years-old;

¹⁰⁷ Though I am not qualified to make a diagnosis, Tim does see a correlation.

¹⁰⁸ Here Tim does not disclose specifically what he would consider reasonable employment.

When I moved to London, I started hanging out with a different crowd. I had a \$40 habit with injecting hydromorphs. And if you don't get those, you get sick, like, you go crazy withdrawal and you'll do anything. I prostituted myself. I sold my body.¹⁰⁹ I wasn't doing it for my own pleasure. I'm young, I'm in college. Not that bad looking, I could find an average girl for, you know... a sex relationship, a girlfriend relationship. I didn't have a thing for older women. I definitely don't have a thing for older men.¹¹⁰

Here Jimmy's narrative of addiction predominates, saying that the drugs made him lose the desire to work a formal job; his labour market decision replicates the cost-benefit discourse, with sex work allowing him to exert minimal effort and work the fewest hours for the highest financial pay-off. Despite hating his clients, he places sex work as less stigmatic than other options;

I had a friend... who did the same thing... that told me about it and it was simple. I had a [client] Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. Yeah, so that covered it. And I guess I was kind of, in a weird way, at the right place at the right time that I didn't have to break into stores or rob people, but I still risk going to jail. Like how do I know who he was introducing me to? Getting beat up, robbed...

Rick connects his selling sex directly to his drug use however it was doctors that were his suppliers repeatedly prescribing him OxyContin for reoccurring kidney stones when he was younger. Legally prescribed opioid painkillers were once seen as a way to help maintain a body that is normal, stable, and in control (King 2014) so much so that prescriptions for drugs containing oxycodone rose 900% between 1991 and 2009 (Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care 2012). In 2015, those who are using the drugs for non-medical purposes comprised of eighty-two thousand Canadians (Statistics Canada 2017). Sproule and colleagues (2009) found that 37% of opioid-dependent patients admitted to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto reported receiving opioids solely from physician prescriptions, compared to 26% of patients who received opioids from both a prescription and "the street," and 21% from the street. Now getting

¹⁰⁹ The use of this language shows that Jimmy frames selling sex as degrading as well as emphasizing a duality of mind-body.

¹¹⁰ Unprompted, he also counters a gendered stereotype that men who have been sexually abused struggle with: that physical sexual arousal and male ejaculation mean a pleasurable experience, as well as equates to sexual identity. Our bodies respond to stimulation, particularly touch or pressure and this is something that can cause a physiological reaction of erection and/or ejaculation. This is something I will address below.

his drugs from the street, Rick needs to make money besides what he earns from his part-time job. He used to sell sex on the streets of Ottawa but now recruits clients at local bars;

I do this because I have a drug habit. And my wages will not cover my living expenses and that, so I do have to find things for that... I mean like, I need money for the shit I'm involved in and honestly even when I wasn't doing drugs I would still need money because even when I wasn't used, my money still burned a hole in my pocket, it's just the way I've always been... I get to say yes or no. I don't like work for a pimp or anything like that so... all I have to do is tell [the older guys at the bar] I'm straight and... you see that glint in their eye go off, like oh you like a challenge, okay. [Laughs] I think it's the conquest of it.

Here Rick takes advantage of the allure of straight men who will go gay-for-pay. Gay-for-pay is the label used for men who do not identify with a gay identity and prefer intimate relationships with women but for a price will engage in some form of homosexual erotic act. Activating the culturally available sexual script with gay-identifying men provides access to eroticized experiences for both involved (Simon and Gagnon 1986). "Scripts" are metaphors for the narrative and behavioural requirements for the production of everyday social life. Sexual scripting, with cues and appropriate dialogue, circulates as generic guidelines for organizing social behaviour (Simon and Gagnon 1986; Escoffier 2003). Thus, Rick fashions himself from the culture myths and social roles that define male sexuality or violate masculine roles, or that affirm homosexual desire. Dealing with various levels of stigma, (for selling sex, for being a man selling sex, being a straight man having gay sex) Rick gives himself permission to engage in this kind of sex work by emphasizing his economic need and need to get to drugs to avoid "getting sick" but as he details later in the interview, his reasons are further entangled as he explores his sexuality.

Howie's story of his motivations for selling sex continues from earlier and he now discloses that he has five drug charges on his record, has been in and out of rehab, but he is still able to work full-time in a copper factory. Like Rick, he was prescribed opiates when he was younger.

I got injured when I was younger, I [was prescribed] percs (Percocet), and from there it was just, you know what I mean, the percs weren't working, so I went on oxys (OxyContin), and then I went on to hydros (Hydrocodone), and then I went from one to another. I got into needles (Heroin) for a bit and I was put into the hospital, and now I'm just back to sniffing pills, so... And that's the thing too, it doesn't help that when I left the hospital they gave me a prescription for the opiates. Right? So, you know, now I got a prescription for

it and it's just, you know, it keeps me from going on the street and buying them because now I get a prescription given to me every week, right?

This prescription allowed him to get the medication under the Public Health Plan.¹¹¹

So I don't have to go out and buy them anymore, but it's like a, you know what I mean, I'm going to rehab in a month and I have wean myself off them, so I'd be 14 days clean before I go. So now it's just like you give a drug addict more fucking drugs it's like where's your head at? You know what I mean? But at the same time I need them, so I was like literally screaming and crying in pain, so... I use daily... It's not even to get high, it's just not to get sick, you know what I mean? Because of the withdrawals from the opiates, right? You get the cold sweats. I can't fucking sleep. I toss and turn all night. I'm grumpy as fuck. I snap on people. You know what I mean? It's like the easiest thing could just set me off.

With the motivation to not get sick maintaining his drug use, I wonder why he is willing to go through the pain of withdrawal and in retrospect wonder if he was ever successful. When asked if having a prescription for the drugs and his eventual rehab would encourage him to stop selling sex, the extra money became his motivator.

I'm not too sure about stopping seeing the girls you know what I mean? The money's good, and I have a fulltime factory job too, so. It doesn't all go to drugs, actually. The money covers living expenses pretty much, just to live comfortably, you know what I mean? I actually put my girlfriend through a year at [the University].

For those who suffered from issues of abuse or mental health (or both) correlated to addiction as youth, the incentive to sell sex does involve the procurement of drugs, but for those like **Nick** with other complicated issues such as grief for the loss of his mother, depression, having a criminal record, only finishing grade ten, and living on the streets when he was younger because extended family was abusive, the sex trade is considered to be one of the few options open to earn decent money. It is likely that he was introduced to drugs and the sex trade¹¹² while he was on the streets, but he was unwilling to elaborate as my previous attempts to establish rapport had failed. He did admit however that he uses drugs or go to the gym when he is stressed out or trying to escape his grief.

Nathan: Is there a specific reason that you got into the trade? [Pause]

Nick: [Long Pause] It's just easy money.

¹¹¹ Since this interview OxyContin has been removed from the Canadian pharmaceutical market making his prescription null and void.

¹¹² He says he advertises using backpage and sells more to women than men.

Nathan: [Pause] Easy money, okay. [Pause] Do you have any other jobs?
Nick: No. [Pause]
Nathan: No, okay. So what do you use the money for?
Nick: To live a good life, I guess you could say, sometimes. Yeah.¹¹³
Nathan: [Long Pause] Do you do any drugs?
Nick: Yeah. [Long Pause]
Nathan: Yeah. [Pause] Okay. [Pause] Do you mind telling me, what do you use?
Nick: Crystal meth and cocaine. [Long Pause]

When I ask him why he is selling sex instead of working at somewhere like the service industry (i.e., Tim Horton's), Nick has more to say and repeats the common entrepreneurial discourse:

I make a lot more money this way. It's a lot easier. I am on my own schedule; I don't have any schedules. I have no bosses; I'm my own boss. I didn't really enjoy too many of them. I didn't enjoy being bossed around and angry and being bitched at all the time, so it was like forget it. Plus, they're underpaying me and I'm like forget it.

Assuming that he had engaged in a cost-benefit analysis, I ask him how much he makes on an average week. Instead of estimating his income he tells me he tries to do it minimally as he does not like what he does; "it's disrespecting myself; it's just disrespectful to myself. I sort of feel like people are exploiting me, but I just feel like I don't respect myself... I do it just enough to survive." Perhaps borrowing from mainstream discourses that stigmatize selling sex, he assumes that I understand how sex work contributes to feelings of disrespect. I take this as a prompt that the benefit of higher pay and less hours does not outweigh the shame he feels, I wonder what he is doing to try to exit the industry and why he has not left earlier. He tells me he does not access any financial or social supports but just enrolled in the *Academic & Career Entrance Certificate Program* at Fanshawe College which functions as a high school equivalency. He does not tell me his reasoning for going so long without assistance,¹¹⁴ except that he did go to prison for breaking and entering and selling drugs when he was 21; this likely effected his ability to access supports or mistrust of "the system."

¹¹³ I should have asked him to describe "the good life" instead of asking about using the money for drugs. The pauses were attempts to give him time to elaborate on his short responses and each time he did not I took it as a cue that he wanted me to move on.

¹¹⁴ Is he staying at a crappy job simply because the pay is good? Would social supports have helped him to at least not have to sell as often? Were there barriers I was not aware of?

Jeff frames his brief story through a history of abuse that leads to a cycle of self-medication with drugs, blaming this past and “the system” for his need to sell sex. Like some women in the City of London’s (2015) interviews, using drugs was a way to cope with an initial trauma in their lives. “I started doing drugs when the court deemed my abuser unfit to stand trial.” Like Jimmy, the drugs had affected him to a point that he could not hold job a year later. “I started escorting and tried to kill myself.” He does not tell me how he was introduced to the trade or his impetus for “going clean” for two-years but he relapsed after being raped by someone from Grindr. “I didn’t even tell anyone. What’s the point? So, I relapsed but a new drug this time. And selling myself to pay for it. Every day I wake up is torture.” This narrative emphasizes his passivity in a hostile world and his tragic fate as a victim.

In a similar yet more reflexive story, **Blake** described his tragic life narrative; after a childhood of sexual abuse, issues with mental health, and involvement with Child Protective Services, he started selling sex to self-medicate with “booze and cocaine.”

I am bored. I don’t really have hobbies and I feel generally disconnected from people – I’d be content to live in a cave somewhere. I also get so frustrated, I have all these books but can’t focus for too long on anything and it gets frustrating and I feel so anxious about it. When I’m high I usually just sit alone listening to music... I’ve been suicidal... in part it’s loneliness, in part mental anguish – I’ve been through a lot but I don’t know who I really am.

Interestingly, as he went on at length, he realized even though he denies being “addicted” he exhibits addictive behaviours. At several times during our conversation, which he led, he cycled into similar themes; he acknowledged making excuses for his addiction; he discussed stigmas attached to addiction and different reactions when he tells people about doing drugs or drinking;¹¹⁵ lastly, he discussed being reprimanded at work for not showing up because he was too hung over to go in. He is on Ontario Works and works part-time at McDonalds, but sells sex to feed his addiction, placing advertisements on Manhunt.¹¹⁶ Blake mentioned that he feels shame and disgust for participating in sex work but he did not feel necessarily exploited, vulnerable, or taken advantage of by clients; partially because he is not on the streets; “Many clients are vulnerable themselves due to questioning their sexuality or their desperate need for discretion.” This empathy with clients is contrary

¹¹⁵ Usually responses revolve around drugs being “bad” or their inability to understand why he does it.

¹¹⁶ I am not sure how he found out about the site or the possibility of earning money this way.

to how Tim, Jimmy, Nick, and Jeff discuss their clients. When asked why he felt differently Blake described his ability to come and go, his gender, and his desirability (meaning he has more choice and opportunity) as traits that make him feel more in control.

Austin is another sex worker whose youth was one negative event after the other; After social isolation, depression, suicidal attempts, dropping out of school, becoming an addict as a teenager, and losing his mother Austin ended up moving to London;

I was homeless. I was completely homeless. Yeah. I was living in a shelter, I was getting fed, but at the time, wasn't eating because I was on drugs. So it wasn't -- food wasn't my commodity, it was to get money for drugs. It was an easy way to make money; had a couple gay friends at the [Salvation Army]. They eventually got me into it. I can afford it, it was an easy way to make money. They showed me the hot streets. That was 2009. I was here and brand new to the city. I had no idea where the hot spots were. So they just told me, hey, if you want to make a quick buck, take a shot at it.

Austin reflects on his experiences and considers his time in sex work as part of a greater downward spiral. Because he was an addict he felt like he was exploited by those clients he met. Austin embraces a victim narrative, "I feel like I had no choice really. It was to get the drugs... Yeah. I feel like I was dumb, like, you know what I mean? I had to do what I had to do. I started doing crime, like, actual crime and hurting people." At the time of the interview, it was also rare for those suffering from addiction to see their involvement in sex work as a positive, the majority described themselves as highly distressed and depressed. For many being an addict and selling sex was understood to imply that they were now not valued by general society (cf. Ezzy 2017). Austin describes this social judgement;

As I've grown up, sometimes I open up to people, but I choose who I open up to. Just because I've learned people are judgmental. They will always be judgmental, you know? It's just, I've had people say a lot of mean things. You know, they hate for absolutely no reason and they just don't understand. You know, they haven't been in my shoes, they don't know what I've been through.

Feeling the stigma of his activities, he emphasizes having "no choice" especially when Ontario Works only paid him a couple hundred dollars a month. The shame he felt perhaps had less to do with the sex work and more from the addiction (though they likely mutually reinforced each other). Austin blames his addiction to explain what are considered morally questionable activities (committing crimes and selling sex). He emphasizes his passivity

in light of that which he cannot control or resist. He justifies his actions by appealing to this narrative (Ezzy 2017).

David was kicked out when he came out as gay to his family who were Jehovah's Witnesses. Making his way to Toronto, he was introduced to drugs and the sex trade through friends in the shelters. "I've been hooked on club drugs... like Ecstasy, Acid, MDMA. Um. And like that's also led to most of my like sex [work] experiences." In Toronto a friend helped him get set up with Ontario Works and set up profiles on Canadianmale and sometimes Kijiji or Craigslist. Selling sex was also a way for David to express his sexuality, finding his willingness to party and play¹¹⁷ attracted clients that he found attractive, "like body builders." In this way sex work fit the discourse of "easy money" but also libido. Like Austin, his story turns to crime and he blames the drugs for the crimes he committed¹¹⁸ but aware of the stigma he tells me twice that he does not steal anymore. In a further attempt to help justify his actions he blames being homeless and the shelters for not providing "a lot food to eat and when they did it was bland and inedible" as well as the special diet requirements of his boyfriend Ted. These (and other) justifications could be framed as evidence of Sykes and Matza (1957) techniques of neutralization, that is, being aware of social norms and consequential stigma for breaking said norms; an individual will attempt to balance out or alleviate his shame and guilt by reframing his acts as acceptable. By asserting being a victim of circumstance, David denies responsibility for his crimes; by emphasizing the needs of his boyfriend, he appeals to higher loyalties; by claiming that the shelters did not provide adequate food he condemns the "failings of the system" and his own victimization.

Eventually he decided that he wanted to leave the industry because he felt he was cheating on Ted. He also compares his time between the Toronto and London, "it's minor here than Toronto was; someone would answer in like 30 minutes but here it's like a day or two waiting period." With it harder to find clients, David had further motivation to leave the industry, but circumstances out of his control drew him back (Vanwesenbeeck 2012). "I was working for a little bit (as a dishwasher)... Then I was let go though because the boss hired his son... I was like now what am I supposed to do? I was doing this, so I could

¹¹⁷ Use drugs and have sex simultaneously

¹¹⁸ "I went to jail because of doing theft and breaking and enter and stuff like that."

get out of sex work." Still struggling with his mental health after being rejected by his family and feeling depressed about job prospects, his self-medication continues. This time he abstains from club drugs, considering this as his managing to "keep clean."

The money from sex work is used for drugs to get to like just to forget about what happened and like move on through like my day. (In regard to drugs) It's really hard to get off of. [Laughs]. I fight tooth and nail now since I've been like managing to keep myself clean. Now I just like basically just do a lot of cocaine and meth. Crack use as well.

Dylan's own "chaos narrative" (Frank 1995; Kilty 2000) shows complex motivations for entering the trade after childhood sexual abuse, being neglected, and kicked out by his mother, and drug use.

I ended up on the streets of Ottawa, Cornwall, Kingston, and Belleville when I was 16. I was there until about 22. I was living right on the street. It definitely caused me a lot of mental issues, like anxiety, and paranoia with people. I did use some shelters for like meals and stuff, but other than that I just lived on the street. And usually when you're on the street at that age it really is about money and where can I get this? And how can I find this drug? And what can I do? And, you know, I'm so bored and it's just you succumb to things, like the trade, and you know... drugs. It's a hard life. When I ended up on the streets, about the second or third day I was there people were like, "oh, try this, and you're the new kid... do this and do that."

Living with a female sex worker on the streets, she set up a profile online for him. Dylan repeats the "easy" money narrative weighing the high pay and reduced hours against the stigma of selling sex, concluding that since he did not care about himself that he could "just put [him]self on the table and make money."

It involved probably about a year and a half of partying and drinking and not knowing where I was in the morning. I was addicted to cocaine for about three and a half years. It was very hard for me to get off of that, and I did... I basically went from A to Zed. I tried heroin, I tried crack, ecstasy, acid. I tried, you know, pretty much everything. I tried OxyContin, speed, and mushrooms. Mushrooms I actually went into a coma for three and a half weeks. So I never did that again. Now I stick to my marijuana, so. I do it before bed and it helps with my anxiety and it helps me sleep.

Dylan here blames the circumstances of street life for his drug use and sex work but attempts to redeem himself through his rehabilitation and self-medication through marijuana.

I think it also too was like just a longing for something. I have figured out in the last like couple of months that I look like, on the inside, I've been really

longing for my mother. And I think just like, oh, I could have crack and it won't leave me behind. You know, it's kind of like I replaced my mother with the drugs, because it gave me that same feeling. You know? When I had it around it felt really good and I felt really happy.

I do wonder how "happy" the drugs made him feel after he tells me that he has attempted to die by suicide twelve times in the last two years. This therapeutic narrative for his addiction links self-ownership for his actions with external blame on his mother and likely was developed during counselling he has received thanks to a support worker at the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). It is also possible that this counselling helped him develop a narrative where he was a naïve victim despite acknowledging the choices he made;

[The clients] were like doing what they wanted to me, and I really wasn't okay with it, but I was like, you know... so I don't know so much of like taking advantage of me, because I was there and I was making the decision to stay there, but at the same time I knew in my mind like these people are taking advantage of me, because they know I'm young, they know that I'm vulnerable, they know that I'm gullible, and they're still willing to give me a load of cash so that they can satisfy themselves.

His story gets further complicated as he explains his motivation move to London and to stay in the industry;

I ended up sleeping with someone at a friend's house and when I had woke up the next morning I found out that that person was only 14 and not 16 like they told me. So their grandmother ended up charging me for that, and I ended up going to jail for about eight months and then got out and now I'm trying to deal with that because with that charge on me it's hard to find employment, it's hard to get into programs. It's pretty much hard to be like anywhere.

Again, Dylan still does not take responsibility for any of his actions and tries to neutralize the stigma of being a sex offender by blaming the teenager for lying and the grandmother's response. Now with the stigma of having a criminal record and the active marginalization he receives from social institutions, he is left relying on sex work while his CMHA worker helps him get his high school equivalency and work skills training.

6.3.3. Systemic issues

A story of powerlessness in the face of overwhelming force seeks situational causes for what happens to the less-powerful, whereas those with power are seen as possessing dispositional attributes. When success is seen as achieved through hard work and those

who do not succeed are individually morally responsible for their failures (Barnes 2002) it ignores the many systematic ways people are marginalized. Entry narratives that “blame the system” therefore are additional techniques of neutralization that counter the shame from capitalist ideologies of achievement. Under the welfare programs of Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), ten percent of Ontario’s close to nine million people (Statistics Canada 2016b) of working age (18-65) qualify for social assistance benefits, with OW providing CDN\$8652 per year for an individual, and ODSP providing CDN\$13,812 per year for an individual with a disability (Income Security Advocacy Centre 2017). However, the low-income measure threshold for households of one person before tax is CDN\$25,516 (Statistics Canada 2016c). These poverty gaps are substantial and mean that regardless if someone like Matt was on OW or ODSP,¹¹⁹ he still would need to find other ways to make money or survive, especially ways that did not equate to income support roll-back or increased taxes.

Though panhandling has been criminalized in Ontario’s Safe Streets Act of 1999,¹²⁰ it is another informal economic activity¹²¹ besides sex work many engage in because they feel like they could not handle conventional jobs because of mental illness, physical disability, or lack of skills (Bose and Hwang 2002). Matt continues,

I have a lot of mental barriers, it makes it difficult for me to do certain types of work. So, I've tried doing a lot of different types of work, but not a lot of people are understanding of my different abilities, so it can really become stressful at times and I don't always perform the best. Where it's like with fucking and selling drugs, very simple tasks. They're things that people can innately do. People fuck, people do drugs, so it was a very straightforward thing to get into. Whereas, like, working at Subway, so challenging. And if nobody's like you there, like, if you're like your own person and nobody shares that then it's so hard to fit in. Oh yeah, they make you feel like children. You can be like 25 and they treat you like you're like 10. It's like I thought making a sandwich would be a lot less mentally stressful than having to put my dick into something that could potentially disease me, you know? But no, no, it was - it was way harder on my head. I - physically it was easier, it wasn't a lot of back motion, it was more just standing there all day working with the hands, but mentally,

¹¹⁹ Though 49% (n=22) of interviewees are not receiving welfare supports, 11% (n=5) are on OW and another 11% (n=5) disclosed their use of ODSP. This is double the rate of those eligible in the Ontario population.

¹²⁰ Matt tells me that in all the smaller towns it was very hard to panhandle, busk, or “chop on the street” (sell drugs) because the police intervene quite quickly. In London, the police leave you alone and “people will walk by and sometimes every other person, sometimes every three or four people will give you money.”

¹²¹ Also see makeshift economies (Hopper, Susser, and Conover 1985); shadow work (Snow and Anderson 1993).

like, when someone's sitting there watching you make their food, it freaks you out, you know?

Matt again deprivileges selling sex and selling drugs “as simple tasks.” This is not only contrary to the negatives of selling sex and drugs he discusses with me later on but ignores the skills he would have had to develop in order to sell either: such as social skills, initiative, discipline, and street smarts. This idea that there are few job-related constraints to selling sex compared to other occupations is a common narrative, especially for those men who felt they lacked formal certified skills,¹²² have criminal records,¹²³ some form of disability, or addictions that render them unable to function. For Matt, the stress of dealing with condescending bosses or demanding customers had worn him down. As long as an activity or characteristic of the sex worker does not interfere with his sexual functioning, Morse, Simon, and Burchfiel (1999) state that it will not interfere with a man's work or the ability to make money. Even with a lack of sexual function (assuming they are referring to having an erection), sex work can involve more than receiving oral sex or active penetrative sex. Matt continues his own analysis of the costs and benefits of his work options;

I've been panhandling lately and I've been making like \$17 an hour out there. I look in comparison to the time I'm spending and the amount of money I'm making, I realize that selling drugs was a lot less labor and a lot more cash and selling my body was a little more labor, like it was a lot more physically straining, but that that was where the money was the best. So it's like it went from like here to here, like it's - I've noticed it's slowly going down and it's freaking me out and I want to go back up but I don't want to have to go that same way. I want to find a different way to have that lifestyle without having to give up my integrity.

Seemingly without other options or opportunities, Matt frames his work in the informal sector with a victim narrative, implying he has no other choice but “to give up his integrity.” Matt is positioning himself outside of a criminalized underclass culture of poverty “without” values (Overbeck, Tiedens, and Brion 2006). In the last part of Matt's narrative, he identifies himself as a survivalist and makes judgment on the “greedy” sex workers who just sell sex so they can afford luxuries;

¹²² 50% disclosed they had some college and university experience or had a college or university diploma (for 15% there was no data).

¹²³ 27% disclosed they had some sort of criminal record (for 34% there was no data).

I'm poor and I'm a survivalist and I have been my whole life. Like, I've done it to get each day past, you know, to make sure I can eat and get the fuck up and not go crazy [withdrawals] and other people do it for [the latest] fucking phone, you know? But like I don't go to the point of fucking someone just for a telephone. Like I guess, like, that's how I paid for this one but that's because I had no phone. I try really hard. It took me forever, almost all this stuff was either paid for with drugs or sex, yeah, that fan was a whole hour right there. [That client] went to give me the money, I was like, "Yo, can I have that fan?" She was like, "Seriously?" I was like, "Well, if you give me the money, can I buy the fan?" She's like, "Take the fan." Yeah. Yeah, and I got cookies too. Half a box of Chips Ahoy. Yeah, dude, that was a good day. Yeah, man, it was the middle of summer, we were boiling.

For Matt, struggling to meet his basic needs by selling sex, the idea of selling sex to splurge on unneeded luxuries was frustrating. His story of getting a fan and half a box of cookies was told not just to show his resourcefulness, but also to show how desperate he really was.

Like most of the men, **Jill's** entry narrative was complicated but shared many of the same issues. The limitations imposed by addiction and a criminal record kept Jill in sex work. She entered sex work at sixteen not only as a way to leave her abusive uncle and an unsupportive family, but to feel appreciated, increasing feelings of self-worth. As she got older, she started dating a drug dealer who got her into doing crack and dealing drugs herself. Here her tumultuous relationship with her ex predominates her story but invariably fuels her involvement in sex work.

I've had normal jobs... I have a criminal record due to me being falsely charged with solicitations. They thought my ex-husband was my pimp before I married him. When I was charged, we were coming back from a date... so that's actually funny. I had \$6 in my pocket and we had gone to a sex shop. But for the cop to lie about everything and get away with it was bullshit. So I went and did it for a few months out of spite. I won't do the street. Screw that. You can get arrested when doing it like that. But on the chat line you can't. I used to work for an escorting agency as well, Me and my friend actually had ads in the London Free Press here, and we operated out of our home. I started off with just doing full body massages, some were happy endings... I'm bi though I'm more on the straight side so [I sell] more to males than females nowadays. So, I had a breech, and then I was falsely charged with that. I'm not bondable, so it's hard to get [a job].

Being charged with solicitation was unheard of for men but Jill repeats the difficulties men experience trying to find work with a criminal record. She also frames herself as a victim of the police, using a technique of neutralization (Sykes and Matza 1957) that condemns

the condemners in an effort to shift blame. Next in her narrative, she supplements her ODSP and blames her ex for being controlling and her need to move out;

Though I was working the [sex] chat lines, I did it when no one was in the house... Screw that I'm not stupid... I was also saving my money from my disability check. Because I told him I was charged with selling sex in the past [my ex and his brother were suspicious]. Then he'd read over the conversation, and then forbid me to speak with other guys with him being a biker and connected and stuff.

So, we broke up and I ended up homeless. We got back together, and we were both accusing each other of cheating, because we were both being told by numerous different people that it was happening when it wasn't, and now it's like we're homeless for sure and we're trying to get back into housing. Even being homeless, it takes two years.

Here, due to a lack of affordable housing provided by the government and systemic barriers, Jill is left in limbo, a self-professed victim of the system. To be eligible for social housing (rent-geared-to-income) in Ontario, Jill like many others cannot apply for 2 years if you have been convicted of an offence related to the social housing program (e.g., rent in arrears). Additionally, in London as of December 2015, the wait list for housing is two and a half years (Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association 2017). Waiting for Jill meant staying at the Salvation Army and finding what she calls a "normal job" at this point to pay unsubsidized rent was almost impossible.

Grant had a very troubled childhood complicated by trauma, issues with mental health, and homophobia in the group home system. Oppressed and trying to come to terms with his sexuality, he ended up in Kitchener after multiple times running away to find sexual encounters. When he was old enough to transition to social housing, his mental health and a lack of transitional supports interfered with his ability to maintain an apartment and to handle the social nuances involved.

I fucked it up because I was younger and I didn't know better. I put a burn hole from my cigarette in my landlord's couch. She didn't want to kick me out. I thought she did though because of the way she was texting me and I just took it the wrong way and then I *made myself* homeless. And so I came here [to London] and I'm here for a month and a half and then I find out about Squirt. And they used to do escorting service... I started doing sex work when I moved back here, because I was 18 the group homes were done with me. I've travelled and escorted in Toronto, I've done it in Kitchener, and Guelph, I've done it in out west when I was out there... For shelters it sucks. Like there are no youth

shelters, they've got nothing for youth and it's like why? You're sending all these teenagers to Salvation Army, it's so fucking ghetto.

Those in the public care system are a particularly vulnerable group who are less likely to have family support but have significant mental health and social problems, including higher risk of self-harm and suicide, poorer educational achievement, and greater risk of unemployment, homelessness, and incarceration (Office of National Statistics 2009). When young people face the transition from the youth system, there is a lack of a formalized communication plan to ensure that their needs are met. Additionally, many of the services and supports available have no equivalent in the adult system. When I ask Grant why he chose sex work instead of a mainstream job, he cites his lack of a high school diploma and his mental disorder as barriers;

Well, because of my disorder, it makes it very hard for me to actually hold even so much as a job at Tim Horton's because, with borderline personality disorder, I get very emotional. I've had customers scream at me... I've had jobs before, like I worked at Timmy's, I've worked at Wendy's, I've worked at McDonald's, but I find at the end of the day I'm just so drained, I want to start crying. I've [also been a waiter] as well as I've worked with animals. Even just that, it's [easy] work but it's the boss yelling at me. That's where it bothers me.

Grant also finds his ODSP cheque limiting citing that it does not give him enough money to enjoy life;

It literally covers rent and Rogers and then I get a little bit of spending money and then groceries. But like for someone who wants to even just live, like that's not even living. It's \$100 for entertainment for the whole month? Okay, you go to the movies once, that's all gone, bye. I'm able to do it because I want to do things.

Grant rationalizes sex work using the oft-cited benefits of having no boss and working minimal hours for large amounts of money. As the entrepreneur he,

tried different prices and noticed what other prices get more people inquiring because it's not so expensive. I started making pretty good money. I put peoples' jobs to shame, for how much money I bring in. I make - my friend, who makes about \$1700 a month, look laughable. But recently I just use Backpage, it's been my best go-to.

Despite these positives, Grant has not neutralized the shame he feels. "This job really deprives me mentally. I don't like the stigma attached to it, it just makes me feel shitty about myself... I hope it doesn't fuck up my head too much."

Another part of “the system” that was blamed was Canada’s immigration system. Nazir sends me a brief message telling me how he was from Southwest Asia and working for minimum wage at a local truck stop.

Well I was pretty low on money. My parents wouldn't or couldn't help me. I was trying to help out with the family. We all live together... me my folks and my siblings. I did it because I couldn't afford food. I was trying to help. We were new immigrants. No help from government or anything. I got frustrated and just decided to hook up with the next guy who asked me.

Whether Nazir and his family knew of or tried to access government supports is unclear. Though this account was unique and brief it shares in that it was presented as an effort to neutralize the shame of sex work by offering a situation where one has no choice.

One interviewee who wishes to remain anonymous highlights the struggles dealing with another government system, higher education and the financial aid of the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP). Students in Ontario may apply for the OSAP to help fund their education. It is available to Canadian citizens and permanent residents and is dependent on: 1) the amount of money required to cover educational expenses (tuition, books, living expenses); 2) personal and parental income and; 3) and whether a student studies full-time or part-time (Government of Ontario 2016). OSAP often does not give a student enough money to survive. While some men attest to using their sex work money to help pay for their schooling, some have no choice because of the expectations that parents will contribute to tuition; households who make \$70000 are expected to help students. Though the university can help students get a part-time job through a work study, the money was is still not enough to cover tuition and living expenses.

Because parents and key caregivers play a vital role in an adolescent's health and well-being (Steinberg and Duncan 2002), the influence of negative family reactions to sexual orientation on the health, wellbeing, and mental health of gay teens is significant (Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, and Sanchez 2009). In regard to sex work, Boyce and Isaacs’ (2014) study with men who sell sex in Southern and Eastern Africa explored their personal life stories to gain insight into the circumstances that lead these men to sell sex. An overarching theme was that sex work is bound up with self-realization and familial rejection. This story is the same for the youth continents away in London; those kicked out for being gay either started into survival sex work immediately, like Edward when he was 16 moving in with

his boyfriend, being unable to find a job, and “getting addicted to the fast money;” or a cascade of drama like when David leaving his abusive step-mother at 17 after being kicked out, having a mental break down and leaving his birth mom for a shelter, and then transitioning to the streets of Toronto at 18, selling sex for food and drugs to self-medicate; or complicated agentive self-exploration like Stuart being kicked out at 14. Stuart sold sex out of curiosity and to supplement his income like any other casual or part-time job; “My first time I was scared as hell. But it really didn’t phase me, it was a job.” Exploring the internet, he used Backpage, Craigslist and before they banned it, Squirt, to find clients. He has recruited clients in person at the local bathhouse, and in the YMCA locker room downtown. As time went on, Stuart has found clients, snowballing through word of mouth. Stuart continues explaining why he eventually started doing porn; Stuart was introduced to porn through a friend. Due to his addiction, he had lost a lot of weight, “he said do you want to shoot a video?”

And I said where and how much? Since I've been on my own since I was 14, I guess I lived a life that most would do in their 30s when I was 20. So now that I've done that, I'm like okay, I'm bored now, I need some more excitement. And what's more exciting than this industry?

Coming to terms with their sexuality catalyzed a move away from home, either because they were rejected or as a matter of choice, although this “choice” may have been made under constrained circumstances given a lack of opportunity for sexual expression (Boyce and Issacs 2014). Even with the legalization of same-sex marriage and various global initiatives that promote LGBT equality, homophobia is still deeply ingrained in Canadian society at every level. With LGBT youth overrepresented in the homeless youth population¹²⁴ and the third shelter for LGBT opening in 2019 (again in Toronto), the failure of governments to implement concerted actions to address the situation nation-wide, on differing levels (i.e., prevention in addition to emergency supports),¹²⁵ has meant that youth have had to fend for themselves. A LGBT needs assessment for emergency shelters in London (Bardwell and the Unity Project 2015) and a town hall meeting with community partners recommended areas where the city could improve such as opening a LGBT shelter

¹²⁴ 25-40% of homeless youth identify as LGBT (Abramovich 2012) while only 5-10% of the general population identifies as such (Josephson and Wright 2000).

¹²⁵ For example, legal consequences for families who abuse, neglect, or reject their gay child

or community centre. The Unity Project which provides emergency shelter and transitional housing since then has helped to design best-practices for the city shelters including procedural changes and designating the shelter as a LGBT safe space. Lazenby, Unity Project's executive director however says the funding is not available for a LGBT-only shelter (Montanini 2016). Lazenby however is not convinced that shelters in London need to exclusively serve LGBT individuals, though, preferring a utopian ideal of universal inclusion (Vermees 2016).

6.3.4. Criminal justice

With over a quarter (n=12) of men disclosing a criminal record (not related to selling sex), it was perhaps unsurprising that stories about these periods of their lives popped up in their narratives. Even though a criminal record implies an individual has served their punishment, a non-pardoned criminal record carries an inescapable stigma. This results in further punishment impacting their opportunities for employment, education, and housing (Carey 2004; Evans and Porter 2015; Jacobs 2015) often leading to poverty and homelessness (Poverty Roundtable HPE 2017). Researchers have documented how widely-available criminal records restrict employment opportunities, voting rights, access to public housing, student financial aid, and social service benefits (Stoll and Bushway, 2010; Uggen, Manza, and Thompson 2006; Ispa-Landa and Loeffler 2016). Four million Canadians have a criminal record (Public Safety Canada 2016); Until a pardon or record suspension is granted the denial of their liberties can continue. The price of this freedom is CDN\$631 thereby making it unobtainable for those with low incomes / unemployment. For sex offenders, they carry an additional stigma that they will never be able overcome after serving their time and they are forever socially ostracized and victimized as well as denied certain freedoms "in the name of public safety" (cf. Corabian 2016). Given these restraints (and others), the job opportunities available are typically low-paying, menial, and short term. The conditions surrounding incarceration have been associated with high rates of depression, psychological disorders, low self-esteem, suicidal ideation, self-harm, and an elevated risk of overdose upon release (Mace, Rohde, Gnau 1997). Further, evidence suggests that the incarceration period itself has an immensely negative impact on mental health generally and contributes to the onset of mental illness or the worsening of existing pathology (Forrest et al. 2000). In conjunction with these mental health concerns,

transitioning out of prison frequently puts youth at-risk for a variety of economic, social, and physical health-related harms (Freudenberg et al. 2008, Apel and Sweeten 2010).

Matt after feeling vulnerable and alienated by his family after time in jail at 16-years-old wanted to gain self-sufficiency but also to feed his addiction; after a friend introduced him and started pimping him,

eventually it just came in the habit and then, you know, I wasn't really down for it but like the first time I did it, I got to drink, I was happy. The second time I did it, I got to drink, I was happy. But the sixth time, I was drinking, getting drugs, cigarettes, food, I didn't want to do it but I couldn't say no, I had no other option. It came to the point where selling drugs is making me like \$10, \$20 a day and this was making me \$20 a girl.

Like others Matt neutralizes the stigma he feels emphasizing his lack of choice. When I ask him about if he ever had any legal employment despite his criminal record it prompts him to tell me a story of remorseful yearning and the variety of things he's done to survive;

I want to have a real, legitimate job. I don't want to be selling drugs and being a whore or breaking into houses. I want to be, like, working in a store, you know, like behind a counter, like one of those guys, you know? I used to run a head shop¹²⁶ out of my house illegally when I was younger. I'm trying to get a real job right now, I hope I get it, but because of how negative I am sometimes, I'm always telling myself, like, what if I can't do it, you know? So it's really I'm just scared that I'm not going to get it

Matt attempts a rational appraisal as he privileges the “unreal,” “illegitimate” criminal economy he has been a part of, in comparison to the formal jobs he has worked in the past though he goes on to emphasize the negatives of formal employment versus sex work and other jobs

I was a door-to-door [salesman] and the money was all right but walking anywhere from 3 to 10 hours a day and I have back problems, so it became really, really strenuous and difficult for me. I wasn't going to be able to keep going. I had to take a 20 of morphine every day just so I could do my job properly. I got a lot of health problems. I think maybe that's another reason why I went to sex work is because it's really quick. Like instead of working like an eight-hour shift like a normal job, you go for 20 minutes, an hour at tops. Couple hours, you feel better, you can do it again, you know, you got the time to feel better... When I was doing the door-to-door job or working at Subway or Popeye's, you constantly have to be going, going, going, going. And then at the end of the day you get, like, the whole night to relax. I never

¹²⁶ Store that sells marijuana paraphernalia but often illegally sells under-the-counter drugs

liked that. I like the idea of work, relaxed work, relax, being able to spread things out. I think that's why I preferred sex work.

Overall, the narratives overlap with an economic framework where people attempt to support themselves (cf. Burnes, Long and Schept 2012). While the internet facilitated about half of the men's entry into the industry, a third of the men were introduced to it by male or female friends already in the industry; others had a friend or sibling who served as their "pimp." In the end most men evaluated the benefits of sex work against the risks they were willing to or had to take. For some (n=12) sex work supplemented their earnings from part-time jobs, or social supports that did not pay enough. Some men found their time at mainstream retail or fast-food jobs as oppressive and demoralizing; co-workers, employers and customers were felt to be abusive; the paycheck and hours exploitive. Others could not find jobs, did not have the qualifications, were unhireable, or worked seasonally. The lower emotional, social, or cognitive output of certain sex work encounters and fewer and flexible hours and higher pay made the industry a favorable alternative for those who struggled with or were not accommodated by traditional employment due to issues of addiction, systemic barriers, or mental health, mindset, and wellbeing. Interestingly, selling sex to their worst clients instead of using the few social services they could qualify for was favoured by some men; the stigma of using these services or being associated with or around those who do outweighed any stigma or discomfort related to participating in the sex industry.

7. Sex work fundamentals

It goes without saying that different people may have different attitudes about their work... some define themselves as professionals and feel that their work offers the possibility of an exciting career... Others consider sex work to be one option among others on a limited list of more or less interesting jobs... Like women all over the world, men choose sex work for “the same reasons why most people work in boring, hazardous and exploitative jobs choose to do so” (Cabezas 1998; Parent and Bruckert 2013).

With the rise of global consumer capitalism, an understanding of sex workers as rational agents seeking to maximize financial gain through the commodification of their own bodies intensified. People could now shape their own identities, not dependent on background or status, that could be tailored from a range of commodities that communicated the taste and values of the purchaser. Men’s bodies specifically become the object of a new gaze that depicts them in an idealized and eroticized fashion, allowing them to be looked at and desired (Gill, Henwood, and McClean 2005).

As per Rubin, “sexual acts are burdened with an excess of significance” (1999: 151). In the case of the sex industry, the sexual is privileged as significant regardless of context. The sex of the sex industry is often conceptualized as quick, impersonal, and superficial and often misread as humiliating (mentally, psychically, culturally, socially) or the most important aspect of the phenomenon (cf. Puar 2007). While sometimes this is the case, interviews reaffirm that some men do experience levels of intimacy with clients and some interactions do not entail “sex” at all. The client who wants to cuddle, to receive (or give) massage, or just share a beer and vent about each other’s lives are examples of non-sexual intimate interactions that can occur. Caldwell (2011) notes that clients visit sex workers for a range of reasons, including emotional support, shyness, intimacy, incapacity, or for sexual variety (Stardust 2015: 73). Some men comment on how work sex is an integral part of their sex lives, how central the enjoyment of the encounter is, and how friendships emerge with some clients (Walby 2012). Regardless of the ideological standpoint used to frame the sex industry, or other variables such as type of services offered or motivation and method to enter the trade, the men I interviewed discussed fundamental aspects of working in the industry.

While the labour process of sex work is diverse, and details vary, there were similarities in the semantic domains¹²⁷ expressed in their narratives. Giving accounts of body and emotion management, men negotiated between private personal performance of self, and intersubjective performance of someone selling intimate services. For some the flexibility of not having to present as a sex worker but to accept money casually and opportunistically when in need or desired meant some men do not actually perceive their practices as work (cf. Scott, MacPhail, and Minichiello 2015). As such they used 16 different terms to describe their involvement in the industry; some categorized themselves with a professional identity label¹²⁸ while others simply described what they did and did not label themselves.¹²⁹

As a highly personalized service like other consumer service-sector jobs, strategic interpersonal skills were essential as sex workers had to be at least somewhat sociable, patient, courteous, polite and capable of dealing with a variety of people (Bruckert and Parent 2013). After communication with a potential client has been established, a worker negotiates rules, location, desires, and compensation. For those using the internet for this process, both client and worker can screen out those they consider undesirable in some manner (i.e., financially, services provided, appearance). The screening process for workers does not just involve assessing desirability, but makes assumptions on personality (politeness was key) and class (typically based on personal grooming) relative to trust and safety. For others, they had to quickly gauge a customer and identify their wants negotiating in-situ. Per Bruckert and Parent, “For these workers, different questions remain open. What services does the customer expect? What is the appropriate way to present them? Will the customer be problematic from the point of view of safety” (2013: 20)? As the sex worker is supposed to focus on client needs and wants, being flexible to accommodate a variety of sexual services in varying roles was just as important as bodily appearance. As performative work, a sex worker must construct certain gendered styles that will appeal to potential clients. As a commissioned performance, economic incentives

¹²⁷ Shared set of meanings, linguistic categorizations understood within a certain context. See Rosch 1975.

¹²⁸ houseboy; masseuse; stripper; escort; gay for pay; sex worker; street ho; whore; mouth-whore; pole dancer; porn star; professional companion; hustler

¹²⁹ professional dating; “did what I had to do; “escorting; sold sex; blowing guys for money; fucking; “told him my story and he paid me”

structure and guide what idealized presentations are available (Mitchell 2015: 38). One's ability to perform creates a social hierarchy in the form of competency. The performance is enacted in coded forms of walking, speaking, gesticulating, and dressing in order to be legible to clients (Mitchell 2015: 39). Capital is then held in how well the worker enacts the performance.

For those workers who advertise online, the body initially becomes known through uploaded pictures. Online pictures of a worker's erect phallus, anus, and chest were available for clients depending on what a man was offering. This means that the semiotic display of the body in picture form is the first moment of valorization and translation of body capital (Walby 2012). Body capital refers to how what we do with our bodies becomes valued (Wacquant 1995). The body is conceptualized as both the means of production and that which is produced. While specific body stereotypes and racialized bodies are valorized, there is no pinnacle body all escorts or clients seek despite claims to the contrary. Logan (2010) and McLean (2013) believe the act of penetration and youthful muscularity are key commodified attributes. These bodily ideals and masculine stereotypes were familiar to researcher and interviewed man alike. However, the majority of the men I met had varying body types and engaged in various sexual acts to reflect the variable desires of male and female clients. In an intersectional and relational sense, narratives about race, gender, body-type and age did inform some of sex work interactions, as some men fashioned themselves to appeal to specific fetishized ideals in both their personal and work lives (Logan 2017).

7.1. Intersectional sexual scripts

Related to performance is the concept of sexual scripts (Gagnon and Simon 1973). These are social roles that involve rules that guide behaviour. Laumann and Gagnon (1995) see scripts as instructions for sexual conduct that include the who, what, and when of sexual conduct. Both customer and worker bring culture bound conventions into an encounter that must be mutually understood for a successful transaction to take place (Jackson and Scott 2007). In Mitchell's (2015) exploration of Brazil's sexual economy, he expressed an interest in the interactions between clients and sex workers. It is here that men from diverse backgrounds and perspectives understand one another and their relationships across differences; they must make sense of one another's subjectivity, try to understand why the

other is there, and what he wants to get out of this exchange. If a script or performance does not convince a client of the legitimacy of the interaction it may be met with misunderstanding, outrage, misrepresentation, or betrayal (McLean 2013).

With 22% of men starting in the industry at 14 or 15 years old and 29% selling at 16 or 17, the desirability of youth was something that men could perform and market. Though some of their customers at that time were fellow youth exchanging sex for drugs, many clients were older men or the occasional older woman depending on the worker. While it would be easy to resort to a trope of predatory paedophilia here, the complicated desires that frame age-different relationships and sexuality between an individual younger than the established legal age of consent (or morally approved consent) and someone older are indeed part of certain sex worker scripts. In gay vernacular, references for young or young-looking adults and teens include “chicken” and “twink,” representative of cultural-knowledge of ephedophilic desire. As per Susan Driver (2010) this desire relies on ageist and often racist tropes of youth, innocence, and virility and (originally) white desirability in which this performance can be fetishized and consumed. Several men said that they would lie that they were one or two years younger or trim body hair to appeal to this crowd while they could. This performance ultimately involves physical characteristics associated with mid-to-late adolescence such as “baby face” or slender physique.

Youth moves beyond body to how a person behaves. This is often defined as opposite the older client with financial means. Daddy/son role playing involves a script of the naïve submissive son and wisdom of the hegemonic masculine father figure, a power agreement of sexual submission and domination. The sex worker here is selling the fantasy of their total abandonment of agency, if only temporarily. “In both body and mind, the son gives himself over to be owned, shaped and delivered to a new manhood. From Daddy, the son learns discipline and obedience all over again” (Zahyr 2017). Though there were accounts of requests for role reversal where the client was made to be submissive sexually, while he still functioned as “provider,” this act was in less demand. Further evidence this was a script being followed and not a reflection of an age-presumed power imbalance was **Ted’s** framing his agency as a minor, using his youth to seduce and exploit. “I liked the sex, I knew they had money. I would use their emotions against them, I know what they

wanted, I know what they would do. I would manipulate them, and I would try to milk them for all they had.”

The pursuit of the idealized male body was a method to acquire body capital from a performance of straight-acting, masculine, muscular, dominating, and penetrative behaviour (Hobbes 2017). **Doug** and **Tim**, both escorts, found that this is what drew women to hire them, especially if they had a boyfriend who did not live up to this ideal. Though more explicitly objects of homoerotic desire, this hypermasculine script was marketed largely for female clients here in London.¹³⁰ **Bashir**, the stripper who works at a gym and fashions himself on the bodily aesthetics of the men in the movie *Magic Mike*, emphasized that only certain types of male bodies can perform as a stripper. Much like professional athletes, male strippers use their bodies as tools and as such the gym becomes a key site for the production of these bodies (Lee-Gonyea, Castle, and Gonyea 2009; Messner 1995). As a “whore,” **Matt** often felt pressured by female clients who said he was not as good looking as they wanted. Matt internalized these messages and finds that even now that he no longer sells sex, he worries about his marketability.

That was like what I’ve got to look like, I’ve got to have muscle, I’ve got to stay thin, I’ve got to have a clean chin, manage my hair. It’s all stuck with me. Now, I exercise frequently. I have to take care of [my]self, wear nice things... I could be starving, I’ll go buy cologne before I buy food, because if I don’t smell nice... They call it whore spray... The way I dress, the way I talk, the way I behave, my manners [are all important].

Scull (2013) found that the respondents in her study of male strippers also placed great importance on the maintenance of their bodies which involved dieting, shaving, steroid use, and large amounts of working out per week. **Bashir** emphasizes that “big and ripped” masculine men, not boys, are “what bring the girls in.” Knowing how to be charming, and how to talk to girls was also part of this performance, as were stereotypical male outfits such as fireman, policeman, and superhero. In the end, Bashir says the most important part of the stripper-script is the large penis. The majority of his stripper friends did accept offers for private dances with women (and one friend with men), which was code for being hired for sex. Here hiring a stripper-turned-escort was framed by the women as recreational and

¹³⁰ Because these performances can gain a premium, it is likely the lack of accounts of this type is related to the amount of remuneration I was able to offer and not specifically the nature of the sex industry in London, though this possibility exists.

by Bashir as a woman looking for “a body like [his].” These nights followed a script involving a private dance in a hotel room or at a woman’s house (sometimes with a woman’s friends watching) to “turn them on.” From there the woman takes control and engages in oral simulation. At this point it is Bashir’s job to make them orgasm via oral simulation and penile-vaginal stimulation. This sometimes is expected to occur several times throughout a night. Because these men have sexual capital they also had the privilege of accepting sex with women they found attractive for thousands of dollars, blurring the separation of professional and personal sex.

In the world of stripping and sexual performance for women, masculinity appears as an essence or commodity that can be measured, possessed, or lost (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 2016). Learned behaviour, anatomy, and desire conflate to reinforce a hegemonic (heterosexual) masculinity; a man’s competency to perform this masculinity was subsequently evaluated by women and encouraged by financial reward. Here masculinity and femininity are not positioned as oppositional, as essentialist assumptions of the passivity of femininity are challenged when the female client objectifies the male stripper.

Though the “white” men were racialized in their own way (i.e., WASP working-class emotionless heteromascularity), this was unmarked in their narratives. It was the men of colour who discussed being sexualized based on their race. The desire for an exoticized coloured body also incorporates assumptions about penis size, shape, body smell, and hair color (cf. Mitchell 2015). This extends to behavioural scripts and racialized performances. Both Blake and Jean Paul describe how working for white clients has brought the fetishization and subsequent performance of race to the forefront. While the fetishization of their bodies is profitable, Jean Paul discussed how at certain times he has “to turn off [his] race-critical thoughts” as people sometimes want to play into fantasies he finds very offensive. **Blake** finds that some white guys assume he is “ghetto” or will use “bro-code” with him and want him to be dominant. This type of racialization characterizes black men with tropes of rap music, the inner city, criminality, and gang life and perpetuates the colonial image of the black subject as hypersexual, muscular, and aggressive (cf. hooks 2004). Related to desires for aggressive and primal sexual experiences, some white men want to be in a dominant position, to role play being master of a black slave. While Blake

would entertain this fantasy up to a point (he did not allow them to use a whip), **Jean Paul** found this too offensive.

These accounts have shown that by selling sex, many men were obligated to renegotiate and reinterpret masculinity, often through their bodies but also through the convincing performance of certain acts. The ability to define certain bodies or behaviours as pleasurable reveals power at play (Walby 2012). While clients reinforced specific types of masculinity through their consumer power, the fact that these were performances means they were temporary meanings and acts. It was the sex worker who was able to control the affective quality of the interaction and set the parameters (cf. Mitchell 2015). At the same time, the momentary fantasy did reinforce certain stereotypes in our society. An important part of performing these roles is that though sometimes constrained by financial need, a worker decides who, when and how people can access representations of their sexualities or bodies and how free or limited that access would be. As per Stardust, “it problematizes the assumption that [sex workers] are [always] available for public consumption” (2015: 72).

7.2. Navigating client desires

“Everyone’s got a crutch.” **Jimmy.**

As a type of emotional-service work, interactions with clients are a fundamental aspect of the sex industry. As the men vented to me about clients in a form of “shop-talk,” they offered insight into the men and women buying their services. 18 percent (n=8) of men sold to both men and women, while 11 percent (n=5) sold their services to women only. This means that over one-fourth of men sold their services to women, while 89 percent did to men (71% / n=31 sold only to men). The existence of male sex workers let alone female and male clients resists the SWERF critique of prostitution as patriarchal exploitation and the imposition of sexuality upon women and children (Dorais 2005). Though these clients were clearly a minority amongst these London men, the desire for sexual intimacy and enjoyment via sex work can (and should) no longer be constructed as solely the purview of men. Female clients of sex workers are still marginalized in academic and policy terms (cf. Browne and Minichiello 1996; Lee-Gonyea, Castle and Gonyea 2009) largely because it does not accord with traditional views about female sexuality and women’s position in society (Wiltfang 1985). Some of the workers themselves upheld these tropes; I asked

Jimmy why he did not have many female clients, “if girls want to get laid, they can go to the bar and put a short skirt on... why women want to buy sex is questionable to me.” In **Steven’s** experience, “married women don’t come looking for guys at all. It’s usually always guys, or one guy looking for a guy and a girl.” **Jack** also expresses his difficulties finding women who are willing to pay. The women who do pay he frames as less sexual, “I did have 5 sugar mammas at once but there wasn’t much sex involved.” The semantic merging of gender and sexuality into the ideas of “sex” also reflect a cultural assumption that sexuality is reducible to sexual intercourse which is between male and female (Rubin 1984: 307). If the sex of sex work is already reduced to heterosexual intercourse, the associated gendered norms of said acts are implied too; this discourse reinforces a patriarchal idea of women are less sexual than men regardless of sexuality, and an SWERF discourse where (hetero)men are sexually voracious and impose sexuality on women (Farley 2004; Dawthorne 2015). Other reasons why the idea of women buying sex is disregarded is that men in London primarily operate through private arrangements rather than in public spaces making it much less visible and considered less of a nuisance or social concern (Crofts 2015). World-wide, various journalists have slowly begun to discuss this population, citing women’s financial independence, time demands, and busy work schedules as among the reasons they are now more willing to pay for sex (Barbes 2009; Callander, Minichiello, and Scott 2015; Chang, Thompson, and Harold 2012; White 2012).

The main difference between male and female clients was that some men hired a sex worker due to their closeted sexuality. As elaborated by the men, the reasons a person purchases the services of a sex worker, regardless of gender, were multiplicitous and overlapping; 1) to fulfill fetish and kink related fantasies; 2) to experience intimacy or sexual activity that they no longer experience with a partner, or because they do not have time for a relationship; 3) the unfulfilled sexuality and loneliness of those experiencing various stigmas that impeded their ability to connect with others in a traditional manner. These barriers were associated with physical disability, obesity, old age, or other issues of appearance (i.e., small penis, scars, lack of hygiene, emotional or mental instability). This fits with previous studies on the motivations of men who purchase the services of women; In Campbell (1998) men bought sex because of excitement; sexual services not provided by current partner; sexual variety; convenience; lack of emotional ties; loneliness; and an

inability to form sexual relationships. In Atchison, Fraser, and Lowman (1998) motivations included unattractiveness and poor sexual development. For the men in Sanders (2008), commercial sex was a source of affection, warmth and intimacy. Men with disabilities cited numerous reasons for why they purchased services from female workers including exercising agency, pleasure, cheaper and easier than dating, the inaccessibility of adult meeting spaces, discrimination, and social undesirability (Liddiard 2014).

7.2.1. Kink and fetish

Despite being labelled atypical in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, fantasies of kink, fetish and sadomasochism are present in 50-60 percent of the general population (Joyal and Carpentier 2017). A kink is something that turns a person on and is outside of presumed sexual norms. A fetish is integral to a person's sexuality and are absolutely necessary for sexual fulfillment. In a similar realm is sadomasochism, the receipt or infliction of pain or humiliation often for sexual pleasure. As for whether sadism is a gendered phenomenon, "surveys have found no difference in frequency of sadistic fantasies in men and women" (Fedoroff 2008). Despite its prevalence sadomasochism carries a heavy social stigma and there are many consequences when outsiders find out including loss of employment, prosecution, or loss of child custody. This is in part due to gender-based assumptions that frame sadism as a manifestation of male aggression and violent sexual crimes and masochism an exaggeration of the submissive role of women (Hall 2008). Reality is different, as whomever plays the submissive exercises power in diverse ways and can transgress gender norms (cf. Banerjee, Merchant and Sharma 2018).

This shame has made these fantasies difficult to live out, and often inviting a partner to participate is awkward, or a partner can be either unwilling, uncomfortable, or inept at the practice. Though sex workers do judge and evaluate their clients, seeing a worker instead of meeting someone online can help remove the fear of being pressured to do things you do not want (Hammond and Kingston 2018). To offer niche services like these alongside more normative "vanilla" sexual practices, workers must have basic anatomic and sexual knowledge, be able to create and maintain an erotic and pleasing presentation of themselves and discern and respond to customers' (often non-verbalized) needs or

wishes (Law 2011). The application of these skills in the context of the commercial encounter is complex: the worker must be able to control the interaction, be vigilant with respect to any danger, set boundaries, and assert authority as a professional while simultaneously creating an arousing environment, establishing a somewhat trusting relationship with the customer, and carry out a sexual fantasy negotiating limits (Bruckert and Parent 2015).

David compares his time selling sex on the streets of Toronto to “being a prostitute” for men in London; “You have to learn how to appeal to their interest so a whole bunch of people get back to you. Most of the people here in London have extremely weird fetishes like bondage. Most of the guys that contact me for sex are like can I have a golden shower and I'm like okay... Ha!” The general consensus amongst the men was that these acts were “outlandish” or “weird,” and passed judgement on the clients. Everyone had limits and said that they would not do anything involving blood or scat while the most common fetish was urophilia. For **Ted**, having to indulge a client who was into wearing lingerie was a chore “because I’m attracted to men.” The queering of gender boundaries made him uncomfortable. However, Ted’s desire for the money outweighed his reluctance, “You're being paid for it so, like, you know, you just do it.” When asked by a woman for kink services, **Bill** charges a premium, “I've had a lot of [requests for] I want to have sex by pudding [splashing] or I want you to use this cucumber on me, [sitophilia] and then you're going to feed it to me. For really outlandish things I'll just say, hey I'm going to charge you this much. If you don't like it maybe tone it down a bit.” **Matt's** experience with urophilia starts to cross the boundaries between what is considered sex.

The desire for uncommitted casual sex is one of the most basic assumptions regarding why clients seek out sex workers (Armstrong and Rensing 2015; Farvid and Braun 2017). However, Matt had a “really weird” woman hire him, but did not want sex;

this chick didn't want me to fuck her, she didn't want me to touch her at all, all she wanted to do was hold my dick and direct my piss wherever she wanted it and load herself up with piss. It was fucked. She doesn't see me anymore because she found a boyfriend who's into it.

Doug also had requests that did not involve “sex;”

I got some really messed up offers; This guy wanted me to sit and kick him in the nuts for 20 minutes for 100\$. I open his door and his legs are in the air. I'm

like okay. [So, I kick him.] He was like, oh that feels good! I was like; the fuck is this guy on?

A different client gave thirty dollars to play with Doug's feet. Lastly, Doug was requested to urinate on someone's face and all over their body;

Basically, just piss and go. No strings attached. [When I was done] they said okay I'm going to shower. The money was sitting right there. There's some booze in the fridge. I'd be there for like 10 minutes sometimes just to take a piss on someone.

While the men found these requests strange, the relatively minimal effort and personal body management these tasks required made kink work "easy money." Doug's story continues

This guy wanted me to stick a dildo in his ass while he smoked meth. I don't know what kind of sensation he got off that, but I've seen some pretty messed up things. One client though, he was into some weird shit, but it was weird though because he actually opened my eyes up to a lot of experiences that are kind of cool. He was kind of a weirdo, but he paid a lot. I faked a climax within five minutes, took \$30 and left.

Again, blurring the boundaries between work and personal realms, they were appreciative that they learned new skills and broadened their experiences.

I've peed on guys in the shower. They'll say are you into it? I'll say I don't want to get peed on but if you want to get peed on, I don't have a problem with that. There's a couple times I whipped a guy with an extension cord because he begged me to do it and he kept saying harder... I did, I just went down inside myself and found some anger in there and I gave it to him. He liked it.

Here **Phil** emphasizes pride in his openness and success at pleasing the client with his new skill. This satisfaction was largely dependent on the high level of control he was able to exercise (Scull 2013).

Overall, only a few sex workers professed to enjoying kinky experiences or wanting to engage in these activities outside of work. If they are asked to do something they would rather not, some men would accept a premium to engage in the act (Walby 2012). **Bill** also gets many requests to "do it raw." The fetishizing of unprotected sex in the gay community was a product of prohibitive HIV prevention discourses that started in the 80s; to take the risk became an act of defiance, a perversion, a taboo (Mowlabocus 2016). In the straight world, condoms have a long history of being framed as unpleasurable for both parties, and

the rise of hormonal birth control made them unnecessary for preventing pregnancy. Because of these risks, Bill will charge more and use the “pull out method.”

7.2.2. Spousal issues

Many sex workers indicated that a client’s reason for seeing them was a desire for intimacy or sex they were not getting at home. Because institutional monogamy is supposed to facilitate (hetero)sexuality and procreation, intimacy and sexuality are expected to be met (tamed?) through marriage (Walby 2012). The feeling of missing out because their spouse was failing to meet expectations was commonly cited as a reason to why a client saw a sex worker. For Dylan and Doug, the women who had purchased their services were, as **Doug** puts it, “Just not getting it from their spouses.” **Dylan** felt used, serving as a house-boy for a woman who “couldn’t get anything from her boyfriend so she would keep me in the house.” Mike, Austin, and Phil however tell stories of married male clients who see them for the intimacy they do not receive from their wives, making no comment on their clients’ sexualities or moral judgments. **Mike** talks of those men who “just want to lay there and like feel and touch you, and like feel your skin. They just want somebody to lie next to them, because you know, their wives don’t do that anymore.” **Phil’s** clients were married men from 40 to 60 years old. These men too were desperate for affection after being married for many years. **Austin** speaks of clients who were cab drivers that picked him up on the street. “They were lonely guys, they had wives that just don't like them.” Though they did not elaborate or have knowledge to why these men stay married, there are numerous reasons why people stay in bad relationships. This often involves a pessimism of future alternatives, the expense of divorce, the likelihood of having to give-up money in divorce action, fears of failure and embarrassment (divorce stigma), and for the sake of children. When I ask why these men do not go to a female sex worker, Ryan and Mike do not speak of sexuality but issues with wives. As per **Ryan**,

One guy told me that his wife doesn't even hug him let alone have sex with him anymore - there's no physical intimacy. In my experience when a straight guy is with a man it isn't seen as infidelity. To the wife - its not cheating because guys aren't a threat to them; the men they aren't being unfaithful.

Mike gives a similar account,

[The client is] straight and I said, “Like, well, why are you choosing a man?” He's like, “because I don't want to fuck another bitch,” he's like they're bitches, and that’s when he started talking more about his wife. Mind you, some men

think one man and another man together is just helping a buddy out. It's not cheating.

These accounts show how clients justify hiring a sex worker, but I believe the M\$M may also be alleviating their own shame for their place in the triangle. This concern also shows up in the accounts of providing services for closeted married men.

7.2.3. Closeted married men

Despite 30 years of LGBT rights, policies, and efforts to end homophobia that has made Canada one of the leading countries for gay acceptance, the numbers of closeted men who visit sex workers has not seemed to change much. As perceived by male sex workers in previous studies (Coutinho, van Andel and Risdik 1988; Bloor, McKeganey and Barnard 1990; Morse et al. 1992) at least a third of their customers were either heterosexual or bisexual and at least 40 percent were married to women. For the London group, on average, the men guesstimated that around half of their clients were either straight-identifying or married. Taught at an early age that heterosexuality is normal (compulsory heterosexuality), patriarchal society demands hegemonic performances of heteromascularity (that are opposed to homo-femininity) which can force men to go in the closet and pass as straight to avoid stigma, social exclusion, and violence (Rich 1980; Sanchez and Schlossberg 2001). Men who grew up before some of more recent social changes likely internalized homophobia, though sex workers did have accounts of a few closeted men in their early 20s. As such there are still gay men who are forced, shamed, and brain-washed to marry heterosexual women despite their sexuality. In Schrimshaw, Downing, and Cohn (2018), those men who may indeed have bisexual identities worry of the negative reactions, changes in relationships, and stigma towards homosexuality that family and friends held as part of religious and cultural backgrounds. **Stuart** sums up the situation perfectly;

It's because they're scared of their life, because of their parents, the way they were brought up... Part of it has to do with masculinity. They feel that you can't be a butch gay so to speak – they don't want to feel gay. I get asked to be more gay - to sissify myself to enhance their masculinity.

Link describes what hiring him means for clients, “I have clients who are in monogamous heterosexual partnerships and they talk about this façade they've been living their whole lives and how I'm the one that's fulfilling that side of the true self.” Link describes how

many of the men want a “boyfriend” experience but are afraid to confront their identities and pursue a non-commercial relationship.

When I ask **Mike** why he thinks clients just do not look for one-night-stands or hook-ups instead of going to a sex worker he cites the heightened level of assurance needed for discretion and secrecy that comes from the temporary nature of the financial transaction;

They tend to hire escorts because we keep it quiet and hush. Money keeps discreteness. There's certain ones that don't do pictures because they're married. Like, as I say, most of my clients are married men. So that's one of the sad things. Because they're married and they're cheating on their wives... Most of them say it's hush hush.

As per Smith and Grov (2011) hiring a sex worker meant not having to worry about establishing any form of relationship outside of the sexual encounter, which is not guaranteed with non-commercial partners. By not having to seek out a community of people, perhaps by paying for it, a man protects himself from further questioning his identity.

Lastly, some closeted men have not felt safe to explore themselves sexually to see what they enjoy the most. **Phil** speaks of their curiosity,

usually they want to suck my dick because it's something they haven't done before... they want to know what it feels like to get fucked and they'll try it for 2 minutes... Sometimes they like it and sometimes they don't. Most of the guys aren't that interested in getting a blowjob because that's fairly easy.

In the case of experimenting with receptive anal sex, **Ryan** speaks of the body management required because of the messiness of sex in general but because these “bi-curious guys don't know the ins and outs, it can get messy and smelly.”

7.2.4. Loneliness

I don't specifically seek out a certain type of client, because everyone needs loving too. You're in it for a reason, to make money. Its all about faking. They're in it to get off or the companionship. It's more I want you to come home and cook dinner with me and watch a movie and its rarely sex. **Stuart**.

While those men in unsatisfying or unhappy marriages may have been experiencing loneliness, and closeted men were holding a self-isolating secret, other people saw sex workers because of difficulties finding mates in the dating world. **Mike** and **Stuart** find that female clients they service are more mature and just want a companion to spend time

with them because they have little time to date or meet someone or do not want to deal with the drama of dating. For some gay men who have escaped the loneliness of the closet, the gay community itself is a lonely place to be. Being close to people who share common ground with you is linked to lower rates of anxiety and depression for many minority groups. This is not the case for the gay community, as in-group discrimination acts as a significant source of stress in many men's lives (Hobbes 2017). Despite the scale and speed of change in society, the rates of depression, loneliness, and substance abuse in the gay community remain in the same place they have been for decades. Being a member of a marginalized group requires extra effort. Even if you do not experience overt stigma, constantly scanning social situations for ways you do not fit in takes its toll over time.

With a lack of queer spaces “you can’t just walk down the street and meet someone” (Hughto et al. 2016); the possible consequences of trying to determine if a man is gay in nonvirtual public spaces can include verbal or physical assault, to being “outed” to others outside of your control. Lewis et al (2015) found that middle-aged gay men perceived the lowest levels of acceptance in the broader London community. Middle-aged men, who grew up in a different time, predominately experienced school and family-based homophobia and sometimes internalized homophobia. They are more likely to carry forward trauma from the past. Younger gay men who have come of age in a milieu of greater social acceptance and gay rights more often demonstrate optimism about the inclusion of sexual minorities within mainstream society and increasingly come out at earlier points (Hammack and Cohler 2011; Lewis et al 2015). Regardless of age, those who had grown up in rural areas or with certain religious upbringing still struggled (Ibid). It is millennial men who grew up in the generation of social media and discourses of sexual fluidity that have more opportunity to access a supportive community of peers; they can join university and college LGBT groups or patronize dances clubs like Lavish. Men in midlife have been left with fewer social supports and opportunities to connect with other men their age or younger (Ibid). Despite the gay community's emphasis on positivity, any concept of community rests on a series of exclusions, of decisions and discursive enactments of who is and who is not “one of us” (Higgins 1999: 189). As such there is community pressure to concentrate our self-worth even further into appearance, our masculinity, our sexual performance, which younger men have more access to, producing

ableism, fat-shaming, misogyny, and ageism. This effect is illustrated as **Dylan** describes his clients as older guys that were lonely,

They believe that they're so old that they can't find a boyfriend, or be with somebody, so they would be very depressed... A lot of the people I met were either depressed or very alone, or very anxious... just paranoid to be in a relationship, or people that feared marriage, or feared relationships and some just liked having fun.

When the internet emerged as a space that was accessible and not confined by geography alone, by 2000 around 20 percent of gay couples met online. By 2010, that was up to 70 percent (Hobbes 2017). The advent of the mobile telephone has had further impact. They are home to applications that link users to both social and sexual networks via a mobile-based global positioning system (see Burrell et al 2012; Grov et al 2014; Landovitz et al 2012; Rice et al 2012). Now at least 70 percent of gay men use hookup apps like Grindr and Scruff to meet each other (Hobbes 2017). Using these apps is supposed to make it easier for people to hook-up. Instead the impersonality they foster, and their visual nature creates a toxic environment that emphasizes the features of young white hegemonic masculinity or exoticizes racial features. **Grant** thinks that clients that are “too ugly” do not have a chance and are rejected. Others may not trust the internet to meet strangers. Otherwise Grant feels that there may not be people that the client feels drawn to especially if they have niche interests, such as paraphilias, fetishes, and kinks.

7.2.5. Dealing with undesirability

“Some people you kind of wanted to put a plastic bag over yourself.” **Dylan**.

Because of stigmatization, some people live their lives in lonely silence (Ward 2008). Those clients with non-normative body aesthetics that do not match up to stereotypical body images because of physical disability, impaired social skills, or other factors, are socially undesirable. Many clients are therefore unable to engage in sexual encounters outside of the sex industry unless limiting themselves to a remote enclave of possible partners, if they can be found at all (Gagnon and Simon 1974). Regardless, almost all of the sex workers indicated dissatisfaction at having to serve unattractive or unhygienic customers and smell and touch were central to their narratives (McLean 2013; Smith et al 2013; Walby 2012). The consequences of having sex with undesirable sexual partners produced cognitive reactions ranging from masculine acceptance (“I gotta do what I gotta

do”) to disgust (“I can’t have sex with a guy that fat and smelly”), or despair. These reactions then fed back into the escort’s willingness to engage in further sex work or with specific types of clients. Men more willing to have sex with a wider variety of clients considered themselves to be more caring about a client’s emotional well-being and were more likely to report having a consistent morality regarding the services they provide (Smith et al. 2013).

When asked about their clients some men spontaneously mentioned those with physical disabilities most often framing them with other clients that have undesirable traits. This included a “morbidly obese man with a prosthetic leg that smelt really bad” as per **Ryan; Edward’s** account of “one guy without a nose;” “lots of people in wheel-chairs” as per **Bill**. Bill worries about hurting them,

Unless they give me a lot of information about their disability, I won't do anything. Like what if she said we can go rough I just want you to smack my bottom and then two weeks later her back is fractured. God forbid I'd want that to happen.

Stuart, with a disability himself, found himself in what he called a “horror story” situation where he had to back out,

I met a little person. He wanted to be chained up. I don't associate “little people” with bondage. Even though that there was money involved, I couldn't do it... Because [he was so small] it was like being with my nephew. Like his wrists were so tiny. So he was like, “Come on, come on, big guy, come on...” And he just kept putting more money on it... I'm like sorry, I can't do this, I have some standards.

Matt talks about the emotional toll of working with some clients,

Like this one girl she was a burn victim and I felt bad for her, so I tried but it's just like when I touched her, and I felt, it was like the weirdest texture. I felt like I was touching sponge toffee, I couldn't do it. But there was some things, like and texture I think is one of them I can't overcome. Things aren't supposed to feel like that. I felt really bad because when you were in a house fire, you can't control that, you know? So that made me feel about -- I've never felt bad about myself like that before that.

Part of what Matt feels is compassion but unlike Ryan who reframes the work as altruistic, “helping out those who wouldn't get any intimacy if it weren't for him,” Matt still lumps these women together as he speaks of the body work he had to do,

There are normally the three types of women, they’re either ugly and fat, old and sometimes they’re special needs. Probably the worst time is when they’re

dirty. I thought if I wore lots of cologne it would overpower the smell, but no. Some of these women were car crashes, man, but I needed the money, so I cleaned up the mess as best I could. I don't have many breaking points where I can't perform, I trained myself to be like that.

Body work refers to the management and modification of bodies through working (Walby 2012; Gimlin 2007). Sometimes body work is dirty work, where less appealing parts of other bodies must be worked on. Here Matt attempted to use cologne. **Stuart** spoke of the need for a client guideline before coming to see him: shower, gargle, and wear deodorant. “Those straight guys who know nothing [about gay sex] need to douche if there’s anal.” This is similar to **Bill**, when some women wanted anilingus or cunnilingus, he would tell them to wash. Dylan’s strategy was to use condoms only for the men he framed as “ugh;” dirty, smelly etc. Used in this manner, condoms acted as a physical and mental barrier from contamination, not specifically from STIs. Another strategy was to anticipate what a client needs and wants by understanding how a person’s body reacts and responds. To avoid body fluid contact in **Cody’s** first sex work session he gave a 45-minute massage with a “300-pound man. I’d never seen a dick like his before and he finished quick when I just gave him hand release. I then realized how easy the money was.” Some men did have more lee-way to reject undesirable clients in situ. Despite screening methods sometimes, a sex worker would have to say no to a client, showing a level of agency and choice. This moves beyond debates of sex work as exploitation to see the multidirectional nature of power. **Link** shows that kindness can be multidirectional too (Mitchell 2015).

Just the thought of being intimate with someone I find repulsive just doesn't make sense to me. I'm not that desperate. I've had gentlemen where they won't provide a picture and when I get in I just look at them and we'll get to their place and I'll try to do it; I just start feeling sick to my stomach and then I go, I'm sorry here's your money back I can't do this. I won't tell them the real reason why. Just to spare their feelings. The whole point of me being there is to make them feel good about themselves and I don't want to make them feel worse after I leave.

While Link was at least respectful when he decided he did not want to be with an unattractive client, other workers can be quite rude. **Stuart** thinks this does not make sense because “you’re out there providing a service, you shouldn’t be refusing people. Of course, I love that belly. You know what I mean?” Lastly, **Matt** shares his body and emotion work that helps him perform,

It's not about looking at them, you know, you close your eyes and pretend something beautiful, man. It's not about necessarily the physical, it's just about a little bit of friction and the mentality of something. It's all physical, yeah. Mentally, if you start thinking about it, you're going to get sick. Like especially if they got, like boils or something.

Described pragmatically, **Jimmy** had to do similar emotion work, “I'd have to close my eyes and picture different girls, and eventually it just became routine.” As a straight-male, standards of attractiveness in male clients were less important since they were not attracted to men to begin with, yet there was still general knowledge of social norms including smell and general appearance were still important. Additionally, Jimmy restricted himself to receptive oral sex as it was seen as the less invasive sexual act he could perform. For **Phil**, it was just part of the job, “There’s a few times where you really have to use your imagination, but you know that's how I earn my money.”

For decades, researchers have argued that sex workers feign intimacy and desexualize their encounters as economic exchanges as a coping mechanism to maintain self worth and avoid stigma (Reiss 1961; Boles and Garbin 1974; Weinberg et al. 1999; Oerton and Phoenix 2001). For some of the men interviewed, this was indeed the case, especially when it came to the service of undesirable clients. Like in interviews with American sex workers by Koken, Bimbi and Parsons (2015) some workers felt a sense of altruism which help booster feelings of self-worth. Other men report bringing comfort and companionship to those with limited social-sexual options.

7.3. Blurred boundaries

Sex work in its varied forms is “a more complex reflection of cultural, economic, political and sexual dynamics” (Laing and Gaffney 2015: 264).

Despite the political purpose of the term sex work, it reduces the work that “sex workers” (for lack of a better term) engage in to sexual acts, highlighting the most stigmatizing aspect (Jinghua 2017). As a label, it does not accurately represent the diverse forms of emotional work¹³¹ and companionship that workers provide such as “paid friendship” or venting-sessions. The experience of compassion-fatigue some workers experienced blurs the boundaries of un/caring (See Appendix G). Even when we do recognize the sexual aspects

¹³¹ Hochschild (1983) developed the concept of emotional work to describe the way that service workers manage their own feelings in order to induce feelings in others (Rooke 2009).

of the job, what is meant by “sex” is not universal and similar acts mean very different things to different people (Britzman 1998). Despite the idea of intimacy being associated with monogamy, heterosexuality, and procreation, sex worker and client experienced various levels of intimacy and attraction.

7.3.1. Attraction

McLean (2013) feels that engaging with rich and attractive men or women, sex workers are perhaps able to reassure themselves that they are successful in their vocation, mirroring norms of masculine achievement. Yet, some sex workers professed to giving or wanting to give “freebies” to those they found attractive. For **Ryan**, charging attractive men makes him feel guilty because if he is gaining pleasure from the experience he feels like he is using them. This runs contrary to the RCMP’s (n.d.) assertion that Ryan must be brainwashed, despite the need for money. Despite **Matt’s** own need for money there were times that he refused payment because he “didn’t think [the clients] were that bad looking, I had fun with them, it was alright.” A desirable client was not met with the same work strategies used to deal with undesirables, allowing for more sensuality, physicality, and intimacy, blurring the distinction between “work” sex and “personal” sex. Interestingly, **Bill** used contradictory work strategies with “desirables” because he felt the line between work and personal sex was blurring and he would be at risk of getting hurt.

It's not like, when you're down on your luck this girl's going to be there for you. No. she's paying you for a service. So, I basically have to de-attach myself from that too. Keeps my ego in check a lot but its hard especially when you get some cute girls.

When Bill speaks of his ego, being paid for sex by someone he finds attractive helps to boost feelings of worthiness and possibly machismo. To counter this Bill tries to find and amplify something negative about a client, “I’m always pointing things out. I find little things that will make me just dislike the person more.”

For **Phil** attractive clients were a fringe benefit of the work,

Most of them are attractive to me. Sometimes I’ll get a guy who actually turns me on you know what I mean? I should be paying him for this, I think it but I can’t tell him that. So, you know sometimes there are some hot tongues you know? Your personal life crosses into work.

To not charge someone for sex, or to get to be choosy in this context then comes from a position of privilege. This was the case of **Bashir**,

I got approached by four girls, and from that, I only picked two, because I was only attracted to two of them, but the other two, I was like, “No, I don’t do that, I’m sorry.” Because I was at my prime and not completely broke *I got to choose*. She looked hot, and she looked clean. I just don’t go after random girls.

Finding clients attractive or elements of pleasure in the work complicates the simple scripts of detachment from the experience and exploitation.

7.3.2. Regulars

Regular clients are repeat customers with whom a sex worker eventually develops a more familiar relationship. They return to the same worker consistently over a period of time often forming emotional and / or erotic bonds (Sanders 2008). As such regular clients emulated normative courtship rituals such as bringing gifts of flowers or chocolate to promote intimacy and an image of civility. For **Phil** the level of intimacy is relatively low though he gets sexualized and more generic gifts from clients he’s been seeing weekly for over a decade,

I get tips sometimes; a lot of my regulars will buy me Christmas presents. My bday is next week so I'm sure someone will get me something. Though no one has ever gotten me 10,000\$ worth of diamonds or anything like. I get a lot of underwear. Yup. Put this on! then when they are done they can't take it home with them so here you keep it. I have a drawer full of underwear. I have more than I'll ever wear.

Link describes a mentality of mutual comfort that the regular client–sex worker relationship tries to foster,

I mean normally I try to make everyone feel as comfortable as possible. I've had guys flat out, it was a full out date. Many of the guys have got a significant other in their lives try to put on the same kind of show that they would put on for their spouse and try to make me feel comfortable. One guy actually did take me out for dinner and then took me home after. I've had one guy actually make dinner for me before which was really nice. I'll see him every now and then, but you get some guys you do look forward to being called on by them. Just their personalities, they're very nice people.

Hart and Corbin’s (1999) work in Spain describes these relationships through three types of friendship: 1) the sales pitch, where friendship is a form of manipulation to negotiate fees; 2) fidelity, where the client wants property rights; and 3) genuine friendship. Sex workers in London however described relationships with regulars to be genuine friendships with varying degrees of intimacy

Some regulars served as sugar daddies, older well-off men who temporarily support a sex worker. **Stuart's** sugar daddies paid for companionship, but he is not expected to have sex with them. **Mike** does have a sugar daddy that he will have sex with, but interactions are open-ended like any other relationship and sex is not the primary purpose of the relationship for the client. The most recent interaction Mike had with his sugar daddy was him paying for his move to London and all his furniture. For **Rick**, the deep intimacy he has built with one regular speaks to the blurred lines between, sex, sexuality, sex work, and affection.

Some of the guys I meet through this are guys are nice enough I could hang out with. Like one [regular] is an older gentleman who actually doesn't want sex at all. He pays me to read to him in the nude and play chess with him in the nude... I mean he just likes me to be there. He actually tells me all sorts of stories about what it was like to be gay back in the 20's and 30's; stories about him and his friend bringing lesbians to bars as fake dates. He's such a nice man like I really actually care for that guy quite a bit. I'll actually be really sorry if he ever stops calling me... He's just a really really nice old guy.

Lastly, **Bill** speaks to the dangers of getting too attached to his regular clients, altering his behaviours to remind him to keep it professional,

We'll get used to something, or they'll get used to a certain way when it's really repetitive. But I try not to do things that I think I would like or things that would make me feel good because I do have to detach myself.

7.3.3. Non-sexual

"I'm not technically a sex worker. I'm more of a companion with benefits technically. The only reason is because it's not always about the sex." **Mike**.

Sometimes sex is the least important part of the job or not even a requirement. Some clients and workers engage in non-sexual massage, caressing, kissing, cuddling, and hugging. Sometimes there is no physical contact at all as a client just wants to make a connection through time and talk (Level and Dolnik 2000). **Mike** tells of a dinner date he had with a woman who did not want sex but just wanted someone to talk to that she did not know. Why she hired a sex worker for this is unclear in light of other options but most likely had to do with being able to have some sort of control by negotiating expectations beforehand. **Jean Paul** considers listening as part of his job and has to make sure that the client realizes the limits of the professional relationship. Another woman, 37-years-old, went for the date experience with **Doug**: out for dinner; drinks at the bar; a massage; and watch a movie.

She just wanted to feel loved. She gave me a hug good bye and that's it. She just wanted me to be there for her and have someone there to listen to her and talk to her. I've done that multiple times. I'm not going to judge you. You want me to be here and you have paid me.

Both Doug and **Robert** talk of how over time the work relationship moves into a friendship where they no longer are paid by the hour.

7.4. Summary

Humans seek closeness and proximity to each other which can inspire a positive sense of self. Nurturing this positive sense of self through the momentary closeness and intimacy experienced between the sex worker and client is a major aspect of the procurement of sex (Birch, Baldry and Hartley 2017). Some clients visited sex workers to experience intimacy missing from their personal relationships. Others were seeking to alleviate their loneliness due to in-group discrimination within the gay community or lack of prospective partners, or desire to avoid the expense and drama associated with dating. The social undesirability of non-normative body aesthetics made it more difficult to find companionship or intimacy thereby prompting some to seek out sex workers. These desires for intimacy and affection are contrary to ideas of masculinity that deny men the expression of the full spectrum of human emotions. Purchases were seldom rooted in a male “need” or entitlement to *sexual* gratification further challenging dominant constructions of sexual normalcy, traditional gendered sexual power relations, and hegemonic masculinity (Liddiard 2014).

Beyond this, erotic labour provided a space in which a client experiences permission to enjoy sexual intimacies they might otherwise feel a need to disguise (Stardust 2015). Although society conspires to behave as though there are normal sexualities that involve a script of penetrative penile-vaginal intercourse, this normality is illusory especially within the confines of monogamy, as many heterosexually identifying people engage in a variety of sexualized activity that blurs simplistic hetero-and gender normative lines; this can include cross-dressing, “submissivism,” anal eroticism, and fluid bisexual experimentation (Queen 1997). This included fetish and kink fantasies (of both men and women) and the discrete expression of closeted sexuality (of men).

As part of the labour process, some sex workers used their body capital, and knowledge of sexual scripts to perform what a client wants and desires as well as to make themselves marketable. This included the commodification of youth, hypermasculinity,

and race through body work. They also engaged in body work to deal with undesirable aspects of a client's body and to control the dynamics of the encounter. In response to undesirability they expressed feelings of revulsion and depending on a sex worker's financial freedom distanced themselves from these clients or framed what they did as altruistic to avoid courtesy stigma (McLean 2013). Lastly, some workers described a genuine interest in their clients and described levels of emotional attachment and friendship with regulars. When a sex worker found a client attractive or engaged in non-sexual activities they blurred the boundaries of sex work by problematizing "sex" and "work," professional and personal.

8. Stories of stigma

The imposition of stigma is the commonest form of violence used in democratic societies... [It] can best be compared to those forms of psychological torture in which the victim is broken psychically and physically but left to all outward appearances unmarked (Pinker 1971: 175).

Though not all the men expressed feelings of shame nor identify stigma during parts of their life story, many did. Stigma is a situation “when a person possesses (or is believed to possess) some attribute or characteristic that conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular social context” (Crocker, Major and Steele 1998). The stigmatization of behaviour is the enforcement mechanism behind social norms that attempt to facilitate group cohesion (Blume 2002). To do so, stigma works at two levels: public and self. Public stigma is the negative perception of others, while self stigma is internalized feelings of shame (Corrigan 2004). When society distinguishes and labels differences it stereotypes certain groups of people and behaviours and discriminates in a manner that creates inequality (Link and Phelan 2001; Goffman 1963). Stigma then serves to dehumanize. The overall stigma from being othered causes minority stress; the disharmony between the individual from a stigmatized social category and the dominant culture has negative consequences on personal wellbeing (Allison 1998). Though certain life events are caused by concrete manifestations of stigma (and can subsequently produce further stigmatization) it is not necessary that any prejudicial event actually occur (Goffman 1963). The perception or anticipation that people are not or will not be accepting provokes uncertainty and worry. This vulnerability can lead to feeling helpless and powerless, impairing self-esteem and social functioning (Crocker, Major and Steele 1998).

By considering the complex relationship between social locations, the simultaneous impact of and resistance to systems and structures of oppression and domination can be examined (Hankivsky et al 2014). Many brought up the stigmatized nature of sex work directly but also showed their implicit awareness of sex work stigma through the way they discussed their lives. While this stigma was particularly significant, the stigma of other behaviours and identities manifested itself in complex ways. These were overlapping and had a close relationship to other circumstances in a person's environment. As gendered behaviours underline the processes of male sex work (Kumar, Scott and Minichiello 2017), interviewees were at times subsumed by stigma as they violated hegemonic masculine

norms; at other times they used tropes of masculinity to shield themselves from potential feelings of shame and to justify their actions. It is by identifying these stigmas that I move beyond deterministic “gender-based” analyses of the sex industry where female is always seen to be the marked form,¹³² presenting a more detailed conceptualization of the causes of perceived equity and inequity and the coping strategies used (Hankivsky et al 2014).

8.1. Stigmatization of the sex industry

I'm open about it all because I'm trying to share this story. I want it to be out there. I'm sick of the stereotype. **Stuart; 33-year-old; Porn actor and escort-for-men.**

Numerous studies detail the substantial experiences of stigma and discrimination that sex workers face, even relative to other low-status jobs (Abel and Fitzgerald 2010; Benoit, McCarthy, and Jansson 2015; Link and Phelan 2001; Oselin 2018). They are narratively constructed as a “spoiled identity” where discourses of desire and disgust are spoken through symbolic and material domains (Hubbard and Sanders 2003). Stigmatized populations respond with a desire and attempt to “create, maintain, and claim membership with the dominant group” (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009; Oselin 2018). The men I interviewed cope with this “spoiled identity” most often by leading double lives, where they conceal the involvement in the industry in an attempt to “pass” (Goffman 1963; Koken 2012; Morrison and Whitehead 2005). Stories involved concern for how family would react, being judged by friends and general members of the public, and anxiety about intimate relationships. Lastly, men struggled with their own sense of self-worth, internalizing societal stigmas. Conventionally, family is supposed to help fulfill an individual’s emotional needs. Most of the men already had strained or fractured relationships with their parents and other family members before they started in the industry so how their family would feel did not come up in conversation. Others still had bonds that made them worry about how their parents would react if they found out about their involvement. Jimmy and Link said if their parents knew “it would break their hearts.” In **Link’s** case his mom had told him she would disown him, “she told me she would love and respect me as long as I wasn't out there doing what I'm doing now.” **Jimmy** worried that his parents would stop giving him financial help. **Doug** also thought his family would

¹³² Gendered-based analysts do not focus on the gender-spectrum but are most often applied to a women-first approach.

disown him but thought they would first make fun of him and assume he was an addict. **Jean-Paul** had an aunt who used to sell sex in Rwanda but his whole family would tell her what a disgrace she was and knew he would be treated the same. **Tyrell** and Link brought up discourses of pride and shame as “sex work was morally wrong” and they “were not raised that way.” Staying silent and “in-the-closet” about their work was a way for men to remain on good terms with family, protect family members from emotional pain (and “courtesy stigma”) and shield themselves from being stigmatized by them. “Courtesy stigma” is the stigma attached to those who are associated with stigmatized people or topics (Goffman 1963). Though topic avoidance within parent-child relationships is often a communication norm especially regarding stigmatized and taboo topics (Vangelistsis and Caughlin 1997), the fear of secrets being revealed can affect a person’s sense of well being.¹³³ “In our society, stress is caused from hiding and lying; the vigilance needed to stay closeted; and the negative labelling that accompanies being discovered” (Tomura 2009).

The knowledge that an individual has been involved in the sex industry has and can be used to discriminate against them in other work environments. Teachers, bankers, police officers, restaurant workers, and real estate employees are public examples of people who have been fired from their jobs because of their current or former involvement in sex work (Carey 2018; Clusker 2015; Dickson 2013; McLean 2011; Petro 2012; Schladebeck 2017).

Rick describes the need for discretion;

Anonymity is [important] because like I do have a day job and family and stuff here that know nothing about what I do. I don't want the stigma. It's not so much shame, it's that I recognize the way other people think. It's not my shame, it's theirs... I mean like I don't think I'd get fired over this because that's illegal, but I do think my boss is the type of person that would really look hard for another excuse to fire me... I work retail for a boss who is heavily religious... If he were to know that I'm like turning tricks, yeah that would be the end of it. I'm not even allowed to say God damn in the store.

Bashir had his own concerns;

It's not like, it's nothing bad that I've done, it's all legal, it's legal work. It's not like I got in trouble for it or anything like that. It's just like, people do it on the private... I was working in a strip club, and I just met a friend, and I went

¹³³ There does not appear to be any sort correlation with mental health diagnoses in this group however as the six men with fears of stigma from family, only half reported current diagnoses.

over to her house, and we had a good time, and that's it. I would love to continue to do it... but I'm applying -- it's funny that I'm going to be applying for OPP [Ontario Provincial Police] next year.

Regardless of how they felt about sex work itself, for most it is not a full-time job nor is it a lifelong career. For those who use sex work to supplement their income or only sold because they were in a desperate situation, the threat of losing their primary job was a very real concern, as the economic motivations to sell sex in the first place still exist. For those who wish to leave the industry completely or have no desire to return, not being able or allowed to work somewhere else serves to create a vicious circle where they have no other options.

When talking about intimate partners, some men had a partner who knew and accepted that they currently sold sex. However, most men in a current relationship were open about their past in sex work and were very clear that they would consider it cheating if they were to date someone and sell sex at the same time. This fits with traditional ideals of intimacy where sex and love are linked through monogamous committed romantic relationships (Giddens 1992; Murphy, Dunk-West and Chonody 2015). As such **Link** tells me that he recently had started dating someone and has had to conceal his involvement in the industry and worries about their future together;

I am afraid to tell him because I mean, I don't know - I don't tell anybody just to save face. I do care what people think and I don't like the lying and the, I mean I hate lying about myself and about things that you know I feel I should be able to express myself in certain ways. So for me to hide something like that is, I mean from the people I'm close with it's hard and it's not something I want to do so. I am going to test the waters and see you know how they would react and eventually I will tell.

Here **Link** expresses his desire not to have to hide his work and it extends to other contexts. "Testing the waters" meant trying to predict how open and accepting his boyfriend is by talking around the issue. **Jean-Paul** also worries about how he can be honest with himself and his partner, so his strategy is to start by telling a half-truth;

I don't know how to have this conversation with somebody that I'm in a relationship with. I think I would probably tell them that I have in the past and see their reaction, I don't know. But it's kind of scary. I do know of people in monogamous relationships that still allow their partners to do what they have to in order to get extra money.

Jean-Paul hints that he would likely continue in the industry if his partner was okay with his past and accepted the divide between work sex and the intimacy of relationship. **Jimmy** did not want to be in the sex trade to begin with, so he keeps his past secret;

My girlfriend doesn't know about the sex work in my past. I wouldn't do it while in a relationship. I'd be too nervous. I'm more nervous of somehow catching something and passing it on and then how do you explain that?

It seems he would keep it secret regardless, but because of the risk for STIs, lying does not make sense. For **Robert**, instead of telling a new partner about his sex work he would wait to see how close and intimate they become;

I would keep it under the table for as long as I could. If I thought that this relationship with this one person would be something that is worth just one person, then I would stop the hoeing.

Though it is not clear whether he would disclose his involvement at this point and what he would do for money, Robert shows an awareness of the expectations required in intimate relationships as social norms would dictate and that the stigma associated could be a hindrance. **Phil's** approach stands in contrast to Robert by wanting to maintain respect and honesty, but he feels alienated to the point that he has stopped trying to try to find a relationship;

Once in a while I'll pop on [the dating app] Scruff but I don't actively go out and date because again I can't meet someone and go on a date with them and then say by the way I'm a hooker right. There goes that date. If it offended him or if he went "oh my god you've slept with too many people" and he wanted to break up with me after hearing that I wouldn't blame him a bit for it. You're entitled to feel the way you want but I wouldn't want to lie either. One of the things that has been a double-edged sword in all these years is that I have 2 lives. I've only got a few friends who know about what I do. Of course, my last boyfriend did which was nice because I had someone to talk to about it. I don't want to lie to my friends and family about what I'm doing you know. Though it's not any of their business.

Phil's discussion of living a double life echoes Jiao and Bungay's (2018) interviews with Canadian male sex workers. His reluctance to make new friends was caused by the stress of being outed, abandoned, and ostracized. In other words, he felt the burden of his "spoiled identity" that disqualified him from full social acceptance (Goffman 1963). **Edward** was aware of the stigma as "no one wants to date a prostitute." On one level he

felt that sex with those he dated became uneventful and not enjoyable as sex had become mundane. He continues his story, expressing shame;

It isn't good for the soul. It's not good for the soul. It completely changes people. I was completely miserable in day to day life. Its pretty morally degrading.

These six snapshots highlight the stigma sex workers face when it comes to relationships and how negotiating feelings of shame with the desire for intimacy can be especially challenging. By being secretive they felt limited in their ability to build authentic relationships with others (cf. Benoit et al. 2018).

Lastly, men discussed a general awareness of how people view sex work and wanted to avoid the judgment of members of the public, strangers, and acquaintances. **Doug** has internalized the negativity surrounding the industry and wishes for secrecy, "It's bad enough I'm a worker but I don't want people to know what I'm up to." Besides his fears of his parents' and boyfriend's reactions to his involvement in the industry, **Link** tells me his own sense of shame. Though **Nick** is unwilling to explain further he expresses similar feelings, "I don't like what I do because its disrespecting myself." This was also observed in Freed's (2003) study of Cambodian brothels and Tomura's (2009) focussed life history of an American female escort where this shame was generated from internalized social attitudes of each respective society. This comes from an acute awareness of being the target of stigma. Link continues,

Umm, just it's not something I ever saw myself resorting to doing sex work to make ends-meet. I don't know just the idea of it, um. It, it it, at first it was almost degrading. Especially like you know it really made me feel a little bit, it really made me think about what my self-worth was.

Again, Link expresses inauthenticity as he feels a disconnect between his inner-self, life aspirations and performance of secretly selling sex (Benoit et al. 2018; Koken 2012). One of his coping strategies was to mentally disconnect and create his "own kind of persona, a whole other entity." As his own way to cope **Tim** feels that he started using opiates to disconnect from selling sex. "I don't really want to think about it, you know what I mean? I pretend it's all good."

Jean-Paul gives an account on how he slowly learned that sex work did not meet his preconceived notions of the industry;

There's a lot of stigma. My first time was really awkward, and I felt, like, I felt dirty. I felt like this is not right, I, you know, I wasn't raised up this way, I'm from a Catholic background. [laughs] I had all these misconceptions in my head and as I started doing it they were clearing up; the stigma and like self-hate and everything else.

Moving beyond his own biases, Jean-Paul learns about how much choice and agency he has and begins to rebuild his sense of self-esteem.

I need to be able to control, to have some sort of control in that part of my life because as a sex worker, there's a lot of things that you're coming into contact with that you sometimes don't have control. It's tricky to navigate. Society latches onto that it's like, "Oh, that's dangerous, you shouldn't do it." I realized I *can* kind of control what's happening... I had a say... it wasn't dangerous. I realized that I'm an adult making a conscious decision. I started thinking that I was doing a service for this person. Like this person actually – it helps this person [the client] and it helps me. I think if I had kept the old mentality, I would have definitely stopped.

He continues explaining his mentality shift by comparing himself to others he considered to have higher-value jobs; he realized that there was a variety of different men working in the industry and that people with financial and social means still opted to be involved. "The more I met people who were doing it who had jobs at banks, and wherever and it was like, whoa, this is blowing my mind, this is not -- like this picture I had in my head."

Bashir goes through a similar process of negotiation but also faces the temporal nature of stripping and escorting;

I used to be against it... I just felt like it was not normal, it's just not for me. It was fun and I enjoyed it way too much and all that for now because you're making a lot of money, but in a couple of years, you're going to be like what am I going to do now? It's better to do something where it's going to help you in the future. They asked me to stay, like, they offered me so much money to stay. I'm like no, I can't, it's not my future, I can't do it. I'm like I don't think my parents would be proud of me doing this, so I was like no, I'm going to stop.

Here he discussed how he felt when being introduced to stripping, and the addictive nature of the money and sexuality all the while worrying about how it would make his parents feel.

Jimmy and Fred internalized their experiences in the industry as a response to desperate times in their life, making value judgements about their self-worth and how they would be perceived by others. **Fred** expresses fear of humiliation and embarrassment if

anyone found out, while **Jimmy** wishes he could warn people against selling sex but feels “too ashamed to speak in front of a group of people.” **Rick**, despite positive experiences with clients and exploration of same-sex desires, compares himself to his peers, considering the low-status of sex work (and his addiction):

There seems to be a real stigma about it [in London] like, it just seems... people will go on and on about how disgusting it is, and those people are usually first in line. [I] definitely [experience] a little bit of shame because I mean like I’m going on 35 next year and you know all my peers that I grew up with I hang around with are doing shit with their lives and I’m out here getting my dick sucked.

As an aside, Rick starts by trying to resist stigma and shame by deflecting such hypothetical judgements by counter-stereotyping. **Tyrell** feels shame for “exploiting himself,” calling himself dirty, but is also learning not to feel as ashamed comparing himself to others due to our own struggles. “Just because your issues are put out front doesn’t mean everyone else doesn’t have issues. Their issues are happening behind closed doors.”

Bill emphasizes his need for secrecy in order to protect his daughter from courtesy stigma, worrying about running into acquaintances and former clients at public events, “Even though I really could care less how people categorize me, I do have my daughter, she’s three years old... I just don’t want her to hear people talking this and that, you know?” Like Bill, **Phil** says he does not feel any shame, but when he talks about the need for secrecy his concern is material goods and what they could signal to other people in the community.

I have to be kind of discreet and you know. Always felt that I couldn’t really go out and buy expensive clothes or say an expensive car or something because people would ask where I got the money from. You know? I can’t live way beyond my means or people would - they would probably jump to conclusions and think I was a drug dealer. I don’t know... I don’t know what people really think of me if I were to go out let’s say, pride is coming up this weekend, so I go downtown. I’m not afraid to go out or ashamed of myself but I always wonder if there are people out there who go, uh huh you know what [Phil] does... And I don’t know if people think that of me or not. Maybe they wish they could do what I do. There are a lot of catty people out there who would just be mean. They would say stuff about me just to be mean for no reason at all.

Like Rick’s story about his employer, Phil communicates a stronger sense of positive self-image, but recognizes the potential to be treated as less than others so he tries to conceal

this part of his life. He also places himself on a hierarchy of acceptability engaging in a downward social comparison (Wills 1981), wanting to separate himself from the “dirty work” (Hughes 1962) of drug dealing and its associated stigma. **Matt’s** reflection lumps his own involvement in sex work, drug dealing, and other crimes as signifiers of a shameful lifestyle;

I'm not a bad-looking guy, so I can use that to my advantage. Like yes, I had money in my pocket. At one point, I was making more doing that than I was selling drugs, which is a hard thing to do. I look back on it and I got to think, like, all these women I was with, and like, I don't remember all of them, but some of them are ingrained in [my head]. Like you ever see something so bad that, like, can't get it out? I'm not so ashamed about some of the things I've done. But I would say when it comes to being a prostitute, when it came to breaking into houses, when it came to anything involving pills or jib or coke or anything, stuff like that, I'm pretty ashamed of, you know? When I was first being a prostitute, I had no shame in it, you know, the girls weren't good looking, but I didn't feel bad about it. I felt, I was like look at this money, this is mine now. That's all it took, you know, like most people do this for free, like I got cash for it. You know, so there was no shame at first, but after a while, the shame begins. I want to have a real, legitimate job. I don't want to be selling drugs and being a whore, breaking into houses. I want to be, like, working in a store, you know, like behind a counter, like one of those guys, you know?

Here he has engaged in upward comparison, after losing the romance of fast-money, reinforcing his feelings of “slipping down” and “losing his dignity” while striving for what he considers a legitimate job.

Though all the men I interviewed did identify in one form or another the stigmatized status of sex work in Canada and the US, what made one man internalize this stigma and another resist was not straightforward. Walby (2012) elaborates, further stating that though sex workers may share work as a starting point, the labour processes of sex work are varied and some share little in common, blurring boundaries and identities. Like Dorais' (2005) study on male sex workers in Montreal, each interviewee positioned themselves relative to a moral hierarchy of what they considered irresponsible or acceptable behaviour. The sector of the industry, the sexual practices one partakes in, the kinds of clients seen, how much clients pay as well as the motivations for entering the trade, and the amount of agency one has, create a matrix for comparative value judgments. These subsequently intersect with other dimensions of identity and behaviour allowing us to examine environmental,

structural, and individual factors that affect sex workers and their abilities to manage stigma. Because some engaged in passing behaviours, nondisclosure also meant a lack of sources of support, either personally or institutionally.

8.2. Perceptions of intersectional stigma

I'm sure if I lived in Africa, or somewhere like that, there would be tons of people who have it ten times worse, and I wouldn't feel so bad. But with the way *our* society is, and the way that they judge everything, and categorize everything and lists everything... I really am sort of at the bottom of the list, so. It's like you actually have to be registered in society before you walk outside your house nowadays. You know? I'm surprised when I go to walk out my front door somebody doesn't show up with a pad of paper and a pen going; okay, are you this? Are you this? Okay, you're allowed out today, you know? Like I'm just waiting for that moment, you know?

It's just so crazy how we're the country that claims we're such a free society and we're so loving and caring, and then you get here and you're like, okay, I'm stuck. And I just don't get why we put out that false image when we really aren't what we say we are. Canada always claims freedom of choice, and freedom in general, and human rights, and equal[ity] and... fair[ness]. No, we're not. There's so many labels and stuff put on us in Canada. It's just like I don't get why they make us look like we're this perfect free loving society when really, we're not. And I've even talked to people who have come from other countries that were like I really wish I hadn't come here. And it's like why? And they were like, oh, because of that exact reason. We were told like freedom and love and care, and we come down here and it's busy, and it's corrupt and people are mean and rude. Well, that's Canada. **Dylan; 23-year-old escort for men.**

People stigmatize others based on a series of social constructs, which vary across time and cultures. Consistent stigmatization world-wide includes the occupationally-linked behaviours and identities of sex workers; the sexual practices and identities of gay men and other MSM; substance use and addictions among people who use drugs among other groups (Stagnor and Crandall 2000). Moving beyond a single-axis framework of discrimination shows the synergistic intersection of these and other differences and how the ways stigma can combine to exacerbate barriers in peoples' lives. While sex work stigma was prominent in men's stories, other types of stigma also were common. Participants recounted experiences of homophobia within familial and community institutions; Classed ideas of acceptable lifestyles prompted internalized stigma towards addiction and past criminal acts but also was also evident in the stigma some perpetuated towards other types of addicts and types of criminality; Those dealing with sexual abuse

felt intense shame and humiliation, often facing stigmatization from family or friends about their experience. Lastly, many of those who refused to access available social services or had previous interactions with services framed the people who used them with discourses of filth and extreme poverty. There was a concern of courtesy stigma, that others will devalue their identity based on being associated with these undesirable groups; an internalized or personal stigma was expressed with a perception that claiming benefits conveyed a devalued identity and an admission of failure (Baumberg 2016).

8.2.1. Homophobia

I've learned people are judgmental. They will always be judgmental, you know? I've had people say a lot of mean things. You know, they hate for absolutely no reason and they just don't understand. You know, they haven't been in my shoes, they don't know what I've been through. You know, they think that they have the right to judge me when they don't. I'm not the person that would go judge them. **Austin; 26-year-old escort for men.**

Homophobia refers to discrimination, fear, hostility, and violence towards non-heterosexual people. Closely related is the concept of heteronormativity (Lyons et al. 2017) and gender normativity; concepts that describe the assumption that everyone is or should be heterosexual and perform gender in one way (Bauer et al. 2009). As **Grant** points out when asked if he has experienced any homophobia, “Of course I have, a lot... what gay guy doesn't?”¹³⁴ Regardless of individual attitudes, society shares knowledge that homosexual acts, desires, and identities are still considered bad, sick, and inferior to heterosexuality (Herek 2004). This is ingrained in the way we use language, talk about family, teach our children about sex, and segregate and label based on gender for example. In this kind of world gay men can carry a large stress burden. This stems from the anticipatory fear of public stigma and experienced negative reactions regarding their sexual orientation (Eguchi 2011). Another level of stigma is experienced during the coming-out process. The emotional legacy this time had in interviewees lives is important to review. Phil and Grant remember being bullied as children and called gay before they had come to terms with their sexuality, let alone knew what “gay” was. Fearing further stigmatization, youth often learn to conceal their sexual orientation and isolate themselves from support networks and safe spaces. This isolation can create feelings of despair, anxiety, and

¹³⁴ I was able to share my own encounters with homophobic violence with him.

depression as well as low self-esteem (Varjas et al. 2008). **Jean-Paul** speaks to the emotional toll coming-out can have on a person;

Once you decide to trust them with this super fragile information in your life and they don't take it the way you want, or they reject it or whatever, then it just crushes you. I went through maybe two years of depression because of that.

During this time Jean-Paul's parents engaged in a form of oppressive denial, highlighting his Rwandan ethnicity, telling him "it's just a phase" and that he was being anti-African.

While coming-out to their parents was relatively uneventful for some and positive reactions acted as a protective factor against stigma (Padilla et al 2010) others suffered from different degrees of rejection. Mike told of how his mother rejected him for three months, but his father stopped using homophobic language. In **Link's** case his mother came to his defence repeatedly as his father continually tried to kick him out.

I haven't really dealt with it. I'm still waiting for the day to deal with the whole coming out story with him. I know if he did disown me there's no way I'd be able to make all my ends meet. I don't have enough money even with 2 jobs and escorting.

This fear of (further) rejection and lack of any level of financial support from family is exactly what Edward, Stuart and David *did* face as coming-out meant being kicked to the streets. Despite the difficulties in counting the number of LGBT youth and adults, of 354 American agencies that work with LGBT homeless populations, 73% of gay and lesbian youth experiencing homelessness report parental disapproval of their sexual orientation as the main reason for their homelessness (Durso and Gates 2012). In Canada, LGBT youth comprise 25-40% of Canada's 40,000 (Abramovich and Shelton 2017) to 150,000 (Keohane 2016) homeless youth. Often when they do not find the support and services they need they are more likely to turn to survival sex work (Cianciotto and Cahill 2003). **Edward**, coming out at 16 was told by his mother that she did not approve of his "choice of lifestyle" and his step-father kicked him out. Moving in with his boyfriend, Edward felt trapped as he became abusive and he had to sell sex to survive. Stuart and David rejected for being gay, growing up in what they deem "extremely religious" families. Negative religious beliefs about homosexuality can produce prejudice against sexual minorities and contribute to oppressive environments as well as feelings of alienation and internalized homophobia (Barton 2010; Rodriguez and Oullette 2000). **Stuart** was raised by a Mormon

family and when he came-out at 14, he was kicked out. Though he presents this time in his life with stories of resilience, the results of stigma still stand. He does hint at the pain this caused him when I ask him; if he engaged in any efforts of reconciliation Stuart tells me he has tried but he feels like his parents and sisters were disingenuous as they just tried to use him for money. **David's** parents were Jehovah's Witnesses and when he came out at 18 they also kicked him out. He elaborates on his continuing grief five years later;

There's still some days where my brain is trapped in a cage, because of like my upbringing [being told gay was evil] and my parents... I still want to talk to them, but they don't want anything to do with me.

Homeless, David met his boyfriend Ted after making his way to Toronto and they are faced with homophobia from people they meet along the way and experience institutional homophobic discrimination in the shelter systems.

I was like with [Ted] and umm they separated us. And umm sometimes roommates were homophobic and sometimes they were understanding. So sometimes I would have to act straight and treat him like a friend... But they wouldn't let us have the same room. There was one point that we just decided to live outside in the middle of winter and we had like sleeping bags and stuff like that... I'm just lucky I didn't freeze.

This lack of support and homophobic environment served to make them more vulnerable. **Grant** who was staying with at a local group home for youth with mental health diagnoses fell victim to institutional policies that repress sexual expression of youth; "I took out a bunch of books on the, the topic of gay rights and history for teens... they told me I couldn't have them... they count it like it was pornography." He says it was this sort of environment that encouraged him to abscond.

Lastly, homophobic stigma can provoke hostility, discrimination, and violence while heterosexist systems provide rationale and instructions for that antipathy (Herek 2004).¹³⁵ These experiences of violence are shared by Jack, Grant, Ted and David; Jack and Grant both recount times when they were called "faggot." Grant tells me how he will walk with his husband around town and teenage boys usually yell "faggots" at them. "I wanted to kick the shit out of them, but they aren't worth going to jail for. Apparently, I sound gay, it's just within my voice, it's in my demeanor with how I hold myself, my posture. I don't see it, other people do."

¹³⁵ See Appendix H for some Examples of local *publicized* homophobic crimes from 2017.

Jack uses humor to cope in his account referring to the use of the term “fag” in the United Kingdom and sticks up for himself;

Sometimes people call me a fag. Of course, I’m going to take offense to that. There’s this idiot guy I know who works at Tim Horton’s right by where my parents live. Put fag on both our Tim Horton’s lid and I went right up and I said I want to be fucking lit right now... But I’d be a good-looking cigarette though if I was.

Though 60% to 90% of incidents go unreported (Theobald 2018, Roberts 2015), hate crimes targeting sexual orientation in Canada are among the most violent of hate crimes (Gaudet 2018). **David and Ted** give a face to the statistics.

Ted was hospitalised and got stitches because a guy we were living with beat the crap out of him. We’ve been busy trying to create a safe space for the both of us. We was in for the night - it was New Years Eve and the guy was high on coke and just wiggged out that Ted was gay and beat the shit out of him and got a few punches to me too - the girl tried strangling me and stole our electronics. We pressed charges for brutal assault and hate crime but the cops took their side. There’s no justice. We’ve had no follow-up, nothing. Nothing happened. For some reason, every time I call in, [the officer] is always never on shift when I call. Then when I do call, and it is his shift they can never reach him. It's kind of like, from my point of view, they're just actively working to just not deal with my case.

Roberts’ (2015) report for the Department of Justice Canada discusses why situations like this may fail to enter official statistics or be classified by the police as hate-motivated crime; “failing to appreciate the importance of determining whether a crime was motivated by hate, officers may simply ignore the issue assuming assault is assault” (7). By ignoring the homophobic nature of crimes such as experienced by Ted and David, the justice system has refused to acknowledge their suffering, placing the burden for closure entirely on them; their apathy further victimizing (McDevitt, Levin and Bennett 2003).

8.2.2. Addiction stigma

With 37% (n=16) of interviewees disclosing current or former drug use or issues with addiction, accounts of addiction-stigma arose in their stories. At one level, the intersection of sex work and addiction served as a way for some to position themselves as “better-off” than stereotypical street-sex workers and junkies. This echo’s Orchard and colleagues (2012) study with women who sell sex in London (Ontario) and their accounts of addiction. When I asked **Phil** what sets him apart from other sex workers he appeals to a professional identity concluding, “I’m not a junkie and I’m not a thief and I take my work seriously.”

Grant performs a similar exercise of identity management saying that despite his troubled background he still feels extremely fortunate but also judges certain behaviour. “There’s crack-whores, I know that’s rough but there are guys who stand on the street like a racket hooker? Who would pull over for that?” **Steven** also creates a binary between what he considers legitimate sex work and what “street-addicts” do;

You might think the odd woman that's a junkie on the street with all picks and sores all over her face probably will suck their crack dealers for more drugs, but when you're hoeing... you're walking up to *nice* people’s houses, and *nice* cars... it's not for your next piece of rock.

The connotation here is of “exclusion-for-being-a-bad-person” (Matthews, Dwyer, and Snoek 2017). Additionally, Steven presents the undesirable substance user as physically marked, picks and sores functioning as stigmata. **Jimmy** has internalized this shaming, so he dresses to be able to pass, concealing as someone without a history of drug use.

I was using needles and I just started looking at my arms, which have gotten extremely better, but, I mean there's still, like, in the summer, I got to buy T-shirts down to there. [Points to wrist]. The other one, I have three. People who know, know what’s going on. When I worked at the grocery store, when I started college and was doing that, I'd buy those elbow pads... I didn’t want to be looked at like that.

He continues telling me another way he maintains his privacy while taking methadone to avoid getting sick.

You can have your needles and your, all dropped off to your house. This guy from a city organization would bring the syringes, the cookers, the box that you put them in, the needles when you're done, condoms. All for free. It helped remove some of the stigma from going directly to the clinics.

Public stigma gives rise to shame as “we imagine how we compare with others, with our former selves, or with the prevailing normative standard” (Matthews, Dwyer, and Snoek 2017). **Austin** talks of how this stigma and shame affected his mental health;

I learned when I was on the drugs... that people hate at me. I was doing what I had to do, it was a lot of stress, a lot of work. I started getting depressed over that, fell... into a deep state of emptiness.

Blake discussed how people reacted when he tells them about his addiction, saying that ignorance precludes any possible sympathy as they “don’t get why I do it,” or repeat the “drugs are bad” discourse. Both Blake and Austin were stigmatized and over time they had

become less confident, trusting, and more cautious forming relationships (Williamson et al. 2014).

8.2.3. Sexual abuse stigma

Often when a child does not have their need for love, value and care met they can become more susceptible to exploitation. The aftermath of sexual abuse and how adults treat victims causes feelings of shame, guilt and trauma that contribute to psychopathological symptoms (Clancy 2009). **Blake**, a victim of childhood sexual abuse, had to endure shame, anger and humiliation as family or friends became aware of what his brother did to him. Another relative would give him and other kids in the family “loonies and toonies”¹³⁶ to stay silent about sexually abusing them. His older brother had been abused himself as well as his other siblings. His mother had also been abused and was the product of his great-grandfather raping his grandmother. This intergenerational trauma likely affected his mother’s reaction to his brother abusing him. Those who have been abused can suffer from long term consequences such as PTSD and therefore require professional therapeutic interventions (Negrao et al 2005). Instead of addressing these issues as well as reporting the abuse to the authorities, Blake spoke of how his mother would tell people about what his brother did to him to get attention and sympathy. Not only does he resent his mother for this, and feel contempt towards his brother, people at school and his friends found out and would shame him with incest jokes. This is why he says he moved out at 14 and is how he frames the development of his personality disorders and mental health issues which required him to receive treatment at a mental health facility. In fact, he brought up past suicide attempts several times alongside his addiction, citing that he feels mental anguish because of his past and does not feel like he knows who he is.

Jeff’s abuse story is partial, but the sense of shame he feels is clear. Though he says he feels a bond (Stockholm syndrome) with his uncle who raped him several times a week for 15 years, he contradicts himself by saying he feels his dignity was chipped away. It was the lack of sympathy and denial by the rest of his family that contributed to his feelings of shame. When the courts did nothing, and justice was not served Jeff, says his life was “completely” destroyed. **Ted** at 14 consented to sexual activity with an old man, admitting he enjoyed his time but also telling me he was lured. It was after talking to his friends and

¹³⁶ Canadian \$1 and \$2 coins

they told him he was disgusting that he began to feel shame; “I started drinking and smoking pot after the *abuse* happened just because it was really hard for me to deal with after.” Regardless if a 14-year-old is cognitively mature enough to consent to sex or not, it was not the act itself but how people treated him that instilled a sense of shame for Ted.

Moving from the accounts of sexual abuse experienced when interviewees were young men and boys, **Matt** gave an account of being raped by a *female* client as an adult and the traumatization and shame he feels. “They say men can't be raped by women. Which is bullshit, like, it's happened to me, I know it can happen. I experienced it.” The stereotypical sexual victimization paradigm comprises of male perpetrators and female victims; it reinforces regressive ideas that feminize and stigmatize victims and that female-perpetrated abuse is rare or non-existent (Mendel 1995); it prioritizes interventions for women and excludes male victims (Stemple and Meyer 2014). Matt continues,

Rape doesn't have to mean just being penetrated... they're doing things to you that you don't want... When we were done fucking I went to get up, she said, “You're just going to lay there and when we're done, we're done, and if you don't like it, good fucking luck, try getting up,” and she was like three times my size.

Here he counters the idea that for men all sex is welcome (B. Smith 2012). His story also puts to question the assumption that male victims experience less harm, that women are disproportionately affected by sexual violence (Scarce 1997) often because of the idea that men are stronger physically and emotionally than women (Koss et al. 2007). John too was raped by a larger client, “I agreed to one thing and he did all this other stuff and didn't pay. I ran into him at the mall and he looked at me and laughed and said, ‘You liked it.’” Matt continues his account,

I couldn't do nothing man. So I started crying laying there. Like it hurt so bad. She gave me the money and I was like -- I just took it and I, like, looked down -- I don't know, but like that broke me man. I didn't feel tough. I didn't feel like a hotshot. I didn't feel cool, I didn't feel like what I was doing was worth anymore at that point.

Because he had finished ejaculating, without a recovery period the penis became extra sensitive to the point of painful for some men. Additionally, because of his back problems his muscles were in pain from the weight of the perpetrator. He also felt that because he had consented initially, no one would take him seriously that he was raped. This is also

why John never reported his rape, “They would have blamed me as if it were my fault because I was escorting.” Here is where the stigma of selling sex and rape intersect,

At that moment, like, I wanted to quit so bad. If I didn’t need the money, that would have made me quit, but I was still hurting; so... I was scared. Traumatized. I feel like everyone I was with was using me. Like, you know, I wasn’t there because anybody cared. At that point I was a whore.

Though his heterosexuality is not put to question here, Matt’s understanding of what happened to him is framed in cultural ideas of heteromascularity (Connell 1995; Butler 1990). He no longer felt in-control or powerful; he felt the shame of being emasculated and there was nothing he could do about it. **John’s** understanding of his rape experience is framed by racialized gender stereotypes despite his own identification as mixed-race Black; “He was rough, and it was a Black guy, so I don't date Black guys now; I don't do them anymore for that reason.” Here he reproduces the image of Black men as predatory and dangerous (Wilkins 2012).

8.2.4. Social class stigma

Some sex workers evaluated their lives comparing basic life chances and current quality of life with a desire for upward social mobility. The failure to get ahead or the precarity of or loss of a middle-class lifestyle brought about feelings of shame. **Link** grew up in the middle-class and constantly tries to maintain a similar lifestyle as an adult. At the time of the interview he was working in various retail positions and sold sex to offset the variability of his paychecks. He reflects on having to change his goals and dreams to fit reality;

When I was younger I had higher expectations, I mean over the years I’ve kind of whittled them down and I’m still not quite where I want to be. A lot of my friends at this point aren't even where they wanted to be. Now I’m starting to accept that as the new normal. You know like, at this point I don't have any expectations. I'm just surviving now. It's a game of treading water.

After going to college for three years to be a fashion designer, he struggled to find what he deems “real work” as the bills piled up. To struggle financially is a source of shame for Link and many others. Though he admits there are structural reasons for his underemployment, the idea that economic situation is determined by individual ability and effort may be an internalized remnant of a Protestant ethos of self-responsibility and hard-work and the failure to do so is shameful (Morton 2014). Though he would like to move to a bigger city with more opportunities or go back to school, he recognizes there is little

he can do at this point as the types of work he does will not move him out of poverty or provide economic independence (Nixon 2018). Link attempts to alleviate some of his shame by realizing that many of his middle-class peers are in similar predicaments when it comes to success.

Howie and Matt come from working-class, lower-income backgrounds. In both of their accounts they express differing levels of internalized shame for where they are now financially and where they came from. **Howie** reflects,

You know, I figured I'd be a little more well-off instead of working at a fucking factory, you know what I mean? I'd rather be somewhere else... It bums me out, you know what I mean? I'm 25 and, you know what I mean, I was kicked out of high school and shit, I wanted to go to college, I wanted to go to university and just one thing after another it went downhill.

Howie here is talking about ideals of education as a method of upward class mobility. For the working-class, higher education, and the possibilities it theoretically offers of entrance into a profession, represents escape from the grinding facts of ordinary working-class life such as little pay, status, or security (Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine 2005).

I just wanted to be something different from like my dad from going job to job growing up. I wanted to be able to give my kids a *better life* than my parents gave me. You know what I mean? Because growing up I was always deprived and shit too. You know, I don't want my kids to ever go through that. I just want to be able to financially send them to college and steer them in the *right* direction, right? And I've never had that opportunity.

Howie emphasizes a desire to that if he has children he wants to remove them from the negative environment he grew up in. Wanting something different, something more than your parents implies there is something wrong with your parents' life. When asked he does not explicitly say he feels any shame about his family or regret choices¹³⁷ he made, the language he uses about things going "downhill", the desire to give his future kids a "better life" and steer them in the "right" direction implies a judgement towards his family's drug use, criminal behaviour and how they left him to fend for himself during his teenage years. Because this kind of lifestyle according to Howie "was in the family, and it was "inevitable" that he would repeat their behaviours, he is essentially arguing that his and his parents' lives are shameful in some way (Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine 2005).

¹³⁷ He emphasizes that using drugs is a choice, though he now does drugs to stop himself from getting "sick."

Like Howie's idea of steering his kids in the "right" direction, **Matt** speaks of a desire for a "conventional" lifestyle. They both are pointing to an unspoiled stigma-free middle-class lifestyle of self-sufficiency, leisure, and consumerism.

[When I met my girlfriend] I had the idea that we get together, you know, we get the chance, we'll get married, get a house together, we get a car, you know, like *those kind of people*. We didn't grow up in that *conventional* lifestyle, but we've always seen it from afar and it's something we've always wanted. We've always wanted to have a car and have a house, you know, and have a life, not be people in an apartment or at the bus on welfare or whatever.

When I ask Matt what he thinks it would take to achieve this dream he looks to his past seeing the paths he has taken as due to the lack of opportunities from being "ghetto." The concept of ghetto is a matrix of urban poverty and segregation within certain spatial boundaries (Wacquant 2004).

I grew up, you know, playing, hanging out by myself, walking around the gullies, breaking into places, get myself into trouble, you know, drinking and stuff like that. Like when I was a kid, I didn't have a lot of opportunities or options. I would have never had to go on welfare at 15 years old, you know?

Being from the ghetto and possessing a tainted identity, Matt discusses a lack of choices for engaging in behaviours stereotypically associated with a culture of poverty such as crime, welfare dependency, and drinking. As stigmatized individuals encounter marginalization and unequal opportunities, social comparisons with those around them can lead to stress and frustration (Kawachi 2000). Matt continues,

If I would have gone, like, into sports when I was a kid and had been in clubs and made friends, you know, go on vacations and, you know, like that's what *normal* kids do. They go out in the sun on spring break with their parents, like, Niagara Falls or something, or, they join like the soccer team and every Wednesday, Mom's got to take you and watch you not score a goal for an hour. You know, that's what kids do. That's what you see in the movies and media all the time, I never had that.

Here he seems to accept dominant stigma narratives about the lower-class by contrasting his own desire to leave this type of lifestyle (Keene and Padilla 2010).

Despite internalized feelings of shame for engaging in sex work especially with undesirable clients, the idea of personally using social services or receiving some sort of social assistance was an extremely shameful idea. Some men engaged in a form of "identity talk" (Snow and Anderson 1987) in order to deny membership in a category of people who currently used these services. They thrust stigma onto a demonized other (Wacquant 1996).

This “defensive othering” (Ezzell 2009) was a strategy to reassure themselves that they are not at the bottom of rungs of society, that they are better than others in some way (Halnon 2013). They spoke of social and bureaucratic interactions using visceral discourses of dirt and degradation. At the Salvation Army shelter, Jill felt dirty, “not knowing when the stuff was washed, knowing the bathrooms are like gross; it doesn’t feel clean to me.” **Grant** calls the Salvation Army “fucking ghetto,” saying youth should not have to “feel so weird” because of “hobos.” A homeless person is different than a hobo; he offers a description, “They do not take care of themselves, don’t care and like the transient lifestyle.” This image of uncleanness is repeated by **Nick** and his experiences at shelters “sleeping in a room with a bunch of other guys that stink and smell really bad.” **Matt** characterizes people who go to Youth Opportunities Unlimited¹³⁸ and food banks as “smelly,” “disgusting,” and “unhygienic.” Some people place themselves on a “hierarchy of need” and refuse to use food banks because they feel that they are not *actually* poor enough to need food from the food bank; even though if they did not sell sex during previous hardships, they would have gone hungry or ended up on the streets. Lastly, Matt, Jill and Nick all describe people who use social services, or who spend time in the downtown core as “addicts and junkies.” This double stigma is interesting as all three are former or current drug users; this shows the existence of a hierarchy of acceptability where those considered out-of-control or without legitimate reasons for doing what they do are othered. Though Nick and Matt had been involved in breaking-and-entering or other crimes they stigmatize these same people. Nick says, “they are drug addicts and always out to steal and shit.” Matt confirms this,

They are not really people I’m going to want to see again or talk to again. They use needles or have something totally messed up about them. I’m pretty fucked up but I’m not *that* sketchy. I’d rather earn my way than have to deal with those disgusting places... most people that utilize those resources typically use hard drugs... I’ve slipped with some stuff but I mean these people use everyday till they’re wasted away and dead and I can’t go in a place I feel someone might rob me.

Different categories and identities have had differing impacts on how a man perceives his position in the world and his subsequent behaviours. Some sex workers discussed the mundane strains of sex work and the behaviours they engaged in were not particularly

¹³⁸ A not-for-profit organization that assists with housing, education, and employment for “youth aged 16-30 years-old”

stressful or particularly exciting. Aside from those who had been victimized and need to deal with their subsequent trauma, it was largely the shame and stigma associated with selling sex that provoked the most distress. Sources of internal and external stigma included implicit and explicit discourses from family, health professionals, state officials and policy, media reports, peers and the general public (Bowen, Atchison and Oliffe 2015).

Though it is clear many of the interviewees experienced differing levels of stigma and shame, they also engaged in othering practices whereby they attempted to distance themselves from stigmatizing discourses (Patrick 2016). This othering framed each man as not “as-not-as-bad-as” or “more-moral-than” others within a stigmatized categorization. Lastly, by affirming a sense of masculinity, they negotiated and minimized feelings of disadvantage in an attempt to maintain a sense of dignity.

8.3. Hegemonic masculinity: Sword and shield

As political feminist discourse has been taken up by the Canadian nation state, any discourse of masculine disadvantage that might have constructed men as victims of structural economic (or intersectional) changes is repressed and countered with calls of patriarchal oppression and the long-term generalized disadvantage of women. Community and social norms therefore silence discussion regarding male vulnerabilities and reinforce concepts of hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is defined as the group of features that connote the physical, physiological, and cultural attributes of elite males, and is advanced as the ideal model for all masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Male sex work has a double stigma as it is associated with same-sex desire and prostitution, both subordinated expressions of the masculine (Kumar, Scott and Minichiello 2017). At risk of being shamed by peers, family, and the wider community for taking a “gender-inappropriate” form of work, selling sex is then an act engaged in despite these experiences of shame and stigma. Considering the number of gay, bisexual and queer-identifying M\$M interviewed in this study, I was somewhat surprised by the similar appeals to masculine discourses that were also used by heterosexual men who sold to women. By aligning masculinity to hegemonic norms, some escorts defined their work by a framework that dominated and subordinated them (the sword) when they engaged in supposedly feminine (non-masculine) behaviour. At the same time, it is through conventional forms of masculinity that men protected themselves (the shield) from shame.

The most common explanation was the fulfillment and reification of their occupational role in society as they placed value on economic independence and breadwinning to support themselves, spouses, or children (McDowell 2014). Others replicated discourses of empowerment and choice by emphasizing higher sex drives, the purchase of luxury goods, or the skills needed or therapeutic services they provide for clients. It was in this manner that they separated themselves from those workers they deemed beneath them, as well as from feminized tropes of helplessness, and incidentally women who sell sex.

Although there is no typical profile of a sex worker, all sex workers have one thing in common: each expresses their degree of personal autonomy within a particular social environment that structures both opportunities for and constraints against particular forms of action... Both their motivations for engaging in sex work and their experiences as sex workers are largely shaped by their individual frame of reference, their social location vis-à-vis others, their perceptions of various alternatives, and the social environment in which they are embedded (Katsulis 2009)

In response to discourses of personal deficiency when men experience unemployment or need for social support, interviewees made assertions of self-sufficiency to combat feelings of shame and stigma (Nixon 2018). **Jimmy** does this by countering feminized discourses of sex work vulnerability;

I did this to myself. I'm not a victim. [Clients] didn't approach me. They didn't know what I needed the money for. They didn't take advantage of me. I had no one to answer to. I lived by myself, I was doing whatever I wanted to do. It was easy.

Jean-Paul emphasizes the privilege and strength he has as a man living in a patriarchal society versus female sex workers especially in regard to safety, "Every situation that I go to, I decide. Every single action that I do is decided, ahead of time. The money that I get is on the table before, it's -- there's no surprises." Jean-Paul does acknowledge that women are more likely to have a pimp or colleagues for safety compared to men who are independent.¹³⁹ **Grant** and **Robert** also frame themselves as safer because things like kidnapping and violence "happen more in straight sex work than gay sex work." **Doug** continues this trope, "I was never worried about my safety. Its a guy thing. Its women that

¹³⁹ Steven and Grant do take precautions however; Like Steven does with one of his regulars, making him wait in the car while he is with a client in case he needs help, Grant makes sure his roommate knows when he is with a client "just in case."

always have to carry pepper spray or something.” As **Matt** simply puts it, “I... do things for me.”

Framing selling sex as a way to capitalise on personal resources in order to make money also proves one’s worth to society and legitimizes a man’s masculinity (Browne and Minichiello 1995). **Bill** considers what he does a purposeful strategy, where unlike women, he feels he has control;

As a man, you can do without a lot of things to survive and still make money. So I feel like I always try to evolve and adapt my game. Like right now, I’m in a lot of debt that’s why I’m basically doing what I’m doing.

Austin goes a step further countering the stigma of multiple behaviours he undertook, “I did what I had to do, did crime, sold drugs, sell sex.” This appeal to making money in any way possible overlaps with masculine signifiers of survival and endurance (cf. Kumar, Scott, and Minichiello 2017). The amount of money selling sex brought in gave some a sense of pride; Grant brags, “I put peoples’ jobs to shame, for how much money I bring in.” **Mike** shares the sentiment, “Once you’re in it, you’re in it for life basically. The money makes you addicted.” Here Doug emphasizes symbols of social class, luxury, and convenience that he would not have had without selling sex.

I had everything I wanted. Went from wearing some ripped up jeans to like designer like Makaveli and Banana republic. I was wearing like Prada and Versace, Sean John and everything. I was loaded. I had real diamond earrings. When I had a job I’d go down and get my hair done, get piercings, contacts and everything all that. Live life. I kept buying like headphones, scarves and what not.

The purchase of designer clothing and the latest mobile phone was also something that John emphasized as beneficial reason to sell sex. What these status symbols do is create a “sign value” that creates a different appearance, modifying the identity of the wearer (Baudrillard 1988). **Stuart** focuses on the business prowess he has developed over the years and how with his money he had purchased several businesses. He continues emphasizing his entrepreneurship,

Its my job to take money. I have a bank account that is just for tips, I do stock trading and I have multiple bank accounts. I also have an offshore bank account too. Having to fend for myself -- having to deal with society on my own is where I got these skills.

Bashir also emphasizes easy money but also discusses the masculine aptitude a stripper needs to be successful.

Its easy money -- The easiest. Though, you have to have a good body. If you don't have a good body, you won't make any money. And you have to be charming, and you have to know how to talk to girls.

The traditional concept of being a provider for family was important for some men. **Nazir** and his family as new immigrants were struggling financially so the ability to help by selling sex helped him manage his shame. "I am a survivor. So, I thought hard about it and getting food on the table with no help from government was important." **Bill** emphasizes that the money from sex work helps him and his girlfriend to live comfortably and that he "put her through a year at university." **Matt** uses the money to help raise his brother's children. For some, the money from their sex work activities was specifically put aside or invested for their own children. Often the birth of their child was the impetus to "change their ways" by avoiding criminal activities from their past or dealing with addictions. The five men with children all had very limited or no access rights to their kids due to custody battles or because of jailtime. Since they were denied the ability to be an "involved" nurturing father, being able to provide financial security for their child allowed them to shift from their failure of paternal masculinity and the stigma of being an absentee father towards the hegemonic image of breadwinner (Randles 2018). As **Austin** boasts, "I'm just sticking by my beautiful daughter."

Another way to avoid stigma was to frame sex work as an act of altruism that reinforces heroic masculinity (Koken et al 2004). **Bem** (1974) outlines the characteristics assigned to the masculine gender role such as willingness to take risks, being adventurous, having the ability to remain calm in a high stress situation, and the ability to stand up under pressure. In order to engage with various people and anticipate and fulfill their desires then required higher technical skills that serve as a marker of status (Kumar, Scott and **Minichiello** 2017). **Ted** emphasizes his people-skills and performative empathy;

I had to be able read people and tell what they wanted and how they wanted it pretty much right away. I get a sense of what they want and then I would be that for them. I think it's part of being a sex trade worker too, right? You satisfy peoples' needs just because I can recognize, you know, their needs faster.

Though everyone gave accounts of very attractive clients that they enjoyed being with, the frame of self-sacrifice and “risk” was prevalent when they had clients who were disfigured, or undesirable in some way. Despite this, professionalism was key. **Robert** feels there needs to be mutual trust, “They just want to be treated the way they’re treating you... it should be really professional.” **Dylan** considers it his job, “the whole point is to make them feel good about themselves and I don’t want to make them feel worse after I leave.” **Ryan** also maintains compassion in light of undesirable clients or sexual acts, “what gets me through times like that is that I’m “helping out” those who wouldn’t get any intimacy if it weren’t for me.” Lastly, **Stuart** emphasizes the emotional labour of service work (Sanders 2005).

Of course, I’m into you, you’re paying me, so even if I’m not *really* into you, now I am. Of course, I love that belly... [Other workers won’t act like that] and that just doesn’t make sense to me. You’re out there providing a service... everyone needs loving too. Its all about faking. You’re in it... to make money. They’re in it to get off or the companionship. It’s more I want you to come home and cook dinner with me and watch a movie and its rarely sex [so looks do not matter].

By moving beyond the embodied sexual experiences and emphasizing their role in empowering emotional and sexual positivity in the safe environment that they created, men gave their work social value (Kumar, Scott, and Minichiello 2017). By using the lens of masculinity, they were able to reinforce their status, emphasizing their occupational expertise or experience.

Constructing oneself as sexually voracious, thereby (re)producing the discourse of male hypersexuality was another way for a sex worker to fight stigma and assert masculinity (Hollway 1989); they could position themselves as in control instead of being controlled (Staiger 2005). For Ryan and Grant, “enjoying sex” and having partners who “couldn’t keep up” with their sex drive served as a fringe benefit of the job. Tyrell and Doug illustrate how the breaking of taboo by selling sex and engaging in less common sexual practices was thrilling. **Tyler** starts, “Deep down I found it kinky... It was a sexual outlet in a way, and intense adrenaline.” **Doug** continues with a similar discourse;

It was mainly the pleasure of it, but it also was the rush - the adrenaline rush. I even have had sex outside with people. It just when you’re done, your heart’s beating and wow, you feel more alive. Sometimes you do things that you only see in a movie... I was thinking to myself, oh I heard that in a movie once. Now

I'm actually doing it. It's like wow, I never thought I'd be here and now I'm doing this.

For **Ted**, the need for money and the excitement of sex merged much like Benoit and colleagues (2017) found in a *multi-gender* sample of Canadian sex workers.

The way I saw it, it was like the perfect trade-off. I wanted sex and I wanted money, so why not do both at the same time, it just seemed like the most logical thing at the time. Because yeah, I was incredibly horny, and I was incredibly broke, so it was a win-win

This tendency to pursue pleasure and excitement and the willingness to take risks matched with traditional masculine ideals (Padgett 2017).

8.4. Summary

A simple appeal to masculinity that constructs “men” as strong or powerful is deceptively simplistic and seriously flawed. Not only does it perpetuate a fantasy that “victims” do not have agency, resilience, or evidence of resistance, it assumes that those who do, have not or do not suffer from oppression (Fine et al 2003). Just like everyone else, work-life, gender expression, personal-life, sexuality, family-life, upbringing, and class-background etc. all interrelate and shape one another. Experiences of stigma and shame varied depending on the extent individuals internalized a “spoiled identity” or had the tools and ability to counter them (McLean 2013; Goffman 1963). For many I was often the only person they had ever talked to about their sex work experiences indicating deeper feelings of shame and stigma (and mistrust of others). This supports literature regarding male help seeking behaviour and disclosure, where men were less likely than women to seek help and those who did had to overcome internal and external obstacles to do so (Galdas, Cheater, Marshall 2005). Hegemonic masculinity makes men feel like it is not socially acceptable to show emotion and have concerns about being judged for reaching out (OliFFE et al. 2012).

Due to fears of being stigmatized, interviewees worried about their anonymity; many feared that friends, family, or employers would discover their involvement in the sex industry and had concerns about how to tell future partners about their past. Some men felt remorse for engaging in “dirty work” (Hughes 1951) wishing they had a different life. Well aware of public perceptions of selling sex, some dealt with internalized shame in attempt to (re)gain self-respect by engaging in therapeutic dissociation, separating themselves from street-workers, emphasizing their agency and control of their lives and the amount of

money they earn. Other coping strategies are similar to those found in Bowen, Atchison and Oliffe (2015), including “participating in research, maintaining physical wellness through exercise and taking breaks from work” (30).

There were four other intersectional categories in which men experienced stigma: 1) Gay, bisexual and queer men discussed issues of homophobia ranging from being bullied, rejected by family, or being victims of hate crime. The lack of age appropriate services for queer men and the disconnected LGBT community contributed to feelings of vulnerability. 2) Those men dealing with addiction were shamed by peers and the public and some tried to cover up injection scarring or remain discrete; to counter internalized shame some men engaged in downward comparison, separating themselves from the “courtesy stigma” of being associated with “junkies.” Some non-addicts also separated themselves from these “crack-whores.” 3) Men who had suffered from sexual abuse or were raped as children or adults gave accounts of being shamed by family and peers. One man who was raped by a woman felt helpless as he felt he would be ridiculed by police due to gendered rape discourse. 4) Lastly, some men engaged in downward and upward social class comparison to express feelings of shame about their lower status, or to separate themselves from those they deemed worse-off. Some men who grew up with a “ghetto” lifestyle longed for a “stigma-free” idealized middle-class lifestyle which included leisure, consumer goods and education. Other men emphasized their self-sufficiency and ability afford to live a “good life.” The stigma of using social supports prevented many from accessing those which were available; often they placed themselves on a hierarchy of need or engaged in defensive othering, framing users of supports as dirty, criminal, or junkie.

Masculinity was a valuable tool to understand the experiences of men in the sex industry as it showed how hegemonic norms acted as a sword and shield in some narratives. To counter feminized tropes of helplessness some men spoke of sex work as an empowering choice, emphasizing independence and self-sufficiency. The status symbolism of luxury goods and the skills of entrepreneurship were often part of these stories; “Doing what one had to do” to survive and endure unfavorable conditions contributed to an idea of heroic masculinity. This also included highlighting one’s role as breadwinner, as a man provided for family members or his children’s future. By emphasizing their charitable altruism for providing services to lonely or undesirable

clients, a man's work could be seen as a professional service with social value. Lastly by emphasizing a high sexual appetite and objectifying attractive clients, some men could assert their masculinity within the discourse of hypersexuality.

Mapping complex relationships with social categorizations has shown that men in the sex trade face a multitude of social stigmas, some perhaps more than others. The impact of social stigma is complicated as many men occupy multiple marginal categories simultaneously (Meyer 2013). With attention to intersectionality ranked assumptions of harm and deservingness have been problematized and also showed distinct experiences of oppression, opportunity, and self-management (Logie et al 2011). These men's stories have shown that there is a price to pay for living a life that can be collapsed at any moment, secrets found out, the fear of stigma overshadowing every action a man takes. By passing (Goffman 1963) using the discourse of hegemonic masculinity, interviewees attempted to protect themselves from the loss of social status that might result from disclosure. However, they also closed themselves off from the possibility of using social supports and failed to challenge the status quo by raising the visibility of their stigmatized identities (Koken, Bimbi and Parsons 2015).

I'm not any less of a person because I did those things. Like I'm still just as complex and just as here as anyone else is, right? And it's just fucking weird, and you realize all these people in their little mainstream little rat race running around doing their rat race things, Because everyone is different. Everyone has different needs, everyone has different experiences. It's all a stigma. It's all like a power trip. It's all like a I shamed you so that I feel better. **Ted; 21-year-old escort for men.**

9. Intelligible variability

Visibility is really important. Not all sex workers are cis. Not all sex workers are women. Not all sex workers are conventionally attractive... Make sure to give visibility to anybody who is doing sex work and not focus on one demographic because that's a common misunderstanding and it puts a lot of peoples lives at danger (Cakes 2018).

With such diversity in the stories I was told, there have been times I have stopped and asked: Can I say anything about these men or the phenomenon of male sex workers other than to affirm that they do indeed exist? What I have found is intelligible variability, a dualism of the arborescent and the rhizomatic. Sex work is,

a socially and culturally constructed manifestation of a de-constitutive dimension of human existence. Thus there is no fixed form of [men selling sex]... It is not reducible to some fundamental principle of human behaviour, to a universal base structure of society, or to general cognitive or biological processes (Robben and Nordstrom 1995).

In other words, sex work is rhizomatic as a concept because it has no beginning nor end; it is comprised of heterogeneous networks of meaning that form and dissolve depending upon circumstance and with what and whom they are dialogically connected (Deleuze 1991). At the same time sex work is shaped by arborescent discourses that are totalizing and hierarchal, narratives of gender, sexuality, governmentality, capitalism, etc. (ad infinitum?) and our own causal ways of understanding each other. In this manner, subjectivity and intersubjectivity worked as tools, to find mutual understandings; not by imposing categories onto lived realities, or “objective reference point” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994) but by exploring the manifestation of reality through the mutual intelligibility of narrative form. This dualism-juxtaposition replicated itself on differing levels throughout this dissertation.

Men who sell sex do not have the same kinds of self and are not the same sorts of beings sharing a minority status. Their independence and isolation from each other did not foster a sense of community, which is often a requirement in identity politics. However, being a man in any one social context has made certain things more likely to happen and other things less likely. It has influenced the sorts of interpretations these men and others have for their actions. Their devaluation by greater society as deviant and incomprehensible, by default creates a marginalized “community” of men. In some situations, men who sell sex (in all their diversity) challenge dominant notions of sexuality

by presenting a fluid expression of male desire and a plastic aesthetic of the body. In other situations, they can disrupt the binaries of gendered agency where men are rational and privileged agents of their own lives, and where sex work cannot be freely chosen. Sex work has a particular way of desexualizing sex, intimacy and love at the same time as it sexualizes the body, labour and money, and society (cf. Deleuze 1991). As an assemblage, the accounts of sex workers in all their messy complexity are presented here not as competitors in the status of truth but to show that multiple (sometimes contradictory) truths can and do exist (Chapkis 1997; Connelly, Jarvis-King and Ahearne 2015).

9.1. The men left behind

Gender equality is not only an issue for women and girls. All of us benefit when women and girls have the same opportunities as men and boys – and it’s on all of us to make that a reality (Trudeau in Morneau 2018).

When the Liberal Party of Canada released its 2018 budget plan, it used a “gender-based analysis” in the name of “gender equality.” Although there is a brief acknowledgement that not all men experience privilege, Trudeau’s statement and the rest of the report illustrate extremely limited action towards the gendered vulnerabilities that affect men (and gender diverse persons) and solely focuses on women’s issues. Interventions were not offered even when reporting on male vulnerabilities *and* the statistics presented the disproportional number of men affected; 1) 75% of women aged 25 to 34 have completed college or university compared to 66% of men and “boys are less likely than girls to graduate high school” (Morneau 2018: 9); 2) Men are 1.5 times more likely to report having been victims of physical abuse as children (31); 3) Women are less likely than men to be the victims of homicide (31); 4) Single adult men represent the larger proportion of the homeless population and suffer more from mental illness, addictions and disability. 72% of shelter users are men (37); and 5) Men are three times more likely than women to die by suicide (38). These of course are only a few examples of these vulnerabilities.

Through a reactionary response to the gendered vulnerabilities of certain groups of women, this budget plan is one example of the creation of storylines that re-form gendered, raced, and classed hierarchies of worthiness that tell us whom we should care about and those that are worthless, and even violently disposable (i.e., men). Yet if patriarchy is ubiquitous, then why exactly are rights and privileges being awarded to those the state subsumes? As state apparati attempt to regulate and create neoliberally governable

citizens, a shifted binary of deserving and undeserving, a core and a periphery, is reinforced; those who reveal realities that shatter group fictions about harm, violence, and justice are subsequently marginalized. The omission of certain issues in stated policy and political discourse is in itself a form of policy (Barker et al 2009). When we ignore diverse realities no matter the positive changes our actions seem to cause, the negative effects need to be studied and efforts made to mitigate them. If research and policy frameworks are made from the mindset that (only) women are vulnerable, and regard sex work as lived by only women and as purely harmful, then policy interventions may pathologize and exclude those not deemed “vulnerable” creating a new periphery (Whitlock 2018). Regarding the study of sex work, Seidman (1996) suggests we move beyond the study of a minority, towards,

a study of those knowledges and social practices that organize "society" as a whole by sexualizing, heterosexualizing or homosexualizing, bodies, desires, acts, identities, social relations, knowledges, culture, and social institutions (Seidman 1996: 12-13).

The need for the recognition of female-gendered vulnerabilities through women-centred policies is not in debate here. What is in question is how can public policies adequately engage men and boys in overcoming gender inequality as well as address their own gender-related vulnerabilities (Barker et al 2009)? If the disempowerment of other groups is not also acknowledged (with more than lip-service) then not only do policies act to perpetuate a culture of dismissal but are limited in their applicability.

The thing is with the women that were paying for it, they are a lot more comfortable with... degrading a man and treating them how supposedly all men treat women. They just have no regard for how that makes me feel as a person... "Oh, well, you're a man, so you have no feelings." **Tim; 29-year-old, sex worker for women.**

The study of male sex work in London has exposed issues not isolated to the facts of sex work but of the treatment of the male gender by society and the assumption that the patriarchal state equates to the universal privileging of men. Structural violence is caused by social structures and institutions that prevent people from meeting their basic needs. Policy legislation and funding allocations directly or indirectly support this structural violence and thus tends to go unrecognized. As such, the gendered vulnerabilities impacting men are tolerated, ignored or simply accepted (Sturgeon 2012).

As it stands, PCEPA has offered minimal consequence to men in the sex industry, without government policing, radical advertising campaigns, or editorials, they can stay invisible, continuing to work as needed and underground. While PCEPA and FOSTA have reduced the number of American and Canadian hosted advertising websites, other sites have opened to replace them (see Table 1).¹⁴⁰ While not being officially recognized by the state has its benefits, the useful resources that types of recognition can bring has implications for the types of policy that could be helpful to these men.

Traditionally, indoor workers tend to be better educated, report fewer financial concerns, and often see sex work as a career choice (cf. Vanwesenbeeck 2012); street-based male sex workers are said to have lower education levels, deal with unstable housing, unemployment, or disability, are younger and self-identify as gay more than internet-based workers. They also were more likely to have a history of incarceration and psychiatric hospitalization. Their motivation is closely tied to survival sex while internet-based often make more money (Scott, MacPhail, and Minichiello 2015; Maginn and Ellison 2014).

In this study, 15 sex workers had completed high school in part or in full, 73% (n=10) *did* have a criminal record not related to selling sex (and n=1 unknown). Compared to majority, the 22 men that had completed college or university in part or in full, only 9% (n=2) had criminal involvement (and n=7 unknown). A third correlation existed between those who had partially or fully completed high school with 80% (n=12) having issues with addiction that started before 18-years-of-age.¹⁴¹ Though every population has issues with addiction to varying degrees, compared to 13 percent of the student population of Ontario, grades 7 through 12, 27% of male sex workers dealt with addiction.

There was little evidence that identified physical violence as a particular risk for these men *at work*, though some men did engage in specific safety measures (e.g. carrying a weapon). Despite this 9% (n=4) indicated being raped as adults by clients including one female-perpetuated rape. As children, 9% (n=4) to 14% (n=6)¹⁴² reported being sexually assaulted. In comparison to at least 17 percent of the general male population (1-in-6),

¹⁴⁰ That being said, for those like **Link** who were unprepared for the deletion of their profiles, the shut-down of these sites caused him to lose his client list, providing no means for him to get it back.

¹⁴¹ Of the 12 with criminal records, all but one had issues with addiction at some point in their lives.

¹⁴² Two of these accounts are on the boundary of sexual abuse due to age-of-consent (14-15 years old), how they view the event and the active role they took in manipulating these men.

there was limited evidence that male sex workers were more likely to have suffered from childhood sexual abuse. However, most often described as a coping strategy, there was a high correlation of men who had been raped or sexually assaulted at some point during their lives, with 70 percent of these men struggling with addiction. Though very few men started using drugs *after* starting sex work, it was the need for drug money that was cited as contributing to motivations for entering the industry. The implication here is that if the underlying psychosocial issues that lead to addiction are treated, these men would perhaps not need to sell sex. Unfortunately, due to hegemonic masculinity, men are less likely to seek help for problems that the larger community deems non-normative (e.g. rape) or determines that they should be able to solve or control themselves such as mental health or unemployment (Lye and Biblarz 1993; Addis and Mahalik 2003). Men's greater use of "numbing and comforting drugs" (New 2001), are also a means of escape from overwork, ill-health and emotional loneliness and vulnerability. Additionally, many men disclosed that the stigma associated with drug treatment centres and the undesirable traits of other addicts served as barriers to accessing resources at any point during their lives

46% (n=20) of sex workers in this dissertation had a current mental health diagnosis identified as related to upbringing,¹⁴³ current-crisis,¹⁴⁴ or social apathy or stigma due to violating gender and sexual norms.¹⁴⁵ Accounts of homophobia experienced at school and in the community,¹⁴⁶ home environments,¹⁴⁷ and by landlords or in the shelter system¹⁴⁸ speak to the continued prevalence of homophobia in Canadian society. The implications for service and policy are that the school system is central both as a contributor to the issues youth-faced but also that schools will need to be pro-active as well as act as sites for stop-gap interventions. This means some sort of integration or identification for multileveled family-welfare accountability,¹⁴⁹ concrete support programs and accessible mental health care, and social spaces for queer teens and men including shelter-space. As per Smith (2007), gay men and youth with depression, suicidal thoughts, or experiencing

¹⁴³ e.g., instigated by parental neglect or abuse

¹⁴⁴ e.g., depression related to perceived failure

¹⁴⁵ e.g., being a sex worker

¹⁴⁶ e.g., bullying, verbal harassment

¹⁴⁷ e.g., provoking some families to abandon their teens

¹⁴⁸ e.g., causing queer youth to live on the streets

¹⁴⁹ Including criminal charges for rejecting gay youth and intervention for those with troubled home lives.

homelessness for example are not the same as those of the general population so specific policies are needed to deal with these vulnerabilities.

Those who struggled with psychological needs and alternative learning abilities were not adequately accommodated by the education system. On-going employment or income supports to find enriching, non-oppressive, good paying jobs or increased income were identified as important needs. Stigma-free assistance regarding developing employable skills, accommodated and supported employment, housing, and goal-setting / life planning would also be beneficial.

Regarding issues of housing and homelessness, men receive mixed messages in London. In 2015, twenty-two agencies, spearheaded by the City's manager of homeless prevention, created a collaborative plan to help the city's "200" women who sell sex on the street, to get housing, get health and "get out of the life" of sex work (Richmond 2015). This is counter the message men receive in London: a demographic snapshot of 249 homeless people in London in April 2016 identified 69% are men (1% other gendered); 47% say homelessness was caused by an experience of abuse or trauma; 24% moved to London within the last year; and 24% are of Native descent (Maloney 2016). On October 2016, instead of coming up with a plan to help the city's men, a consultant's report called street culture in the city a blight (De Bono 2016).

Since I was often the first person they have told their trauma stories to, it is clear that the stories of male sexual assault survivors need to be heard. Men and boys need given the space to recover, not further traumatization by a culture of silence, stigma and ridicule, and lack of supportive resources (see Appendix I).

It's hard for a guy to get help if you need it, or even to talk to somebody. That's why when I found out about this study I was thinking maybe there will be something that guys can relate to, too. **Robert; 39, Street professional dating for men.**

In general, expanded, male-centred or inclusive, more convenient and individualized (home-based, inconspicuous) social services and supports may help remove some of the

associated the stigma and discomfort that inhibits men from accessing what few supports do exist.¹⁵⁰

9.2. Transitions

I sort of feel like people are exploiting me. I just feel like I don't respect myself. That's why I try to not do it as much, just enough to survive, you know? **Nick; 24-year-old escort for men and women.**

I don't feel like I'm objectified. I feel like its both. They were using me and I was using them. **Bashir; Stripper-for-women, 21.**

The idea of exploitation was often ambiguous for these men; 42% (n=11) had a complex view of the exploitation / empowerment paradigm as it applied to their time in the sex industry, simultaneously describing how they felt violated or taken advantage of because of their life situations but also how they were giving their consent (even if sometimes they did not like it). 46% (n=12) felt that selling sex was a choice they made or due to other life choices they had made. Only three (11%) men emphasized that sex work was part of a saga of lifelong abuse and trauma they had endured.

The numerous reasons anyone starts and stays at a job are often the reasons they cannot leave no matter how they feel or what happens to them while they are there. For those who choose to stay in the industry, some had embraced the identity of a sex worker, escort, or whore and enjoyed the lifestyle, or were “addicted” to the money. Others decided to stay or leave based on personal relationships; For example, after meeting his wife **Matt's** attitude towards sex work changed,

One day, my wife was like, I'm going to love you and I'm never going to leave you, but the longer you keep doing this, the more it's going to tear me apart. Yeah, we felt like it was cheating. I'm with someone now. They're a part of my life, I'm supposed to reserve myself for them and them only. I love her too much.

Others had aged out of the industry or had become disenchanted due to factors such as the risk of violence, STIs, stigma, or weird clients. Those workers with regulars or sugar

¹⁵⁰ A more nuanced understanding of male gendered vulnerabilities, and particularly for straight-men, further study into the reluctance or inability to receive help in response to female perpetrated violence, abuse, or manipulation will be important. In addition to Tim's account of being treated as property by women, Steven, Dylan, Doug, Grant and Matt all shared stories discussing their frustration with the double standards of certain women and institutions (See Appendix J).

daddies or mamas had a more stable income than those who did not establish these relationships; otherwise the seasonality of the work made the income unpredictable.

Some men expressed a desire to leave escorting and were selling sex until an indeterminate future date. When pressed further on how they would achieve this goal, it was clear that for some, there were no formal or even informal plans to do this, or even a clear definition of what that goal was. Others had an action plan in practice and were making the necessary connections to find real opportunities; they were using budgets, actively job or house hunting, getting treatment, finishing or furthering their education, developing the skills they needed to be hired in a different job – whatever they needed to reach their desired outcome. Some men entered and left the industry multiple times as their needs and wants dictated or as they were able to or unable to find employment. **Link** tells of his experience in this regard; In the span of a year since we talked Link, “got a job at [a bank], got out of escorting, then lost my job at [the bank], got a job with [a grocery store], and I am now back to barely making enough money to live.”

Those with criminal records, using ODSP, OW, staying at shelters, or trying to access affordable housing, were unable to or found it extremely difficult to mediate their structural vulnerabilities. Only through the inclusion of Canadians with diverse experiences can we design effective nonjudgmental supports for those wishing to retire from sex work (Koostra 2010; Law 2011; UKNSP 2008).

9.3. Future research

As the first in-depth qualitative study of male sex work in London this dissertation serves as a starting point for further research.¹⁵¹ The sample of men in this study is not representative of the male sex trade as a whole (though no study is). It excludes any men under 18, who could have given a different perspective on how they currently view sex work relative to their current age. Additionally, the accounts of high-end workers were missing. If high-end trade does exist in London, the nuances need to be explored. Lastly, in-depth, first person narratives of clients are missing and their motivations and experiences could offer further insight into the dynamics of the trade. Examining the accounts of female

¹⁵¹ In future work I plan to explore these workers’ recorded responses to gendered structural violence specifically. Other potential avenues to explore would be those workers who are currently under 18; localized memories of male sex work historically; exploratory comparison with other small cities, and issues of collective solidarity.

clients will also aid in identifying gendered dynamics and the ways women may exploit the gendered vulnerabilities of men. Though research into male sex workers has been particularly scarce, research into lesbian and transgender sex work is even further marginalized (especially in London) and due for exploratory study. Lastly, designing a longitudinal study, though likely difficult due to stigma and transience, could show the long-term effects of stigma, how a sex worker's narrative or interpretation of their time in sex work changes, and further impacts from law, policy and changes in social supports

This dissertation confirms research that suggests sex workers who advertise on the internet have unique needs and desires compared with those in other contexts (cf. Scott, MacPhail and Minichiello 2015; Agresti 2007; Cunningham and Kendall 2011; Logan 2010; Parsons et al. 2007). "Crack whores" (typically street workers who sell sex for drugs) hold the lowest status (and higher stigma) than escort work (Allen 1980) and male strippers. There has been mixed research on whether the internet has facilitated or hindered the safety of male sex workers. Berg (2009) and Reisner et al (2009) assert that men can go online to find partners willing to engage in higher-risk practices such as barebacking. Yet other studies report how internet workers engage in less risky behaviour than street workers (Smith and Seal 2008). However, with libraries providing free access to web-connected computers, all workers have been able to utilize online advertising in one form or another as an income strategy, complicating any differentials that can be made. With the increasing regulation of the internet and the shut down of many of the advertising sites during or after this research period, future research should look at the impacts this has had on the industry.

Uy et al's (2004) work as well as this dissertation find rates of HIV infection and lifetime prevalence of STIs amongst male sex workers *as not significantly different* from the gay and bisexual community (Catania et al 2001; Koblin et al 2000). Historically sex work has been positioned in sexual health discourse as a risk factor associated with condom use and penetrative sex (Handlovsky et al. 2012). When asked, most men replicated discourses of safe sex and getting tested, without much reflection as if they were routinized responses. Mitchell (2015) wonders if male sex workers try to give the researcher "the right answer" and over report condom use and testing frequency in order to avoid disapproval. When I called **Phil** out on whether he made exceptions he admitted there were a few times; "I don't know why...sometimes [a client is] nervous and wants to get out

of the door so fast there isn't really time to negotiate.” While some male and female clients did request bareback sex offering to pay extra, most men avoided the practice or negotiated based on client attractiveness or through touch and sensing as part of body work (Walby 2012). Some shared a sense of paranoia while others rationalized risk, with Tom, Ted, Blake, Dylan, Adam admitting that they consistently did not use protection or regularly get tested. No one disclosed a positive HIV diagnosis though there was one worker who had a simultaneous case of gonorrhoea and chlamydia, and another who had contracted chlamydia eight times.¹⁵²

At the beginning of this research project, antiretroviral medication (PEP) use in the general population immediately after being exposed to HIV or taken consistently as a preventative (PrEP) was not approved (POZ 2016; Elst et al 2013). By 2016 Health Canada issued its approval but without medical insurance it was cost prohibitive. As of January 1, 2018, it is now covered under the Ontario Health Insurance Plan Plus and anyone under 24-years-old is eligible. Those older than 24 and eligible for ODSP, can get coverage. The regional public health unit however has no information online regarding the drugs however RHAC's PrEP clinic may fill some of this gap. Either way, prevalence rates of its use among male sex workers and its impacts on the population will prove fruitful to study. If widely adopted, will it provide a false sense of security to its users? Will it increase their willingness to bareback? Will there will be an increase in other STIs if condom use declines (Gold 2018)? Will there be an age-disparity due to public funding?

9.4. Conclusion

Scheper-Hughes (1992) challenges anthropologists to speak out against the injustices we encounter. To do anything less is equal to condonement. As such, the all-or-nothing mentality that paternalizes and marginalizes people of all genders in the sex industry must change. This is not in opposition to those who want to improve the conditions of women, but those who do so by turning men into symbols of evil as well as distort data to meet the needs of women to *the exclusion* of the needs of men. Discourses that gender, normalize and ignore the intersectional nuances of lives need resisted and corrected. Policies that deny women's agency and embody women in feminized tropes, do nothing to challenge

¹⁵² Gonorrhoea can be transmitted via oral sex and STIs like herpes and syphilis via skin-to-skin contact so the use of condoms will not offer protection on that front.

patriarchy or de-center privilege. While women tend to be more disadvantaged than men, there are contexts and environments in which the current gender order does not meet the basic needs of men either. As its own form of mistreatment and oppression, the social construction of subjects who can function well in a capitalist, heteropatriarchal society serves to objectify men as disposable bodies, naturally violent or unemotional (New 2001).

With prostitution often discursively constituted as “women’s work” the lack of attention to the risks MSWs face reinforces the very dualism that many feminists would wish to challenge, since it reproduces pre-existing heteronormative assumptions about gender in which women are “naturally” sexual objects. Thus work on MSWs strongly challenges prevailing gender logic (Castaneda 2014: 402).

When an issue affects people of all genders to various degrees, framing it (such as sex work) as a “female issue,” designates a social context in which “people are reduced to the merely figural: rhetorical tropes and discursive levers invoked to talk about social relations of gender, nation, or class that pre-empt the very possibility of certain bodies, identities and lives” (Namaste 2000). Just because certain men and women benefit from the gender order to different degrees, does not mean that they cannot be mistreated within it. In most cases, the plea for inclusion, or recognition of the gendered vulnerabilities of male workers in the discussion should not be seen as an attempt to privilege male stories over those of women or “the ultimate legitimising move for straight white men donning the mantle of victimhood for the sake of maintaining hegemony” (Yudice 1995: 272), but underscore that a space for male healing is lacking.

Since the public is not given access to the various and conflicting research on sex work and gender, they more often than not are presented with seamless and simplistic visions of harm. Given the explosion of rhetoric regarding female sex workers in the media and policy, the accounts of men involved in the sex trade are especially important (Namaste 2000). This dissertation then weaved together the variable threads of life stories as evidence of the gendered vulnerabilities of this group of “dispensable men” (cf. Scheper-Hughes 2007). The call for extreme caution regarding laws and local strategies must be taken seriously, otherwise we risk reproducing the structural inequities and interactional experiences that perpetuate different kinds of harm, stigma, and social rejection.

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Appendix A: Research ethics approval



**Western
Research**

Research Ethics

Western University Health Science Research Ethics Board NMREB Amendment Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. Regna Darnell
Department & Institution: Social Science\Anthropology, Western University

NMREB File Number: 105017
Study Title: Representations of Prostitution and the Lives of Male Sex Workers in London Ontario
Sponsor:

NMREB Revision Approval Date: September 02, 2014
NMREB Expiry Date: April 30, 2016

Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Revised Study End Date	Study extension to 30Apr2016	2014/09/02


The Western University Non-Medical Science Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the amendment to the above named study, as of the NMREB Amendment Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of HSREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.


Ethics Officer, on behalf of Riley Hinson, NMREB Chair

Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information

Erika Basile	Grace Kelly	Mina Mekhail	Vilbi Tran
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Western University Health Science Research Ethics Board
NMREB Annual Continuing Ethics Approval Notice

Date: March 16, 2015
Principal Investigator: Dr. Regna Darnell
Department & Institution: Social Science\Anthropology, Western University

NMREB File Number: 105017
Study Title: Representations of Prostitution and the Lives of Male Sex Workers in London Ontario
Sponsor:

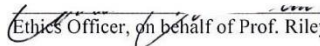
NMREB Renewal Due Date & NMREB Expiry Date:
Renewal Due -2016/03/31
Expiry Date -2016/04/25

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed the Continuing Ethics Review (CER) form and is re-issuing approval for the above noted study.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), Part 4 of the Natural Health Product Regulations, the Ontario Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA, 1990), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.


Ethics Officer, on behalf of Prof. Riley Hinson, NMREB Chair

Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information

Erika Basile	Grace Kelly	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mina Mekhail	Vikki Tran
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**Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board
NMREB Annual Continuing Ethics Approval Notice**

Date: April 21, 2016
Principal Investigator: Dr. Regna Darnell
Department & Institution: Social Science\Anthropology, Western University

NMREB File Number: 105017
Study Title: Representations of Prostitution and the Lives of Male Sex Workers in London Ontario

NMREB Renewal Due Date & NMREB Expiry Date:
Renewal Due -2017/03/31
Expiry Date -2017/04/25

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed the Continuing Ethics Review (CER) form and is re-issuing approval for the above noted study.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), Part 4 of the Natural Health Product Regulations, the Ontario Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA, 1990), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Ethics Officer, on behalf of Dr. Riley Hinson, NMREB Chair

Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information: Erika Basile ___ Katelyn Harris Nicole Kaniki ___ Grace Kelly ___ Vikki Tran ___

Western  Social Science
RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED
COMPENSATION PROVIDED

Are you a male (18+) who has provided
“intimate” services in London Ontario?

I am a PhD student in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Western Ontario conducting research about the lives of **male sex workers** (e.g. strippers, hookers, prostitutes, escorts, rent boys etc.) who sell or live in London Ontario. If you have been paid for sex then you qualify.

WHAT PARTICIPATION ENTAILS

If you agree to take part in this study, I would like to talk to you about the various aspects and forms of sex work as well as your personal views, life experiences and stories. You have the option of allowing the interview to be audio recorded (stopped at any time). If you choose not to be recorded you may still participate in the study.

You will be compensated **\$40 for a minimum 1 hour** long interview.

To volunteer for this study please contact Nathan Dawthorne or text me for confirmation of eligibility for the research.

You will remain anonymous and personal information will be treated in complete confidence in accordance with Western’s Ethics Review Board.

If you have further questions about your rights as a research subject you may contact the Director of the Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario

Appendix C: Digital setting

i. Contextualizing websites

www.backpage.ca is a classified advertising website founded in 2004. It follows the historical antecedence of free classified advertising in daily and weekly newspapers since the 1970s which include adult sections. Here sex workers post advertisements offering their services to any gender. Beginning in 2011, the American version of the site faced numerous legal challenges, accused of being directly involved in sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. This culminated with the American sites removal of its adult section in January 2017. Canada's adult listings however remained in place though law enforcement officials had remained mixed on whether the Canadian site should follow suit or continue to be a tool they use to track potential victims (Mehta 2017). With the passing of the American SEST and FOST Acts, the Department of Justice seized Backpage and its international affiliates and arrested its CEO April 6, 2018 (see Plate 7).

Plate 7: Screenshot from www.backpage.com taken by the author, May 2018.



www.squirt.org went online in 1999 and is designed as a site where MSM for “sex, cruising, hookups, dating, fun and friendship” (Squirt 2017). It contains maps and listings

and forums of local cruising¹⁵³ locations worldwide as well as allows for the posting of member profiles which includes profile photos, geolocation and personal and sexual statistics, gives a private email address, live video chat rooms often used for online sexual interactions. Paying for a membership allows for unlimited emails, and postings while free membership is limited to one reply and 5 emails. Squirt also allowed for the creating of escort/massage profiles, allowing M\$M to advertise the services they were offering and at what price. Those looking to purchase their services could thereby search the directory and initiate the business transaction. During my recruitment period, as of October 21, 2015, all references to escorts and massage services were removed from Squirt.org. Their rationale was that a need to comply with the change in Canadian law prohibiting advertising the sale of sexual services (Squirt 2015). Perhaps not coincidentally, this followed the seizure of the commercial social networking site www.rentboy.com by the Department of Homeland Security (see Plate 8). Rentboy earned revenue from escorts who paid a fee to host their ads on the website and had been doing so since 1996 (Logan 2017). On August 28, 2015, the CEO was arrested for profiting from and promoting prostitution (The Editorial Board 2015).

Plate 8: Screenshot from www.rentboy.com taken by the author, September 2015.



¹⁵³ Cruising is a term used by men to describe the practice of sending and receiving verbal and non-verbal signals which show you are attracted to someone else. This can occur in various places while walking or driving in search of anonymous, casual sex. Encounters between MSM often occurred in movie houses, bars, parks, open streets, public bathrooms and certain (often porn video) shops.

www.Canadianmale.com is a site specifically for escorts to post free profiles (with erotic photos) and advertisements and allows clients to rate their experiences with M\$M. The site often includes banner ads for international live cam shows,¹⁵⁴ or regional strip clubs and bathhouses. I learned of related sites later through interviews, academic literature, or news stories. These were Men4rentnow, Skipthegames and Rent.men.

www.boyscort.com is an online male escort services directory. In the span of a year (2014-2015) there were 163 advertisements for London male escorts. However, on closer inspection many of the advertisements included phone numbers with unrecognizable area codes. Suspicious that this may be a scraper site¹⁵⁵ I text-messaged twelve of the most recent posts and I received no reply from seven with one only replying “lol” (laugh-out-loud). One replied saying he wanted more money stating that “at 40 n hour your not eligible for anything;” another after telling me he is not in London attempted to recruit me for a cam show, wanting me to e-transfer \$40 “cuz I got what u need on skype.” One explained he lives in Toronto and is only in London to visit family once every three months and does not sell there because the clientele are not upscale. The last reply was from a man who said he has been advertising for years for women online and in newspapers and has never had a client. At this point I decided that this site was too suspicious and omitted it from my formal data set.

www.SeekingArrangement.com was founded in 2006 as an online dating service for Sugar Babies and Sugar Daddies or Mamas.¹⁵⁶ University students appear to be a big draw for the site, with the founder of Seeking Arrangement, Brandon Wade citing a Student Debt Clock on the site as a way to illustrate that students must find a way to manage the cost of Post-Secondary Education (Seeking Arrangement 2017); Students who register using university email addresses receive free Premium Membership and every year the site posts a ranked list of new sign-ups (male, female and trans*) from all Canadian schools. In 2012 and 2013 UWO ranked 7th, in 2014 ranked at 9th, in 2015 ranked at 11th, and in

¹⁵⁴ A cam show is a form of sex work where webcam performers “put on a show” (often of sexual acts but can vary from conversation to fetish work) and receive tips facilitated by a webcam hosting site (Stuart 2016).

¹⁵⁵ Scraping is a form of copying, where an automated program takes content from other websites and populates the content onto a new site, making it appear as if the content is original. This is done to lure visitors to the website for the purpose of clicking on advertisements (Herman 2013).

¹⁵⁶ This sort of arrangement is on the border of what is considered “sex work.” This is an exchange of money for companionship and as implied by the terms, there is an age disparity between the partners, with the older sugar daddy providing for the younger sugar baby.

2016 ranked at 13th on a list of 21 Canadian Universities (Seeking Arrangement 2017). Though this site had existed for over a decade, it was not until I saw a news story in the Huffington Post, January 2017 (Butterfield 2017) that I discovered this site and started tracking profiles (the oldest joining December 2015). In March 2017, I found that one of my research participants had even created his own profile.

ii. Contextualizing mobile applications

M\$M have been challenging and redefining the social definitions around the meanings of sex work using social media applications like Grindr and Scruff, expanding from gay escort sites into more popular dating apps. These applications have the potential of a more transitory, ambiguous, and opportunistic definition of sex work. They represent spaces embedded in social practices and interactions facilitated by mobile technology that have the potential transform space in ways that are transformative and transgressive. They are used to connect the physical and the online to ease entry into and exit from sex work (Ryan 2016). Grindr is a location-based dating application based on GPS coordinates launched in 2009 with over 3.5 million users in 192 countries at that time (Gudelunas 2012; Blackwell, Birnholtz, and Abbott 2014). Scruff, a similar app, was founded a year later and as of 2015 has approximately 8 million users worldwide with users 180 countries. users can upload a photo and enter details of their height, weight, and ethnicity with optional links to Facebook and Instagram on free or paid versions providing a "new infrastructure of the sexual encounter" (Race 2015: 254). Since Grindr does not allow for escort profiles or discussion of money for sex in user profiles, it is commonly used by someone offering cash for sex as a one-off or by someone who works only occasionally (Kleinman 2014).

Appendix D: Draft back-up interview questions

1. Have you ever been interviewed before?
2. What terms do you use? Do you consider what you do/did work?
3. Why and how did you get started in sex work? (age)
4. Have you always been in London? (in general, sex working)
5. Where and how do you find clients?
6. Do you have any rules / routines / rituals for who can buy; how the scene must go; what happens when you're done?
7. Was / Is this your primary job? How often do you hook up for money on average?
8. How would you define your sexuality?
9. Are you out to people about your sexuality? Escorting?
10. What are your relationships with family? Friends?
11. Is there a community of MSW in the city?
12. How do you determine prices? Would you accept anything other than cash?
13. What is the marketplace out there? Who is buying?
14. Is there anything you won't do? What kind of acts did you do? (Anything that might not be considered sex?)
15. How do you feel about STIs / HIV / bareback sex with clients?
16. Do you feel comfortable telling me about any bad experiences?
17. What do you do if someone is super hideous?
18. Do you do drugs?
19. How do you define the difference between an escort interaction and a relationship with a sugar daddy or regular?
20. Have you befriended or dated any of your clients?
21. When you hook up – where does the sex happen?
22. Are / were you ever concerned for your safety?
22. In general, what causes you stress right now? What would make you feel better?
23. What separates you from other guys? Do you market yourself a certain way?
24. What do you do outside of “work” life?
25. How do you feel about the local gay community?
26. Is there anything unique about sex work in London?
27. How do you feel about sex work laws?
28. Have you noticed how the media portrays sex workers?
29. Do you think more focus on male sex work in the media or government would be a good thing?

Appendix E: The stigma of sex work research

As “dirty work,” sex work is stigmatized based on moral, physical, or social taint (Hughes 1962). The cultural meanings, moral ambivalence, and political nature of sex work has generated feelings of isolation, marginalization, and dismissal of my research. One consequence of the stigma is my avoidance in discussing my work life in general conversation. Being introduced to people becomes somewhat of a chore, as broaching the topic of sexuality when asked about what I do for a living is off-putting for many. As one new acquaintance said after a long pause, “I don’t know how to respond to that.” After the usual awkward silence, the foreignness of the idea that men sell sex becomes obvious. This “abnormality” triggers three main types of reactions: 1) attempting to place these men into normalized feminized discourses of victimization and trafficking, or masculinized discourses of criminality, promiscuity, and self-sufficiency; 2) indifference because these men are considered to be a minority; 3) hostility because they see my work as turning the lens away from women. This pigeonholing brought with it the fatigue of constantly having to advocate and educate. This is generally not well received and seen as a barrier to making connections with most people.

In the anthropology department, my peers’ research would often be put in the spotlight, they would receive special commendation in newsletters, featuring on our Twitter feed, or highlighted to incoming students. Yet my work with NECC, conference participation, and interviews with Fanshawe Radio and Western Radio went unacknowledged. The stigma of sexuality also occurred in an incident involving a fundraising auction website I had created to support our graduate anthropology conference. I was able to secure a generous donation of “healthy sexuality kits” from the head office of a chain of Ontario based sex shops founded in 1972. Someone in the department objected to these kits being the first thing people saw on the landing site. This complaint suggested that having them featured first was in bad taste and the department took down the link until this was rectified. Moving the items suggested there was something wrong or offensive about sexuality.

Appendix F: Navigating engaged anthropology and researcher stress

To engage in work that “gives back,” taking an approach of advocacy may be a way to enable the voices of those men who have experienced or are experiencing hardship to speak to that which has “deformed and disfigured” their lives (Lather 1995). For other men, this approach allows for more detailed, descriptive, and richer narratives that reveal the ways monolithic conceptualizations of the sex industry have effects on their lives. Advocacy work is especially difficult in a culture that devalues certain groups and provided its own challenges (Pearlman and McKay 2008). By reflecting, some of these forces of hegemony and injustice can be exposed; exploring the process can contribute to an understanding of the problems researchers can expect as they aim for a just world (Crotty 1998; Lather 1986). Lastly, these dynamics are evidence of the emotional stress I faced during my research.

In late 2015, I was approached by a London grassroots group, Northeast Community Conversations to assist in organizing a public meeting on the sex industry. This group holds public discussions encouraging community engagement on topics relevant to Londoners. NECC works outside of municipal government mandates and initiatives and sets its agenda on what members of the public request. Past sessions have included topics such as engaging youth, mental health, and alleviating poverty. It was at the conversation on poverty that a community member prompted the creation of this particular conversation. As my husband has volunteered with NECC and he was (obviously) familiar with my research on the men in the industry, he suggested the group reach out to me for some guidance, or at least as someone who could offer my perspective at the conversation itself. I took this as an opportunity to do some advocacy work and regain some hope for positive change and to “give back.” Additionally, in the spirit of collaboration I hoped that some of the interviewees would use the opportunity of the conversation as a way of re-aligning the power dynamics in our researcher-researched relationship, to tell their story the way they wanted to, not filtered, and interpreted by an academic.

Now I am not naïve enough to think that the two-hour dialogue of the conversation would have that much impact on the community, or that it was even close to doing justice

to the men who have shared their lives with me. Some may argue that this initial conversation achieves more injustice, labelling it a forum for a privileged few with middleclass sensibilities, serving as an affirmation of a sympathetic middleclass identity that often relies on benevolent acts (see Heron 2007). Others could frame the event as a desperate plea to be heard by someone, in a somewhat apathetic and “conservative” environment (Orchard et al. 2012),¹⁵⁷ as a way to validate my research but also the existence of all those voices washed over. Perhaps it is that and then some. Unfortunately, this was not as straightforward as I thought despite NECC’s mandate that their conversations be set up as spaces of equality, formatted to encourage a dialogue that could reduce disinformation.

I held the initial planning meeting for the conversation in my living room in early 2016. I invited one of my advisors as she is a researcher of the sex industry with connections to a variety of social service organizations in London and has extensive experience dealing with the nuances and politics of public presentation of the topic. She was accompanied by an individual representing a local women’s support organization. In attendance, aside from my husband and two NECC volunteers was a woman with lived experience in the sex industry who was invited by the NECC chair. I also invited one of the men that I had interviewed who had expressed an interest in advocacy work and staying connected. He was a well-off escort and had said during our interview how London needed to hear some truths. He wanted the opportunity to publicly advocate for men selling sex not to be treated like criminals. Though I invited him to three meetings, he no-showed each without explanation. I have not heard from him since. I was also contacted by a gender-fluid individual who had sold sex who was interested in my study and being a member on the panel. After several online conversations, they did not take any initiative to follow through. Other members of our planning group also had their own difficulties in recruiting participants. Our emails to local organizations including a sex worker run support group often went unanswered despite multiple attempts.

This meeting was organized to provide some insight into the nuances of the sex industry and related discourse and gave NECC an opportunity to tell us their goals. In anticipation of the potential for volatility in light of the topic’s political nature we attempted

¹⁵⁷ Though the event was deemed a success with 44 attendees.

to establish a safe space to emphasize dialogue, personal reflection (Friere 1972), and interpersonal sensitivity. As we came to know each other over coffee that night, I was asked to briefly outline some of the political debates on the subject; when I attempted, an individual in the room began rolling her eyes and glaring signally her disapproval. Feeling scrutinized I stopped before becoming too flustered and deferred to my advisor. I believe this violation may have spoken to being positioned as a neophyte (and therefore deemed unqualified) and possibly the gendered conceptualizations of the sex industry those in attendance had in advance.¹⁵⁸ It became clear from the rest of the discussion that this person did indeed have a polarized view; all prostitution is exploitive, especially to women at the hands of men. Unfortunately, within the week, the woman with lived experience withdrew. Despite this, the general conclusion of the group was that we hoped those with lived experience would be interested in taking part to illustrate the spectrum of people in London's sex industry and to create a public space that encourages the public to see social, political, and economic contradictions (Ibid).

Regardless of internal politics and unease we muddled through to make sure the conversation went ahead. Like Rickard's (2003) experiences collaborating with those selling sex during her research, the tensions between carrying the emotional weight of some of the narratives, my own feelings about them, and my feelings about other members in the group became its own personal burden, further contributing to compassion stress. Conversational nuances, personality differences, and conflicting expectations created tensions for the committee and often I was confidentially made aware of the concerns of many of the parties involved.¹⁵⁹ The nature of NECC however was to have "the experts," as part of the organizing and planning, in part because they had no foundation on how to deal with this content. Often this would become overwhelming not just for those of us having to point out generalizations and political implications of language use, but also for those being "coached." NECC members began to confide that this process had been unlike any previous planning sessions and they began to feel too uncomfortable to speak-up in apprehension of saying something, no matter how well intended, that could be met with

¹⁵⁸ Perhaps being gendered as a man made it inappropriate for me to be speaking about feminism to a group of women?

¹⁵⁹ Which often did meet my own perceptions though I was largely unsure if I was reading too much into how people were acting, as well as over-analyzing my own position.

critique. As time went on I too began to become apprehensive of being questioned, cut off, or contradicted during our meetings as I was treated perpetually as the neophyte. I felt powerless to address these violations as I was invited as a consultant, I was not sure how much of an executive role I was supposed to take and wondered if me saying anything would come across as patronizing. These failures help to illustrate how community and activist work around contentious social issues is an intimate and complicated process and can have real effects on the people involved (Dewey, S., and Heineman 2013). It reinforced not only my self-doubt but also showed the true limits of rapport I had achieved in my interviews.

With a lack of those who sell sex willing to speak, NECC chose to settle for the reading of blog posts written by an array of non-Londoners to have their diverse voices present in some form. Though the audience reacted positively, due to time constraints parts of the stories were heavily edited (not by the writers themselves) by omitting points or reflections that were repetitive or tangential. By publishing these stories on public blog posts, we can at least assume that these individuals intended these stories to be heard by the public. However, by not knowing more about their origins and other intentions (Gready 2013) and editing the story in ways convenient to us felt disrespectful. I became genuinely concerned if I should share any quotes from my interviews. Ironically the few I did choose were deemed by the group to “not to be good soundbites” compared to the blog posts. What made me most uncomfortable about this was that despite my wanting to “do justice,” not only were the voices of my research participants still silenced, the abridged formatting of the conversation left any story disconnected from the lives of those who had shared them online. As I was to speak as part of a panel I did have the opportunity to independently share stories from the research but in the end I decided against it for this reason.

This has implications for the ideal of collaborative research and advocacy work. No matter what form research takes, no matter how authentic the stories, no matter who is involved, good will is not enough (Narayan 1988; Heron 2007). When doing ethnography, the primary research instrument is the researcher (Humphreys et al 2003). I have considered the politics of listening and representation by exploring the ways I used boundaries to professional and personal ends. By acknowledging and examining my place as insider and outsider and accounting for my role as a “witnessing professional” (Friederic

2010) I have outlined how I tried to navigate ethical dilemmas while building rapport and reflected on my positionality and how it shaped my interactions. Though I was able connect on a deeper level with some of the men I interviewed, only five continue to contact me, connecting online once or twice a year. Despite many telling me how they were willing to “keep-in-touch” and their seemingly genuine interest in my work and seeing the final product, our bonds were temporary courtesies. What remains are their stories and my memories.¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ And courtesy stigma.

Appendix G: Stories of compassion-fatigue

It takes a lot of resilience to engage in emotional labour and service work. Without proper self care however, burnout and compassion fatigue become the “cost of caring” for those in emotional or physical pain (Figley 1995). These feelings are characterized by exhaustion, reduced ability to feel empathy, and increased cynicism about the world.

Part of the emotional work that **Robert** engages in as a street worker who lives at the Salvation Army Centre of Hope, requires him to be extra sensitive with clients as “they do have a lot of pent up emotional issues; they are very fragile.” Though he has never experienced any violence he is paranoid that “if you say or do the wrong thing, some of these guys could flip and do horrible things to you other people.”

Mike tells me that he felt more like a psychiatrist than an escort,

They tell me all their problems and I have to listen because they're paying right? When a married man is talking to you and telling you that him and his wife are only together because their daughter is handicapped, and they didn't want to break up because of that and there's been no sex ever since the kid was born. She lives upstairs, guy lives downstairs and that's when you're like oh my fucking god, seriously?

As a coping strategy Mike left the industry for 3 months to gather his wits. He only went back to it as he needed more money. Though he has never experienced any violence he is paranoid that “if you say or do the wrong thing, some of these guys could flip and do horrible things to you other people.”

Doug has less sympathy for clients who “pour their life story out” when he has been hired for sex. Some people are ready-to-go but others “go on about work and the orange peel on the ground or some shit like that.” Impatient and unsympathetic, Doug clock-watches as he charges by the hour and wants to fit as many clients into his day as he can.

You know fuck it, I'll just leave, and they'll be like, where you going? I'm like - I am here as a sex service, not to get my ear talked off. I'm trying to do this and then go my own way and you're like stalling me. What the hell? My phone will have gone off like twice and I'm like okay dude, sorry.

Appendix H: Examples of local publicized homophobic crimes from 2017

Plate 9: Local secondary school, homophobic graffiti, April 2017 (Carruthers 2018).



Plate 10: Hate-based vandalism, cigarette burnt pride flag July 2017 (Dubinski 2017).



Appendix I: Example of male sex survivor resources

Plate 11: Screenshot from the SACL website for male survivors, September 2018.

Our Services:

Our 24-hour helpline is open to male survivors who need information, intervention and stabilization. We can also provide referrals to community organizations that do provide one-on-one counselling to male victims. Call our crisis and support line 24 hours a day at 519-3000.

Community Partners:

Further resources for men in the London-Middlesex community include:

- [Addiction Services of Thames Valley](#)
- [Caring Dads](#) (Caring Dads is devoted to ensuring the safety and well-being of children through working with fathers who have abused and neglected their children or exposed them to abuse of their mothers.
- [Changing Ways](#) (Helping men end violence against women)
- [Daya Counselling Centre](#) (Grief & loss, childhood sexual abuse)
- [Family Services Thames Valley](#) (Support for childhood sexual abuse)
- [London Intercommunity Health Centre](#) (Men's Discussion Group: Dealing with Anger and Other Feelings)
- [John Howard Society](#) (Outreach, counselling for those facing trial, on probation or at risk of offending)
- [London Family Court Clinic](#) (Parenting coordination after separation & divorce)
- [London Military Family Resource Centre](#) (Crisis Intervention & support)
- [Regional Mental Health Care London](#)
- [Regional Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Treatment Centre](#)
- [United Way of London](#)

When a male survivor seeks out help from one of the few resources open to both men and women in London regarding sexual assault, they are welcomed with resources that are designed for male perpetrators of violence and abuse (Caring Dads, Changing Ways, John Howard Society and the London Intercommunity Health Centre). There are no equivalents for female perpetrators nor are these resources appropriate for survivors. Additionally, unlike the listing for women who need to leave an unsafe situation which includes several women-only-shelters, there is no equivalent for men, nor the LGBT population.

Appendix J: Response to gendered structural violence

The ways society denies men spaces to heal or even the right to be seen and acknowledged are directly tied to the way our society defines the masculine and the feminine (Millard 2016).¹⁶¹ The lack of institutional supports for men, but higher prevalence of women-centred services and what they deem “feminist” discourses, alongside double-standards of justice, prompted varying degrees of resentment (and for some hints of a growing misogyny) from a few of the men who have struggled to benefit from the privileges assigned to hegemonic masculinity.¹⁶² **Dylan**, 23 is an escort for men and women and has a homoflexible identity (he also identifies as “Native / Italian Canadian.” He speaks of the gender norms expected of men;

The government doesn't care about us. If you're not a woman and you don't have problems then we don't really care... They get so much attention but I have met many girls that do nothing but use guys and want their money and treat them like crap. If you don't have a job then they want nothing to do with you. You know, I've seen a lot of women cry and get upset because their husbands or boyfriends don't pay enough attention to them, that they're focusing too much on work. It's like, well, that's what a guy has got to do, a guy has got to work to be able to support you, so stop complaining.

These feelings support Barker et al (2010) and Hawkes and Buse (2013) who point out that major global institutions such as the World Health Organization as well as policy-makers in most national governments, assume gender disparities are about women only and therefore neglect male-centred strategies. Compounding this are the negative stereotypes that view men “mainly as oppressors – self-centred, disinterested, or violent – instead of complex subjects whose behaviours are influenced by gender and sexual norms” (Barker et al 2010). 23-year-old **Matt**, whore for women (and white heterosexual identity), notices a similar phenomenon,

What's the worst I'm going to get for banging some chick for money? What are the cops even going to say? Like what are they going to do, laugh at them? Like if I was a girl, it would be the biggest deal in the world. They'd be worried about my wellbeing and me getting hurt... there's no such thing as a Jane school.

¹⁶¹ Always within a white (Anglo-Saxon) and heterosexual framework.

¹⁶² 2 men were heterosexual identifying, 1 homosexual and 3 bisexual. Though these numbers are too small to extrapolate from, I find it curious that two-thirds of the men had subjugated sexual identities.

According to Cook (2009) and Hines and Douglas (2010), the burden of proof for male victims of female perpetrated violence may be especially high. Within the judicial system, some men who sustained violence perpetrated by a female partner reported experiencing gender-stereotyped treatment. Even with substantiated evidence that their female partners were violent (and the men were not), they still lost custody of their children, were not allowed to see their children, and were falsely accused by their partners of being abusers (of the children and themselves). **Doug's** (25, escort for men and women, "Cree" bisexual identity) experiences are similar,

Apparently there are father's rights but women are usually the ones the press 911, that's what happened to me. You bitch about gender equality and all that, then you really want it but then we're the assholes? Many clients would tell me how their husband's abusive or wife's abusive. Well there is anger management for men, where's [women's] anger management? People don't think a girl can learn a black belt and then lift a guy up with one hand? Like... start beating the hell out of him? If a girl kicks a guy in the balls no one cares but when a guy slaps a girl the whole world explodes. It's like, really? Well she kicked me in the balls first... Equality means if you punch me in the nuts I'll punch her in the fucking boob.

Doug here is outlining how the construction of masculinity assumes men are physically dominant over women. Despite the abundance of studies that show significant levels of aggression and abuse perpetrated by women (and the severity of assaults), indifference towards male victims and in some cases *punishment* (especially if he fights back) speaks to this structural violence; **Grant**, a 21-year-old sex worker for men (with a white homosexual identity) and **Steven** a 38-year-old "Street hoe" for men and women (with a white bisexual identity) echo these sentiments, including pointing out that women are not the benevolent-natured antitheses of malevolent men.

I actually really hate [the double standards] women have... Right now if a girl touches your dick, she's not going to jail, even though you're gay, but if a man touches her boob, damn right you're getting charged. It's a very sexist world we live in. As much as girls want to say guys run everything, its not everything; Men have to come home to listen to you make the rules and aren't allowed to disagree. Women are well aware of the power they have and they know how to use it. **Grant.**

Women go through the drama worse than I have for sure. Well, some girls do and others just don't care at all. Some of them are just so scandalous, like they

robbed, stabbed, thieved, pull a guys pants down or a woman's pants down, get the money and then out the door. They are 100 percent scam artists. **Steven.**

Curriculum Vitae

Name: Nathan Dawthorne

Post-secondary education and degrees: University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada
B.A. Honors Specialization in Anthropology
2013

University of Western Ontario
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Ph.D. Sociocultural Anthropology
2018

Honours and awards: Ontario Graduate Scholarship
2016

University of Western Ontario
Faculty of Social Science
Graduate Research Award
2015

Regna Darnell Graduate Award for
Fieldwork in Sociocultural Anthropology
2014, 2015, 2016

University of Western Ontario
Dean's Honor List
2011, 2013

Related work experience: Undergraduate Teaching Assistant
Faculty of Social Science
Department of Anthropology
September 2013 – April 2018

Courses:
The Many Ways of being Human
F 2013, W 2016, W 2017, W 2018

Anthropological Approaches to Language
F 2017

Introduction to Sociocultural Anthropology
W 2014, F 2014, F 2015

Anthropology of Tourism
W 2015, S 2015