Working Well: Women's Experience of Managing Psychological Wellbeing as Sex Workers

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Abstract

Despite evidence to the contrary, policy makers, some researchers and many who provide health and social services to sex workers continue to reflect and reinforce the notion that sex workers are dysfunctional and constitute a threat to public health. This thesis presents the results of a study which explicitly examined how indoor sex workers look after their psychological wellbeing. Twelve participants (who had worked as sex workers for at least 3 years) took part in semi-structured interviews and discussed how they looked after themselves both at work and in their wider social context. Interviews were transcribed and analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis. Two main themes emerged from the data. The first, "doing sex work", relates to workplace practices. The second theme, "being a sex worker", relates to how the women understand their experience of being a sex worker in their social context and how they care for themselves in this arena; also apparent in this theme are aspects related to entry and exit of the industry. All participants took part in the study to increase understanding of and social justice for sex workers. Most of the participants see sex work as having a positive contribution to their personal growth. The findings show that participants are resilient and employ self-care practices that are commonly used by many in occupations that deal with people or who are stigmatised in some way. Major conclusions drawn from the study are that working in a supportive environment, prior understandings of sex work, personal traits and reasons for entering the sex industry are closely related to positive psychological wellbeing.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

This project has arisen from a desire to tell the stories of women who are or have been sex workers, in particular, the women who do not see their involvement with the sex industry as directly causing psychological problems. I have been involved with people who work in the sex industry for over 10 years. I have worked as a health educator, counsellor, supporter and advocate. I lobbied the central and local government in relation to law reform and, for an undergraduate project, undertook research with mothers who were sex workers. Over the years, I met many sex workers for whom the sex work itself was not a problem. Problems seemed to arise from stigma, secrecy, and other consequences around the dominant discourses to do with prostitution. Some of these workers thrived; others struggled to maintain their psychological wellbeing in the face of what sometimes amounted to persecution. By far the majority of the workers that I met were well within the range of normal psychological functioning; they did not have major mental health problems or diagnoses, did not have substance dependence issues and were fully involved members of the community.

The broad aim of this research is to tell the stories of these workers and to find out how they look after themselves at work and in their day-to-day social lives. There are many assumptions about sex workers and their psychological wellbeing that differ from the understandings I have developed over the years. My aim was to find out how valid these assumptions were for indoor sex workers in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In particular I wanted to find out if the behaviours and cognitions that sex workers undertake as they go about their work and social lives were the same or different to people in similar situations. In addition, my desire is to offer an alternative to the grand narrative of prostitution. I want to "disrupt the terms of the dominant discourses" (Ristock, 1996, p.7) and improve the lived experience of sex workers in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Before outlining the aims and organisation of this thesis I first set the scene by defining sex work and providing a brief history of sex work in Aotearoa/ New Zealand.

Setting the scene

Definitions: What constitutes sex work?

Sex in exchange for goods or services and those who do this activity have been subject to a variety of terms. The currently acceptable term is sex work and sex worker respectively. "Sex worker" was coined by Carol Leigh in 1979 or 1980 (Leigh, 1997). Throughout this thesis I use a variety of terms. In general the word prostitute is used in relation to *being* a sex worker and sex work is used around *doing* sex work. I also use the term whore; this term has its linguist roots in the temples of old, goddess worship and the sacred harlots (Walker, 1893). Some sex work activists now use the word with pride (Chapkis, 1997). I use it in relation to stigma, to ownership of the term and pride in being a sex worker. Other terms, drawn from the literature, are also used from time to time. Using a variety of terms reflects the multiplicity of frameworks around sex work and allows the writer to be respectful of the meanings and understandings that are reflected in the narratives and texts that are utilised in this thesis.

There have been arguments about whether prostitution is work since the practice began. In the twelfth century, the theologian Thomas of Cobham argued that prostitutes were entitled to their wages from the work that they did (Karras, 2004).   In recent times, prostitution began to be positioned as legitimate service work in the 1970's by prostitutes' rights groups and scholars. This position was argued against on three counts. Firstly, prostitution is slavery because consent is not possible or has no meaning in patriarchy; secondly, sex is a natural act like eating and sleeping therefore no expertise is required and it cannot be termed work and thirdly, sexuality and the sex act is such an intrinsic part of a person's self that prostitution is the selling of the self and therefore is abuse not work. Around that time a sociological perspective on the commodification of emotions was being explored and the term emotional labour was coined. Use of this term in relation to sex work gave some legitimacy to claims that prostitution is indeed work (Chapkis, 1997). Increasingly, sex work is seen as a valid job. In a recent mainstream workplace management text, a sex work example was used to illustrate emotional labour management strategies (Watson, 2006). Although currently widely accepted as a form of work, there is still no clear definition of commercial sex work (Day & Ward, 2004a).

Some researchers define commercial sex as ever having paid for or received payment for sex (Rissel, Richters, Grulich, de Visser, & Smith, 2003). This definition may be too broad to define commercial sex activities or to ascertain numbers of sex workers and clients and may elicit a quite different response to a question about having ever engaged in commercial sex. Minichiello et al. (2001) defined commercial sex narrowly; all sex encounters that involved either no penetrative sex or 'no risk' acts were excluded from their analysis. Others do not define sex work, they refer to "people who work in the sex industry" (Benoit & Shaver, 2006). Farley and others (Jeffreys, 2004; Ross, Farley, & Schwartz, 2003) define prostitution broadly

and include erotic dancing and pornography as well as acts that involve direct sexualised body contact. Andrea Dworkin (1993) described it in this way, "It is the mouth, the vagina, the rectum, penetrated usually by a penis, sometimes hands, sometimes objects, by one man and then another and then another and then another and then another. That's what it is". Prostitution is defined as the selling of sexual services for money or its equivalent such as drugs, alcohol or housing by Overall (1994). Overall also states that prostitution depends on the social construction of women's sexuality as a saleable commodity for the benefit of men. The definition provided by Overall is the one most useful for this study, however her description does not take into account that there are male and transgender sex workers nor the fact that there are female clients. In addition Overall does not state what actually constitutes 'sex'.

This lack of definition reflects the notion that prostitution is a multifaceted construct. The lack also reinforces the idea that it is not the acts of prostitution themselves that are so important, rather it is how, where and why these acts are carried out. "Prostitution" is the act, "sex" is the act within that, and both of these can be carried out in many, many ways. To narrowly define sex work, in the way that Minchiello et al (2001) does, dishonours the multiplicity of creative ways that sex workers manage threats to their sexual health by invisibilising activities that lower the risk of contracting a sexually transmitted infection (STI) or blood borne virus (BBV). The broad definition makes it difficult to acknowledge the impact of what it means to be a sex worker and puts all women who have sex with men on the same plane. This could be a deliberate act of labelling to justify positioning all heterosexual encounters as rape or prostitution. Alternatively, their position could be an acknowledgement that there are many aspects of being a prostitute and being a woman that are the same but do not constitute prostitution (Baldwin, 2004).

Definition and identification is important in relation to sex work because it is an activity that has meaning and impact beyond the exchange of money for a physical activity. Many of the harms of sex work are related to what it means to be a sex worker (McVerry & Lindop, 2005). The consequences of being labelled a whore have the most negative impact on sex workers' lives (Chapkis, 1997; Scambler, 1997; Schur, 1980). According to Overall (1992), it is the naming of the activity which causes it to be that activity. Arguably there are many people who have exchanged sex for money, goods or services who do not identify themselves and are not labelled as sex workers and therefore are not subject to whore stigma. Conversely, there are also people who are labelled whore who have never exchanged sexual favours for money or goods. The terms used for prostitute are often conferred as a label onto women who step outside socially acceptable sexual boundaries. For some, a prostitute is "someone who will do anything for money" (Clarke, 2004, p. 182). When used to define a person as deserving of whore stigma, these terms may induce fear of stigma that keeps the target of the insult compliant in aspects of demeanour, behaviour, dress and financial dealings between the sexes.

Strength is given to the idea that these terms have meaning beyond the naming of an occupation and reflects the status of those who undertake acts of prostitution. This serves a purpose of allowing the acts which are named prostitution to be defined differently according to time, political situation and cultural location (Carpenter, 2000).

Other than harsh, graphic descriptions of abuse described in the abolitionist literature, there is no operational definition of commercial sex. Interestingly, in relation to sex work, the sex component is seldom talked about in the public arena and even less in the literature. This could be because people in general are uncomfortable talking about the specifics of sex acts or because it is considered a private interaction between worker and client; the public component of the work is the exchange of money or perhaps this is done deliberately to prevent accounts of sex work from being seen as gratuitous or pornographic. Additionally, in the process of positioning prostitution as legitimate work it may be deemed necessary to sanitise it by removing the 'sex' component and focusing on the more respectable psychological aspects of the job (Chapkis, 1997). One could read that whores have sex and sex workers do something that is rather more respectable. There is some debate around 'whore' as a sexual identity or behaviour (H. L. Miller, 2004). Sex radicals who do position commercial sex acts as part of a continuum of sexualities are subject to much criticism from radical feminists and others. If 'whore' is positioned as a sexual identity or behaviour there is danger of it being positioned as deviant or pathologised now, in much the same way as it has been in the past (Eldred-Grigg, 1984).

My discomfort around the possibility of contributing to negative stereotypes in relation to the sexuality of sex workers and lack of space to address these issues contributed to an unwillingness to give detailed descriptions of specific sex acts in this thesis. In addition, in the process of deciding what the research questions would be for this study, it was made very clear that the aim was to ensure that it was not gratuitous or voyeuristic; which of course panders to the idea that commercial sex acts are somehow "not OK". Although "doing sex" is a major part of sex work, and some descriptions are a part of the data I gathered, the specifics are not discussed in this thesis and what the actual physicality of the job involves remains largely undisclosed. We are left to assume what happens in the commercial sexual connection.

For the purposes of this study sex work is defined as a sexual activity carried out in exchange for money, or goods or services in lieu of money. To keep the group as homogenous as possible I sought out women who have regularly engaged in commercial activities that involved or potentially involved, intimate sexualized body contact with their clients. The sexual activities include, but are not limited to, penis vaginal intercourse, hand relief (masturbation), oral sex, sensual massage and fetish activities.

A Brief History of Sex Work in Aotearoa/New Zealand

There has been a culture of sexual hospitality and trade since the first traders arrived in Aotearoa. By most accounts, Māori women had sexual freedom until a permanent alliance was formed; this alliance may have been an early betrothal organised anytime from birth to a relationship in the nature of marriage (Belich, 1996; Eldred-Grigg, 1984; Fitzgerald, 2007; Rountree, 2000; Te Awekotuku, 1991). In contrast to the cultures of the visitors, the expression of sexuality, although considered special, was viewed as a pleasurable activity, not shameful or to be hidden away. This attitude was either a source of glee or horror for the early settlers in Aotearoa (Te Awekotuku, 1991, 2001).

Along with other expressions of hospitality, intimacy and companionship were also offered to the visitors, pleasantries and gifts were exchanged in ways that were considered appropriate by each culture. Whether the intent and meaning behind these exchanges was fully understood by the other is debateable, but beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss. The visitor would give his companion small gifts of food, nails, socks or anything glass or metal to show his appreciation (Te Awekotuku, 2001). Over time many of these types of exchanges became commercialised.

Unmarried women were offered to visitors by relatives and a fee was expected in return. In the Bay of Islands a chief named Pomare had around one hundred girls available, much to the economic gain of his tribe (Donne, 1927). One report states that only slaves were prostituted and had to hand over most of their earnings to their masters, the women only being allowed to keep biscuits or other foods. This gave rise to the term "utu pihikete" - the price of a biscuit - for half-caste children (Te Awekotuku, 1991). According to Te Awekotuku, the practices of sexual freedom and commerce were not always looked upon favourably, in Ohinemutu, girls seen loitering were sometimes picked up and taken home by vigilant members of their community assigned to that very task. Missionaries considered that Māori women were degraded by prostitution and expended considerable effort to rescue them from this. Nga Puhi women in particular were targeted, they were taken from their family networks and attempts were made to keep them in the confines of the Mission Station in an endeavour to teach them the Christian way of behaving (Fitzgerald, 2007).

From reading the available accounts it seems that in other instances the practice of commercial sex was less clearly defined, it could be a straightforward commercial act, an exchange of host/visitor sensual delights and companionship, an act done to increase prestige or an easy combination of all three. In many ways this combination of commerce, pleasure and hostessing is reflected in the accounts of 'boat girls' culture (Jordan, 1991) that flourished in port towns until the mid 1980's.

The going price for sexual favours varied from the tokens mentioned previously to articles of clothing and tobacco. Amounts of tobacco given ranged from a quid, the amount one fit in the mouth to chew on, up to a pound; one young male who was prepared to give William Yate fellatio was given a pound of tobacco (Eldred-Grigg, 1984). This was probably quite a profitable exchange given that at the time of writing this thesis a pound of tobacco is worth just over three hundred dollars!

There are few accounts of Māori involvement in prostitution after these early ones. There could be several reasons for this: Christianisation had occurred and prostitution became considered a sin and was therefore hidden or denied (Te Awekotuku, 1991). Christianisation shifted attitudes about sexual matters from the special and sacred to that of sinful and therefore not to be discussed (Metge, 1995). Māori sex workers may have been absorbed into the general milieu of prostitution; around 1852, it was common for Māori women to spend a season in a brothel as voluntary, casual workers (Eldred-Grigg, 1984). In 1840, Māori signed a treaty (Te Tiriti o Waitangi) with the British Crown and Aotearoa/New Zealand became governed by British Law (Orange, 1987). Therefore the status of prostitution changed from a legitimate to an illegal activity, this change in legal status may have changed the willingness of Māori to engage in commercial sexual activity. In addition, interest in prostitution shifted from the exotic and gratuitous to a public health focus. Disease prevention focused on keeping the colonisers healthy and gave little attention to the health of indigenous people (Levine, 2004). In other colonies the sex industry became tiered with high class white women, who serviced only white men, at the top. The most visible common prostitute, who serviced people of all races, was given the most attention and the 'native' sex workers, at the bottom of the hierarchy, given little attention. According to Levine, those at the top are considered low risk, those in the middle as most likely to spread disease and those at the bottom, the 'natives', of little importance. On reflection, it could also be because as visible prostitution became entwined with drunkenness and disorderly behaviour Māori women wisely chose to stay away from the public gaze. The current lack of visibility of Māori sex workers is discussed in a small way in relation to ethics in the method section of this thesis. In reading that section it may be useful to remember that issues arising from colonisation may continue to be an issue in relation to visibility, funding of interventions and research. It is possible that, in addition to Māori concerns, institutionally there is less concern for the health of the indigenous people and any interest in Māori sex workers is confined to the most visible and exotic.

Pākehā prostitution is largely recorded in terms of control and in relation to drunkenness and disorderly behaviour. Prostitution thrived in the colonial culture of bingeing, hitting and whoring in a country where there were many more men than women and there were red light districts in every town (Belich, 1996). According to Belich, Dunedin, in 1864, had an estimated 200 full time prostitutes and in 1881, Oamaru had 12 busy brothels and it is estimated

that at least one in ten colonial women worked as prostitutes at some time in their lives; some as a career, some to supplement wages and others as a fill in before marriage. Although widespread, prostitution was referred to as a social evil and not mentioned in polite society. In 1888 there was a discussion about prostitution in Parliament; to protect the public from the details of the vice, this was not recorded (Eldred-Grigg, 1984).

Control of brothels was left up to local authorities, although street workers could be arrested under the 1824 and 1866 Vagrancy Acts. The 1869 Contagious Diseases Act was passed to control venereal disease and to provide a way to create a system of registered workers; any common prostitute could be ordered by a Justice of the Peace to submit to a medical examination. Common, in this context, refers to public property, a term which allows the person to be treated differently to others (Jordan, 2005). Any prostitute found to have venereal disease could be detained. Clearly this was about public health and state control rather than any attempt to stop the widespread prostitution. Reflecting the double standard of morality, clients were not subject to the same control and treatment as the women; access to prostitution continued to be guaranteed for the men. Women in the under classes, the most visible of the sex working population, were subject to the most control (Jordan, 2005).

During the 1870's more than three thousand women were convicted under the Vagrancy Act. Many of these ended up in lunatic asylums or jail. Prostitutes fought back, some refused to attend medical checks and others enlisted the support of prominent males. One supporter stated that prostitutes should not be abused because of the way they lived and another stated that if the oath of a prostitute was discounted in courts then so should that of a lawyer because both sell their consciences and souls (Eldred-Grigg, 1984). The 1893 Criminal Code Act provided for up to two years hard labour for anyone keeping a place for prostitution, in 1901, the Police Offences Amendment made pimps and procurers liable for punishment. However, well-behaved prostitutes and quiet brothels, owned by people from all social strata, were allowed to ply their trade in peace. Sole operators were allowed to work freely by 1915; one-woman brothels were commonplace and able to operate legally (Belich).

About the same time as the gaze of writers turned from the exotic there was another shift in discourses around sex work. Around the turn of the eighteenth century prostitution was placed in a social and medical context; many liberals and feminists blamed poverty and the clients for the 'problem' rather than something inherent in the prostitutes themselves, while some medical professionals and others continued to position prostitutes as mad, bad women who contaminated the good men of Aotearoa/New Zealand (Belich, 2001). To stop this contamination, refuges were established around the country for prostitutes and other women who might be on the way to a fall from grace; local authorities, central government and churches funded these. Well over 8,500 women used the services of these places between 1877

and 1915. Some of these women rejected this help and the harsh conditions of the refuges and returned to or continued with sex work (Eldred-Grigg, 1984). Debates about the double standard occurred and in 1910 the much criticised Contagious Diseases Act was finally repealed (Belich, 2001).

Over time, the gender ratio became more balanced, the level of prostitution abated and for a while the sex industry gained little political or public attention. However, in the late 1920's there was some public panic about sexual behaviour and prostitution was given attention as a vice to be rid of along with nymphomania, transvestism and other degenerate behaviours (Belich, 2001). During the 1950's concerns about public morality arose again and many ship girls were sent off to borstal to reform (Jordan, 2005).

The Massage Parlour Act was passed in 1978 in an attempt to regulate the industry. At that time most prostitution was carried out in massage parlours, on the streets or, more casually, on boats. Workers in massage parlours were not allowed to offer therapeutic massage, nor were they allowed to offer sexual services. Massage parlours were deemed public places so it was as illegal to solicit for payment for sexual services in a parlour as it was on the street. It was legal to accept money for sexual services as long as one did not ask for the money, but not to live off the earnings of prostitution or to keep a place of prostitution. It was difficult to have supplies of safer sex products in venues because these could be used by police as evidence of soliciting. Sex workers lived in a climate of fear, they were frequently arrested for soliciting offences and at times they were entrapped. The number of arrests per region and per year varied widely and the frequency of arrests seemed to depend on local police inclination. Once a worker had a conviction for soliciting (or for a drug offence) they were no longer able to work in any parlour. This meant they were forced to work on the streets and were more vulnerable to violence, police harassment and arrest. Until 2003 the police kept a record of all people who worked in massage parlours. In some police districts this record was cumulative, names were not removed when workers left the industry (Jordan, 2005). As usual, clients continued to have undisturbed access to the services and the double standard remained. Public concern rose again with the advent of HIV /AIDS and sex workers were again positioned as carriers of disease.

The New Zealand Prostitutes Collective (NZPC) was started in 1987 to provide information and support for sex workers (Jordan, 2005). NZPC worked towards achieving law change to enable sex workers to have the same labour and human rights as other people. Although funded as an HIV/AIDS prevention strategy, NZPC never lost sight of the issue of discrimination against sex workers. Initially called "Fallen Angel" their magazine name was changed to "SIREN" which stands for Sex Industry Rights and Education Network; a reminder of the purpose of NZPC. NZPC educated and lobbied relentlessly for law reform and continues to work towards reducing marginalisation of sex workers.

Cell phones came into common use in the 1990's and enabled sex workers to become mobile and work independently of massage parlours and escort agencies. In 1996 there were 279 massage parlours and escort agencies advertising in Aotearoa/New Zealand and it was estimated that there were 1500 sex workers in Auckland (C. Ryan, Murphy, & Kinder, 1998). In June 2001 it was estimated that there were well over 4500 sex workers in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Jordan, 2005).

After many years of education and lobbying the Prostitution Reform Act (PRA) was passed into law in 2003. The principal aims of this act are to protect sex workers from exploitation, protect children from commercial sexual exploitation, safeguard the human rights of sex workers and to create an environment that is conducive to public health (PLRC, 2008). In many respects the law change has been successful. There have been a number of convictions relating to prostitution and underage workers, one conviction of a client who regularly took condoms off during commercial sex acts and other convictions in relation to forcing workers to see clients against their wishes (Reed, personal communication). On the other hand, in some establishments conditions are little different to conditions prior to the passing of the PRA. It seems that good employers continue to be so and those who disregarded the rights of workers continue to do so (PLRC, 2008).

During the build up to the passing of the law reform, anti prostitution groups asserted that numbers of sex workers would increase dramatically, exploitation of youth would increase, criminals would use the sex industry to launder illegal income and there would be a rise in sexually transmitted disease through sex workers. This has not proved to be the case. Numbers of sex workers have remained reasonably stable, although there has been a move towards working privately rather than in managed situations, numbers of youth in the industry have not increased and there has been no significant relationship found between criminal activity and the sex industry (PLRC, 2008). There is no evidence that prevalence of STIs has increased in the sex worker population (PLRC, 2008). Sex workers now have the legally sanctioned right to refuse, without giving a reason, to undertake commercial sex. This is stated in clauses 16 and 17 of the PRA (2003). This right is acknowledged in the Government publication, "A guide to Occupational Health and Safety in the New Zealand Sex Industry" (OSH, 2004).

Contrary to the aims of the PRA and the New Zealand Health Strategy, sex workers continue to be vulnerable in their workplace (MOH, 2000). It is apparent that sex workers are still being forced to see clients and go on outcalls against their wishes. Many establishments impose fines on workers for refusing to see a client or to go on an outcall. This has resulted in some workers having commercial sex against their wishes and other workers have been raped in circumstances that they were forced into (Kelly, personal communication). There is still work to be done to improve conditions in the sex industry.

Organisation of thesis

Chapter Two reviews and critiques a selection of literature. Firstly I look at a representative selection of accounts that pertain directly to sex work. Literature that relates to psychological wellbeing is then presented. Finally, I discuss the feminist debates in relation to sex work.

Chapter Three outlines the theoretical framework that underlies this research. Traditional and qualitative methods of psychological research are discussed. Following this, a brief overview of feminist research in psychology is provided. I then discuss feminist standpoint theory, interpretive phenomenological analysis and, the approaches and understanding that both frameworks share. Finally, I provide a detailed description of my position as the researcher.

Chapter Four provides an account of the method used in this research. I provide a history of this project and discuss ethical concerns that arose. This is followed by describing participant selection and providing a brief biography of each participant. Finally, I outline the method of data collection and describe the process of analysis I utilised.

Chapter Five thematically presents the findings of the analysis and discusses the findings in relation to the literature. Chapter Six briefly summarises the findings, considers implications for practice and makes suggestions for future research and theorising about sex work.

Writing a thesis is a fascinating process. Academic writing does not allow for the journey of this process to be explained or addressed comprehensively in the finished product. A part of my journey has been to keep a journal as a part of the reflexive process. In that journal there is a wealth of information that has been vital to the production of this work, yet is not appropriate to include in the thesis in any formal manner. To address this, I have inserted pages of text on card between chapters. These contain quotes from sources of inspiration (or frustration) and excerpts from the diary I kept during the research process. They are there to inform the reader of a small portion of the reflexive process that went on alongside the construction of this thesis.

Chapter Two: Theoretical landscape

Introduction

Research is a social activity always embedded in context. It is conducted in relation to other research; to confirm, contradict, challenge or to build on and expand the knowledge gained from previous research. Research is carried out within particular socio-political contexts that influence both academic and lay understandings of the subject under investigation and thus the direction of any research. This research project is carried out within a feminist standpoint theory (FST) framework. One aim of research within this framework is to increase understanding and empowerment of the population concerned (Harding, 1991). From this perspective, it is imperative that not only academic and socio-political factors are taken into account and understood during projects such as this but most importantly, that the concerns of the population under investigation are given primary consideration (Harding, 2007). Therefore, the selection of literature in this chapter has been chosen and critiqued with the concerns of sex workers in mind.

The first section contains a representative selection of the literature pertaining directly to sex work. This representative selection covers international research, research in Aotearoa/New Zealand and texts from the sex workers themselves. The second section contains literature that is related to psychological wellbeing; it covers wellbeing in general, work related wellness and emotional labour. The third section discusses feminist theoretical arguments about sex work. Taken together, these sections position this project in the current research and socio-political climate. These are the works that I have drawn on to further my understanding of sex worker coping strategies and wellbeing; taken with the literature in the first two sections, they inform my analysis of the participants' narratives.

Sex work as a perilous profession

All scientific disciplines with an interest in human health and behaviour have turned their gaze to prostitutes. Prostitution and people involved in the sex industry have been studied in contexts including deviance, disease transmission, delinquency, insanity (Liazos, 2005, p. 634) and colonisation (Doezema, 2001). In common with research on other stigmatised populations (Link & Phelan, 2001), the focus of these studies changes from time to time and from location to location depending on political factors and current trends in research. In general, the results of these studies serve to both reflect and reinforce current beliefs about sex work and being a prostitute (Vanwesenbeeck, 2001). Therefore it is important to review examples of recent literature to understand how sex workers are currently positioned and to ascertain where there is a need for further research.

Vanweesendbeck (2001) has compiled a comprehensive review of literature published between 1990 and 2000 and Jordan (2005) has compiled a review of literature that is relevant to sex work in Aotearoa/New Zealand. These literature reviews illustrate that there is an assumption in the extant literature, political rhetoric and popular debate that prostitution is inextricably linked with substance abuse and with the spread of disease. Since the advent of HIV/AIDS sex workers have been targeted as high risk for this disease (Jordan, 2005; Lichtenstein, 1997). Although prostitution has not been proven to be a major vector of disease, sex work researchers continue this focus (Vanwesenbeeck, 2001). Use of drugs and alcohol in relation to sex work is frequently researched with a view to finding out more about risk taking behaviour in relation to HIV/AIDS (Mallory & Stern, 2000). The most visible, vulnerable and easily accessible sex worker populations are most researched (El-Bassel, 1997; Vanwesenbeeck, 2001). The results of these studies are then generalized to the wider sex worker population. In Aotearoa/New Zealand, until recently, disease transmission has been the focus of most sex work related health interventions and research (Healy & Reed, 1994).

Concerns in relation to public health drive research that is conducted with the aim of reducing risk of sexually transmitted diseases. Sex workers continue to be positioned as a threat to public health. For example, focus groups were conducted in Canada to find out how to make HIV prevention strategies fit with sex workers' needs as part of a strategy to reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS infections in the female heterosexual population (Keeping, 2004). The researcher stated that sex workers are among the most vulnerable to HIV infection in the same section that she mentions the rising rate of HIV infection in heterosexual females in Canada; the implication is that sex workers are vectors of transmission. Although this vulnerability is in their private lives rather than at work, there is no acknowledgement that the issues sex workers face in their personal intimate relationships around condom use and testing are the same as those faced by non sex workers; that is questions of love, trust, intimacy, perceived safety of partner and so on. The implication is that sex workers are less able to negotiate safer sex practices in their intimate relationships than non sex workers.

Recently, the British Home Office stated that visiting a sex worker contributes to the spread of HIV/AIDS (Sanders, 2006). However, recent empirical research across Europe shows that risk of sex workers transmitting infectious diseases is relatively low (Day & Ward, 2004b). Contrary to popular understandings, sex workers have not been proven to be vectors of disease. In a study of Australian call girls, Perkins & Lovejoy, (2007) found that most use condoms all the time, do not use illegal drugs regularly and have regular health checks. Their data is similar to that found in the most recent Aotearoa/New Zealand study of sex workers which found that the sex worker population is well aware of health risks and mange these well (Abel, Fitzgerald, & Brunton, 2007). Recent research has positioned the sex industry as a site of education and prevention. Sanders (2006) challenged the positioning of sex workers as carriers of disease in

British society and discussed the idea of sex workers as health educators in a study of fifty-five sex workers. Sex workers endeavour to prevent the transmission of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or blood borne viruses (BBVs) in relation to both their clients and other sex workers. In a climate of political debate around the regulation of the sex industry in Britain where much of this debate concerns disease, Sanders' arguments around sexual health are understandable. However positioning sex workers as sexual health educators moves the focus off the multitude of other functions that prostitution may serve. Sanders states that formalising the education aspect of sex work will place additional burdens on sex workers by further entrenching the idea that sex work is closely associated with disease.

The idea that commercial sexual activity increases awareness of prevention strategies is supported by one study that explicitly challenges the notion that sex workers are carriers of disease. McVerry and Lindop (2005) conclude that the workers could be viewed as being agents in protecting against infection. Their findings were consistent with other recent studies; women were well aware of sexual health risks and how to deal with these. Wellbeing in relation to psychosocial factors is more likely to be linked to how threats are managed than sex workers' lack of awareness or knowledge; it is psychosocial factors that influence the use of condoms and other "safer sex" practices.

Despite evidence to the contrary, policy makers, some researchers and radical feminist or abolitionist groups who provide services to sex workers continue to reflect and reinforce the notion that sex workers are deviant, dysfunctional, and constitute a threat to public health. However, the evidence on which they base their arguments is often taken from non-western populations.

Research in non Western countries

Globally, there are many sex workers who are treated as mere commodities, are abused because of their position in society and are at high risk of contracting a STI or BBV through their work (Farley, 2006). Most of these sex workers are located in what are termed as non-Western or developing countries. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to adequately review these studies, therefore I provide a brief description of how many are carried out and describe the influences they have on sex work research.

Results from studies conducted in non-Western countries and developing nations are often generalised to Western populations. Research in these areas is conducted in a political and cultural climate that is markedly different to that in Western nations. One often cited paper states that "sex workers are an important source of STIs" in the first paragraph (R. Chan & Goh, 1997, p. 373). It is seldom acknowledged that for these populations there are a range of issues that are faced in relation to research, sex work and disease transmission; these include short supply of condoms, the position of women, issues of poverty and the abuse of sex

workers. To receive funding from USA Government, outreach organisations must sign a pledge to state they are against prostitution. The practice of the research varies from reporting on data in relation to prevalence of STIs and BBVs (Homaifar & Wasik, 2005) through to action research that involves communities, NGOs and government organisations. Ethical practices range from those that are highly questionable and oppressive (Kerrigan et al., 2006; Longo & Ditmore, 2003) to those that are guided by the needs of a community (Jana, Bandyopadhyay, Saha, & Dutta, 1999).

The effect of research which focuses on non-Western populations serves a variety of functions including enabling the "othering" of sex workers, taking the focus off oppressive practices in Western countries and fuelling fear of disease (Doezema, 2001). A secondary effect of this type of research is that it influences the sex workers themselves when they are asked to participate in research (D. Chan, 1999; Jeffery, 2002). The distaste for how some projects are implemented and the use of the results has caused many sex workers to be wary of researchers and at times refusing to cooperate. My knowledge about these projects, the ethical issues involved, the reactions of the sex workers concerned and the responses of sex work support groups was influential in how I formulated and conducted this project.

A Change of focus?

Current trends

Despite existing critiques of the literature and emerging theory in relation to context, sex work and disease, the discourse that implies that sex work is directly related to disease is still alive and well. Looking through mainstream media and many peer-reviewed journals revealed a plethora of articles about sex work in relation to deviance, disease and dysfunction; this highlights the fact that in some quarters, nothing has changed. Rekart (2005) states that "Sex work is an extremely dangerous profession" and "Sex work and injecting drug use are among the most perilous activities worldwide" (p.2123). For some, death by homicide is said to be an expected outcome of being in the sex industry (Farley, 2004b). While Rekart (2005) does not state that sex work actually causes disease he does call for the sex industry to be closed down to reduce the spread of disease and reduce harm to the community. Although the research does not support, and often contradicts, notions of disease, authors such as Rekart (2005) and right wing activist groups such as the Maxim Institute (2003) reflect and reinforce the notion that sex work causes harms, the most common of which is the spread of disease.

It seems that, as the evidence against the sex work/disease connection mounts and is becoming accepted as 'fact', another reason must be found to maintain interest in prostitution and give credibility to moves to dismantle the sex industry. It has been argued that the resurgence of interest in sex worker migration has worked to maintain media and academic attention on sex work (Cwikel & Hoban, 2005). Assumptions of the harm of sex work are reflected in the

growing body of writing and political lobbying in relation to trafficking of women and children across borders. While no one would argue against the idea that trafficking occurs and that many people are harmed by this, the approach, use of statistics and intent of current anti-trafficking groups is widely criticised by academics, sex workers, activists and sexual health workers. These critiques include racism, increasing oppression of migrant workers and being more concerned with stopping the spread of foreign allegedly disease ridden sex workers into privileged communities, than about the empowerment of women and children (Cwikel & Hoban, 2005; Day & Ward, 2004b; Doezema, 2001). The focus on sex worker migration has also been criticized for taking the focus off the abuse of women and children in Western countries (Hanson, 1998).

Sex activist organisations lobbied for research that focused on contextual factors in relation to sex work (Wahab & Sloan, 2004). Since the late 1990's there has been a shift, more articles report investigations into the lived reality of sex workers' lives and some have moved the focus from STI/HIV AIDS and street work to coping skills and indoor workers. Most of the studies use qualitative methods or a combination of qualitative and quantitative, thus allowing the voices of the participants to be heard within research projects. Increasingly, the voices of sex workers are being given more status, entering the literature as separate articles alongside those of academic and other researchers. Context and voice are given priority in the studies I outline below.

Context

When the research focus moves away from disease towards the context of the women's lives it is found that what is happening around the commercial sexual transaction is most important and has the most impact on the lives of the individuals concerned (McVerry & Lindop, 2005; Romans, Romans, Potter, Martin, & Herbison, 2001; Sanders, 2004a). The most stressful aspects of the work are from the day to day experiences around being a sex worker such as living a double life, internalized stigma and discrimination (McVerry & Lindop, 2005). Isolation because of this was also a stress factor, as were worries about broken condoms and client management (Perkins & Lovejoy, 2007). Although there are similarities between sex work and other types of human service work, because of the stigma attached to sex work and being a sex worker the issues around work are different for sex workers. In one Canadian study, one of the main concerns was difficulty of keeping work and non work aspects of life apart, or managing these in a way so that each aspect of the individual's world did not have a negative impact on the other (Jackson, Bennett, & Sowinski, 2007).

The context of the sex industry as a place of work is also important to consider. A USA study found that women's experience of the sex industry and how others perceived them as sex workers was influenced by class position, both in wider society and within the hierarchy of the

sex industry; a street worker talked about being perceived as trash, an escort as a high-class whore and a dancer as part of a group of friends who are strong women (Wahab, 2003). In a similar study that focused on what sex workers would like social workers to know, it was concluded that, "The principal findings of this study suggest that the multiplicity of forces such as race, class, working conditions, clients, violence, the criminalisation of prostitution, and stigma work together to inform women's experiences as sex workers" (Wahab, 2004, p. 152).

Reasons for entry

Reasons for entering the sex industry are diverse. Sex workers are not a homogenous group; they come from a variety of backgrounds, ranging from extremes of poverty (Phoenix, 2000) to positions of privilege and well paid employment (Perkins and Lovejoy, 2007). In the common understandings of prostitution and in some of the literature it is argued that people enter prostitution to support an addiction, are forced by pimps or boyfriends or because there are no other employment options available (Farley, 2004a). However, most indoor workers choose sex work from a variety of other occupations available to them, some of which are well paid (Sanders, 2004a). Sex workers choose their occupation for the same reasons other people do, such as a reasonable income, financial independence, suitable hours and other conditions (Brewis & Linstead, 2000a). A Canadian study of sex workers in a variety of settings found that mothers choose the work because they are able to work hours that fit in with family demands (Jackson et al., 2007). For British indoor workers the benefits of the job outweigh the illegality and stigma associated with being a sex worker (Perkins & Bennett, 1985). Monetary considerations are important; Brewis and Linstead (2000) found that the decision to enter prostitution is an autonomous and assertive decision to overcome other financial pressures, reduce dependency on the state and unreliable child support payment systems. However, a large proportion of private sex workers have worked in other occupations that attract large salaries, therefore money is not necessarily the main consideration. In an Australian sample of call girls, conditions such as autonomy and flexibility of hours were the main contributing factors in the decision to do sex work (Perkins & Lovejoy, 2007). As researchers notice the multiplicity of explanations for entering the sex industry it seems that there is no one main factor. Although money is often the main reason given, there is nothing remarkable in this; it is the reason why most people engage in paid work. Respondents may talk about money because that is a socially acceptable response to such a question, saying one is doing sex work because one likes having sex and being paid for it is not so socially acceptable (Chapkis, 1997).

Describing the work

Although some literature asserts that a sex worker is merely a receptacle for men to masturbate into (Farley, 2006), many sex workers describe the work as involving more than sexual relief. British indoor sex workers explained that they provided services that include sexual health education, prevention of extramarital affairs, providing emotional support for men, dealing with male sexual dysfunction and providing sexual services for disabled people (Sanders, 2006). A diverse group of women in the United States of America (USA) spoke of selling a service rather than themselves or their bodies, they saw the job as involving nurturing and education both for other workers and for clients; all reported choosing sex work and enjoying the work at some point (Wahab, 2003). Women's understanding and experience of the sex industry is influenced by many factors. Previous sexual relationships impact on how women interact with clients, those who work on the street are more likely to have had negative experiences in the past and view clients and the sexual interaction negatively; those who work indoors are more likely to have had positive experiences in the past and therefore position the clients and the work in a more positive light (Plumridge, 2005).

Paradoxes and contradictions

Recent research has asked questions that allow sex workers to voice both the positive and negative aspect of sex work. Within and between narratives about sex work there are many paradoxes and contradictions, as there are in most human experiences (Phoenix, 2000). For example; twenty-one English sex workers who came from backgrounds of low education, poverty, abuse and violence were studied. Focusing on the conditions that sustain sex workers' involvement in the sex industry, Phoenix found that the workers displayed both agency and lack of agency within constraints and in difficult circumstances. The participants described men as benefactors and abusers. Plumridge (2001) found that indoor workers stayed in the sex industry for the money but often did not earn enough to cover work related expenses. Sex workers sometimes explain that the work is gratifying and the clients respectful and also describe some clients as abusive and treating them like commodities (Nagel, 1997). These paradoxes and contradictions are inherent in most accounts of sex work: "Every sex worker has a formula, a world view that explains everything, a world view that is constantly collapsing and reforming" (Sycamore, 2000a, p. 4).

In addition to the studies described above, edited books also provide comprehensive and pertinent information about the sex industry. Day and Ward (2004b) include contributions from sex workers, activists, health workers and academics in a volume that focuses on women in the European sex industry. There are sections on policy, health, the mobility of sex workers and sex worker activism. Matthews & O'Neill (2003) cover the history of prostitution, the sociology of prostitution, the politics of prostitution, and the regulation of prostitution; the

dates of the works in this volume range from 1937 to 2001, giving a comprehensive overview of the sex industry.

These examples illustrate the change in focus in sex work research and academic publications. Research questions are asked that allow sex workers to address both positive and negative aspects of doing sex work and being a sex worker. They directly challenge notions of disease and dysfunction and allow the voices of the sex workers to be heard. The contradictions inherent in sex work, as in all social life, are voiced and explored. They contribute to the argument that it is the context of sex work, mostly in relation to stigma and the social consequences of this, that has the most profound effect on sex workers' wellbeing. This study aims to build on this body of knowledge from a Aotearoa/New Zealand context.

Aotearoa/New Zealand Research

Research in Aotearoa/New Zealand has investigated many areas of the sex industry. Of 26 books and articles related to prostitution in Aotearoa/New Zealand, eight focused on sexual health, risk and personal safety, two biography, two on child prostitution and two on clients. Other areas covered included history, empowerment, feminist perspectives and peer education within the industry. Below, I review the articles most relevant to this thesis that are not referred to elsewhere in this chapter.

It is estimated there are between 4500 and 8000 sex workers in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Jordan, 2005). The estimate for the initial report to the Prostitution Law Review Committee (PLRC) was 5932 for the period around 2003. A 2007 survey indicated that there were 2332 spread across Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Nelson and Hawkes Bay (PLRC, 2008). However, all these figures must be read with caution. The methods for collecting data vary between time and location and as previously stated, the sex industry population was, and remains, a hidden population.

The most recent research on the sex industry in Aotearoa/New Zealand has been a series of reports to the PLRC and the report generated from that information (PLRC, 2008). This report is informed by a number of reports and studies including, "The impact of the Prostitution Reform Act on the Health and Safety Practices of Sex Workers" (Abel et al., 2007) and a report based on key informant interviews with NGOs, brothel operators and community groups and information gathered from local authorities and government agencies (Mossman & Mayhew, 2008). The comprehensive PLRC report covers legal, compliance and governance issues, occupational health and safety matters, information about all sectors of the industry and those who work in these venues, and matters in relation to underage sex workers, avoiding and exiting the industry and trafficking (PLRC, 2008). This is a large and complex document with a plethora of information that is beyond the scope of this literature review to discuss fully. The

findings from the Abel et al. (2007) report are briefly discussed below; other information from this report is drawn on from time to time throughout this thesis.

Abel et al (2007) drew participants from street, managed and private sectors in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Nelson and Napier. The report includes qualitative and quantitative data of 58 in-depth interviews with sex workers and the results of a survey of 772 sex workers. Entry into sex work was primarily for financial reasons and also influenced by social and sexual identity factors. On entry most felt they had adequate information about sex work, some from friends and co-workers and others used NZPC and the internet. People stayed in the industry for financial reasons, the social aspects of the job, the flexibility of the working hours and some because they enjoyed the sex. Benefits of being in the industry included the social aspects with co-workers, sexual and social contact with clients and flexibility of hours. Negative aspects were in relation to stigma, being harassed and the physical and mental stress of the work. Just over half had stopped working in the sex industry and then returned at least once. Reasons for returning included the social aspects of the job. Most participants used condoms all the time and had regular health checks (Abel et al., 2007).

As discussed previously there are many contradictions in sex worker narratives. In a study of 19 people who worked in the sex industry, the participants described sex work in ways that seemed to conflict; the participants described it variously as a professional service and as the provision of an objectified body; they also described it as sexual relief to pander to the drives and desires of men, and as a social service (Weatherall & Priestly, 2001). Plumridge (2001) (2001) interviewed 31 sex workers over a three year period and subjected their narratives to discursive analysis. In a manner that is similar to other descriptions of lived experience, both indoor and street workers told stories that had many contradictions. It was found that the arguments given by the sex workers for doing sex work did not match the reality and were used to mask risky aspects of the work. According to Plumridge, the reason given for entering sex work, money, was at odds with the reality; income from sex work was neither consistent nor plentiful. Freedom and the company of women were other reasons the women gave for being in the sex industry.

Background of the workers may be an important consideration when investigating the current situation of workers. Previous experiences influence the sex work experience; for example, past experience of sexual interaction influences how sex workers look after their wellbeing and on how they perceive and interact with their clients (Plumridge, 2005). In common with other locations, Aotearoa/New Zealand sex workers come from a wide variety of backgrounds (Romans et al., 2001) and have an equally wide variety of paths of entry into the sex industry (Abel et al., 2007). In a small study, abuse history of 29 female sex workers was compared to that of 680 controls; it was found that the sex workers were more likely to have come from

families with psychosocial problems and were more likely to have suffered physical or sexual abuse in childhood (Potter, Martin, Romans, & Martin, 1999). There are some limitations to this study, the sample was small and not random, and although the researchers state that they attempted to interview a cross section of sex workers they do not state the venues in which the sex workers conducted their work. The last is particularly relevant; it is widely acknowledged in the literature that there are many differences between street based workers and those who work indoors.

It could be expected that as a marginalized employment group sex workers would experience poor general health; however this is not supported in the literature. When comparisons have been made with other populations many similarities have been found (Vanwesenbeeck, 2006). Using a sample obtained through New Zealand Prostitutes Collective (NZPC) for the cross sectional survey Romans et al. (2001) compared the mental and physical health of Aotearoa/New Zealand sex workers with an age-matched sample. There were no differences between the two groups in self esteem, mental health, self-assessment of physical health or quality of social networks (Romans et al., 2001). This study is important and has utility because it used the same measures for the sex workers as for the general population which allows for reasonable comparisons to be made.

People engaged in human service work have particular ways of managing their customers or clients that are relevant to the workplace and type of interaction. Because the intimate encounters with clients are a unique aspect of sex work it is important to consider how these encounters are managed on an emotional level. According to Plumridge (2005) the emotions of sex work are influenced by pre-established understandings of sexual interactions. Plumridge found that there are considerable differences in the histories of street workers and indoor workers. The indoor workers discussed both the negative and positive aspects of both private and commercial sex; in contrast the street workers assumed that all sex with clients was damaging. The indoor workers used various coping mechanisms in relation to work sexual encounters; they framed the encounter as one similar to a non commercial sexual experience, they mocked and invoked the stereotypes of prostitution and they contrasted the positive aspects of commercial sexual experience with the negative aspects of private encounters. Present negative experiences were seen as hurtful, negative and possibly damaging. Plumridge concluded that sex worker claims about sex, emotion and work are not simply rhetorical devices employed to justify sex work.

Overall, recent Aotearoa/New Zealand research into the sex industry has reflected current trends to focus less on physical health and risk issues, to include the voices of sex workers, and to allow both positive and negative aspects of the work to be acknowledged. However there are problems with the research that are similar to those in other locations. The positive aspects of

sex work are not acknowledged as "reality" by Plumridge (2001); instead descriptions of these are labelled as 'gloss' which is explained as a linguistic device that is used to make an argument convincing. Although it is acknowledged that it is common practice to construct arguments that are different from the reality, using terms such as gloss serves to invalidate the positive aspects of the work, and do nothing to normalise sex workers' coping skills. Aspects of the work in relation to other occupations that may be similar, such as other types of people work or people who work for commission are not discussed. Romans et al. (2001) also did not compare the sex worker population with a similar occupational group. For example, there is a high rate of history of abuse in the mental health and medical occupational groups; studies report a range from 17% to 37% history of childhood sexual abuse (Kendall-Tackett, 2003). Yet no comparison study has been made between sex workers and this or any other human service group in relation to abuse history. It could be argued that a lack of comparison serves to pathologise behaviours, such as the use of linguistic devices that rationalise work, because they are done **by** sex workers. The implication is that if sex workers engage in a particular behaviour then it is less healthy than if done by people in other situations. Comparisons have been widely recommended in the literature because they are useful in relation to investigating and normalising sex worker behaviour and cognitive process (O'Neill, 2001; Sloss&Harper, 2004). In addition, comparing sex workers with similar occupations will enable prostitution to be more consistently framed as an occupation rather than a social identity (Shaver, 2005).

This study aims to contribute to knowledge of Aotearoa/New Zealand sex workers by continuing to give primacy to the lived experience of sex workers. By utilising literature related to comparable occupational groups in relation to wellbeing it is possible that sex worker coping mechanisms may be understood and normalised.

Wellbeing

There is much information available in relation to dysfunction and pathology in sex workers. There have been few comparisons of sex worker wellbeing with that of other populations who engage in similar work, whether this is human service work, stigmatised occupations or high risk occupations. Below, I discuss relevant literature in relation to psychological wellbeing.

Using the lens of the sociology of labour and reproducing the voices of the participants, Bruckert, Parent & Robitaille (2003) interviewed Canadian sex workers in massage parlours and brothels to describe many aspects of being a sex worker. They focused on everyday aspects of the work and the social consequences of working in a stigmatised occupation. It was found that sex work shared similarities with other jobs such as hair stylists and real estate agents in relation to shifts, work conditions and income structure.

Research needs to build on studies such as this to find out more about the wellbeing of sex workers (Shaver, 2005). There is a need to understand what is unique about sex work and what

is similar to other occupations; sex worker coping mechanisms may then be reframed so that the healthy and commonly used strategies are clearly identified. For example, drug and alcohol use has been described as an unhealthy side effect of sex work however whether this is normal in relation to peer group behaviour has not been fully explored. Substance use of sex workers needs to be compared with this as a coping mechanism among other populations. Other professionals also use drugs and alcohol and justify this as useful for recreation, to enhance creativity and to cope with the demands of work (Blackmore, 2005). Therefore we need to look at literature that relates to wellbeing in other non clinical occupational populations.

Wellbeing is a multi-dimensional construct that has been defined in various ways; all theorists agree that it is more than the absence of pathology. Cowen (1991) describes wellness as having two sets of indicators, one in relation to doing life's tasks well and meeting physical needs such as eating and sleeping well and the other, which is less easily measured or defined, is in relation to a sense of purpose, being in control, a sense of belonging and satisfaction with oneself. Most people do not use long term formal engagement with helping professionals to manage their well-being (Henry, 2006). As discussed previously, literature suggests that sex workers are no different in this respect, preferring to build and use self help strategies, their own social supports and specialist peer based organisations.

Many people try self-help strategies such as positive thinking, visualising a positive future and having peer support. Henry (2006) used self-report studies, from a non-clinical population, sampling primarily among managers, psychologists and educators that were attending conferences or workshops. The strategies most commonly reported as successful by 20% of these participants were physical activity, being absorbed by activities and, to a lesser degree, having a sense of purpose and meaning in life. Twenty percent used strategies such as re-framing, mastery, work life balance and expressing oneself, while 10% cited strategies such as humour and drug taking. Other strategies that rate highly include activities that use both body and mind such as sport, dancing, gardening and playing with children (Henry, 2006).

There are conditions which make the effective use of coping strategies possible. Taking a sample of managers and high achievers, Prilleltenski & Prilleltenski (2006) explored overall wellbeing. Preconditions for psychological wellbeing and health include, control, emotional nourishment, empathy and optimism. People who are high in subjective wellbeing are optimistic, they have control over many aspects of their lives, have fulfilling relationships and have found meaning in what they do. They experience life as "satisfying, enjoyable and rewarding" (p.105). According to Prilleltenski & Prilleltenski the signs of wellbeing are self-determination and a sense of control, a sense of self efficacy, physical and mental health, optimism, meaning and spirituality. Sex worker studies that have explored wellbeing and coping have found that sex workers do indeed use similar strategies and have the same

preconditions for wellbeing as other populations (McVerry & Lindop, 2005; Plumridge, 2005; Sanders, 2004b; Sanders & Campbell, 2007).

Stigma

> "With knives and branding irons, ancient Greeks would slice and burn criminals and traitors to denote their immorality or lack of fitness for regular society. Such a mark was called a "stigma", and an individual bearing a stigma has to be discredited, scorned and avoided." (Neuberg, Smith, & Asher, 2000)

There are multiple effects of stigma. Many sex workers choose not to engage with mainstream helping agencies because of fear of a negative reaction to any disclosure about their occupation (Jackson et al., 2007; Plumridge & Abel, 2001). Some prefer to use the services of small specialised organisations (Jackson et al., 2007) and others relied on friends and other sex workers for (Perkins & Lovejoy, 2007). This fear is not unfounded, in a retrospective study of British sex workers; the workers describe negative experiences with many professionals due to the nature of their work. For example, one British worker was refused fertility services due to her occupation (Day & Ward, 2004a). In a study of 46 indoor sex workers in the Netherlands "More than half (54%) of the group had experienced at least one negative social reaction in their private lives because of their profession during the past year" (Vanwesenbeeck, 2006, p. 634). It has been stated that stigma is the one thing prostitutes have in common: "They all know that society condemns them for what they do. They are a pariah race, branded as outcasts and feared" (Jessen, 2004, p. 208).

According to Neuberg et al., stigmatised individuals pose a threat to the social life of the group by violating norms or by being seen as a burden to the group that confers the stigma. Sex workers as an occupational group are regarded as being in a stigmatised occupational group. Such groups have a moral taint and/or their work is classed as 'dirty work', the work that nobody else wants to do (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999).

The point of difference between sex work and other stigmatised occupations is the impact of the social consequences of working in a stigmatised occupation (Aggelton, 1999; Bruckert et al., 2003). Literature strongly suggests that stigma has the main negative impact on the wellbeing of sex workers. Plumridge (2005) states that although no longer pathologised; prostitution is an "occupation without honour" (p.152). She found that the workers she interviewed, no matter how strong, were affected by the social disrespect and contempt that prostitutes are held in. There was always the threat of shame.

The term stigma relates to how people view and treat prostitutes and how the sex workers view themselves and each other. The stigma of the prostitute is transferable to all women (O'Neill, 2001). Whore stigma affects all women, any woman who does not comply with sexual norms is liable to be labelled whore and it is fear of being labelled thus that keeps many women

compliant with the dominant norms around sexuality (O'Neill, 2001). I argue that until prostitutes cease to be stigmatised, all women will not be free to experience the fullness of sexual expression whether this is commercialised or not. Stigma, in relation to sex workers, partially serves to warn other women of the consequences of improper behaviour. It serves to put some women in the position of "other" (Dozema, 2001; O'Neill, 2001). Having one sector wearing the cloak of stigma serves to strengthen the position of those who are "not like that" (Baldwin, 2004).

Stigma could be likened to a cloak of dishonour that is put around people who undertake activities or have certain characteristics. This cloak acts as restriction, warning and social control (Nagel, 1997). Stigma thrives on and reinforces social inequality and the labels that are instituted by dominant groups (Link & Phelan, 2001). Although useful because it conveys the cloak effect and a sense of shame that is commonly understood, I use the term reluctantly and endeavour to keep in mind the individual components, or threads, of stigma. I argue that these include, but are not limited to prejudice, hatred, fear, discrimination and misuse of power; this notion is supported by Link & Phelan (2001). I rationalise that to unweave such a cloak the individual threads must be named, teased out and dismantled or dissolved one by one. Use of the term stigma has been criticised for being too broad a term, for glossing over prejudice and disadvantage and for focusing on the psychological reactions of the individual (Link & Phelan, 2001). This breadth makes stigma difficult to define and measure. Vanwesenbeck (2006) measured it as a negative social experience in the participants' private lives that was directly related to being a sex worker.

According to Link and Phelan (2001) stigma is conferred by the relatively powerful onto those with less power; the components of this power include being able to separate "us from them" and ensure that the stigmatised difference is recognised in the culture (p.376). Link and Phelan have conceptualised stigma as existing when status loss, discrimination, labelling, stereotyping and separation occur in a process where power differences can unfold. They assert that to change stigma all components of the stigmatisation process must be addressed. In particular the fundamental and widely held beliefs that are held by the more powerful groups need to be challenged and changed. This is difficult because the labelling and dominant understandings then change to continue to justify the stigma (Stangor & Crandall, 2000). In relation to sex work, prostitutes have variously been positioned as sinners, as mad, as helpless victims and as deviant. One recent shift in labelling has been from positioning prostitution as deviance to seeing sex workers as victims. Labels and descriptions change in part to fit in with the current political climate and also to avoid having to accept that the reasoning behind one set of labels is erroneous (Stangor & Crandall, 2000). This process is akin to changing the subject in a conversation so that challenges to one's beliefs are avoided. Those in power simply 'change the subject' so that stigma continues to be conferred.

Media representations reproduce the social stigma of sex work. The media continues to focus attention on street workers. Hallgrimsdottir, Phillips and Benoit (2006) examined print media between 1980 and 2004 and compared media portrayals of sex workers, with the self reports of personal background and experience of these workers. They conclude that these narratives tell little about the realities of sex work and represent the workers as victims who are "morally lost and legally corrupt" (p.278). These media representations impact on construction of personal identity. Ashforth and Kreiner (1999), state they relate to constructions of occupational identity.

Many sex workers struggle with the social stigma of sex work (Wahab, 2004). In a study of indoor workers, Vanwesenbeeck (2006) found stigma related factors such as role conflict, lack of respect for sex workers, non supportive work environments and negative social reactions outside of the workplace. These factors were related to symptoms of burnout amongst the indoor workers. More than half of the 96 participants had experienced at least one negative social experience that was directly related to their sex work in the previous year.

The stress related to sex work can be attributed to status as sex workers, and what other people think of prostitution, rather than undertaking acts of commercial sex (McVerry & Lindop, 2005; Sanders, 2004b). People regard sex workers differently when they know a person is a sex worker (Day & Ward, 2004a). Fear of discrimination forces many sex workers to lead double lives and to hide their work from those who could be supportive of them (Barlow, 1994; Day & Ward, 2004a; Plumridge & Abel, 2001). Lying and hiding is stressful (Smart & Wegner, 2000), and has been found to be one of the most negative aspects of sex work. Fear of prejudiced reactions and how this will affect services means that many sex workers do not access health and other services that are available (Day & Ward, 2004a; Plumridge & Abel, 2001). To counter this, sex workers, in common with people in other stigmatised occupations, develop work related support and social systems (Ashforth, Kreiner, Clark, & Fugate, 2007; O'Neill, 2001).

Few people who undertake stigmatised activities are fully aware of the impact of this when they begin that activity. When many sex workers start in the sex industry they do not see it as a long term employment solution; some who see the work as a short term measure do not identify as sex workers (Perkins & Prestige, 1994) and are less likely to be affected by the stigmatisation process. According to Aggelton (1999), it is this stigmatisation process which may lead to some of the risk taking behaviours that are commonly associated with sex work.

The understanding of and effect of stigma appears to be progressive and continues after leaving the profession. In a fifteen year prospective study of 130 British sex workers, it was found that workers enter the industry with some concern about their character being blemished (Day & Ward, 2004a). After a short time they stress the legitimacy of what they do, credit stigma to the

external world and develop an analysis of how it is perpetrated through institutions, gender relations and work. Later, they become concerned about the social process of becoming a prostitute and how stigma has affected their lives, in particular their life chances and mental wellbeing. Some take on the notion that prostitution is an abuse of the body and feel a sense of sin or shame. Others develop a sense of dishonour after a series of events that are attributed to being a prostitute; these may be negative social reactions, health problems, change in social group or negative attitudes of clients. Fifteen years on, whether they had left the industry or not, the participants spoke of the personal costs of doing sex work. They found it difficult to find work and to integrate with non-sex workers. Although not a focus of the study and therefore not addressed directly, it was suggested that there is a link between stigma and psychological problems. Many of the interviewed participants reported a range of psychological problems that they did not have prior to starting in the sex industry. These persisted even after a change of occupation. Some credited living with stigma as a positive strengthening experience and all acknowledged the social, financial and personal growth aspects of sex work. Several had constructed an oppositional identity that valued freedom, autonomy and financial security (Day & Ward, 2004a).

In summary, from the literature available it seems that it is all the aspects of stigma, in combination, that are the main negative effects of sex work. It has a profound and lasting effect on the wellbeing of sex workers.

Wellbeing in sex worker populations

Working in the sex industry impacts on health in a number of other ways; these include the effects of increased vulnerability to violence by clients, managers and others, the psychosocial effects of working in a severely stigmatised occupation and the effects of working under conditions that are sometimes exploitative and coercive (Jordan, 1991; Perkins & Bennett, 1985). In addition, there is the relentless reminder of the severe consequences of contracting a STI or BBV as the workers manage their risks by condom use and other strategies (Sanders, 2006). Most of the impacts of these factors are not unique to the sex industry; however the combination of effects is particular to working in the sex industry.

Sex workers use a variety of mechanisms to manage their emotions at work. Kramer (2003) investigated the emotions of women engaging in acts of prostitution and how they managed these. 89% of the sample was in jail for prostitution or minor offences. The other 11% were working in escort agencies and recruited using snowballing. She found that 59% used drugs and 28% reported using alcohol to numb out while turning tricks. It does not appear that she asked questions about positive and healthier ways to cope with emotional responses to acts of prostitution. Respondents were asked to list five words that described their feelings while turning a trick; 90% of these were negative, 10% positive and 14% uncategorised. Turning

tricks involved acting for 75%. 19% indicated that prostitution was physically pleasurable and 13% found the work emotionally pleasurable. Kramer suggests that different emotional experiences can be attributed to "time spent in prostitution, differences in the amount of violence suffered and differences in the meaning attached to prostitution" (p. 195). By offering such a small range of possible answers she effectively constrained responses and silenced any alternative explanations. Research such as this not only keeps alternative understandings from the literature but also works in a negative manner on the participants. Those who have a different understanding are silenced and may well doubt their own understanding. They may have negative self images which are reinforced by being pressured to restrict their own understanding of self to those presented by the research questions (Chapkis, 1997).

Ross, Farley and Schwartz (2003) and others conduct studies and review literature to investigate the prevalence of dissociative, post-traumatic, mood and substance abuse disorders in the sex worker population. Despite sometimes acknowledging that sex work is not damaging for all woman all of the time, they consistently describe prostitution as brutal and claim that trauma is intrinsic to prostitution (Farley, 2004b).   The instruments they use to assess psychological problems have been criticized as imprecise, capable of pathologising most people or not comprehensive enough (Piper, 1994). As well as pathologising normal behaviour and cognitions, studies such as this do not ask questions that allow the respondents to describe healthy coping mechanisms. Positive reports of the sex work experience are belittled as either the result of privilege or some dysfunction. I posit that studies such as these do little to increase the understanding of the experience of sex work and contribute nothing to improving the wellbeing of sex workers as they go about their lives. According to Chapkis (1997) these types of studies increase prejudice and stigmatization of sex workers.

Other studies investigate the wellbeing of sex workers in relation to context. As discussed previously, when context is explored, issues that are not directly related to the sexual activities of prostitution are found to have an impact on the wellbeing of sex workers. For example: McVerry and Lindop (2005), Romans et al. (2001) and Sanders (2004) found that sex workers have a high level of control over threats to physical health. There is less control over social issues that arise from factors such as gender and stigma. People who have a high level of control in their workplace manage their stress better than those with less control (Prilleltenski & Prilleltenski, 2006). Sanders argues that the risks sex workers face are similar to those faced by all women, most especially those who are on the margins or considered immoral. Risk, to Sanders, is gendered.

Independent sex workers may create an infrastructure to reduce risk and provide support. A study of 38 rural sex workers in Florida showed that these women created support networks to share information about clients and organised physical safety backup from male acquaintances

(Bletzer, 2003). In common with most sex workers in New Zealand, these workers did not have pimps, most were not coerced into the sex industry and had regular clientele. Most had worked in other occupations, some worked in the sex industry intermittently or concurrently with other work. The women chose their clients with care. Most did not take on new clients, did not see clients they did not want to and relied on intuition to enable them to avoid dangerous clients. These women cope with acts of violence by externalising this; seeing it as a consequence of either being a prostitute or of being a woman. This externalization gives the women a feeling of solidarity with other women and, according to Bletzer, decreases the psychological impact somewhat.

Vanwesenbeek (2006) compared sex workers with other workers who share some of the same job characteristics, such as emotional labour and shifts. This quantitative study of 96 female indoor sex workers was conducted as part of a larger study in the Netherlands. It was found that emotional exhaustion and personal competence levels of sex workers were similar to those of a group of female nurses. Levels of depersonalisation were similar to people in treatment for work related stress (Vanwesenbeeck, 2006). Depersonalisation was more related to contextual factors such as not working by choice, lack of control over experiences with clients and experience of violence. Not working by choice, negative work environment and negative social situations were related to emotional exhaustion while personal competence was explained by support from social contact and the workplace, starting work at a older age and having a professional attitude (Vanwesenbeeck, 2006).

In summary, it can be argued that the overall wellbeing of sex workers is similar to that of matched populations. Differences between indoor workers and those who work on the streets could be explained not only by the different questions that are asked but also by the many differences between these populations, such as work environment, personal history and economic situation.

Emotional labour

The term "emotional labour" was first used by Arli Hochschild in 1983. According to Hochschild, emotional labour is work which involves the suppression or expression of emotions as an expected component of carrying out the job well. Regulation of emotional expression is a particularly important aspect of work that involves interaction with people, often termed "people work". Emotion regulation is engaged in for many reasons; including making the interpersonal transaction as pleasant as possible, to perform as required to ensure continued employment, and to ensure the customer returns (or not, depending on the circumstances). Emotional regulation is a specific type of performance that is generally considered socially acceptable and necessary in our society. It requires either deep or surface acting. Surface acting is where a person behaves as if they are feeling a particular emotion.

Usually this involves engaging in socially recognised behaviour or gestures that indicates how a person is feeling. Deep acting is where a person makes themselves feel a particular emotion either because it is expected of them or because they expect it of themselves. This is done by creating a particular feeling or by using the experience of remembered emotion and the behaviours associated with it to create an appropriate emotional response to a situation. Deep acting sometimes involves using the body to inspire feeling. A person may regulate emotions consciously or with less than full awareness. This regulation may occur in response to what other people want or need or because the individual wants to change how they feel (Wieclaw, Agerbo, Mortensen, & Bonde, 2006).

Occupations that provide customer service, education, health care or social care are sometimes defined as human service professions. In these occupations, there is an increased risk of mood and stress related disorders especially when the workers are exposed to abuse, crime or threats to health (Mann, 2004). The risk does not increase in occupations where there is job mobility and the workers do not have to hide emotions and manage clients continuously. Mann (2004) suggests ways of coping so that negative consequences are minimised; these include defining the emotional labour as a skilled part of the job, taking time out, and the use of humour. Sex workers use these same strategies to manage the emotional labour component of the work (Sanders, 2004b).

Sex workers describe managing their own emotions and those of the clients as exhausting (Sanders, 2006). Vanwesenbeek (2006) states that prostitution is emotional labour because the work is in part built up from feigned behaviours and emotions as a part of playing the whore or being on the game. Women who had worked in the sex industry for many years and described themselves as successful, explained that the skilful combination of emotional, social and sexual skills was the reason they maintained regular clientele (Ross et al., 2003). Some describe the work as acting. Kramer (2003) found that 75% of her respondents described 'turning tricks' as acting. This performance has often been pathologised and related to the harms of sex work. Some researchers do not differentiate between the regulation of emotion required to perform sex work and clinically significant dissociative disorders (Grandey, Fisk, & Steiner, 2005). It could be argued that some literature promotes the association between sex worker coping behaviour and harmfulness because it is a sex worker who is doing it and not because it has been shown to be harmful in other circumstances. There are many similarities between the emotion regulation that sex workers engage in and the emotion regulation of people in other human service occupations where such coping skills are considered healthy and the absence of them as unhealthy.

Counsellors and other 'people workers' are trained to regulate emotions and be in a role; it is considered a normal part of the job and essential for the worker's psychological wellbeing. In

common with sex worker descriptions, other work that involves the regulation of emotions has been explained as exhausting. However, people with work autonomy are more likely to have less exhaustion and high job satisfaction regardless of the level of emotion regulation involved in the work (Dollard, Winefield, Winefield, & de Jong, 2000). One of the often criticised features of sex work is the way that sex workers manage their emotions and act up or perform to clients. Yet sex workers have considerable control and autonomy in relation to interaction with clients, an aspect of the work that is a significant buffering factor from the negative effects of emotional labour (Grandey et al., 2005).

In summary, work that involves emotion regulation needs to be managed well to reduce job stress and increase job satisfaction. For sex workers, in addition to the emotional labour aspects of the work there is the continual pressure to manage physical aspects of the job. Around all this is the impact of stigma. Because of these multiply impacting factors it could be expected that sex workers have to work much harder than people in other occupations to manage their psychological wellbeing.

Coping strategies in sex work

Sex workers, like people in other occupations, employ a variety of strategies to enable them to cope with the work and to enhance their wellbeing. Some of these are discussed throughout this review. In this section I discuss literature in relation to coping strategies that are specific to sex work.

Finding meaning in life and in the work one does contributes to psychological wellbeing (Prilleltenski & Prilleltenski, 2006). Sex workers see their work as having meaning beyond that of providing sexual satisfaction to their clients. They see themselves as therapists; similar to counsellors, psychiatrists or psychotherapists, as sexual health educators, as community caregivers in relation to providing services for disabled clients and as people who provide services to married men and thus save marriages (Sanders, 2006; Wahab, 2004). Some see the job as involving nurturing, sexuality education both for other workers and for clients, and as a service (O'Neill, 2001).

Being in control of the work situation and in control of one's personal life enhances well being and decreases the impact of job stress (Prilleltenski & Prilleltenski, 2006). Being able to cope financially and have some extra money gives some sex workers a feeling of being in control by not depending on others for financial support (O'Neill, 2001). O'Neill found that client management skills are often quickly developed. Sex workers educate each other about ways to be in control of intimate situations with clients (Perkins & Lovejoy, 2007) and how to attract and screen clients (Lewis, 2006). Boundaries between client and worker are under the control of the worker, some separate the emotional self from the body as a tool of the trade by not kissing, not self disclosing to clients, being clear about the difference between work sex and

recreational sex and keeping in sex worker role while at work (Jackson et al., 2007). As mentioned previously, in Aotearoa/New Zealand, sex workers have considerable control over client interaction and who they choose to see.

Having a sense of autonomy increases job satisfaction. Working in a supportive environment and cultivating good peer relationships are other ways of making work manageable and at times enjoyable (Grandey et al., 2005). Private sex workers usually choose this type of work so that they are autonomous and in control of the clients they see. They screen clients carefully prior to meeting them and if financial pressures are not an issue they regularly turn down clients or refuse to see problematic clients again (Perkins & Lovejoy, 2007). Some now only advertise on the internet; this enables screening, the ability to identify clients if necessary and cuts out a whole sector of the population from being able to contact the sex worker (Bernstein, 2007).

The camaraderie of the workplace is one of the factors that sustain women in the sex industry (Abel et al., 2007). The brothel environment is one of the few places where women spend a lot of time together in the absence of children or partners. They share intimacies, educate each other, become comfortable in the presence of other women's bodies and provide emotional and practical support, from this develops a special intimacy and sense of camaraderie (Dudash, 1997; Spivey, 2005).

Many sex workers are parents. Good support outside of the sex industry is also important as it decreases isolation and increases the ability to organise the practical aspects of parenting and working. In a qualitative study of 14 street workers who are parents, Sloss and Harper (2004) found that issues facing this population included shame that they were sex workers, concerns about child care, fear of the children finding out, and the fear that they might get hurt or murdered. In common with other working mothers they struggled with trying to do it all. The one thing that was mentioned that lessened the stress of being a mother and a street worker was good family support (Sloss & Harper, 2004).

In a study of eight white indoor workers in the Midlands region of England, McVerry & Lindop (2005) found that the main concern of the women in relation to their psychological well being was fear of disclosure about their occupation. To manage this threat they used various strategies to achieve separation of home life from work life; they managed disclosure of their work very carefully, did not use their real names at work and adopted a work persona. At work they acted out their role and/ or "switched off completely" (McVerry & Lindop, 2005, p. 115).

Separation of work life from home life and clearly differentiating between work and non work roles is vital to managing the impacts of people work (Hochschild, 2003). Ross et al. (2003) describe these coping skills, when used by prostitutes, as mental health disorders. They position the development of a separate personality for work life and private life as a dissociative disorder rather than a healthy coping skill or protective mechanism. From their

own studies and reviews of others', they conclude that most sex workers have a "dissociative disorder not otherwise specified" (Ross et al., p. 206). Separation of work from life and developing different personas for different roles is regarded as a healthy coping skill in other occupations. Hochschild maintains that to maintain psychological wellbeing the roles must be kept separate. Sex workers are more aware of taking on their work role than other types of workers (Sanders, 2005).

Humour is often used as part of stepping into the role as sex workers (Sanders, 2004b). Sex workers use humour in a similar way to those in other occupations who deal with emotion work, bodies, stressful or dangerous situations and occupations where group solidarity is necessary (Ashforth & Kreiner, 2002). In a study that draws on a 10 month ethnographic study in Birmingham UK in 2000 and 2001 the use of humour was documented (Sanders, 2004b). Sometimes joking is a way of reframing incidents or communicating about issues that are difficult to talk about; stories of dangerous or potentially distressing incidents are retold with laughter and sarcasm. This use of humour diffuses the gravity of the situation while still working to inform others of the dangers and survival strategies to use it also verifies that certain emotions such as fear or disgust are appropriate to the situation and group norms. There are three main functions of humour: as a strategy of emotion work, to foster friendships and group solidarity, and as a means of communication (Sanders, 2004).

Overall, it is apparent from the extant literature that sex workers employ a variety of strategies to cope with the work and to look after their wellbeing. These strategies are similar to those employed by other occupational groups.

Where this project fits

This section of the thesis has provided background information and coverage of literature pertinent to this project. This project was influenced by consultation with sex workers, sex work organisations and academic recommendations for future research. There have been requests from sex workers that theorists and researchers put aside theoretical arguments and focus on the lived reality of sex workers' lives with a strong recommendation that researchers stop denying and invalidating the accounts of the sex workers (Sloss & Harper, 2004). Wahab (2004) rejects the idea of formulating grand theories about sex work and recommends working towards gaining a deeper understanding with sex workers at the centre of the enquiry. Replicating studies of other populations has also been recommended to compare sex workers with other groups who have similar issues (Sloss & Harper, 2004; Weitzer, 2005). The usefulness of focusing on street workers has been questioned repeatedly (Benoit & Shaver, 2006). As recently as 2001 it was found that there was no research on strategies that enable sex workers to develop "sustainable lives" (O'Neill, 2001). O'Neil suggested exploring how women manage the emotional labour aspect of sex work, how they separate body from self to

do this intimate work and how they care for themselves while using exceptional control to show a caring identity for the clients.

This project validates the accounts of the sex workers themselves, does not engage in in-depth arguments about the nature of sex work and draws on literature that is relevant to other occupational groups in this exploration of how female indoor sex workers look after their psychological wellbeing.

What the women know: the voices of sex workers

Given the recent change in the direction of sex work research internationally, it is apparent that some researchers have paid heed to the voices of sex workers and sex work activists. It is important to acknowledge the importance and existence of this body of knowledge although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a detailed review. This section presents some of the literature that is relevant to the issues addressed in this thesis.

Although the voice of sex workers has not been heeded until recently it is not because of lack of written material that reflects their understandings and experiences. Prostitutes have been providing narrative information for researchers and their own written accounts of their lives for well over one hundred years. For example Cora Pearl, a courtesan who lived in London and Paris, published her memoirs in 1890 (Blatchford, 1983) and Anna Johannesdotter, a Swedish prostitute, wrote an autobiography which was published in 1907 by feminist author Klara Johanson (Jansdotter, 2008). These personal accounts were written in an attempt to provide balance to popular understandings of the reality of prostitutes' lives and because other people told their stories incorrectly (Jansdotter, 2008).

More recently, the voice of sex workers can be heard in many different places, in qualitative research, in more empirical based action participant research projects, biography and in sex worker rights' publications. In the academic literature, the voice of the sex worker is mediated; participants speak to the interests of researchers, narratives are edited for presentation, impact or explanation and then conclusions are drawn, all of which colours the told experiences of the participants (Carpenter, 2000). The less edited writings of sex workers themselves speak to what they want known and it is these that informed me as I formulated ideas for research and sought some balance in the sex work literature.

Edited books that contain writings by sex workers and former sex workers include accounts that vary from stories of exploitation and abuse through to celebrations of the subversive expression of sexuality. Many narratives express the contradictions and paradoxes of doing sex work and being a sex worker. Illustrating the vast differences between survival sex and that which is freely chosen in the best circumstances, they reflect the diversity of those who work in the industry and their understanding of their lived experience. Most have the aim of explaining

the diversity of the lived experiences of prostitutes, reducing stigma, increasing support and facilitating law change. Some set out to reflect this diversity and include narratives from different perspectives (Allen, 1989; Chapkis, 1997; Delacoste & Alexander, 1987; Nagel, 1997), others are celebrations (Bell, 1995; Stubbs, 1994) or biography (Blatchford, 1983; Jordan, 1991) and some are from an abolitionist perspective (Raphael, 2004; Whisnant & Stark, 2004). Reading these narratives fully leads to a deeper understanding of the complexities of being a sex worker and doing sex work.

Some sex workers align themselves to the tradition of the sacred whore (Fabian, 1997; Gilmore, 1998). Women of the Light (Stubbs, 1994) contains the writing of nine such women. This book reflects the diversity of commercial sexual practices. Contributors are porn star, sex surrogate, call girl, fire woman, meditation teacher, masseuse, group sex hostess, an artist and a nurse. All find positive and spiritually enhancing aspects to the work that they do. Others write with a view to celebrating sex work and/or changing stereotypes; Sex work: Writings by women in the sex industry (Delacoste & Alexander, 1987), and Whores and Other Feminists (Nagel, 1997) contain the voices of sex workers and sex work activists. Prostitutes: Our life (Jaget, 1980) contains the stories of six women who were involved in the prostitutes strike in Lyons, June 1975. Sex work research often involves 'hanging out' with participants; in Whore Carnival (Bell, 1995) the author joins in the activities of her participants to produces vivid accounts. "Tricks and Treats: Sex workers talk about their clients" (Sycamore, 2000b) gives insight into how sex workers view their clients, their work and life around sex work. Although works such as these are criticised for glorifying the sex industry, on close reading, this is not so. Most contributions acknowledge both positive and negative aspects of the work they do.

In "Not for sale: Feminists resisting prostitution and pornography" (Whisnant & Stark, 2004) and "Listening to Olivia: Violence, poverty, and prostitution" (Raphael, 2004) the negative aspects of sex work and being a prostitute are given primacy. Books such as these do provide an insight into why the abolitionist perspective is so strong and give detailed information about the negative aspects of sex work including substance use, forced sex work, the experience of stigma and prejudice. However, this perspective does nothing to reduce whore stigma. I argue that these works increase stigmatisation by disavowing positive aspects of sex work, reinforcing negative stereotypes, denying agency and positioning all sex work as inherently abusive.

 Other works discuss the more practical aspects of sex work. "Turning Pro" (Meretrix, 2001), is a book of advice for sex workers that draws on the sex industry experience of the author. Woven amongst the advice are stories about her personal experience. This book discusses both positive and negative aspects of the work. Former university lecturer Jo Hanson (Mistress, 2002) has written about her experience of moving from academia into the world of professional

domination. Hanson provides an insight into what really goes on in a world that is hidden within the sex industry and highlights the diversity of the industry. She contradicts the notion of forced choice or dire financial need as a factor when entering sex work.

There is also a critical voice that comes from within the sex industry and sex work organisations. "Research for Sex Workers" is an annual online publication produced by the Global Network of Sex Work Projects. On occasion this resource has been drawn on by researchers from all sectors of the sex work political spectrum as they formulate arguments. It began as, and continues to enable, an exchange of experiences of sex work researchers. Much of the information is from the perspectives of the sex workers. The content reflects the global nature of sex work with articles from many different cultures and locations. Topics covered include: peer education, appropriate health services, empowerment, violence, repression and other health risks, migration and mobility, human rights, research ethics, law enforcement and sex work and money. [1]

These and similar accounts tell us that sex workers have made considerable effort to have their voices heard in spite of and perhaps because of being invisibilised, disavowed and contradicted in the academic literature. Many are also driven by a desire to make some changes in the dominant common understandings of the sex industry and what it means to be a sex worker. They, similarly to the academic literature, illustrate the diversity and complexity of the sex industry and the multiplicity of viewpoints of those who undertake sex work. They have informed the formulation of this project and have provided an alternative ground to enable an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of the participants in this study.

Feminist debates

Introduction

The most heated debates around sex work took place during the 1980s and 1990s (Chapkis, 1997) when feminism was deconstructing the traditional knowledges and challenging the status quo in relation to research (Hesse-Biber, 2007). Sex workers were struggling to have their voices heard and feminists were grappling with the issues around prostitution. Reflecting and reinforcing popular ideas about sex work and sex workers, radical feminism makes a major contribution to popular representations of sex work (Carpenter, 2000).   The feminist

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[1] Back issues are available as PDFs from http://www.r4sw.org; the NSWP website, http://www.nswp.org, and the website of the Vrije Universiteit Medical Centre, http://hcc.med.vu.nl.

abolitionist point of view, which is similar to that of right wing moralists, receives much attention and is widely published in academic journals, publications aimed at the helping professions, policy information packages and in mainstream media. In much of the sex work literature this point of view is contested by sex work activists and by those who do not take a moral stand against sex work. Some research about sex workers is formulated with the idea of challenging notions that are informed by radical feminist ideologies. It is important to consider these debates because they receive wide acceptance which impacts on the lives of sex workers in relation to stigma, stereotypes, media representation, funding and implementation of interventions and the construction of government policy (Outshoorn, 2004). These debates not only have an impact on the lives of the participants in this study but also in my personal and work life. Much of my own initial theoretical understanding of sex work was informed by radical feminist theory around prostitution, pornography and violence against women. This influenced my work with women who have been traumatised by male violence and subtly but profoundly affected friendships with sex workers

This section begins with an overview of the different types of feminism and their particular positions regarding prostitution. I follow this with a discussion of ideas of sex work that are informed by radical feminist, abolitionist ideologies. To conclude I give a very brief overview of some of the solutions that have been proposed by other feminist researchers and academics. Each feminist school of thought takes a different stance in relation to sex work; by necessity simplified, I provide a brief overview of these below.

Radical feminism views the sex industry as a site of exploitation of women. It is asserted that prostitution reflects and creates the subordinate identity of women (Brace & Davidson, 2000); it is degrading to the prostitute and all women. Prostitutes are seen as the victims of male oppression. Those who contradict this view are said to theorise thoughtlessly and undermine feminist politics (Brace & Davidson, 2000). The political position is against decriminalisation and for all aspects of the sex industry to be abolished.   *Socialist feminism* states that in the absence of capitalism women would choose not to be sex workers and that the class system coerces all workers into degrading roles. Prostitutes are viewed as victims of a corrupt system. The political position is also against decriminalisation and for prostitution and other exploitative practices to be abolished (Bromberg, 1997). *Marxist feminism* argues that prostitution is as degrading as any wage labour which is involuntary servitude. Prostitutes are regarded as victims of the economic system. The political position is against decriminalisation and it is believed that if capitalism disappears so will prostitution (Overall, 1992). *Feminist existentialism* sees sex work as a choice that can be an empowering, liberating experience and can be a choice of a competent woman. It is seen as an example of the extraordinary powers that women utilise to overcome adversity. According to this view, prostitution should not be eradicated (Bromberg, 1997). *Liberal feminism* considers that the prostitute acts with free

choice; it is a civil right to contract out labour however one chooses to do this. According to this viewpoint, the position of sex workers can and should be improved by improving equality between the sexes (Bromberg, 1997). The political position is against eradication of prostitution, sex work is supported (Wahab, 2004). *Radical sexual pluralism* is critical of any restriction on sexual activities (Wahab). Sex work is positioned as legitimate work and prostitutes as political figures. The political position is that prostitution should be celebrated not eradicated (Bromberg, 1997).

The Debates

According to a point of view that could broadly be described as radical feminist, the function of prostitution is to keep women in their place, to objectify women and to fulfil male desires (Thompson, 2001). The sex industry is "an institution of male violence and racial and economic privilege" (Stark, 2004, p. 278) and all commercial sexual acts are paid rape (Farley, 2004b). Although a type of labour, it is also a gendered relation and a 'symptom' of assorted masculinities (Schotten, 2005, p. 213). The use of the word 'symptom' gives strength to the idea that prostitution is the manifestation of much that is wrong or unhealthy within patriarchy and heterosexual relations. Women who work in the sex industry are seen as victims of male domination and lacking in free choice. The agency of sex workers is denied because prostitution represents "what it means to be a woman" which includes the illusion of being free (Dworkin, 2004, p. 141).

Drawing on postmodern theories of the self policing body, Dworkin (2004) explains that one cannot make a free choice when one's body has been colonised and trained to accept humiliation and pain. According to Dworkin, prostitutes are both knowing and compliant; they know that acceptance of pain and humiliation brings rewards and that rejection of pain or abuse brings further abuse; therefore they are compliant. The women concerned carry the commands of male domination within themselves and police their own actions in order to avoid negative consequences (Dworkin, 2004). Some of these negative consequences have been learnt through childhood abuses at the hands of men and through adult experiences of gendered violence (Farley, 2004b). Other consequences are learned by osmosis or the experience of betrayal, violence, poverty and deprivation (Clarke, 2004). Given this understanding of the position of women it is logical to assume that any concept of having free choice is a mere illusion (Dworkin). The frequently used passive term "prostituted woman" indicates that it is something that is done to a woman not by a woman. Choice is denied.

Many sex workers assert that they have freely chosen to enter sex work. However, many radical feminists object to hearing voices of individuals in relation to adaptation and choice (Lakeman, Lee, & Jay, 2004). Sex workers and others who argue for choice are at best criticised and at worst vilified by radical feminist theorists and activists. Brison (2006) extends

her vilification to suggesting that sex work activists will soon be publishing a book about pimps and prostitutes for children. Freely chosen participation in sex work is said to contribute to the oppression of women (Brison, 2006; Farley, 2005). Sex workers are said to justify their choice because they depend on the economic benefits of sex work and therefore must promote prostitution and minimise the hardship and abuse inherent in sex work to protect their source of income or because they are in a state of 'false consciousness' (Jeffreys, 2004).

In addition to being accused of having false consciousness sex workers rights activists and non-repentant sex workers are silenced or attacked from a variety of positions.   Although abolitionist feminist research focuses on the most vulnerable of the population to further their own political aims (Bromberg, 1997; Doezema, 2001) they accuse rights activists of making a mockery of the concept of choice by using different stories from similar populations to explain agency (Lakeman et al., 2004). Sex radicals not only argue that sex work can be freely chosen, they also celebrate sex work as a political act and a sexual practice (Bromberg, 1997). This understanding of sex work as a sexual practice is regarded as a "naive celebration of minority sexuality" (Schotten, 2005, p. 213).

The celebration of sex work is also seen as contributing to rape and battery, and violence against women and children. The stories told by women who find sex work as positive are positioned as inauthentic. Organisations such as COYOTE, a USA sex worker organisation, are criticised for not allowing understandings of prostitution that offer alternatives to the celebration of sexuality. COYOTE is also criticised for having few active sex workers in its organisation. It is not acknowledged that many sex workers in these groups choose not to disclose their occupation because of the stigma attached to sex workers. Unwillingness to be silenced or become vulnerable to attacks on their integrity is understandable.

Not only are people who choose to represent sex workers under attack by abolitionists, sex workers could also be considered to be under attack through the way they are depicted by radical feminist researchers. Research participants are usually drawn from the most easily accessible and dysfunctional populations and some researchers refuse to listen to or seek out information about other perspectives on sex work (Bruckert et al., 2003). Some sex workers refuse to cooperate with these research projects (Chapkis, 1997). Lack of research allies is bemoaned (Clarke, 2004). Refusal to cooperate with research mystifies some researchers who justify their selection difficulties by saying they cannot access sex workers who have a positive experience of the work and that sex work activists will not cooperate (Kramer, 2003). This lack of cooperation is understandable when one considers that alternative narratives have been pre-positioned as inauthentic. Data from this research is frequently generalised to include all sex workers (Farley & Lynne, 2004). Sex workers are then positioned as dupes or victims of the system of male domination and individual males within that. According to Ross, Farley,

and Schwartz (2003) this victimisation is repeated with every client interaction, each of which is described as an act of rape (Ross et al., 2003). It is argued that that either previous experience of abuse or this continual assault results in symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder which causes the sex worker to use drugs or alcohol to cope with the stress of the job or dissociate in order to not have to be psychologically present at work (Farley, 2004a; Farley & Lynne, 2004; Ross et al., 2003; Young, Boyd, & Hubbell, 2000). According to Bletzer (2003) this continual barrage of assault results in permanent emotional scarring and other ongoing consequences such as changed appearance.

According to Dworkin (2004) most "women who are prostituted" (p.142) look different to other women; no matter how sexy a non-prostitute woman looks she will still look different. The vaginas of prostitutes are also positioned in particular ways; Farley stated that all prostituted vaginas are receptacles to be masturbated into (Farley, 2006) and Dworkin says that the vagina of the prostitute and of all women is dirty or positioned as dirty. Dworkin (1993) described prostitutes vaginas as being filthy with semen and lubricant.

With little discussion about the effect of their own view of the prostitute body, feminists critique the male view of women. This is particularly in relation to pornography but also encompasses other forms of sex work and the male view of sex workers. Current western erotic representations of women are presented as inherently abusive, oppressive and harmful. In contrast, veneration of the vulva, and presumably the rest of women's bodies, is acceptable when produced in other historical and cultural locations (Caputi, 2004). Caputi deems representations of vulva and other parts of women's bodies as acceptable when carried out by people such as feminist artists. Yet these same researchers and theorists do not honour the lived experiences of sex workers who are similar to themselves in many respects, that is, those who are articulate, politicised, working for the rights of women and working in a chosen occupation. This further entrenches the division between prostitute and non-prostitute.

Few would argue against the notion that many aspects of being a woman and being a sex worker are similar or that the sex industry is a loud and visible representation of human relationships that involve intimate sexualised interaction. Yet radical feminists, while acknowledging this and using it as part of their argument to prohibit the sex industry, continue to maintain the separation between prostitute and non-prostitute women (Baldwin, 2004). Women in sex work are positioned as victims and those who exit, and repent, as survivors. Non repentant whores or ex whores are labelled traitors (Bruckert et al., 2003; Jenness, 1990). Sex workers who wish to receive the services of feminist organisations must agree to move to a non-prostitute, survivor position, or from bad girl to good girl, to receive help (Baldwin, 2004; Stark, 2004). There is little difference between this stance and the dichotomies of good girl/ bad girl and madonna/whore that have been widely discussed in the feminist literature. It is

beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss the reasons for this separation but it is important to critique the radical feminist perspective and follow this by acknowledging the arguments and solutions that have been put forth by more liberal feminists and others so that there can be a more united "feminist" voice working for the rights of all sex workers. It is these arguments and suggested solutions that inform this thesis.

One of the aims of feminism is to ensure that the voices of women are included in the literature and to further the empowerment of women. In practice, the feminists who oppose sex work contradict the aims of feminism by forcing victimisation on to sex workers (Kesler, 2002). The disbelief and exclusion that some radical feminists apply to sex workers and sex worker activists does not apply to other groups of marginalised women (Fawkes, 2005).

In addition to listening to sex workers, it has been suggested that feminists working as sex workers and feminists not working in the industry should work together for change (O'Neill, 2001). Baldwin (2004) asserts that feminists should be accountable to sex workers, just as they purport to be accountable to other female populations (Baldwin, 2004). Kesler (2002) argues that that the dualisms around sex work keep women fighting amongst themselves rather than directing energy and action into fighting the oppression of women. Chapkis (1997) argues for a "hybrid perspective" (p. 213) that takes into account and uses the strengths of each perspective. She suggests using the idea of the abolitionists that just because something exists does not mean it is unchangeable and taking the radical feminist stance that oppression must be challenged. Additionally, Chapkis calls for an understanding of the sex workers rights groups' belief that prohibition will not achieve transformation of the industry and to take into account the sex radical perspective that subversion is a creative means of affecting change.

I posit that although seldom acknowledged, sex radicals and abolitionists do have common ground. Both share an outrage directed at the current sexual social order and both claim to care deeply about the position of women in society. Sex radicals favour subversive practices rather than abolition. Refusing to be passive they engage with the sexual order and play with it, giving positive connotation to sexual negatives, deconstructing and reconstructing meanings and sexualities in a manner that creates a sex-positive subculture of pleasure and resistance (Chapkis, 1997). The abolitionists, on the other hand, do not find anything to be playful about in the milieu of heterosexual relations. Perhaps this is because it is difficult to separate sex and violence.

Sex work is frequently equated with violence in academic anti-violence against women networks (Wahab, 2005). This equation does not take into account, and invisibilises, violence against male and transgendered sex workers. In addition, it needs to be acknowledged that men use sex acts, and the threat of these, as a means of control and a weapon against women; this does not mean that these same acts cannot be undertaken as acts of pleasure or commerce. I

argue that there are many weapons in the arsenal of power and control which can also be utilised in a non-harmful manner. It would be useful for sex workers, and all women, if context and intent around sex acts and violence against sex workers were considered with more care. The benign could then be differentiated from the malevolent and that which is targeted at sex workers because they are sex workers differentiated from domestic violence.

Both pro and anti prostitution positions are based on similar assumptions (Carpenter, 2000). If the various feminisms could use their shared sense of outrage and the politics of caring to form coherent action in relation to sexuality and prostitution a powerful force for change would be created. Literature that addresses the binaries within the feminist debates strongly suggests that theoretical bickering be put aside and the practical work of improving women's lives becomes the focus of attention. Sex workers themselves are asking that they not used be as symbols that represent extreme positions of prostitution as either good and revolutionary or evil and bad (Chapkis, 1997).

Feminism provides a political, theoretical and practical framework from which to create powerful change. O' Neill (2001) states that feminist research into prostitution should have elements of each and prostitution must be understood across the spectrum of commercial sexual activities and context, including the social organisation of desire, the current legal status of sex work and the activities of institutions. In addition, according to Harding (1991), feminist research needs to start from women's lives and complexities, and contradictions addressed so that oppressive practices are revealed and space can be made for change. To do this well, both sex positive feminists and those against prostitution need to deconstruct the dichotomies and stop silencing the voices of the women who are currently silenced within each theoretical position (O'Neill, 2001).

Radical feminist abolitionists practice the same politics of exclusion that traditional male dominated psychology has been criticised for (Fawkes, 2005). This practice has been criticised by other feminists, sex workers and sex worker advocates. Recent research and theorising has attempted to fill the gaps in knowledge and counter the radical feminist arguments; it could be argued that this stance silences, by failing to voice, the most negative aspects of sex work. By taking the strengths from each position, it will be possible to form a united voice around sex work. Others have suggested that arguments about the nature of sex work should be put aside and more attention given to the lived experience of sex workers.

I argue that questions need to be asked in relation to why radical feminists continue to stigmatise sex workers. Stigma is conferred on those who are seen to pose a threat to social order, safety or self interest (Stangor & Crandall, 2000). Sex radicals clearly see those who oppose them as threatening one's perceived right to practice consensual sex however one wishes. However, from reading the literature by radical feminist abolitionists it is not clear

what they believe the threat is from sex workers. I posit that before the debates can move forward; those in the abolitionist side of the debate must consider in what way prostitutes pose a threat; is it about self interest, safety of the group or a threat to the social order? Many feminists had to reflect upon and work through issues of privilege and perceived threat as they dealt with accusations of racism and homophobia, I suggest that a similar process of reflection needs to be undertaken to enable these arguments to move on so the continuing marginalisation and stigmatisation of women by other women ceases. Only then will full and appropriate support be given to all sex workers.

This thesis does not argue about the nature of sex work, rather it seeks to fill in gaps by investigating the lived experience of the population concerned and utilising relevant strengths from each perspective. I seek to do what Andrea Dworkin (1993) said she sought to do when she stated that, "What matters here is to try to learn what the prostituted woman knows, because it is of immense value".

Conclusion

There is no solid ground from which to launch into any investigation of the lived experience of sex workers. The foundation of studies in this field shifts and changes depending on which perspective one is gazing from, and then shifts again as narratives and texts illustrate the paradoxes, contradictions and multitudes of truths that are inherent in this aspect, as in all aspects, of the human social world. Aspects of each perspective have validity and had some influence on every facet of this thesis project. I use a hybrid approach to draw on literature from each perspective as appropriate. Each has value in relation to developing understanding of the lived sex worker experience in all its complexity.

Being a victim?

Melissa Farley weighs in, in the NY Times.

Besides the usual blather, she states "Her [Kristen's] purpose, as a man who knew patiently explained, is "renting" out an organ for 10 minutes." Thank you, Farley, for repeating that. We all want everyone to understand that's what sex work is. To Farley, we're all simply female organs — much like the men she accuses of victimizing sex workers with this attitude. Fuck you, Farley, because I am much more than a walking vagina. Really. Believe it or not, my clients saw me that way. Why can't you?

Does she not realize how much this victimizing of sex workers hurts us? That it makes us less than human in the public eye — **not** more sympathetic? Does she not realize how patronizing it is to decide what's right and wrong for every sex worker in the US — regardless of each individual's experiences and feelings? Does she not realize how much money she makes off our backs — anyone here who has gotten an op-ed in the NY Times raise your hand.

She blames the "buyers" for the problems of sex work. No, it's people like her who maintain the status quo of criminalizing sex workers. The criminalization of sex work is shown to cause great harm. She far more dangerous than a whole roomful of politican-clients who want a good time hidden from their wives.

This entry was posted on Wednesday, March 12th, 2008 at 7:21 am and is filed under Farley, Media, Spitzer. You can follow any responses to this entry through the RSS 2.0 feed. You can leave a response, or trackback from your own site.

http://bng.swopusa.org/?cat=26

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*jillbrenneman-S*ays:
March 12th, 2008 at 10:51 am

Ironic, when I was the target of death threats from self professed Anti Trafficking types linked to Nikki Craft, Ms. Farley went public with the statement that I was suffering some form of multiplicity.

Thus the moral of that story. If you get the death threats and you are an anti trafficking guru they are real. If you get the death threats because you were a trafficking victim that stopped agreeing with the anti trafficking gurus you must have a major personality disorder. At least in the world according to Farley and Nikki Craft, those noted experts out to rescue all of us, well, none of us unless there is a book deal in it or some photo op or press conference.

http://bng.swopusa.org/?p=338#comments

Chapter three: Theoretical framework

Introduction

During formulation of this project, I spoke with sex workers and people who work in sex worker support organisations about their opinions of the current state of knowledge around sex work. We discussed gaps in the research, what questions researchers ask and do not ask and what the concerns of the sex workers were. We discussed stereotypes and popular understandings about sex work and sex workers. There was an acknowledgement that although there has been a change in the way prostitutes are represented in some literature, this has had little impact on public representations and stigma attached to sex work.

I decided to investigate one aspect of sex workers' lived experience with a view to increasing understanding of sex workers' experience then to use this knowledge to reduce some of the stigma attached to sex work and to increase understanding of the factors that enhance sex workers' wellbeing. I chose a feminist standpoint methodology because the broad aims of feminism include filling in gaps in knowledge about women to empower women (Harding, 1987). The theory fitted well with my personal understanding about empowerment, gaps in the knowledge, the formulation of research questions and frequent exclusion of sex workers from the research process. FST allows for the researcher to be both an insider and an outsider; within FST framework it is acceptable to take a political stand and to be less than objective about the area under investigation (Harding, 1987). The theory also supports values that I view as important such as solid ethics, integrity and honesty with the participants. To ensure that the approach that I used was clearly focused on the experiences of the participants in this study, I chose Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to provide a method that allows detailed examination of the participants' own understanding of their situation (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999). IPA also allows me to use my privileged position and knowledge to interpret their accounts in a manner that is both understandable for the general population and for academic readers. Although the language of feminism and interpretative phenomenology differs, the ideology, methodology and epistemology are similar. In the few instances where there are differences or contrasts these are more likely to fill in a gap in theory than to be a source of conflict between the theories. These theories provide a framework for this research project that fits with my own personal understanding in a manner that traditional psychological epistemology and methodology does not. It is these theories that are discussed in this section.

No research is constructed in a theoretical vacuum. Whether explicitly acknowledged or not, each endeavour is based on a number of assumptions and theories. In brief, the assumptions this study is based on are that: Traditional psychological research misses out important understandings of lived experience, knowledge is culturally informed and located, and accounts

of experience and understandings of the subjects are at least as valid as those given by expert observers and knowledge makers. Further, because academic knowledge has an impact on wider society, social change can occur as a result of altering the academic knowledge base. Disrupting dominant concepts about how people are, or should be, can lead to social change and empowerment of members of oppressed groups. For research to have most value to the groups concerned, members of that group must be consulted throughout the research process.

In addition to theoretical assumptions, research is explicitly based on a cluster of theories about knowledge and how this is generated: Epistemology is the theory of knowledge, methodology is a theory of how research is done, and method concerns the techniques of best gathering evidence (Hesse-Biber, 2007). This study is informed by the epistemology of FST and the methodology and method of IPA. IPA method is especially useful for novel research questions, complex situations and processes for exploring personal aspects of people's lives, and is recommended for investigating issues for hidden populations (Smith et al., 1999). It is possible to use IPA within a pre-existing theoretical framework (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Feminist standpoint is recommended for informing projects aimed at achieving political change and for giving voice to marginalized groups.

Traditional methods

Traditional psychology operates within a particular scientific paradigm. As psychology established itself as a scientific discipline, around 1904, it proclaimed itself to be a natural science that was experimental, objective, quantitative and independent of reflection or contemplation (Furumoto, 1998). Based on traditional scientific paradigms of positivism and empiricism (Packer, 1988) it aimed to be objective and value free. Using methods that are appropriate to the physical sciences, psychological issues are often treated in the same manner as material objects; they are labelled, measured, and manipulated. Empirical positivist psychology explores the relationship between variables and the results of this exploration are usually presented in quantitative statistical form. To generate this knowledge, human behaviour is decontextualised, observed, described and taken apart so that it can be measured at the smallest possible level in isolation from context. In this type of examination context is viewed as irrelevant, disruptive to the process of inquiry and contributes to producing unreliable results (Packer, 1985). The objective discoveries of empiricist psychology are then used to generate universal laws or generalisations about the nature of human beings, cause and effect, and relationships between variables (Shelley, 2000). These understandings are then dispersed from academic settings to the wider population and become part of the general understanding of how human beings behave, or should behave, in the world. They are often used to predict or govern human behaviour in a variety of settings that may or may not be similar to those in which the knowledge was generated (Gergen, 1997; Skinner, 1965).

It is this generalisation to wider populations and the subsequent use to which the results of this research are put that has given rise to much of the criticism of positivist empiricism. The main criticisms are that the discipline is not mindful of those that are left out of the research and results are generalised inappropriately; across cultures, genders and other populations (Hesse-Biber, 2007). Feminists have long asserted that psychology has been the domain of white middle class men and that there has been confusion between male perspective and 'truth' (Shelley, 2000). Deconstructionists have demonstrated the dynamics of power within the discourses and questioned taken for granted notions of truth (Shelley, 2000). Various postmodernists, including feminists, have argued that there is no one universal truth, that knowledge and truth changes across time and location; it is culturally bound. In traditional psychology, the researcher is required to be neutral and dispassionate; any consequent relationship between researcher and researched is criticised because empirical methods disavow any relationship between researcher and participant; and power differences between researcher and researched are not acknowledged (Martin & Sugarman, 2001). The researchers are considered the experts and the subjects as people who don't know their own experience; the viewpoints of the subjects are rarely sought.

Some qualitative methods, such as IPA, grounded theory and standpoint research, actively seek out the viewpoints of the research subjects. Qualitative methods, such as action research (Meyer, 2000) that draw on epistemologies and methodologies from a variety of social science disciplines are often used (Hesse-Biber, 2007). Ideally, the use of these methods results in in-depth descriptions of lived experience that can be utilised to add the body of knowledge concerning humans, their behaviour and the multitude of ways of being in the world.

Qualitative methods

In contrast to positivist empiricism, many qualitative methods such as grounded theory, IPA and narrative inquiry allow context to be acknowledged and, if necessary, explored. The context of the object of inquiry and behaviours of the individual are not viewed as separate entities, nor is the individual behaviour seen to be entirely the result of physiological or sociocultural forces (Martin & Sugarman, 2001).

Qualitative research methods based on interview techniques involve an interaction between researcher and researched that allows the researched to contribute from their own point of view. The relationship between researcher and subject is acknowledged; differences in power and status may be stated, although it is sometimes also acknowledged that both the researcher and researched are likely to leave the research relationship with the same status differences as when the relationship began (Harding, 2007).

It is frequently argued that truth is subjective and that all research findings are not generalisable across locations. Many qualitative papers include a disclaimer in relation to generalisability by

acknowledging that the data is open to a multiple interpretations and that the understandings of these are contextual. However, the trustworthiness, validity and rigor of the process and findings needs to be assured so that the research has utility beyond its own rhetorical existence (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). In more traditional methods, validity is assured methodologically, for example by replication (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991). There are alternative methods of assessing validity and trustworthiness that apply to qualitative research (Martin & Dawda, 1999; Morse et al., 2002).

There are no set criteria for determining what is the most accurate telling in a narrative or which meanings have most validity. According to Martin and Dawda (1999), assurance of validity must be in relation to the context, scope and purpose of the inquiry. A valid account is one which will "assist both inquirers and those studied to further their concerns" and take into account future events (Martin & Sugarman, 2001, p. 202). In this sense a valid account also will have utility, that is, it will have some use for the future. Future events could include interventions, further research or contribution to the knowledge base. To establish trustworthiness, consensus needs to be sought among groups that have knowledge in relation to the particular area of inquiry.

Morse et al. (2002) argue that validity is a means of ensuring rigor through techniques that are appropriate to the methodological approach being used; they recommend that rigor and validity need to be attended to throughout the research process rather than engaging in consultation with participants or experts at the end of the research project. To ensure validity, research questions, method and data analysis need to match to ensure methodological coherence and the sample must consist of participants who have the best available knowledge of the research topic so that appropriate information can be obtained. Data collection, analysis and theoretical thinking all require checking and rechecking throughout the process. Theory development needs to be an outcome of the research process and become a template for comparison and further theoretical development rather than working to a preconceived theory (Morse et al., 2002).

For this project, validity, rigor, trustworthiness and utility are assured by the iterative process of ongoing consultation with sex workers, those who work with sex workers, academic peers, supervisors and the literature. This process is explicated in the method section of this thesis.

Feminist research in Psychology

Women have been in the discipline of psychology since the late 19th century. However they have been marginalised and in some instances invisibilised (Furumoto, 1998). What they know has been excluded from dominant discourses (Hesse-Biber, 2007). Many early American women in academia chose not to persist with academic life because of systematic exclusion. Consequently, some chose to use their knowledge to work for social change outside of the academic arena (Furumoto, 1998).

Women from the past had valuable knowledge to impart, yet this has been marginalised and excluded. Like other forms of scientific enquiry, feminist epistemology and methodology draws on and builds on what has gone before. Feminist research and theory draws on the struggles of insights of women like Virginia Woolf, Harriet Jacobs, and others from both within and outside the academic arena (Furumoto, 1998).

There is no one feminist perspective; each one, in a manner appropriate to its epistemology, strengthens the ties between theory, activism, academia and everyday lived experience (Hesse-Biber, 2007). Engaging in the theory and practice of feminism means to challenge knowledge that appears to be inclusive, but is not, and to ask new questions in relation to women's lived experiences so that subjugated knowledges can surface. This purposeful disruption of traditional ways of knowing enables fresh meaning to be created. Feminist research involves being mindful of the hierarchies of power and the multiplicity of standpoints and locations of both the researcher and researched (Harding, 1987). It is feasible to be both inside and outside, to have and negotiate multiple identities that when combined, produce knowledge that is valid, true and empowering (Hesse-Biber, 2007). It is also feasible to be along side, working beside the participants to achieve social change. By using participatory action research and engaging the population in the research process one can produce spaces for change, understanding and interpretation (O'Neill, 2001).

Feminist Standpoint Theory

FST developed in the 1970s and 1980s, emerging from the 60s and 70s political movement and feminist criticisms of knowledge production. Feminist researchers investigated women's everyday lives so that the dominant beliefs were challenged and the knowledge could be used to illustrate and reveal the "principles and practices of dominant institutions, including research disciplines" (Harding, 2007, p. 48). This knowledge was also used to enrich understanding of and increase empowerment of oppressed groups of women.

One of the goals of feminist standpoint is to "provide a ready source to increase the empowerment of oppressed groups" (Harding, 2007, p. 45). To achieve this, the epistemology of FST focuses on the gap between the understanding generated by dominant discourses and those generated by marginalized or oppressed groups (Harding, 1991). It is unreasonable to expect that the understandings of the different groups would be the same or that the institutionalised values and discourses which contribute to oppression will be acknowledged and subject to examination by members of a group that benefit from that oppression. Traditional epistemologies have allowed for the systematic exclusion of marginalized groups from the research process (Harding, 2007).

Several themes in standpoint accounts provide answers that traditional epistemologies lack (Harding, 2007). The first is in relation to social location; what people know about themselves

and the world around them is limited and enabled by their material life. Second, the understandings of members of different layers of a hierarchically organised society are often opposed in certain respects. Feminist and feminist standpoint research reveals understandings that are alternative to and often the inverse of an oppressive understanding. Thirdly oppressive understandings are made to seem desirable and inevitable through the institutions that inform and are formed by the social and natural sciences. Knowledge of the dominant understandings and knowing the values and understandings of marginalized groups leads to successful standpoint research (Harding, 2007).

There are three consequences of standpoint logic (Harding, 1991). Firstly, human subjects are multiple and sometimes contradictory or in opposition to each other. This reflects the multiple, intersecting and contradictory identities that exist even within individual subjects (Nash, 2008). It is possible to be both a member of an oppressed group and a member of an oppressing group. Secondly, there is a relationship between oppressions so that what is liberating and emancipatory for one group should also be liberating and emancipatory for another group. Thirdly, a group of oppressed subjects cannot claim to be unique in their ability to generate knowledge about themselves because their lived experience and understanding of this are controlled and informed by the structures of the oppressors (Harding, 1991).

It could be argued that theory based on experiences of the oppressed is distorted because the dominant social structures and discourses are dictated by the oppressors (Harding, 1991). However, FST does not claim that the view of the oppressed provides the only valid account possible. Nor does it claim that FST is objective in the traditional sense of the word.

In traditional research methods and epistemology the concept of objectivity is operationalised narrowly, and involves eliminating all social values and interests from the research process, however, this is a goal that is not possible to achieve (Harding, 1991). What is eliminated from such research are often only those values and interests that differ from those of the knowledge makers (Harding, 1991) and any taken for granted background beliefs are invisibilised. Many feminists state that objectivity needs to be changed to feminist objectivity which asserts that "knowledge and truth are partial, situated, subjective, power imbued, and relational" (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 9).   As an alternative, FST argues for "strong objectivity", this enables both researched and researcher to be on the same knowledge plane (Hesse-Biber, 2007). Achieving strong objectivity requires the examination of background beliefs and acknowledgement of the relationship between researcher and researched (Harding, 1991). Practices of power, that initially may appear value neutral, can be revealed by strong objectivity. Ideally, this enables group consciousness to be raised and enhanced (Harding, 2007). Because of this, research based on the epistemology of FST is ideal for creating change both within the dominant groups in relation to the oppressed groups but also for members of oppressed groups (Harding, 2007).

In summary, FST provides an ideal theoretical base for this project. It allows for critique of dominant institutions and practices and has the aim of increasing understanding and empowerment of the population concerned. Participants' understandings of themselves and their context are able to be articulated and explored while acknowledging that this self understanding is partly informed by dominant and oppressive practices and understandings. Most importantly, FST requires that members of the population concerned are part of the research process, that the research questions are related to changing conditions and that the researcher overtly takes a stand rather than remain neutral and dispassionate.

Interpretive phenomenological analysis

IPA values narratives and interpretation as a more active process than mere description; narratives are positioned as more than social interaction, they are viewed as the connections between past, present and future (V. Eatough & J. Smith, 2006). IPA allows for investigation of the "psychologically forceful" aspects of emotional life that are private and at times indefinable (V. Eatough & J. Smith, 2006, p. 118). Although IPA, like other hermeneutic inquiry, recognises that the social worlds of individuals are shaped by social processes and cultural and linguistic practices they assert that "the worlds cannot be reduced to them" (V. Eatough & J. Smith, 2006, p. 118). Informed by social psychology and social cognition theories IPA assumes that there is connection between the physical state of a person, their cognitions and their narratives. Cognitions, in this context, are related to what the participant thinks or believes about the topic of concern. IPA can therefore be used to explore the "reasons behind peoples' thoughts, beliefs and behaviours" (Smith et al., 1999, p. 99). The interpretive and analytical components of IPA refer to the task of the researcher to make "sense of the participants trying to make sense of the world" (Smith et al., 1999, p. 219).

The approach is called phenomenological because it investigates a person's perception or account of an object or event, rather than attempting to produce an objective statement about objects or events (Smith et al., 1999, p. 218). Events are given importance, because they have an ongoing relevance and significance for the person concerned. When people recount their life stories they are imbuing the events they talk about, the phenomenon, with meaning (V. Eatough & J. Smith, 2006). The aim of IPA is to discern meaning from these accounts.

The first source of meaning is from the participants' interpretation of the lived experience of the phenomenon. This is the intersubjective meaning; the common language and understanding shared between the participant and the researcher (Hein & Austin, 2001). IPA assumes that there is a "universal inclination" to self reflection and that biographical stories are formulated in a way that makes sense to the participant. IPA aims to explore, with flexibility and in detail, this process of self reflection (Brocki & Wearden, 2006).

The second source of meaning is from the hermeneutic process of the researcher. The interpretation does not rely solely on the explicit meaning of the words, it looks for the possibilities of meaning beneath the surface of the language (Hein & Austin, 2001), often with reference to the context in which the participants' meaning emerges. As well as recommending using a hermeneutic approach, an ideographic approach is also recommended: this is the in-depth examination of a particular phenomenon that has been experienced and given meaning. This enables fine-grained and contextual analysis of the phenomenon under investigation (V. Eatough & J. Smith, 2006).

The final analysis involves a detailed interpretation of the themes that emerge from the participants' accounts. It goes beyond the standard thematic analysis by revisiting data so that two or more sets of themes can be analysed and interpreted; micro-level theorising is one aim of the analysis. The analysis process does not have to be entirely inductive, it is acceptable to refer to the literature to find out more about constructs that participants refer to (Brocki & Wearden, 2006).

Common ground: a hybrid approach

IPA and FST have much in common. Both aim to explore areas of concern for participants rather than test a hypothesis generated by the researcher. IPA seems to be more concerned with methodology and can be used within a variety of theoretical frameworks (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). FST is more concerned with epistemology and different methodologies can be applied within this framework. Both are concerned with joining theory and practice (praxis) and awareness of what one is doing and why (reflexivity). They share similar approaches and understandings, these are discussed below.

Generalisation

IPA does not attempt to produce knowledge that is generalisable across locations and groups. The focus is on discovering and revealing structures that are general for particular groups of people (Hein & Austin, 2001). The aim of FST based research is not to produce knowledge that will fit for all people in all locations, rather it is to produce knowledge that gives a valid and reliable account of the reality of the participants (Harding, 2007). The analysis of small homogenous samples may lead to generalisations about other similar populations (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Both IPA and FST aim to add to the body of knowledge by contributing specific, context dependent, analytic accounts of participants' lived experience. Hein and Austin (2001) describe this as providing "us with a deeper and fuller understanding of human existence, ourselves and others." (p.4) and Harding uses the term "filling in the gaps" (Harding, 1991).

The place of the subject

Both IPA and FST recommend recruiting participants that share similarities; the aim is to give voice to or address the concerns of a particular group of people or to illuminate a particular research question. Researchers look for differences and similarities within a group (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). IPA uses small homogeneous samples. It is recommended for use when the parameters of a population are not known, and so is particularly suitable for this population where there are a considerable number of hidden sex workers.

The subject is explicitly valued for their own expertise about themselves and their context. Both FST and IPA give central place to the experience of the subject. According to IPA "In the existential view, existence cannot be studied objectively but, rather, is **revealed** through a person's reflection on his or her own unique, live situation" (Hein & Austin, 2001, p. 3). Conventionally, the researched have little say in the nature of the research; design, target population, sampling and dissemination of results (Harding, 2007). The post-modern and FST emphasis is on including the researched 'other' in the research process (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 11). Feminist theorists argue that because the oppressed must have knowledge about their own world and that of the master to survive, a view from their perspective gives a more comprehensive picture of the situation (Hesse-Biber, 2007). Standpoint starts the generation of research from the lives of the subjects and the subject group is consulted throughout the research process to ensure that their concerns are addressed and voiced (Harding, 2007). With IPA the viewpoints of the subjects are actively sought and used and the subjects are considered to be principal narrators of the texts to be examined (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). The IPA account is the product of the reflection of both the participant and the researcher (Brocki & Wearden, 2006).

The place of the researcher

Conventionally, the researcher makes considerable effort to maintain distance and objectivity (Harding, 2007). This is considered undesirable by both IPA and FST. IPA positions the research process as interactive, with both researcher and researched working together to make sense of the individual's life world (V. Eatough & J. A. Smith, 2006). FST, as the name suggests, requires the researcher to take an ethical standpoint and have moral integrity (Hesse-Biber, 2007).

For both, the researcher must have a degree of closeness to the subject or subject group. Both recommend having an insider's perspective either from being involved in the area of concern or by obtaining this perspective from consultation with the group members (FST) or relevant literature (IPA). Both agree that the perspective of the researcher as an outsider or expert is important. Within an IPA framework, this is so that the researcher can use their own conceptions in the interpretive process. FST recommends the researcher has both an insider and an outsider view. FST considers that it is important to comprehend the understandings and

ideology of the dominant groups so that areas that need change can be addressed effectively and that while the opinion and understandings of the oppressed group are valid, they may also be distorted by oppressive structures and their interpretation of their experience relies on the linguistic paradigms of the dominant groups.

Reflexivity

Both IPA and FST recommend a process of reflexivity which raises awareness of what one is doing and why (Harding, 2007). This is a process of rigorous self-reflection that enables the researcher to become aware of and able to declare their own biases; the preconceived ideas and assumptions that they bring to the research process (Hein & Austin, 2001). The researcher then makes their values explicit. IPA recommends that the researcher makes an effort to put aside the prior assumptions and biases; whether these are from the lived experience of the researcher or from other knowledges. However it is difficult, if not impossible to put aside all biases (Hein & Austin, 2001). Within this framework biases contribute to the research process for both IPA and FST; what we know is explicit and it is inherent in all inquiry. Assumptions and biases are used by the IPA researcher in the interpretive process (Smith et al., 1999) and by the FST researcher throughout the entire research process. Because of this it is important that the researcher is aware of their own biases and makes the reader aware of these influences (V. Eatough & J. A. Smith, 2006). Therefore I explain my position below.

As with all humans, my location is complex and multiple. I was brought up in a right wing Christian household; missionaries, new converts and potential converts were frequent visitors. From this way of life I learned valuable lessons about community, the power of personal beliefs and the notion that it is possible to create change at all levels of a society. As a teenager I left the church lifestyle and had a stint as a wife and mother; escaping from that with my own and my children's bodies and minds battered but intact, I followed my inclination and came out as a lesbian. I went to University to become a psychologist and gain understanding of how my own and everyone else's minds worked. The classes I sought out to further my own understandings of myself and others like me presented material that contradicted my reality and pathologised me and people I cared about in such a manner that, disillusioned and feeling like a freak, I left the ivory towers in disgust. From there I moved to working with woman survivors of abuse, people with alternative sexualities, sex workers and then to "mainstream" mental health and addiction services.

My interest in prostitution was sparked off by the gripping yarns in the Christian books "The Cross and the Switchblade" and "Run Baby Run" which detailed the life of gangs in New York. At age twelve, that location and lifestyle beckoned as an ideal alternative to the church. While a wife, I lived on the fringes of a hedonistic lifestyle that included the purchasing of erotic services by several acquaintances and I became friendly with a number of sex workers. Later,

as a counsellor in a feminist organisation that provided services to survivors of sexual abuse I had clients who were sex workers. The dogma of that institution was that for a prostitute to heal from any sexual abuse she had to stop sex work. My clients didn't believe that and neither did I: Why give up a job that is sometimes fun, fits in well with family requirements and above all provides financial independence from the oppressors? Why give up an activity where, sometimes for the first time ever, it is OK to say "no"?

Together with some of these clients I started a local branch of NZPC. It provided a safe space, genuine non-judgemental support and an education service for sex workers and social service agencies. I spent many hours in massage parlours, escort agencies and in workers' homes, journeyed alongside many men and women, including clients and operators, and shared their joys and sorrows and battled for their rights when necessary. I educated people as they entered the sex industry and provided ongoing support for those who chose to exit. I shared their marginalisation and coped with many of the same prejudices; as an advocate and known associate of the sex industry I was tarred with the same brush and thus marginalised within my own work and non-work communities.

I was disturbed, but not surprised, to notice that the discourses of oppression and stigma sex workers are subjected to are almost identical to those myself and other non-heterosexuals were overtly subjected to prior to Homosexual Law Reform in Aotearoa/New Zealand and continue to be subject to on a more insidious level. The only difference was that the target had changed from gay/lesbian/queer to prostitute/sex worker/whore. The closet effect was similar too. The only difference was that the representative colour had changed from purple and pink to scarlet.

From that account of my position it is apparent that I usually have at least one foot in a place of difference or oppression; over time I've been in these places amongst others; right wing Christian as a child, battered wife, single parent, lesbian mum, queer activist and sex worker associate. However like others, I have multiple and intersecting identities. I consider myself to be in a position of privilege: I'm able bodied, Pakeha, literate and have the resources to find or build a community wherever I go. It is from this position of privilege, albeit well informed by experiences of oppression, that I write this thesis.

My biases are many. I have come to realise that for some people sex work is an ideal occupation and that people who choose to be sex workers should be fully supported in their choice and that a part of this support includes reducing prejudice and other means of marginalisation. One aim of this project has been to address the concerns of sex workers in relation to oppression, all participants took part in the study because they want to create some change in the way sex workers are viewed and portrayed. My experiences in academia have led me to believe that the voices of subjects must be given equal status to that of the expert and that the expert is accountable to the target population. Although giving voice to marginalised

groups through academic pathways does pander to the notion that the only valid knowledge is that which is generated in this arena, I have chosen this means to give their voices some legitimacy. To balance this I have attempted to avoid the use of jargon in this thesis so that relevant sections should be understandable to the population concerned: it helps keep me honest.

Chapter Four: Research Design

Introduction

The process of enabling this research project has been long and involved many people. My aim was to investigate an area that sex workers themselves wanted investigated and to produce results that sex workers would find useful. The preliminary discussions were by e-mail and casually at a variety of locations. The first e-mail asking for ideas about research were sent in February 2006 to NZPC offices and sex workers I knew. Due to the negative perception of sex worker research I received a few angry responses questioning my authority and my safety as a researcher. I countered this by talking about previous research I had done and used in the process of prostitution law reform and its aftermath in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The theme running through all discussions was that the research had to be useful, respectful of the industry and the individuals involved, and needed to involve ongoing consultation with sex workers. Themes about the research questions were mostly about what not to do; do not pathologise, do not focus on the negative aspects of sex work, and not to use empirical statistical methods or surveys. Sex workers and the people who supported them wanted something to provide balance to what was already available in the literature. After much discussion, I submitted my research proposal to NZPC early in 2007 and got full support.

Ethical Considerations

As a Pakeha researcher with a lived experience of working alongside Maori, I was intensely aware of the importance of consulting with Maori in relation to this project. Consultation with Maori is widely recommended (Huygens, 1999; Tolich, 2002). Research with Maori needs to be of benefit to Maori (Cram, 1997). I knew it was likely some of my participants may identify as Maori and discuss matters I do not understand from their cultural perspective. Hudson (2004) has identified four essential elements of ethical research practice for non- Maori researchers working with Maori: respect for different ways of knowing, allowing Maori authority over the direction and processes of the research, honesty about capabilities and limitations of the researcher, and evidence that the results will be both responsive to and relevant to Maori needs. With these elements in mind, I consulted with Maori women who had an interest in sex work and/or worked in kaupapa Maori social services. All were supportive of my suggested project. All were equally adamant that I should not "speak" on behalf of Maori in this project. We discussed the conflict between the need to visibilise Maori concerns and the knowledge we all had, that to do so may lead to further marginalisation of Maori female sex workers. Together, we were saddened.

Below is an excerpt from my application to the Ethic Committee that explains my position in relation to Maori issues:

> "There is insufficient information about Maori sex workers to provide background material for this project. The small number of participants may result in inadequate representation of Maori and cause harm if ethnicity data is collected. I am not Maori and do not have the lived understandings that would enable me to ask the right questions or to analyse the answers in a way that is appropriate. Coping skills that draw on Maori culture will be honoured and articulated as such in consultation with cultural advisors and the participants concerned. A summary report will be provided to Maori involved in NZPC, a full copy will be available on request. I have consulted with Maori who are or have been associated with NZPC and they have advised that ethnicity should not be collected because of the reasons mentioned above and the possibility of being identified and stigmatised in their small community. If there are any Maori participants; cultural advice will be sought from Maori workers at NZPC head office. These staff members will link the researcher to appropriate Maori advisors in other locations if necessary."

Another strand in the web of ethics involved finding out how ethics committees view projects that involved sex workers. Informally, I discovered the main concerns were confidentiality for the participants and researcher safety. I realised that Ethics Committee members are ordinary people who have usual everyday understandings of sex workers and, given stereotypes and stigma, have every logical reason to have these concerns.

I addressed the first area of concern by arranging the information sheets so the my contact details and general information could be separated from the page that mentioned sex work, so that participants could discard the sex work section and keep relevant information at home without fear of their occupation being disclosed. It then became apparent that it was possible the information might be distributed electronically. Because of this, the information sheet includes instructions on how to delete files from a computer system. Because a Massey University letterhead is necessary on these sheets they could only be distributed as PDFs, which are difficult to conceal on a computer. Because of this, potential participants were only given paper copies of the information sheet. I thought about every possible way that data could be stolen, lost or retrieved from computer hardware and devised strategies to counter these.

In relation to worries about researcher safety I was troubled. This project has an aim of reducing stigma and deconstructing stereotypes, yet to do this project I felt that I had to pander to the notion that sex workers are dangerous or live and work in environments that are dangerous. I resisted this until the very end of the process, when I eventually detailed a plan to ensure my safety

There were also concerns that talking about sensitive issues with the participants may result in some distress. To address this issue I ensured that I had contacts with understanding counsellors and other support people in each location. In addition I was prepared to pay for a session with a counsellor if the need arose.

The Ethics application was conditionally approved at the first hearing. I made minor adjustment in relation to electronic distribution of information and provided a safety plan for

myself as researcher. I was then able to formally seek out participants. The approval number is: HEC: Southern B Application – 07/57.

The Participants

Participants were recruited by the snowballing method. People I know who have involvement in the sex industry were asked to contact people who meet my criteria (see below) and were willing to participate in research projects. I also contacted three brothel owners that I knew well from my previous work with NZPC. With the permission of potential participants my key contacts gave me contact details.

I wished to interview women who are sex workers or ex-sex workers who believed that their sex work was not psychologically damaging to themselves and were willing to share their coping skills. They were to be over 25 years of age and have been involved in the sex industry for 3 years or more. I chose 3 years or more because I expected that the women would have settled into routine aspects of the work, to have developed their own style of working and self care strategies. I wanted them to be over 25 years of age so that they were outside of most definitions of "youth" and had enough maturity to be able to articulate their thoughts and processes around their self-care.

I required the participants to have English as their first language. As the "interpreter" of their narratives I needed to share cultural understandings with the participants. For this type of analysis the researcher needs to be as close as possible to an insider's perspective (Smith et al., 1999), arguably it is not possible to do this when the participants and researchers come from different cultural or linguistic backgrounds.

I planned to interview 12 participants. This number was chosen because researchers have found that between six and 12 people need to be interviewed to get to a point where no more new information is revealed (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). In addition, a small number of participants allows the researcher to retain a full picture of each of the individuals concerned (Smith et al., 1999). .

The following descriptions of the participants are as accurate as possible. Identifying details have been omitted or changed slightly to provide anonymity and thus safety for the participants.

Alice is 60. She started work age 34 and worked for 23 years. Alice worked in parlours in a large city. She stopped work because she was nearing retirement age and management practices at the parlour had changed. For many years Alice has worked in a social service that is supportive of sex workers and people with alternative sexualities. She has two adult children who know about her work. I interviewed Alice at NZPC Wellington office.

Casey is 33. She started work at 18. Casey has worked in parlours, as a stripper and as a dominatrix in the main centres. At the time of the interview she was doing therapeutic and

sensual massage from home. Casey has a business degree and published a successful alternative sexuality magazine. Separated, she shares the care of her two under five-year olds with their father. I interviewed Casey at her home.

Chloe, who has a teenage daughter, is 38 and began sex work age 23. She has moved in and out of the sex industry a number of times and currently runs a small owner operated brothel in a large city. She has expertise and experience in a variety of business and quasi-legal professions. Chloe is an opiate addict. Interestingly, during her times working in the sex industry she has always been "clean" or stable on low doses of methadone. She has a progressive neurological disorder and her employment options are becoming increasingly limited because of this. Zoe provides foster care for young people, many of whom do not receive state financial support. During the 12 months prior to the interview she had provided shelter and care for 10 young people. I interviewed Chloe in her place of work.

Elizabeth is 51. At 21 she worked on the streets of a large city for a few months. Later, at age 29, she left her career in the public sector and began work in a parlour. Elizabeth was arrested but not convicted for soliciting, which made her an unwelcome employee in the sex industry. She stopped work to concentrate on a career in a social service that is supportive of sex workers and people with alternative sexualities. I interviewed Elizabeth at the beach

Kathy started sex work at 26, she is now 29. She has worked only in a parlour in a small city. Kathy has three school age children who live, by amicable arrangement, in another town with their father. Kathy spends several months at a time near her children, she does not do sex work while she is there. She lives with her partner, while away from their hometown they engage in home maintenance work together. While living near her children Kathy runs a retail business. I interviewed Kathy at a motel.

Laura is 41. A trained chef, she started sex work around age 19 and continued to work as a chef. She worked as an escort and stripper in a parlour in a small city. Laura left sex work when her substance use became dangerous. When her first child was young she returned to the industry briefly but decided it was not for her. Laura now owns a business in the hospitality sector. I interviewed Laura in a motel.

Mary is 47. She initially entered the sex industry age 37. She has moved in and out of the industry a number of times. Having worked in parlours, Mary now works in a small owner operated brothel. She has two adult children. Her daughter, her daughter's partner and their three preschool children live with Mary. Working in the sex industry provides her with an income source that allows her the time to focus on her grandchildren who delight her.

Nina is 28 entered the sex industry at 18, worked for a year then returned again at 22. All of her sex work has been in parlours; she is currently working in a parlour in a small town. Nina is a

qualified chef and has a school aged child. She is active in the school community and coaches sports teams. I interviewed her home.

Sally is 38. She started sex work at 15. Sally has worked intermittently in many venues around Aotearoa/New Zealand. At the time of the interview she was working in a parlour in a small city. She has one preschool child. Sally is in the process of leaving the industry. Her decision to leave is solely to protect her son from stigma attached to being a sex worker. I interviewed Sally in a motel.

Sue is 28 and started work at 21. She has worked in parlours in a small city and ran her own parlour/escort agency for a few months. She has one child age 5 months. Sue has a neurological disorder and her employment options are limited. Sue has experienced work-based government funded training schemes but found these abusive and exploitative. Sue hated sex work and left the industry soon after our interview. She now works as a cook. I interviewed Sue at her home.

Vicky is 60 and worked privately as an escort and Dominatrix for 5 years after entering the industry aged 53. Sex work was a part of her personal journey of exploring and enhancing her own sexuality. Interestingly, Vicky has been and continues to be a client. Vicky's main career was as a health professional. She ceased sex work because her health was failing. She has 2 adult children. I interviewed Vicky at her home.

Zoe is 27. She did one sex work job at about 13 or 14. She re-entered the formal sex industry at 18, in between times she lived in a boarding house and was associated with an older man who sold her drugs and procured clients for her. Zoe explained her early independence as probably due to having attention deficit disorder and describes her family life as not abusive in any way. She has four children who live with her. At the time of the interviews, Zoe was working in a brothel in a small city. I interviewed Zoe in a motel.

Data Collection

Prior to each interview I spent time with the participants explaining the purpose of the research, issues of confidentiality and how the data might be utilised. Each participant was also offered the opportunity to read the interview schedule so they had some idea of the topics I wished to address; not all chose to read that document. For the women still engaged in sex work these conversations occurred at their places of work; two massage parlours and one small private "house". I spent an evening at each of the massage parlours I had contacted and a total of three days at the small brothel. At one massage parlour I was made very welcome but kept within the confines of the front office and not given access to the workers. In all venues, we spent many hours chatting about sex work and other more social topics while business was conducted around us. Time was spent with other participants at their workplace, home and talking on the

telephone. This process allowed me to gain more insight into their work worlds and develop a level of trust and understanding between myself and the participants. We became at ease in each other's company. The interviews were conducted at the venue of the participants' choice.

I used to semistructured interviews. Semistructured interviews are the exemplary method for IPA (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). The interview schedule aims to "facilitate the participant's ability to tell their own story" (Brocki & Wearden, 2006, p. 90). The interview schedule, see Appendix D., was on hand during interviews and referred to from time to time to ensure that topics were covered if they had not already been discussed spontaneously during the course of the interview.

On occasion, participants were asked to describe what advice they would give a new worker or health professional about sex work, this type of question has been found to allow people to reveal something of their own attitudes and discuss sensitive issues with more ease than when talking directly about themselves (Day & Ward, 2004b).

All interviews were audiotaped. As soon as possible after each interview I transcribed the interview. At this stage the names, locations and other identifying details were changed or removed. References to other people were removed if it was possible to do this without changing the intent of the narrative. After transcription, audio files were destroyed. Each participant was given a copy of the transcript and was able to make any changes she considered necessary; for some this involved changing identifying information and for a few others this entailed changing wording so that it made more sense. All participants signed a release form authorising the use of their narrative for this thesis and any related publications. Some participants chose to keep a copy of the transcript; others returned them with their consent forms.

Analysis

The process of analysis follows that recommended by Smith et al. (1999).

Initial reading and identifying of themes

I read each transcript several times and made notes in the left hand margin on anything of interest or that seemed significant. I then chose three transcripts that seemed to reflect most of the common points of interest to analyse closely.

Identifying themes

I used the right hand margins to develop initial ideas into more specific themes and on the transcript marked key words and representative phrases that captured the essential quality of the theme. Following the close analysis of the three transcripts, the remainder of the transcripts were analysed and points that related to the themes already made apparent were noted in the margins. New themes were noted and added to the list. 125 themes emerged from the data.

From time to time, these initial themes are referred to as threads. Each theme was given a title, colour coded and grouped into clusters that made sense. Each cluster was given a descriptive label. For example, friends, family and partners were grouped together to form part of the theme initially titled "social support". Initially there were 18 thematically organised clusters. These clusters were discussed with supervisors and a former sex worker to ensure that they made sense. Some were collapsed into others and some omitted because of lack of data in the other transcripts. Some themes were easy to identify because they reflected the literature or my prior understandings of sex work, the theme relating to role is an example of this. Other themes emerged directly from the data; an example of this is the theme initially labelled "prior understandings".

Connecting themes

After the themes were organised coherently it became apparent that they broadly fitted into two larger clusters. These clusters became the superordinate themes of "Being a sex worker" and "Doing sex work". I then listed these themes in a spreadsheet. Each transcript was then read several times and phrases were marked on the transcript. Relevant quotes from the participants were placed in the same spreadsheet row as each theme. Not all participants addressed each theme and not all pieces of narrative that related to a theme were included in this spreadsheet grid. Each quote included the line number from the transcript. Pieces of narrative that were not quoted had the line number included in the grid.

Achieving order

I then organised the themes into a coherent order in relation to each other and the superordinate themes. To begin the analysis I placed each theme and associated participant phrases into a separate grid, these were printed out to analyse the threads closely.

Ensuring validity

These grids were discussed with supervisors and a former sex worker to ensure that they made sense. During analysis and interpretation I moved backwards and forwards between the participant's narratives and the analysis to ensure that I was representing their understandings and contextualising the data well. On occasion I contacted a participant to ensure that I my interpretation was consistent with their understanding of their experience. For example, I contact Laura to ensure her understanding of her work/private split was similar to my interpretation.

The analysis and discussion process

Some of the threads and themes were relatively straightforward to analyse and discuss. Related literature was easy to access and some literature related to the themes had been discussed in the literature review section of this thesis. Others were more difficult. The process for analysing and discussing the themes that did not have easily accessible relevant literature involved much

searching, a process of reflexivity and moving backwards and forward between the data, the literature and colleagues who had an understanding of sex work.

Doing research

Walking up the stairs I am stared at suspiciously by a woman sitting just outside the door smoking. I sit by her and explain why I am there, she is expecting me, relaxes, we chat about how the day has been, another women comes out, we know each other and hug, lots of smiles and wide grins, the boss and I wave in greeting, … A client comes up the stairs and sits down at our feet, his relative was just killed a few hours ago in an accident, he has come here for company and to go through. It is a safe place for him to unwind and shed a tear. He is young and really sad. I wonder how come he is here instead of with his family. Is this like his second home? I don't ask. We crack jokes and laugh. I go in and sit at the bar… The atmosphere is not as light as it was when we were sitting in the doorway, some older men come in, I recognise them, I don't know from where, Rotary? Work,? We grin at each other and they start up a game of pool, I'm invited to join them but I decline. I don't want them to think I am available… I haven't got contact details for the participants yet and its after midnight…I leave exhausted but functioning well and then go to the next parlour… There are young people fighting outside this place. I park close to the door and almost run in. They stare at me, probably think I am an escort returning from a job, I wondered if they would turn on me if they thought I was a hooker… The boss isn't there, …I was greeted warmly by the receptionist and taken into her office, her daughter had worked, she didn't think any of the ladies who worked there fitted my criteria.. I knew that wasn't true, but still, if that was the situation there was nothing I could do. We chatted about sex work, the state of the industry and how she came to be a receptionist. I left an information sheet there, just in case. By then it was 2 am. I was bone tired…

At another venue…I've supported a few women who have worked at this venue; it's hard and not always fair. I recall to myself how the owner once described the workers as like pieces of steak…A client comes in he is fat, drunk. While he is in the shower they explain that he is always drunk when he goes through and that he won't come and is hard work if he doesn't fall asleep, we giggle quietly and express our hope that he falls asleep. The woman who will be my participant takes him through; she is paid to do reception but will pay her workmate for looking after the place while she is in the room. That way everybody gets a share of the night's money. Even someone who doesn't get a job will get something to go home with. The eftpos machine isn't working so the other worker goes out to withdraw money for him from the money machine just down the road. I'm left to be the receptionist. No one phones, I'm glad because I don't know the names of the workers who are available or anything about prices. I keep the woman company until the other one comes out. We arrange to meet in the morning straight after she has taken her child to school. She plans to see me then have her sleep. It is nearly 1 am when I leave. I have to be up at 7 am to get to her house at the right time in the morning.

Another venue…I'm welcomed warmly, coffee and smiles. We sit in the kitchen area and chat, why I'm doing the project, where their stories might get published, how I'll protect their identities. What it's all about. It's great, light and airy, a feeling of warmth and mutual support. There is no apparent hierarchy…We talk about clients, tell funny stories about them. It's a way of sharing information. Every time we start to get organised to do the interview we are interrupted by another worker and we start chatting again. It goes on for hours, it's lovely, chat, the company of women, being in the position of being taken in and accepted. I feel privileged. There is so much laughter. There are serious moments too, talk about partners, health, work conditions in other jobs….Every morning they have a time set aside to talk about how their lives are, how the business is doing, brainstorm ideas about how to increase business. They all look forward to going to work. It's delightful. It is a high quality workplace in term of care for staff. Other workplaces who deal intensely with people could learn a lot from sitting in on this.

The next day I decide to take some time for myself and go to see the galleries… I sit with a pair of young street musicians and play the bongos with them. We smile. There is a familiar sort of unity with these young men with dreadlocks. I don't know their names either, I'll probably never see them again, but the bond is there and real, just in the moment. It's similar and different, same, not sam

Chapter Five: Analysis and discussion

Introduction

In this chapter each theme has two sections. In the first, I present extracts from narratives of the women and analyse these; contextual details are provided where necessary. This is followed by a discussion of the theme in relation to the literature. The first reason for this is so that the voices of the women are given primacy. These are their stories and I have a commitment to honour them; one way of doing this is to allow them to stand out without being entangled in academic discourse. In addition, the threads interweave. To address each thread separately as they are presented would entail much repetition and it is more efficient to view the threads cumulatively.

Table 1: Summary of Themes: Doing Sex work

It looks like it is about sex	This section explores participants' understandings of the practical aspects of their work.
Fumbling around in the dark	The participants offered a variety of explanations about how they learnt about doing sex work.
You're the boss in the room	This theme is about managing the intimate connection between client and sex worker.
Acting up or acting out?	This section explores the participants' own understandings of how they manage work roles.
Clients with issues	This section is about clients with issues, these are the clients who are difficult.
That's how women deal with it	The main focus of this section is self care after interactions with difficult clients.
It's a very special job	This section explores what the participants think and feel about sex work as a job overall.
A place like home?	This section explores the participants' experiences of workplace culture.
Have it all balanced	This section briefly explores the general coping strategies of the participants.

Table 2: Summary of Themes: Being a sex worker

Beginnings	An exploration of thoughts about being a sex worker prior to entry into sex work and how they first became involved.
I am	This section explains the participants' understandings of themselves in relation to being a sex worker.
I'm not that sort of person	In this section their interpretation of popular discourses and how they resist these are explained.
It's strengthened me	This section explores the participants understandings of how being a sex worker has affected them.
I walk with pride	In this section I draw on their narratives to discuss the theme of disclosure outside of the sex industry.
The first thing they throw in your face is your work	An exploration of the type and quality of social support the participants experience.
Letting go is hard	Reasons for leaving and re-entering that sex industry are explained.

Doing Sex Work

The first superordinate theme that emerged was that of *doing* sex work. This section explores the practical aspects of doing sex work. Issues discussed here are related to building and maintaining occupational identity, coping with work and the benefits of working in the sex industry.

It looks like it is about sex

A theme apparent in the narratives was that the participants have very clear ideas about the services they provide and the requirements of the clients. This section explores participants' understandings of the practical aspects of their work. What exactly is sex work? What sort of service is needed and provided? Who are the clients?   The participants' understanding of these issues and the answers to these questions are briefly discussed in this section. Threads from

this theme are apparent through the other themes related to doing sex work where aspects of the job are analysed in more detail.

Apparent in all the narratives was the notion that the decision to engage in the intimate interaction with clients is usually mutual. The women who make their own appointments explained that clients phone in to find out about the service. During this conversation, client and worker get a sense of each other. If the client chooses he will make an appointment. A similar process happens in a group situation in a parlour or brothel. Client and workers both appraise each other and there is some mutuality in the selection process. In both situations, if the worker is not willing to service a client and financial pressures allow, she may make herself unavailable or undesirable in some way. Understanding this dynamic gives an expectation that the intimate experience will be positive for both parties, as Elizabeth explains:

> Elizabeth: 741: the people that I was meeting were the people that were coming because they wanted to
>
> j. yeah
>
> e. that meant that they would, that it would be hopefully be a pleasurable time on their side and on mine, if they were not jerks and were easy to deal with

For her the work was kept simple and uncomplicated. Clients were there for a pleasurable sensual experience and that is what she provided; there was no role ambiguity.

Alice saw herself as a provider of sexual services uncomplicated by psychosocial needs of the clients. This clear view of the needs of the clients means that these participants did not experience the work as psychologically or emotionally demanding. Similarly, Vicky, who provided services to both 'straight' clients and those interested in bondage and S/M, did not attempt to address the psychosocial needs of the clients, however she found the work demanding because the sexual needs of each client she met were so diverse:

> Vicky: 170: the needs of so many different people are so different

Others see the service they provided as much broader and more complex, with the sexual acts being only one component:

> Zoe: 655: it looks like it is about sex but it's really got nothing to do with sex, it has, but it hasn't in so many other ways,
>
> Mary: 214: sex and it's more about what they are getting out of it apart from that

Some clients expect the workers to listen to and solve their problems. If the worker chooses to have this as part of the service the work becomes emotionally demanding:

> Nina: 101: Yeah really, mentally and physically exhausted cos they treat you like you are their therapist,
>
> Laura: 543: Cos you are a psychiatrist, you are like a psychiatrist sometimes, listening to their problems, and not all of them just wanted sex, they wanted company.

In addition to providing sex and good listening skills, some take on a sexuality educator role including teaching the clients how to be better lovers:

> Alice: 928: premature ejaculators, well I took that on as a personal challenge, to try and make them better sex partners

> Nina: 524: you gotta teach them because they just don't know

This teaching is understood as a benefit for the client's partners' and for the worker. A client who has some understanding of women's bodies is far less likely to be rough in the room.

Some, like Alice and Elizabeth, deal with this multitude of needs by being very clear about the service they provide. For the others, who try and meet all the expressed and unexpressed needs of clients, the work is more difficult. It becomes both physically and emotionally exhausting. This affects their views of the client.

Sex workers position their clients in a number of ways. Those who see the clients as needing a simple sexual service or erotic encounter talked very little about the clients. Their talk about clients was mostly positive:

> Alice: 784: All my clients were special

> Casey: 338: clients are interesting, I just loved the clients. 493: I was respected and loved and appreciated and in complete control of the situation

Most put considerable effort into finding the goodness in clients; learning how to find the goodness in everyone and appreciating the beauty were described as one of the positive aspects of the work:

> Alice: 82: off we would go in our little dance and, you know, I would look into the persons eyes and maybe I didn't fancy him really, physically, but I would see that same energy that was keeping him alive that keeps me alive, I understand, and it was beautiful, beautiful

> Kathy: 737: but like you do see the beauty in everyone

Other narratives about clients contained contradictions and tensions. The clients are described in negative terms, or in ways that might elicit a response of pity, pampering or a motherly control - lonely men, needy boys, quite sad. The women believe that this aspect of their clients is generally hidden from the public:

> Sally: 895: when they get in the room and that's when their true self comes out.

> 314: just like a four year old, it doesn't matter if they are eighty-four or forty, pat them on the head and put them in the bath with their little boats.

Mary, who painted the most consistently negative picture of clients, called them "arrogant predators" (515) and also put considerable effort into seeing the "needy wee boy" in them. She rationalises this:

> Mary: 1301: I have to see the little lost boy in all of them, otherwise I would hate all of them and I don't want to get to that point where I'm so bitter and hateful and twisted that I'll never be able to form a normal relationship with a normal person outside of work, I've got to be able to see that, like I said it's like two sides of the coin.

Whatever the service was seen to involve, the participants positioned their clients as needing value for money and were prepared to provide this:

> Alice: 715: I thought this is a lot of money and I would put my all and my everything into this person for this time we are together

> Kathy: 171: paying damn good money and they want to be treated well so I do my utmost

> Vicky: 300: I mean they pay for a service so you want to give a good service

Discussion

Most of the participants had developed an understanding of the job that worked for them; they understood themselves to be providing a service that was beyond that of providing a set of genitals to be used by men and they considered that they did their job well. For those who did not address the psychosocial need of clients the interaction was variously described as an exchange of energy, a sensual experience or a pleasant time. Interestingly, and not addressed in the extant literature, the women who described the work in this way did not indicate ambivalence or conflict about the work or the clients, nor did they view the work as emotionally demanding. These women also did not volunteer any talk about negative experiences with clients. Both Elizabeth and Alice, said there were none and Casey said there was one negative experience in five thousand encounters. Those who did address the psychosocial needs of clients were more likely to view the work as tiring and hold contradictory views of the clients. According to the literature, to do any job well one has to have role clarity; one must know what the job is about, what materials one is working with and expectations of the workplace. Lack of this is termed "role ambiguity"; role ambiguity is a contributing factor to work related stress (O'Driscoll & Cooper, 2002). Clearly, most of the participants have role clarity.

The women who understood the clients in a manner that might elicit some sort of emotional response had the most contradictions in their narratives. The clients are 'this' and they are 'that', they want sex and therapy; they are both good and bad. Viewing the clients as needy is implicit in the many narratives that describe the work as therapy and overtly apparent in some sex worker writings (Queen, 1994). People who work with people categorise and describe the clients and their behaviours in particular ways that are often contradictory. Explanations are given so that that socially appropriate responses can be given, behaviour manipulated in a way that fits best with the client and the worker doesn't take the behaviour of the client personally (Hochschild, 2003). It is the beliefs about the client that influences all interactions and the understandings of these.

Other aspects of the work were understood in relation to other human service occupations such as counsellor, psychiatrist and therapist. Descriptions of sex work as therapy abound in the literature (Bell, 1995; Chapkis, 1997; Sanders, 2006). There are common understandings about the nature of human service occupations; drawing on these to understand sex work makes it easier to appreciate the nature of the work and carry out the tasks required (Ashforth & Kreiner, 2002). Similar comparative strategies are commonly used by people who work in stigmatised occupations to sanitise or justify the work that they do by relating aspects of their work to other more socially acceptable occupations (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999).

While describing the work as some sort of therapy may serve to sanitise the sex work exchange it does more than that. It also explains much about the nature of the work. We live in a society where the language of therapy has become commonplace and it is a widely understood form of commercial relationship. Using the analogy "therapist" explains much about the interaction without having to go into detail. A counselling relationship is mostly one-way; the client discloses, the therapist does not, the client gets the attention, the therapist does not and the therapist is friendly but is not a friend (Callaghan, Naugle, & Follette). Some people expect therapists to be in role outside of work and while there are similarities between the therapeutic engagement and a friendly engagement, there are also vast differences that include intent, focus and reciprocity. In a therapeutic alliance the client does not regularly contact the therapist outside of agreed hours and there are commonly understood ways of behaving with each other. In addition, what happens in the privacy of the therapeutic space has influence outside of that space; it may touch many lives and influences both client and therapist to varying degrees. It is useful to understand these similarities when trying to make sense of what sex work actually entails.

Fumbling around in the dark

The participants offered a variety of explanations about how they learnt about doing sex work. For all but one of these women, the learning began after starting work and was informal; they obtained information from clients, peers, managers and receptionist. It is worth noting that all these participants began sex work before the 2003 prostitution law reform in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Before law reform, talk about sexual activities was constrained by the legal situation. Management were in a position where they had to pretend that sexual activity was not taking place between the worker and clients therefore lack of education from managers and receptionists around sexual matters was understandable.

However, teaching new workers how to do a basic 'rub' was legally acceptable. Zoe, who did her first job at age 13 was quickly shown how to do this before meeting her first client. Zoe is the participant who started sex work youngest. At that time she was already earning her own survival income and the receptionist did not know how old Zoe was when she gave her work. On realising the situation, the receptionist made sure Zoe was "OK" and asked her not to come back until she was 18. Zoe explains how she learnt what to do:

> Zoe: 558: when I was about 13, I must have been thirteen, the time I did that job and earned $60, this lady, took me into this room where there was a massage table and she showed me how to massage a client, so she did show me that, that was it, I had no idea

Laura had a similar experience:

> Laura: 22: she sort of left us to it, she would get us in a room and she would show how to do a basic rub down and that, but anything sexual we had to learn on our own

Nina describes what this was like for her:

> Nina: 376: I sort of fumbled around in the dark for a while by myself and then sort of realized that I can ask questions and that everybody is there to help, everybody is there to look after everybody else, that they will help you, we are all there for the same reason doing the same thing

Reflected in these narratives is the feeling of not knowing quite what to do, but somehow managing. Somehow they were expected to know what to do with the client, but they didn't.

After a time in the sex industry, they realised that other workers would be supportive but by then they may have had some unpleasant experiences. Most eventually learnt from colleagues, either by being taken under the wing of an experienced worker or from listening to general talk between workers and then becoming comfortable enough to ask questions. Even after realising that it was acceptable to ask questions, talking about sex and intimacy was not easy:

> Nina: 372: I generally make friends easily but it's not always easy to talk about things like that when you're younger...
>
> j. you haven't even got the language
>
> n. yeah that's right, like "what did you just say?, oh my god do you?"
>
> Laughter
>
> j. yeah
>
> n. "oo, am I supposed to do that?" Laughter

Any reluctance to talk about sex soon passes; it is there in the everyday conversations that the women have in the time between clients. During my time with these women, many of the off tape conversations were related to doing sex work: Sexual health problems, how to handle difficult clients, how to deal with smelly clients and a multitude of other matters were all discussed, sometimes with humour, apparent in the extract above, or anger and sometimes with great sensitivity.

Another aspect of learning was through work culture and sanctions. Some workplaces enforce dress codes, rules around sexual behaviour with clients and standards of hygiene. Sanctions included fines, being sent home for the shift and instant dismissal. Chloe, who worked at a parlour, explains:

> Chloe: 41: if you were found to undercharge you were fired, if you were found that a man was touching you or fingering you, you got fired

For those who had worked in strict environments there is a sense of gratitude for the educative support they received. Nina detested being told how to dress and how to behave with clients, but now is thankful she learnt her work skills at that venue. Chloe feels the same:

> Chloe: 46: it was marvellous because I didn't know anything; I am so bloody grateful that I learnt from this woman who ran a very successful business

They are clear about the consequences of not knowing what to do:

> Nina: 161: it was an old guy he would have been 60 something, and no one had told me a thing, I just walked in, got dressed and here's some condoms, not even lube or anything, didn't tell me to make him shower of anything. I knew nothing. And I was just traumatized by it because of what I had to do to the old man, and you know, things that I probably shouldn't have done or didn't know that I shouldn't have done, and it just made me feel ill and I felt ill for quite some time about it, and I think because of that

> because I took it away with me, because of that first time I was sort of emotionally drained and I trained myself not to take it away with me, not to let it bother me…Yeah, it wasn't a very nice experience but I'll never forget it, never, never, never forget him, and yeah it was a good six, eight months before I went back to it again

Nina utilized her first experience to remind herself to look after her emotional wellbeing as a priority, not to take her work issues out of work and, discussed in other parts of her narrative, have firm rules with clients.

Sometimes it is easier to talk about matters that evoke strong feelings by talking about these in relation to other people. The participants make an explicit connection between their own process and that of other workers. It is important to note here that the term "kids" refers to young people in their late teens and early twenties, not children. Chloe describes her experience of working in a parlour, after Law Reform, where the workers are deliberately left in the dark so that they are more compliant with clients who seek out naïve new workers:

> Chloe: 65: It's very sad through working at the parlour I would see young girls start. I might not be working that day, I might be having a couple of days off or whatever and to get there and this new girl would come out and not have used condoms because she wasn't shown anything. Not by the manager or the receptionist. These poor kids were shown nothing. Luckily if I was there or some other old girl, we would help these kids, but so, so many women, young old, your age even, the ladies starting who had never worked before and not told anything, they weren't told about sea sponges. I told a girl on her first night, she started bleeding and she was just doing jobs bleeding and no one had said about a sea sponge. So there is some pretty shoddy stuff going on out there.

This extract reveals feelings of anger, sorrow and disgust that are repeated in other narratives.

Chloe draws on common understandings about safe sex and menstruation to illustrate her abhorrence of situations that happen when new workers are not given instruction. The dangers of not using condoms are well known and there are discourses around menstruation that are often unspoken. One can imagine the feelings of shame or embarrassment and confusion that a young woman might have in this situation. As Nina said about her first experience, it can be traumatic and stay with one for a long time.

Elizabeth, who started work on the street, learnt on the job and she was taught how to use condoms by a client. For Alice, who started work prior to the advent of HIV/AIDS, whatever she was learning had to be relevant to her and she had to learn it in her own time. Although she had some understanding about sexual health and had regular checkups and treatment for STIs she did not understand her responsibility around sexual health in a way that had meaning until she witnessed the distress of a client's female partner while visiting the sexual health clinic. Her own distress at seeing another woman so upset changed her work habits around condom use.

Vicky learnt before she started sex work. Her partner had been a client of other sex workers and Vicky had talked to one of his 'ladies' about sex work. Later she became a client and learnt through her own experiences. After developing a friendship with a sex worker who also worked as an educator, Vicky attended sexuality workshops organized through NZPC.

> Vicky: 110: I learnt a few things about being a working girl, the safety side of B&D, the safety side of safe sex and also, the needs of so many different men with so many different wants and needs.

Vicky added to this skill set and built up her confidence by working alongside her friend. Vicky had another occupation in the health sector where she used good communication strategies on a daily basis; however she did not believe that she could transfer these skills to her sex work role. Learning to be more outgoing with clients was one of the things she learnt over time.

Using NZPC as a resource was discussed in relation to new workers. It seems that some operators actively discourage workers from contacting NZPC. They fear that education will encourage the workers to have clear boundaries and thus be less than compliant with the demands of some clients and also worry that the workers could learn about other establishments and leave.

> Chloe: 79: PC do a great job in education but then a lot of girls are scared to go there, at this parlour you are not encouraged to go there because then the boss will lose revenue because girls are getting the correct information about don't let a guy do this and don't let a guy do that.

Viewed cumulatively it is apparent that the learning process is a combination of a brief introduction, peer education, work culture and sanctions.

Discussion

There is no sex work school; however there is no shortage of information about how to do sex work. Books, manuals, life stories and videos are available at some bookshops, over the internet and through NZPC. Interestingly, none of the participants mentioned texts or other media and only Vicky mentioned any sort of NZPC involvement in the learning process. The participants, in hindsight, value operators and other workers who had strict rules. The meaning of these has changed over time; initially met with some resentment, the imposed restrictions are now appreciated fully after discovering that the rules around behaviour with clients, dress codes and hygiene have relevance to the work. What is important for these women, indicated by their recall, is that, in general, they either learnt by trial and error, or from peers and management. This finding is supported in the literature. Abel (2007) found that sex workers obtained useful information from peers and management.

Learning through such informal methods is common practice in workplaces (Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003). According to Ashforth & Kreiner (2002), as individuals enter an organisation they are exposed to a socialisation process; veterans share the norms of workplace behaviour and the newcomer is exposed to ways in which stimuli, in this case clients, are classified and dealt with. This socialisation process reduces role ambiguity and gives the individual the perceptual tools for normalising and managing emotionally charged aspects of the work. For people in stigmatised occupations, this process enables the worker to make sense

of the work as they reconcile themselves to working in a stigmatised occupation and attempt to build a positive work identity (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999).

Clearly, the participants understand their learning process to be important to psychological wellbeing. Observing the plights of naive new workers and experiencing considerable distress and anger about how they are treated reinforced the meaning of this. From their own and others' experiences they understand that learning about sex work involves more than learning how to do the commercial sex act; it is also about preventing distress, shame, embarrassment and physical or emotional trauma. Having learnt the value of peer education and having made several mistakes themselves, several have become committed to educating other workers. This commitment by experienced workers shows how much value they place on the education process.

From these narratives it is clear that initially the workers did not feel competent in their work. Feeling competent at one's work decreases stress and the likelihood of burnout (Jex & Bliese, 1999; Vanwesenbeeck, 2006). Becoming competent is a process that takes time in any occupation. It is apparent from the narratives that having previous sexual experience or experience in other forms of people work do not help new workers feel competent to perform their job; none of the participants were virgins when they started work so they obviously knew something about sex, yet they saw themselves as having "no idea". Clearly, the sexual and social acts of sex work are understood to be different to those in other settings. One reason for lack of formal training could be that having sex and chatting to people for money is considered to be merely doing what comes naturally (Chapkis, 1997) and therefore no particular training is needed, however these examples illustrate that this is not the case. Sex workers have stated they would like more education about the body work skills needed, health and safety issues and for independent escorts, small business skills (T. O'Doherty, 2007).

For all the participants who talked about learning, the informal and ongoing peer support and education onsite between workers has been most memorable and valuable. People who are considering sex work should be encouraged to start work in a group situation rather than as sole operators so that they can learn over time from their peers. This notion is supported in the literature; Abel (2007) found that workers in a managed group situation had more information about working safely then those who worked on the streets. My experience of being with the sex workers to prepare for and gather data has highlighted the value of informal onsite peer education. It is not only pertinent to each situation, but is a delightful process done with a lightness of spirit that is difficult to explain.

You're the boss in the room

Another theme identified in the narratives concerns managing the intimate connection between client and sex worker. This theme covers physical and emotional boundaries. These boundaries contain the intimacy within the context of commercial sex and are in place to keep everyone physically and emotionally safe. Understanding of the nature of the relationship develops over time, from their own experience and with some input from clients.

Being in control of the intimate connection is an important aspect of taking care of oneself for these women. The notion of being the boss in the room was commonly regarded as important in advice given to new workers as these quotes illustrate:

> Kathy: 650: never be afraid to say no I don't like that
>
> Nina: 754: just relax and be yourself and don't let them do what you don't want to do
>
> Sally: 907: they are the boss in that room and if they don't want to do anything they don't have to, if they have any problems to excuse yourself and pretend that you are going to the toilet and tell the office what is going on

All the participants spoke about boundaries around interacting with clients. There are different reasons given for having boundaries. If these are overstepped or not enforced the consequences are dire for the worker. Elizabeth saw it as a "mental intrusion".

> Chloe: 410: clients would try and get into the kids heads and mine too when I was young… and ask about their families, and the clients are taking control then, and then they have the control and the poor kid feels, he has the power over them and it's hard for them to say no and they don't want him to do whatever to them

Mary too, said that disclosing too much information or allowing the emotional and spiritual side of the self into work makes one vulnerable. These extracts illustrate the understanding that if boundaries are not in place one will become vulnerable and be intruded on. If the rules are relaxed the client will take advantage of this and gain control.

For some, the boundaries of the interaction are related to time and location. Alice talked about how she explained it to her clients:

> Alice: 574: well I loved them and I always told them I loved them, I made it really clear, like you know "I'm totally with you within these four walls and I love you and I'll just be your lover"..."No, no, no this is just for now but you'll always stay in my heart", and they did.

Elizabeth refused to play the role of "social worker", she kept her talk with clients to a minimum of a few well placed words to give them a sense of who she was and "perhaps could be" and was clear in her narrative that she did not wish to spend her time with a client listening to "sad, sorry stories":

> Elizabeth: 178: the sensual encounter (laughs) is not going to happen if you have a client pouring his problems out to you and I'm not terribly good at absorbing them either. 792: "put a sock in it sonny you're not going to be telling me the problems of being a beige bureaucrat tonight". It needs to be about fun and pleasure and a nice time, a nice encounter.

Viewed together, it is clear from these extracts that it is critically important that boundaries were clear and respected.

The workers disclosed personal information to varying degrees. None advised making up stories because keeping track of these stories becomes difficult when the client returns. Nina explains it well:

> Nina: 786: and then you get caught out, mmm didn't you say blah blah and then oh yeah
>
> laughter
>
> j. like how was skydiving? what?
>
> n. you can see it's the ones you don't remember that come back the second time, oh god, yeah no, that just gets messy (laughter) and then you just feel like a big fat liar, funny.

All disclosure is done carefully. Elizabeth would disclose some parts of her life; often about family matters and her social life.

> Elizabeth: 230: I talked about me, and a little bit, but, you know, just carefully, I didn't talk about any relationships I had, I was very clear that, to keep that away, cos I didn't want that kind of mental intrusion into who I was to that degree

The clients have a different sort of knowing about the sex worker, she doesn't lie but chooses what to talk about and what not to talk about. Casey explains that the clients have a different, although no less authentic, knowledge about her than people she knows in other settings.

Casey: 971: the clients know lots about you and your neighbourhood doesn't know the same lot

The restriction around the relationship does not mean that the workers do not care about their clients. Rather, it is that they know they would not be able to cope with the consequences of being emotionally attached to their clients, giving too much of themselves or allowing the care to go beyond the space of the interaction. They explain the bounded care in much the same way as a counsellor would:

> Nina: 122: I don't get emotionally attached to them... I think if I let them do that to me all the time I think I would, I don't think I would still be doing it...leave it there, pick it up again
>
> Zoe: 135: I sort of care about my clients in a um, not in a friendship way because I would never get them as my friend...I just see the good in everyone so I see the good and I hone in on that and that's what I care about, but at the same time once the hour is up, it's not like it's over, if they want to come back, it's hard to explain

The boundaries of the interaction are also understood by the clients. Although it is clear that in general the workers make and enforce their limits, if some do not do that the clients will. Casey, whose main social world is with her clients, often wants to develop a friendship with her clients. She tells of an occasion when her client made the boundaries clear:

> Casey: 29: the way he reacted was obvious that this was very compartmentalized and I had to have a gear shift in my mind to think, that that for them I'm not a date

Mary too, has had to change her perception of the interaction from time to time.

> Mary: 891: I think oops you don't want a relationship you just want sex.

These accounts illustrate that the limitations are there for the clients too and that on the few occasions when the worker wants more than a commercial transaction the client is likely to

enforce the boundaries and the worker is reminded about the nature of the work. They soon learn that the clients may actually want it this way.

While it is important to have strategies in place to manage the social aspects of the interaction, it is equally important to manage the sexual connection. This ensures that the erotic encounter progresses in the way the worker wishes it to. The following example illustrates one way this is done. Kathy thoroughly enjoyed pampering men, but for her to do this well it needed to be done her way. She controlled the progression of the encounter by using massage as a way to connect with her clients.

> Kathy: 720: I cannot do a client without a massage, some clients want to just have sex and I say, I'm sorry I can't have sex with you until I feel your body, and I can't do that because I really need to feel their body and then I get into a groove with their body and it just sort of flows from there

The standard sexual encounter is usually quite routine. Elizabeth described it as "paint by numbers". A recurrent thread is that work sex and recreational sex were quite different:

> Sue: 630: sex up at work isn't really sex

> Laura: 206: I wasn't making love… there was no spark

This doesn't mean that the sex wasn't enjoyable. Laura enjoyed encounters with couples and Alice enjoyed most of her sexual encounters. For Elizabeth, it was mostly just "paint by numbers" or a pleasant romp. The "wow factor" was rarely there, when it was she enjoyed it immensely. The following extracts illustrate understanding of enjoyable encounters;

> Alice: 111: it's a very beneficial thing to do for yourself and for your clients if you enjoy sex and you enjoy sharing the love, the energy or whatever it is. 937: I like the difference of the change of energy

> Sally: 92: the sex is good. 697: it's just like having a rendezvous but you get paid, laughter, sometimes it's really good, sometimes they are really nice

Lack of emotional investment with the client can lead to a freedom of sexual expression that is not able to happen in other relationships. Kathy believed that she could take risks with the clients that she was unable to do at home. She did not want her partner to think she was being silly and if he gave negative feedback she would be hurt. At work however, if the client did not like what she was doing she would simply change her behaviour. Similarly, Zoe explained that outside of work she is quite shy with people she is attracted to, at work she is outgoing and able to enjoy herself without worrying what the client thinks about her.

In contrast, Laura and Sue found the sexual aspect of the job hateful. Sue because she actively disliked it and "hates penises", and Laura mostly because she was bored. Laura preferred stripping or being with heterosexual couples:

> Laura: 318: That bored the shit out of me… More than one was OK.

The social aspects of the work were not so problematic for Laura and Sue. Both became friendly with some clients and their narratives indicated that they cared about the wellbeing of some of their clients. To cope with sexual intercourse they shut off as much as possible, both mentally and physically. Laura would be thinking about anything except what was happening

between her and the client, she would "just switch off". Laura described it as being a "dead fuck" (193). This lack of response or refusal to play the game indicates to the client that they are not enjoying it and if this strategy works well the intercourse part of the encounter is over swiftly. Sue coped differently:

> Sue: 288: I get stoned, I get stoned and I close my eyes when they are lying on top of me and I close my eyes

Sue could not do this part of the job without being stoned,

> Sue: 255: It drives me crazy, yeah I did it the other night and stuff and it was the hardest thing I have ever had to do in my life

Sue was a regular cannabis user before she started sex work. She justified her use by explaining that it helped control her epilepsy. She has not had an epileptic fit since she began using this drug. Sue began sex work to finance her drug use which then escalated because of her high disposable income and her distaste for heterosexual intercourse. Nothing in her narrative suggests that she felt she was the boss in the room unless she was stoned. Her one experience of a difficult client confirmed her belief in this because the instance she recalled occurred when she was working straight. Her belief that she needs to be intoxicated at work was further confirmed by her recent experience of working straight, on that shift she did not get any clients, three turned her down once they went into the room with her.

Both Sue and Laura no longer work in the sex industry. Laura left many years ago and Sue obtained another job soon after our interview. Interestingly, neither saw sex work as damaging or abusive when asked.

> Laura: 218: I didn't feel abused or used or anything. I didn't give my all.

Considered together, these narratives illustrate that the sex workers understand that control over the interaction is vital to their wellbeing and that, indeed they generally feel in control of the interaction.

Discussion

This section illuminates the women's understanding of their position of power and control in the room and describes some strategies for maintaining control. The women are clearly "the boss" in the room. This supports the finding of other researchers who maintain that sex workers see themselves as and in fact are in control of the interaction, particularly if they see themselves as providing a service rather than as sex objects (Kontula, 2007; Plumridge, 2005). One aspect of the professionalism of a sex worker is the ability to minimise effort, control the situation and maintain some distance from the client (Ashforth, Kulik, & Tomiuk, 2008).

Although they utilise different strategies for exercising their power and have varying understandings of the negative effects from lack of boundaries; it is clear that the worker is in control of the interaction and that some clients expect the commercial sexual transactions to be

this way (Kinnell, 2006). Many sex worker accounts indicate that the workers are in control of the situation (Perkins, 1991; Sanders; 2004a; Weatherall & Priestly, 2001). The commercial context is one of the few places where women are able to negotiate sexual exchange from a position of power (Warr & Pyett, 1999). This is considered one of the benefits of the job (Barbara, 1993). Peers, clients and most operators support this use of power within the culture of sex work.

The client expectation could be in part because of the exchange of money, or it could be that they are honouring the experience and wisdom of the sex worker who should be able to be negotiate the encounter so that it is physically and emotionally safe for both (Warr & Pyett, 1999). In other trade situations it is often the buyer of goods or services who dictates the terms of service. However, people in professions and quasi professions often call on a "status shield" (Hochschild, 2003) to enable them to not defer to the client, position themselves as the expert and refuse to work with clients who expect the professional to work outside accepted practices for that profession (Ashforth & Kreiner, 2002). In these situations the client expects the professional to set the boundaries.

Although many clients claim to want the "girlfriend experience" (Sanders, 2008), from these narratives it is apparent that this needs to be kept within the confines of the commercial encounter. Other sex workers also understand that clients actually want the women to be in charge (Barbara, 1993; T. O'Doherty, 2007). These women understand that clients desire bounded authenticity and that this can be done without losing a sense of self or feeling invaded. To preserve a sense of self when utilising aspects of the self that are considered integral to intimate social experience some distancing is necessary for people who work in human service occupations (Hochschild, 2003; Warr & Pyett, 1999).

As previously discussed there are many similarities between human service work, therapeutic services in particular, and sex work. I draw on the women's description of the work as therapy to justify turning to literature that is produced for counsellors and other therapists. There is little literature available that focuses on the self care of the therapist in relation to their own wellbeing. However, what there is strongly advises that therapists leave patient concerns at the office and pick them up again when appropriate (Kendall-Tackett, 2003); this is one of the strategies that the sex workers describe in their narratives.

Apparent in the narratives and the literature is the notion that sex workers can draw on or deny their full presence during the course of their work (Carpenter, 2000). The workers choose the activities they will undertake and the type of interaction they have with the client in accordance their talents, personal preferences and perception of risk (McVerry & Lindop, 2005: O'Doherty, 2007). Others chose not to provide certain services because they are for private activities, too time consuming or may be too painful (Sanders, 2005). Being similarly selective

about the services one provides is recommended as a health promoting strategy for people who work in mental health services (Osborn, 2004). Personal resources such as time, energy and compassion need to be conserved and protected to reduce psychological stress and prevent burnout (Osborn, 2004). To achieve these self-care strategies one must be able to have control in the workplace. For therapists, having boundaries and being in control of the process is vital to having a successful therapeutic relationship with some degree of authenticity (J. B. Miller et al., 2004).

Most of the participants did not shut off or use drugs to cope with sex work. The exceptions were Sue and Laura. Shutting off and taking drugs has been found to be one strategy that sex workers use to place a barrier between themselves and the client (Kramer, 2003). Although these strategies are not used by most of the women in this study, drug use and dissociation are considered to be intrinsic to sex work in both abolitionist and dominant social understandings of sex work. Both Sue and Laura describe some of their experiences of sex work in ways that fit comfortably within these understandings. However, neither considered that sex work per se, their drug use or shutting off processes were damaging to their psychological wellbeing. It is not within the scope of this thesis to examine and explain drug use or dissociation in depth, nor is there space to adequately, and safely, contextualise the experience of sex work for these women.

Acting up or acting out?

An identified theme in the narratives is one of being in a sex worker role while at work. This section explores the participants' understandings of what work name, role and persona means to them and explains how they mange this in a manner that is beneficial to their wellbeing.

When people enter the sex industry they are usually given or asked to choose a work name and advised to develop a work persona. These extracts illustrate the workers' understanding of the use of a work name. The common thread for these participants is the necessity for them to maintain separation between work and non work areas of their lives:

> Nina: 82: I mean by having another name it's like you're leading two lives so you can go from normal life, walk into your job, you're a completely different person, like two different worlds and if you keep them separate, it's easier to deal with.

Nina is a single parent in a rural community. While she is not secretive about her work, the separation allows her to easily define and separate her role as mother and active member of the community from her job as sex worker. Laura also used her work name to maintain separation from home and work; she was living a double life and having a different name and persona functioned to enable her to leave work and pretend that she had not been there.

> Laura: 398: well that's "Leah" my working name and I'm me

For her, as she explained during the consultation process, it meant that she could maintain her lies and deceit, not only to her friends and family but also to herself. She could say to herself

that it wasn't really her doing the sex work; the real her was a chef and daughter, not a prostitute.

For Chloe the name was about keeping home away from work:

> Chloe: 339: I think to deal with it in my head… I go Ok, when you are here between 10 and 12 or whatever, you become so and so. So you leave yourself at home and thinking about yourself, the kids and the husband and at this place you become someone else, you put on a different hat, you are wearing lovely dresses and all this sort of thing. So I did that for a while and then as I got older I didn't need to worry about that anymore.

As life in general has become less stressful and she is more able to think clearly, there has become less need to this maintain separation. As Chloe ages and there are fewer issues at home to deal with she has become less concerned about separating her work and non work life and has become relaxed about regular clients knowing and using her real name. When she was younger she used her work name and work persona to move into her role easily. She could put aside concerns and worries about her home life so that they did not intrude into her time at work. The separation of roles functioned to provide a welcome respite from day to day concerns.

For some participants the name is directly connected to work roles:

> Sally: 223: like I have different names in different places

> Kathy: 61: as soon as I walk through those doors I change from Kathy to Melissa, I'm in character, the glasses come off, um the sexy clothing comes on and I'm in character...I like being in character

> Elizabeth: 210: instead of using the shortened version of my name I actually extended into the full version and made it more formal…which sounded more grown up

Sally changes her name to fit in with how she is presenting herself as a sex worker, she explained that she works differently in different geographical locations, for example, the work requirements and thus her presentation is quite different in a large city than in a small rural town. Similarly, Kathy uses the name rather like another piece of her character costume; it reflects her personal style and attitude to work.

Viewed cumulatively these extracts show that the work name and persona enables separation of home and work and is related to how the participants present themselves to clients, community, family and themselves. Interestingly, they do not mention issues of safety or anonymity as a reason for having a work name although most of the participants describe being given an explanation similar to the one Elizabeth was given when she first started sex work:

> Elizabeth: 216: they later explained as you walk down the street and someone calls out to you and you can pretend that's not you and I thought well that's nutty

However, as shown in these extracts, in practice this is not what it actually means for these sex workers.

Not all workers choose a work name or persona. Some participants choose to use their real name because they do not wish to separate work self from non-work, they are comfortable with

integration. Casey has little separation between work and non-work life and uses her real name. Alice had clear boundaries around time and location with her clients and did not see the need for these in relation to herself. Both Alice and Casey are "out" to most people in their social worlds.

> Alice: 629: I never changed my name I never saw a need for that, it was just me.
>
> Elizabeth: 204: actually, I thought it never made sense to me to have another persona, why would I want to disengage or not be me?

Clearly the accounts show that the use of a name is related to their understanding of work role and persona. Elizabeth, Alice and Casey, were most consistent between work and non-work roles.

> Alice: 169: I always said if I had to act I would stop, that wouldn't be right at all, and I didn't, you know I couldn't live a lie.
>
> Elizabeth: 198: I was quite comfortable being a sex worker, very comfortable, very proud actually, and I never um, I didn't make up another persona, probably just a less garrulous (laughter) one

For Alice taking up a work role would mean being dishonest and for Elizabeth her use of her real name and being consistent across roles may have reflected her comfort with being a sex worker. It could be assumed from these extracts that acting may mean dishonesty or discomfort with being a sex worker however some other participants who describe their role experiences in detail do not impose this meaning on role playing or persona.

Two of the threads to the participant explanations rationalise and normalise taking on roles. The first is that having roles for different situations is a usual part of being in the world. The second reflects the experience of being a woman. Being in role, having a persona or acting up to the clients does not mean that the "real person" is somehow left out of sex work. In these threads there is an implication of integration of self and own social experience into the role rather than the separation discussed earlier. Mary's explanation sums it up:

> Mary: 32: I am who I am with my kids and I'm who I am with my friends and I'm who I am with family and I am who I am with my clients, but I'm still me. I might be different in different ways with all of them but I'm still me…

This extract reflects the explanations given in other narratives, for these women, the sex worker role they take on at work is functional and works in the same ways as other roles; they are acting in a way that is appropriate to the situation. The situation is the sexualised interaction between men and women. Part of being a woman in that situation is faking it:

> Mary: 1212: sometimes of course it is a little bit fake, it comes with the territory, for us women you have to feign a certain amount of it.
>
> Elizabeth: 384: but you see that in the straight world too, where women work hard to, you know, you can see scenarios where women are working hard to be bright and light and be sexually available and sending all those messages

They see the gendered interaction, the exaggeration or variation on usual heterosexual social interactions, as quite different from overt negotiated role-playing:

Sally explains the difference:

> Sally: 200: your normal clientele and you know what they want and you role play, getting them off and faking it and all that sort of stuff, and then you have the role playing, where you are the bored housewife or aunty or the daddy's girl or some little girl at school or whatever their fantasies are

While acting out fantasies that are beyond usual heterosexual interactions is considered mentally and emotionally draining; acting up to the requirements of heterosexuality can be quite fun. Acting up to dominant understandings of how women are required to be, simply requires a little more effort than usual, it is more of the same rather than different; more makeup, sexier clothes and other exaggerated expressions of femininity. Kathy, Sally and Zoe take on such role playing with relish. Pleasure and delight in having a safe place to play with sexuality was evident in the telling. There was much laughter and movement as they explained the benefits of being in role:

> Kathy: 62: I like being in character for that amount of hours and you know playing that, 88: maybe it's just the alter ego coming out and I think that it's great being, you know, reinvent yourself. 92: I can strip off naked and prance around the room and feel so confident in the room. I could probably do more things in the room with a stranger than I can with my boyfriend.

Both Sally and Kathy explained that this confidence comes from not having an emotional investment in the clients:

> Sally: 796: But people I quite like I'm really shy around

These participants shy are around someone they are attracted to but are outgoing and full of confidence around a client because there is no desire to form any emotional attachment. Drawing on common understandings of ego, Kathy wondered if perhaps her "alter ego" was drawn out in this arena. For these women it is apparent that a part of themselves that is coming out to play is constrained from expression in usual day to day life.

As described previously, the women are in control of how they present themselves; this may change from day to day or client to client. Zoe changes according to how she perceives the client:

> Zoe: 440: as soon as you get on their wavelength and you're just changing from different wavelength to different wavelength and being able to just do that ten times in a night

For Zoe, being in role is related to what is happening in the work context. In contrast Mary uses her work ability to be in or out of role in accordance with how she feels about herself as a sex worker and how she feels about her clients. On some days she relishes taking on and using her position to express what she sometimes thinks about clients in general:

> Mary: 1071: sometimes I want to be able to dress up and be this nasty bitch to them, it's my way of thinking, well fuck you, I'm thinking, fuck you for being a cheater on your wife, fuck you for being, full stop

It enables her to express her distaste for clients in a way that is safe for her and them. It discharges the tension and internal conflict she experiences in relation to being a sex worker. This is a useful strategy that eases the emotional strain of doing a job she does not feel is morally right. In her other world she is kind and gentle, a "people pleaser"; on the days she

doesn't want to comply with societal requirements, she uses her work-endowed power to express what she would really like to express in the other world. On other days it's different, she is her usual self at work, she explains why:

> Mary: 1091: I just think it's part of being able to be who you are, even in this job yes, for me anyway, that's my take on it, maybe that's a part of me being accepted for who I am maybe in my totality, maybe not only in this job but in my whole life

For Mary how she is at work reflects how she feels not only about her clients but about herself. In contrast to the explanations given at the beginning of this section, Mary uses the situation to deliberately reduce separation, while still seeing herself as in a role.

Discussion

For most of these women having a work name and going into and out of role is a useful strategy that enables them to do their work in a way that is comfortable for them. Some have little or no separation between work self and non-work self. Others have clear separation for a variety of reasons. For most, presentation of self and acting up is an enjoyable or useful experience. It allows an expression of self that is not permissible in their other worlds. The meaning of taking on another name and a work role is far deeper and more complex than simply maintaining some separation between work and non-work worlds. The observable behaviours of these women in relation to persona and role-play may appear similar to the casual observer; however the reasons and meaning for these behaviours vary widely between individuals and contexts. They also illustrate the paradoxical nature of sex work, in this instance it is the use of role play to be oneself. At first glance this appears to be a process of separating self from role, these extracts and explanations show that the meaning for some of these participants is quite different; it is the bringing of self into the role. These results highlight the variability and heterogeneity among sex workers.

Having a work role is important in most jobs. In many respects the explanations given by these participants are similar to those given by other people in service roles. Workers across a wide variety of occupations use similar strategies to move into and maintain roles; clothes are often used as a part of being in role and particular idiosyncranatic behaviours may be engaged in (Ashforth et al., 2008; Hochschild, 2003). It is common for people to describe themselves as having a "work me" and a "real me", but find it difficult to explain the psychological mechanism by which they move between roles (Ashforth et al., 2008).

It is apparent from the narratives that some, for example Chloe, utilise the time at work and the role to take a physical and emotional rest from home worries and others, like Kathy, use the role to act in ways they cannot in their social world. These findings are consistent with the existing literature. Choosing a work name and acting out another personality while at work to achieve clear role separation and to protect identity is an important aspect of maintaining the psychological health of sex workers (McVerry & Lindop, 2005) and is considered to be a

universal phenomenon of sex work (Sanders, 2005). Other sex workers take on a work name and persona to enable them to act in ways that they do not in other areas of their lives (Bell, 1995). For some, the work role is clearly different to that of a home role; it allows separation of home and work. In some instances this is so work doesn't intrude on home (McVerry & Lindop, 2005) and for others it enables home to not intrude on work. It has been found that one of the benefits of sex work is that it provides a welcome break from home and family (Abel et al., 2007), leaving aside home concerns as a part of being in role may provide a psychological respite from day to day concerns.

Previously I discussed keeping certain sexual behaviour outside of the work arena; in this section I discuss what it might mean to bring those behaviours into the sex work arena. Although widely reported that female sex workers do not enjoy the sex and that they are usually acting or faking it others research differs (Chapkis, 1997; Kontula, 2007; Sanders, 2005). Thirty nine percent of a sample of 772 sex workers in Aotearoa/New Zealand reported that they stayed in the industry because they enjoyed the sex (Abel et al., 2007). In contrast, it is argued that the sexual identity at work is manufactured as part of a work persona that maintains separation of work and private sex (Sanders, 2005). Sanders also argues that part of the performance of identity is to capitalise on femininity for financial gain; beauty therapists, air stewards and many other workers in occupations also use sexuality as part of the marketing package. However, it is also argued that sex worker i**s** a sexual identity (H. L. Miller, 2004). Kontula (2007) suggests that "it seems that at least in some cases the internal power relation of sex work can emancipate prostitutes towards more pleasurable and self-confident sexuality" (p.13). For some of the participants in this study it seems that the combination of having control of the situation and lack of emotional attachment to the client allows for confident expressions of sexuality that are not possible in the private sphere, a notion that is supported by Kontula (2007). It is not always emotionally safe to act out fantasies with primary lovers and it is certainly not safe for a woman to 'prance' in many social situations. This idea is given strength by the use of words like whore, ho, and other terms that are related to sex work to describe women who do act out and act up sexually so as to both conform to and contradict currently acceptable ways of being a woman.

The women in this sample who were most consistent between work and non work are those who had the freedom to express their whole selves without fear of sanction in their non work lives. Although the details of their private lives are not revealed here, these are the women who had the least stress at home, were open about their work to friends and family, and allowed themselves free expression of their sexuality in their private lives. These women were less concerned about stigma or prejudice because they moved in social worlds that embraced or accepted sexual diversity. There was no need for them to use the sex industry forum as a platform to perform that which could not be done in their day-to-day lives. Nor was there any

need to keep their private lives completely away from their work lives as a strategy to cope with private life stresses. This lack of separation may display their comfort with themselves as sex workers but also reflect their comfortable position as women in the world. There is little theorising about sex workers who are in this position. The little that is said comes from the direction of radical feminists who criticise such sex workers as being an elite, privileged exceptional few (Brison, 2006; Jeffreys, 2004).

I argue that the percentage of sex workers who are in this position is irrelevant, rather, we need to be investigating why they are in this position and what can be done to enable more women to be in a similar position. By looking at the wider context of these women's lives and comparing them to others who do keep strict separation between private and work it is apparent that the effects of stigma and the societal restrictions on women's sexuality largely contribute to the work/private splits apparent in many accounts of sex workers experience (Day & Ward, 2004a). Sanders (2004a) found that women who experienced conflict between their work lives and non work lives did not have efficient strategies to manage high levels of distress that lead to low self esteem and substance abuse. Further, from these accounts it is apparent that the more comfortable one is in one's private life the less need there is for it to be kept completely away from work. Therefore the other conditions of sex workers lives need to be considered and addressed in relation to social and psychological wellbeing of this population (Wahab, 2004) and the benefits of the work need to be acknowledged.

Clients with issues

A theme through the narratives is that difficult clients are positioned in particular ways in an effort to understand and deal with their behaviours. This section is about clients who may be abusive towards the participants or have issues that the participant finds difficult to deal with. It needs to be noted that most clients are not abusive or described as difficult to deal with.

Vicky said she did not have any difficult clients and Laura, who didn't like the work, could not recall any difficult clients. All of the participants were clear that they had very few bad experiences or clients that were difficult:

> Casey: 235: there's only two incidents of my entire career of five thousand um, events and I don't want to colour the view of the rest of my work because I had two isolated incidents
>
> Laura: 462: they were all good clients
>
> Zoe: 590: the people in my personal life bother me, my clients don't bother me

The participants do not see the clients as bad people, as previously stated, most try to look for the good in their clients. They rationalise bad behaviour by interpreting the cause as something not intrinsic to the client such as a history of abuse or other issues, too much alcohol or lack of skills. They explain difficult clients in different ways:

> Sally: 499: dirty old men in their old men in their fifties and sixties or seventies who have either been altar boys or had a very hard mother or aunty who has dominated them. 678: you think that poor boy you. Some of them have dominant mothers and aunties who forced them to have sex with them

> Mary: 143: there are the real freaks and you think, oh my god, they have got real issues, real problems that seeing me isn't going to fix.

> Nina: 486: bit rough sometimes, lot of the times that's because they are drunk or they just don't know how to touch a woman. 490: you've got to understand them

While they do not overtly apportion blame to themselves for client behaviours there is a very strong thread of attracting certain clients or allowing particular behaviours. The only narrative this was absent from was Sue's. The women draw on dominant lay explanations in relation to attraction, and responsibility for one's own health and wellbeing. In these extracts there is a reflection of current beliefs that people choose or attract everything that happens to them:

> Elizabeth: 506: I certainly have a way with eccentrics and I tended to have a cluster of them (laughter)

> Nina: 481: generally the guys don't mess with me, because I come across as firm I think

> Kathy: 396: for some reason guys love choking me, they really love strangling me, I think it's because I've got a hard look about myself

> Zoe: 355: I believe that we attract our clients to us, you know. 447: client gets attracted by the vibes that you give out

> Mary: 694: at the start I did have that victim mentality because I was hurting so much and I felt so lost, and I just let them walk all over me. I thought that's what I had to do. I thought I had to let them do whatever they wanted

> Casey: 298: I don't attract people who are after that sort of thing. 557: I found that I never got picked by the people I wouldn't have been interested in seeing

Alice saw her reaction to the clients as contributing to their behaviour. She talked about clients that had been a problem for other workers but not for her:

> Alice: 670: didn't react in fear or anger so it changed

Another thread in relation to being responsible is the use of intuition and unspoken communication between themselves and clients:

> Sally: 886: I mean every woman has got that little voice in your head and if it's screaming at you to not go in that door then you don't go

> Kathy: 407: For some reason before I have a bad client I always get this feeling and it like sits in my chest

> Zoe: 437: I know which one is going to pick me, I don't know how I just look in his eyes and I know

Kathy likes adventures and minor risk taking in general and explains that while she usually trusts her intuitive feelings about a client she sometimes doesn't listen to those:

> Kathy: 482: an obligation to the boss especially since business hasn't been too good for the boss, it's been great for me but you know, um you do feel sort of obligated you know you want them to make money too and you don't want to disappoint the boss by going "no", and being picky and things like that and I suppose you just challenge your instincts sometimes as well, just got to test it and see

> j. it's that risk taking thing that you do

> laughter

> k. exactly, laughter, test this out

> laughter

> j. to see if it works

> k. he really is an arsehole, damn it he was

> j. yeah, and in some ways it lets it easier to let go of because you are in control of going in the first place?

> k. yeah

> j. do you blame yourself or do you?

> k. mm

> j. or just go oh this is what happens

> k. um, I blame myself as far as I knew I shouldn't have gone to that job, I knew I shouldn't have done that job, I never blame myself in the room

Kathy's account illustrates the pressures in the sex industry. While it is illegal to force anyone to undertake any given commercial sex act, there is a sense of obligation, also apparent in other narratives and threads, that it is important to make money for the parlour. When she doesn't follow her intuition she understands herself as partly responsible for what happens. Interestingly, it is implicit in this extract that she blames herself for what happens on an out call but not for whatever happens in the room at the parlour. She did not explain how these situations are different in terms of her responsibility.

Taken cumulatively, these extracts illustrate that sometimes client behaviour is explained by factors external to the client, that the sex workers understand themselves as attracting particular sorts of clients and that although intuitive responses are noted they are not always heeded for a variety of reasons.

However, while an attempt may be made to excuse or explain bad or distressing behaviour, it is not tolerated. There are two ways of reacting to bad behaviour from clients, either to manage them in the interaction or to stop the interaction and to refuse to see them again. As mentioned previously, the notion of being in control of who they see and in control in the room was strongly represented in the narratives:

> Zoe: 396: you just got to keep the situation in control and know what you're doing.

One way of being in control is to charge the client extra to allow certain acts that that would otherwise be positioned as unacceptable. This puts the behaviour back in the worker's control and allows the worker to feel it is done respectfully.

> Nina: 570: he would pay bucket loads for it

> Kathy: 413: I charged him the earth cos I thought, if you're going to take me through well you're going to pay for it because I have a funny feeling about this

> Zoe: 711: I don't mind if you want to be violent but you pay me, you pay me for it… and be respectful

Participants often refuse to see the client again.

> Nina: 490: I won't go and see him because I know that I'll get angry with him

Sally willingly sees a diverse range of clients; some express and act out desires that are illegal and/or repugnant to her. She sometimes thinks that by providing this service she is preventing them from acting out their desires in the community, at other times she is not so sure. She describes how she managed a client who she understood to be a threat to children:

> Sally: 472: I used to see the weird ones, and daddy girls and when you are dealing with paedophiles and stuff like that
>
> j. and you know they mean it eh
>
> s. and yeah, sort of like role play, I would try and put the clocks back so that by the time he would leave me and he would go down to the school, because sometimes you don't know if you are encouraging it or preventing it
>
> j. yeah,
>
> s. and um, yeah put the clocks back so he would think it was three o'clock when it was actually four o'clock and the kids had all gone

In this situation she is using her position to do whatever she can to protect the local children. Putting the clocks back resulted in her spending extra unpaid time with the client. Giving him extra time provided some balance and justification for her agreeing to see this client; even if he was really a paedophile. On the occasions he saw her, she worked to ensure he was not going to have easy access to children.

The participants differentiate between clients who have problems and those that are not respectful. Clients who misbehave from a position of disrespect are not seen again.

> Kathy; 182: disrespectful and just see you as a slut that is taking money and you've got to do this and um, I have no respect for they are definitely just the money and sometimes I really do hate them and I won't go through with them again and if I find an arsehole. I won't go through with him again… a hundred and fifty dollars an hour is, to me that's not worth my happiness,

Often, in a group situation, a difficult client will be given to someone else who has the skills to handle him:

> Sue: 413: he ended up going through with a friend of mine and she's a big buxom Māori girl and if he ever did that to her she would pulp him, she would turn him into, like, spaghetti

There are two threads in relation to clients that cause difficulties; one is the positioning of the client and the other the positioning of the worker. Clients are either viewed as having a problem or being disrespectful. Those with problems are positioned as not fully responsible for their behaviour and the workers try to be understanding about this. Those who act from a position of disrespect are treated less well. Transactions are terminated swiftly and/or the client is given to someone else to handle.

Discussion

The participants in this study seem to place most of the blame for client misbehaviour on the client. According to the literature, this is not an unusual way of dealing with people who behave badly. Some psychological models explain that blame is assigned after a series of

judgements are made about the situation of the actor and the actor is assigned responsibility for their actions; if there are mitigating circumstances blame is less likely to be assigned to the actor (Alicke, 2000). If the actor is viewed as not totally responsible for their actions, severe sanctions are less likely to be imposed; circumstances taken into account include responsibility, context and intent. Spontaneous blame attribution is often based on assumptions about the actor and the emotions of the observer (Alicke, 2000). The emotional labour literature suggests that client behaviour is frequently attributed to circumstances outside the clients' control so that a socially appropriate response such as sympathy can be given (Hochschild, 2003). From the narratives, it appears that sex workers tolerate clients they see as having "issues", however clients who are viewed as being disrespectful or having malevolent intent are treated severely; usually the worker will not see them again.

The sex workers in this study rely on their intuition to ascertain psychological and physical risk. This is a similar finding to that in other sex worker literature. Intuition is utilised by both street and indoor workers (O'Doherty, 2007) and is one of the three most important violence prevention strategies alongside screening measures and having safety plans (Lewis, Maticka-Tyndale, & Shaver, 2005; O'Doherty, 2007). Sex workers do not always follow intuitive responses for a variety of reasons usually related to pressure to earn money (Wallman, 2001). However as indicated by Kathy, from time to time a risk may be taken to test out the accuracy of intuition or because the individual likes taking risks. This is not uncommon, some individuals take risks because they are concentrating on the rewards and will take a risk if they cannot prove that a situation is unsafe (Fick, 2005).

The main way the participants related to difficult clients was to stay in control of the encounter. Keeping control and remaining detached are common strategies for sex workers and others who do emotional labour (Fick, 2005; Mann, 2004). Sex workers deal with difficult clients in a similar manner to others who engage in people work. Blame or responsibility is assigned to the client so an appropriate response can be given. The women, while not overtly blaming themselves for client behaviour, do seem to take some responsibility, in the sense that they are present or that they attract certain types of client.

That's how women deal with it

A theme that emerged from the narratives is that although difficult clients are the exception, self care after a difficult client is important. This section explores activities that occur away from the clients or the space that Ashforth (2008) terms the "back stage" area. Although the focus of this section is how the participants deal with difficult clients after the interaction is over, I also explore the use of showering. This is an activity that occurs after almost every client interaction and therefore has use for dealing with the effect of both difficult and more mundane clients. The participants have various ways of interpreting events involving difficult clients, and how they take care of themselves afterwards.

Kathy explained that her self-care strategy is already in place. She knows what she will do after a bad client. She leaves the physical space of work, changes location and engages with humour as a coping mechanism. She understands that this physical and emotional change of location enables her to reduce the impact of the event so that she can return to work the next day her usual self:

> Kathy: 429: when I have bad clients I couldn't work for the rest of the night...went up to my mates place had a good laugh with them...it was over, I don't hold on to the emotion. 477: as soon as I have had a bad client I go straight out the door and to me it's over, you know and then the next night I turn up and it's all happy again

Some clients ask for services that are morally repugnant. Sally described her experience of one particularly difficult night:

> Sally: 486: you get clients that are necrophiliac and lying stiff like a dead person and it's pretty hard, but when you have had a whole night of that, one particular client where I had a whole night of that. I just sat in the toilet and just cried because it was too draining, just mentally, um I wasn't prepared for it because I hadn't, I felt that I hadn't been in it long enough to actually learn to actually cut it off completely in the mind. Where you just switch to someone else and then switch back again, you can't remember a thing,
>
> j. you do it on purpose eh? But sitting in the toilet crying, it's hard
>
> s. yeah, like sitting there oh my god what have I done? ... I felt very violently ill, I felt oh these men, normal white collar pillars of the community… yeah, you've got to get it out. Going to a cemetery and screaming your head off is one thing or having a bath and I would put my head under the water and just scream under the water and calm myself down.
>
> j. yeah screaming, bathing
>
> s. yeah or writing it down or drawing it, some therapy somehow to get it out

Initially Sally believed she had done something wrong by cooperating with the client; however she moved the blame to a category of men. This enables the blame to not be on herself or on the individual client. Putting him in a category makes it easier to deal with and reduces her feelings of immoral complicity. Sally attributed her distress to not having enough experience to have learned to psychologically distance herself from the client. Sally has developed coping strategies over time, if her attempt to shut out the experience is not successful, she actively engages in behaviours that release the tension and express her feelings. These are activities that

she can undertake by herself, she also uses peer support, usually straight after an incident. The following extract illustrates the shared understanding of difficult clients and how that is dealt with in the workplace:

> Sally: 519: Most of the old school girls know already, they can tell when things, as soon as you walk out of that room they already know
>
> j. yeah that something has happened that is not usual
>
> s. yeah, and they go he's a bastard isn't he?
>
> Laughter
>
> s. and you go yeah, and then you joke around and you know, wouldn't we like to put some things up his backside
>
> laughter
>
> s. that humour, and even just laughing and crying with it, because that's one way, or having some ice cream or chocolate afterwards and you feel a lot better
>
> j. yeah
>
> s. but that's how women deal with it

Nothing needs to be said about the detail of what happened, the situation is assessed and action is taken immediately to diffuse the emotional response. Sally interprets humour and the sharing of food as a normal way for women to deal with potentially traumatic events. Peer support, using unflattering terms for clients, and use of humour as a beneficial coping mechanism was a common thread in the narratives. Throughout the interview process; the narratives were often punctuated by laughter. During pre-interview visits with the participants and between interviews there were moments of great humour, mostly at the clients' expense.

Casey had described a client who had left her feeling like she had been raped. He also stole personal items from her bag. She justified the client's behaviour as the result of a "mismatch of expectations" that were a result of her not negotiating the service fully. Although the incident did not colour her view of sex work there were other consequences. She laid a complaint with the police and they would not press charges, her workplace was equally unsupportive, the client had paid on a credit card and she was not paid for the job. Her way of coping was to leave the venue and move to another town. However she did not allow her few negative experiences to affect her views of sex work:

> Casey: 221: it didn't give me negative feelings about the sex work. I saw it as an isolated event cos I'd already had lots of lovely clients. 545: I didn't let it worry me

Keeping in mind that distressing incidents are a rare occurrence, I was curious to find out if there were any particular strategies that were undertaken after mundane client interactions. From my time spent in various sex work venues I was aware that it is common practice to shower after every client whether there has been any body contact or not. The participants explained what this means for them:

> Mary: 1060: the important thing, especially after every client, wash the evidence, to wash the sins of the day

> Kathy: 705: you sort of like cleansing, it is a very cleansing thing I even have a shower at work and go home and have another shower and it is the whole cleansing process and water is so good for just purifying yourself after each client,
>
> Sally: 431: we had a sauna and I would, it's like cleansing myself
>
> Sue: 478: I go for a shower before and after every job and then I come home and I have a bath.

Clearly, the use of water has significance beyond personal physical hygiene. Mary's account reflects her feeling that sex outside of a committed relationship is not a morally correct activity. Water helps to take the sin, either her's or the client's, away. Although no participant said the clients made her feel dirty, there is that implication in these extracts that there is something that the client leaves behind that needs to be washed away; Mary describes this as "energy". These participants may be drawing on common cultural understandings of the spiritually and psychologically cleansing benefits of water. In these, water is often used as a means of purification that cleanses the recipient, and does not necessarily mean that the 'object' was dirty before application of water.

In summary, these extracts illustrate the ways in which the participants remove themselves from the impact of client behaviour. Clients are not attributed blame as individuals, responses to potentially traumatic situations are diffused and showers are given culturally significant meaning beyond that of hygiene.

Discussion

Although this section focuses on difficult clients, it could be assumed that similar strategies are utilised in the back stage arena to cope with the more ordinary aspects of sex work. For example, humour is an everyday aspect in the culture of sex work (Sanders, 2004b) that these participants describe as a part of coping with difficult clients.

Kathy described how she leaves work and meets with friends after a difficult client. This ability to leave the workplace or decide to not see any more clients is one of the beneficial aspects of this type of work. Removing oneself from the location where a disturbing incident has occurred is common practice in day-to-day life and is recommended as a coping strategy for many situations, such as parenting, anger management and coping with critical incidents in the workplace. For example, self care guidelines for therapists recommend that they "take a break" after emotionally disturbing client encounters (Kendall-Tackett, 2003). This strategy allows the individual to diffuse their emotional response by shifting their focus from the incident to something or someone not related to it. These types of avoidant response also have the effect of enabling the individual to gain some distance from painful and potentially overwhelming emotions (Hughes, Uhlmann, & Pennebaker, 1994).

The participants describe a variety of effective ways, which are also described in the literature, to diffuse their emotional responses to clients. In addition to redirecting attention there are

other means of diffusing emotional responses. Humour, verbal and physical expression of emotion, describing clients in less than flattering terms and giving them nicknames are common diffusion practices in all service professions (Ashforth & Kreiner, 2002; Hochschild, 2003; Sanders, 2004b). These strategies function to lessen the impact of the emotion so that it does not become psychologically overwhelming (Ashforth & Kreiner, 2002). When the initial response has been addressed, actively thinking and talking about, or using other means of working through a potentially traumatic incident enables the individual to avoid long term psychological effects of the trauma such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Hughes et al., 1994).

From the narratives it is apparent that these sex workers are resilient, they have a "whatever it takes" approach and utilise a variety of strategies to cope with incidents that are potentially traumatic. It is also apparent that these strategies are an accepted part of sex work culture and widely supported within the industry. The most common response to potentially traumatic events is one of resilience. Although an individual may experience an initial distress response, they will continue to function well and remain at or return to normal levels of functioning within a short time. There are multiple factors that contribute to resilience; these include supportive relationships, and personal attributes such as good self esteem, the ability to be flexible when faced with challenges and a "whatever it takes" approach to coping (Bonanno, 2005, p. 137).

From my experiences in indoor venues and discussions with participants, showering stood out as a ritualistic type of behaviour that was done after almost every client. There are few academic references to the meaning of washing in relation to sex work or other human service interactions. One participant in the Abel (2007) study mentioned bathing and cleansing as an important aspect of self care. Showers have received some mention as part of the ritual for preparing for street sex work (McKeganey & Barnard, 1996). In everyday life the use of water and showers has meaning beyond cleansing; one showers to freshen up and bathes to unwind, some people shower after work as way to wash off the day and move into non work life. Physical and symbolic cleansing is at the heart of many religious rituals across cultures (Zhong & Liljenquist, 2006). It is possible that the use of water is also the 'Macbeth effect'; that restoring purity after engaging in or being exposed to another person's immoral or unethical behaviour (Zhong & Liljenquist, 2006). The use of water as a moral cleanser is apparent in Mary's use of the shower to wash the sins of the day away; other participants also use the shower to achieve a cleansing that fits their own personal understandings of the client interaction and of the use of water.

It needs to be noted that I asked directly about showers, it seems that they are such an imbedded part of the culture that they are seldom spoken about. Often the most important norms are the

unspoken ones or those which are taught subtly during the socialisation process (Ashforth & Kreiner, 2002). Using the participants meaning of showers in combination with commonly shared understandings of the use of washing the body and informed by knowledge of the cultural significance of cleansing practices, it could be that showers after clients services a multiplicity of beneficial psychological purposes as the sex worker moves from the interactive space into the non performance area. In addition to hygiene and being fresh for the next client, showers provide "freshen up" and "wind down" elements, a quiet space to be alone and a way to remove any moral or other taint, described as "energy", that the client may have left.

It seems that from these narratives that the participants engage in a variety of behaviours and cognitive processes that lessen the impact of distressing incidents. Some are in the "whatever it takes" category and others are well supported by the literature as healthy or usual coping responses. Others, such as the sharing of food are commonly understood ways of providing support for other women.

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It's a very special job

A theme identified in the narratives is that sex work is about more than just the money. This section explores what the participants think and feel about sex work as a job overall. The threads running through are "I love it", "I hate it", "It's healing or educative", "The money is the best thing, even if it's not regular" and "It's social".

Most of the participants clearly enjoy the job overall. The following extracts provide an indication of factors make the job enjoyable:

> Elizabeth: 705: I remember just lying back and having a cigarette and looking at the ceiling and thinking, gosh I'm lucky... just lying back, thinking this is so relaxing.
>
> Kathy: 27: I love slip and slides. 58: I love pampering men and I love them pampering me, 339: I love being a sex worker because you get to be creative on your own
>
> Zoe: 676: I love it, yeah, it's like sometimes ... I'm laughing... I'll going oh my god why, this is really cool
>
> Alice: 95: just going to the pure basics of energy and life force, and joining in a physical way with another person. I love dancing for the same reason... I just knew that this was my dream job.
>
> Casey: 67: I loved it. 244: I, um, find it one of the most beautiful things that one can do…428: it's a real genuine gift and talent I have with it, I've got my clients a .. to be , to be relaxed and pampered and loved and cared for

In describing what they like about the job they display no uncertainty or ambiguity in their saying they 'love it'. The certainty of these statements indicates that this is not an attempt to

explain or justify involvement in the industry. All participants except Laura saw sex work as being beneficial for their personal growth.

> Elizabeth: l374: I feel um, much better, happier, stronger for that knowledge,

> Nina: 711: it's taught me to be sort of more nurturing and more caring as well, in a physical sense I think and I've learnt a lot more about men. 630: it's been good for me socially, working in the environment, just getting to know the different people

> Kathy: 53: it's done oodles for my confidence

In addition to benefits to themselves there is a thread of belief that the work has a positive effect on the client that goes beyond sexual gratification. As mentioned previously, some of the participants describe their work as therapeutic, healing or educative so that it has some benefit to people other than the client:

> Zoe: 476: there is no other job where I could do so much good in the world

> Alice: 110: it's a very special job and it's a very beneficial thing to do for yourself and for your clients if you enjoy sex and you enjoy sharing the love, the energy or whatever it is

> Nina: 735: they go away and get their sex and then they go home and deal with their problems, a lot of the times it forces them to, or wakes them up to realize that shit, that what I'm doing is probably wrong, that maybe I should do something at home, you know to remedy our situation, yeah I would hope to think that

> Mary: 822: if they go away happy, they might change their perception. 1428: I'm healing them... the whole spiritual side of it, I would like to think, this is what keeps me sane anyway, I could be fooling myself, laughter, I tell myself, well I'm helping them

Although they have drawn on popular understandings to liken the job to that of a therapist and find that aspect of the job gives a sense of satisfaction, two of these extracts highlight the feeling of uncertainty about that. Drawing on the notion of sex work as a social service helps explain and justify the work. This is especially salient for Mary, who has conflicting feelings about the morality of sex work and the clients who she positions as emotionally and spiritually damaged. Her aim is to improve life for the clients and their social world, to provide healing and to improve the general perception of sex workers. For Mary positioning the work as healing and spiritual is a deliberate attempt to make the work more psychologically bearable. In contrast, for Kathy there is no uncertainty about the positive effect she has on some clients; she described a client who she has worked with to improve his confidence, the following extract describes the experience of the phenomenon and provides her with evidence of the usefulness of her work with this client:

> Kathy: 751: he walks in now, his head's up and as soon as he sees you there's a big grin, you know it does something for me as well as them and it actually gives me a buzz as well seeing that

Casey also provides evidence of the impact she has on client's lives.

> Casey: 666: it's extremely gratifying when I come across people and they say, "You had such a powerful effect on me". 611: it's an honour and a privilege

Like all workers, they work for the money. Eight of the participants had responsibility for children while working in the sex industry. Zoe uses her money to pay for good quality childcare:

> Zoe: 271: I keep on doing it because I have to keep on going, I've got four kids and I've come to rely on that money which is probably a bad thing. 285: I can wake up fresh and the kids are wanting to see me and we can go out to the park or, it's really good.

Zoe's idea that relying on the money is a "bad thing" is interesting. Although she loves the work and has no intention of leaving, this statement indicates that she does not really want to be relying on the sex work money. This is another indication of the contradictions in these narratives; she likes the work but positions her reliance on the money as something undesirable. It clearly benefits her as a mother by providing time out from the children, good quality childcare and an income that allows her to do interesting activities with the children. Yet there is an indication of reluctance. This could be because of internalised stigma that says she shouldn't do this job, or it might be because she has been in the sex industry long enough to know that it is simply not sensible to rely heavily on an income that is not assured.

From the narratives it seems that explaining how the income is spent is an important aspect of explaining and justifying sex work. It cannot be done as simply as another job; that is, to earn money for whatever one wants to do with it. It must have a sense of purpose:

> Sue: 449: every night before I go to work I give my daughter a kiss and I look into her eyes and say it's all for you my love and say it's all for you, it's all for her

> Kathy: 236: since I've been away from the kids is if I work I work for, at least half of that should go back to my children because, and then it makes, it reassures me that I am actually working for a purpose as well

> Mary: 347: we were able to give our kids good lifestyles and pay our bills on time and actually have money in the bank and not have to go on benefits and not have to have men to support us, so we actually had our freedom and independence. 387: it was worth it

There is a sense here, that they understand that it is not acceptable to be doing sex work "just because", or to support a good lifestyle in general. For Mary the satisfaction of freedom and independence made her struggle with the morality of the work to be worth the struggle of her internal conflict. These justifications are likely to reflect the position of many working mothers, that to work outside the home, there needs to be some justification for it.

For many, the combination of the money and the flexibility is an attraction. Just prior to the interview with Chloe, she had quit her other job because of the combination of low wages and inflexibility around Chloe's chronic physical health problems. The employer had promised that Chloe would not have to work when she was ill; unfortunately that was not the case so Chloe left:

> Chloe: 271: The money, I don't mind going and working, like 13 dollars (at the other job) was the starting rate, so the money (in sex work) is huge, and flexibility, when I'm sick

For two participants, it is only the money that makes the work bearable.

> Sue: 294: I get stoned and I close my eyes when they are lying on top of me and I close my eyes. It's money. Give me your money honey laughter

Laura also only did the job for the money. For these two, there were no added benefits to working in the sex industry. They needed to keep their focus on the money to be able to undertake commercial sex acts. Mary also keeps a focus on the money, especially when dealing with difficult clients:

> Mary: 1143: why am I doing this job why am I, I'm setting myself up to see fucking freaks who don't even deserve my time and then I realise it is for the money

Like any other retail business, the income flow is not always steady. The following extracts explain this phenomenon and effect it has:

> Chloe: 93: Last week I only did two one hour jobs and one 45 minutes
>
> j. it's not enough to live on
>
> c. yeah and I'm supporting three kids. 681: I have gone four days without a job… The money is not there now. It's getting harder and I worry that Inland Revenue and that think we are making all this money.
>
> Elizabeth: 103: I had to work quite a lot harder because I wasn't the new face, 340: the weight started to stack up, you know the weight of not making enough money and being quite scared of bills and, just perhaps living beyond my means and then that whole sort of having to work as opposed to "I might come in tonight, I might not"
>
> Sue: 682: I had no formula for my daughter. That's really bad when you go to work to feed your daughter and then you don't get any work

Taken cumulatively, these experiences around money indicate that the participants understand sex work to be somehow different from other forms of work. It is worth noting that Mary doesn't say, "it's because it's my job". Explaining that the money is put to good use provides alternative and more socially acceptable reasons for doing sex work.

The women also enjoy the social aspect of the work. Casey, who usually works independently, enjoys the company of clients. The following extracts illustrate the social aspects of the work. The work is more than just doing a job. It provides a place for relaxation, fun and social support:

> Chloe: 692: there is no stress. I quite look forward to it, …, even though I might not make money, I enjoy coming in, having a yarn
>
> j. some of it is the company of women
>
> c. yes, awesome, I like that. How else do I keep my head straight?
>
> Zoe: 75: I've got four kids, so it gets me away from my kids. 72: I get to be a teenager
>
> Sally: 185: on a good night you look forward to the girls and you have fun and you get paid for it, you dress up and you wear makeup and clothes. 987: you want to make money, I have met awesome chicks doing really awesome stuff, the girls, personally how I look at it is a break from my child, it's being around the girls, cracking fun at the boys and getting paid for it, how good.

Taken together, these accounts reflect the heterogeneity of the population and inherent conflicts and paradoxes in the occupation.

Discussion

The results of this study show that these participants get a sense of satisfaction and enjoyment from their work. It is not uncommon for sex workers to report that the work they do provides a sense of purpose and satisfaction (Bell, 1995; Chapkis, 1997). For example, more than half of the 247 female sex workers surveyed in a Queensland study experienced their sex work as a major source of life satisfaction (Woodward, Fischer, Najman, & Michael, 2004). People implicitly attempt to understand the meaning of their work and how one understands one's meaningfulness in the world, especially at work, has a direct impact on one's feelings of value as a human being (Wrzesniewski et al., 2003). Overall subjective wellbeing is contributed to by an individual having a sense of purpose and satisfaction in life (R. M. Ryan & Deci, 2001).

There is no ambiguity in the statements in relation to loving the work. Although little space is given in the in the academic literature to allow for this expression, in some sex worker narratives, there is an indication that many sex workers love their job (Chapkis, 1997). It has been theorised that looking for the beneficial aspects of the work is an attempt to justify prostitution and make it seem more palatable (Farley, 2004a), however the certainty expressed in these statement indicates that this is not what is happening here. Such enthusiasm may not have been given expression in the literature because the right questions have not been asked or because participants often confine their talk to the subjects that they believe the researcher is interested in and what is socially acceptable; it is not socially acceptable to say that one likes having sex for money (Chapkis, 1997).

The understanding that the participants have that their work provides benefits for those not directly connected with the commercial sexual transaction resonates through other sex worker accounts (Delacoste & Alexander, 1987; Stubbs, 1994). Easily understood occupations such as educator, healer or therapist are often used when describing the similarities between sex work and other jobs. A popular understanding of these occupations is that the work they do has beneficial impact on people in the client's social world. This explanation of similar benefits to sex work clients and people in their lives is widely acknowledged in the literature (Bell, 1995; Chapkis, 1997; Sanders, 2006). Some theorists state that this is a comparative device used to normalise the work and sanitise the sex industry (Farley, 2006). It is common for people in stigmatised occupations to compare their occupation with others that are similar but are more morally acceptable; this enables the participants to feel that they are doing an activity that is morally acceptable, and to justify their involvement to themselves and others (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Others state that this justification is misguided and the effect of commercial sex is only to increase male domination, objectification and abuse of women (Dworkin, 1993).

In contrast, narratives by clients strongly indicate that the encounters have positive effects on their wellbeing (Bell, 1995) and personal relationships (Kinnell, 2006). Disabled clients report an increase in self esteem (Sanders, 2007). However there is insufficient research in relation to

clients. Because of the secrecy of the commercial sexual encounter there is no current way for client perspectives to contribute to the discourse concerning the effects of these interactions. However, these participants **do** get a sense of satisfaction and achievement from their understanding of this aspect of the work, although not all are sure of the actual impact of their work. Having a sense that what one is doing is meaningful contributes to wellbeing (Prilleltenski & Prilleltenski, 2006). Developing an understanding of the meaning of a job is part of the socialisation and sense making process that goes with any employment. Sometimes the meaning of work is widely understood and part of popular discourse; for others, particularly stigmatised occupations, the meaning is confined to a particular occupational group and may conflict with popular understandings (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999).

One popular understanding of sex work is that it is done "for the money" and that somehow the relationship between sex workers and money is different to how people in other occupations relate to money (Weldon, 2006). Sex workers frequently explain their involvement in the sex industry as a means to get money for a useful purpose. This talk may be an attempt on get others to understand why one would do such a job; most people can relate easily to the notion of doing an undesirable or onerous activity because it pays well (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). It is not uncommon for researchers to ask questions about the money earned from sex work (Weldon, 2006). There seems to be a need, both in the literature and in popular discourse, to explain and justify sex workers' use of money. I argue that only women who are mothers and people working in stigmatised occupation are placed in a position of needing to justify why they work for money and explain what they do with it. For mothers who are sex workers, this justification could be a device to explain that although they are sex workers they are also good parents because the money is spent on their children.

According to my participants who were currently working, it is still possible to earn more than the average weekly wage in a day's work just as it is equally possible to earn nothing. For sex workers the relationship with money may be particularly salient. There are few other situations where one has such swift positive financial reinforcement. One can go to work and get paid and go and pay bills or buy goods immediately (Weldon, 2006). However, income is not guaranteed. Plumridge (2001) found that although sex workers stated the money was one of the positive aspects of the job, talk about high earnings did not match the reality. The uncertainty of income also creates a large amount of stress (Jackson et al., 2007).

Unpredictability of income is balanced by the culture of sex work. As Chloe said, she enjoys going to work even if she doesn't earn money. In part she is going to work for the company of other women; this is not uncommon. Plumridge (2001) noted that there was a "quasi-familial atmosphere" (p.205) in parlours and that the women enjoyed the camaraderie. The Abel (2007) study found that 42% of those surveyed stayed in the job because they enjoyed the company of

the other workers. For those who had left and returned to the industry, one fifth gave the social aspects of the work as a contributing factor in their return. Due to the stigmatisation of sex work and the close interactions with clients the social culture of the sex industry is not remarkable. Where there is a high level of personal interaction with the clients, workers are more likely to form functioning groups (Ashforth et al., 2007) and people in stigmatised occupations are more likely to form a strong and supportive work culture (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999).

In summary, these participants provide a number of justifications for doing sex work. Overall they find the job satisfying. For some, money is not seen as the primary consideration, this is discussed in more depth in the section that addresses the themes related to "Being". Some understand that the work may serve some social purpose that improves the lives of their clients and those connected with their clients. Continuing to work in a situation where the income is unreliable is understandable given the strength of the culture.

A place like home?

A theme apparent in the narratives is that the workplace situation is important to the participants. As the participants explained above, one source of job satisfaction is the work place culture. This section explores the participants' experiences of this. The participants have worked in a variety of venues. Casey has worked in parlours but currently works independently from home. Chloe and Mary have previously worked in parlours and escort agencies and now work in a small cooperative brothel; in this type of brothel each woman advertises for and manages her own clients and they share the cost of running the premises. Elizabeth worked for a brief time on the streets then on her return to the industry worked in a parlour. The remainder of the participants worked in parlours.

Most of the participants experienced the workplace positively; the exceptions were Casey, who did not engage with her co-workers and Laura, who describes much of her sex work experience in negative terms:

> Laura: 392: there was no support, it was also too bitchy, it was who is going to make the most tonight. 419: they were as troublesome as each other, like that wasn't really support, we were all working and when's the next party

In contrast, Nina and all the others describe the situation in more positive terms, the following extract is representative of how they understand the support they get from their peers:

> Nina: 378: everybody is there to help, everybody is there to look after everybody else, that they will help you. We are all there for the same reason doing the same thing.

In a thread that is linked to management of difficult clients, one way of looking after each other is to manage clients in a way that benefits everybody. The women share information about clients so that they are managed appropriately, this also enables them to choose which clients to

see. They understand that for the work to be least onerous a good match between worker and client is desirable:

> Mary: 761: we share information about the clients and pass ones on to each other that we think might suit our personality

Managers and receptionists are in control of the workplace and the support these people can give the workers has been mentioned in the section " Fumbling around in the dark". Not all managers were seen as positive; four of the participants specifically mentioned problems with management. Both Elizabeth and Casey had drawn attention to themselves; Elizabeth had been charged, but not convicted of soliciting and Casey had laid a complaint with police about an abusive client:

> Casey: 211: the parlour was completely unsupportive as well, and they had charged the guy, charged the guy by credit card and they never paid me the money and they just saw me as trouble

> Elizabeth: 566: it became difficult to stay in the place I worked in. 586: when people are bad news ... you don't want to be around it because it brings you down and reminds you

> Alice: 1035: j. is there a worst thing? a. some management

These three women, like most of the others, chose to work in venues that suited them and where they were treated well. Casey moved to another city and Alice left any parlour where she was uncomfortable with management policies. Elizabeth began a completely different job and continued to do a small amount of sex work secretly and Sue eventually left the sex industry. Sue worked in a small city with few options, she began as a sex worker, then worked for the same manager as a receptionist for less than a minimum wage; at the time of interview she had ceased doing reception work. Her anger at her boss and her distress was evident throughout the interview process. For safety reasons the details are not discussed here. Her sense of betrayal and pain is evident in her vivid description of what it felt like. She had felt cared for and nurtured by a boss who portrayed herself as caring and motherly and then terribly hurt by having her generosity and support abused. It was after this betrayal by her boss that she began to really hate sex work. These extracts describe how the experience was for her:

> Sue: 63: she used to refer to me like a daughter. Um, back in the day. 564: she was like my boss and my friend at the same. 89: I helped her out for ages and she shat on me, it was like dropping a baby from a ten story building

Interestingly, the two participants who viewed sex work in negative terms had restricted choices about where they worked. Laura needed to be in a venue where she could work and keep it a secret from her family and Sue saw herself as having few employment options. Other participants have had more options available to them, often including the knowledge that they could do other work if they chose to.

Having choice about hours and venue is a salient feature of the work for most of the participants. For the participants who have children in their care, the flexibility is a

considerable bonus. Being at work while the children are asleep means they do not miss out on time with them:

> Nina: 882: I enjoy working at night I'm a night creature, definitely flexibility of hours, .. by me working at night, it's only an hour or two then he's in bed, he's not missing out

> Alice: 14: I worked mostly in parlours, it suited me to work for other people on very specific days because I had children, I had another life, and, um, I knew where I'd be at certain times, 295: I would only go to certain parlours if I could work those 2 double shifts

Others use the flexibility and ability to pick and chose clients for different reasons:

> Vicky: 234: I did refuse some because I was too tired and I wouldn't have been able to give my best

> Sally: 154: If I don't feel like being nice to people I don't go to work. That's where it's the kind of job where you have the choice

A common thread throughout the narratives is enjoyment of other women's company. The 'backstage' of the sex industry is one of the few places that women congregate without the company of children or men. The following extracts explain:

> Elizabeth: 325: there were women there who were doing things like studying, furthering, mature women, yeah, that made it good, a set of friends, and I just think that I liked that network.

> Sally: 104: I've met some absolutely fabulous women. 101: yeah and hanging out with the girls, I've met some absolutely fabulous women over the years and very intelligent women

> Mary: 732: oh we love each other, we hate each other but we love each other,

> laughter

Mary's use of the emotive terms love and hate indicate the intensity or intimacy of the relationship between colleagues. This has a powerful effect. Zoe describes how it is for her:

> Zoe: 117: you can have such a good time sometimes that you really don't want to leave you know. Like I do and I have a week holiday and I go back there I'm so happy, I can't wait to go back there. Almost home again.

Zoe's use of the word home indicates the family nature of the backstage relationships. Throughout the interview process the social nature of the workplaces was apparent. In between clients and interviews we talked. This talk was not idle chatter; in addition to sharing stories about clients we talked about a whole variety of subjects. Punctuated by gales of laughter we discussed relationships, children, intimate areas of our bodies, sexual health, prejudice targeted at sex workers and women in general, and the current legal and economic climate. One noticeable feature was the lack of censorship; ideas and opinions were expressed freely and differences of opinion were allowed.

Discussion

The narratives reflect that most of the participants experience their work as enjoyable and they find their workplace supportive. The environment rather than the work itself is a main contributing factor to psychological well being (Rego & e Cunha, 2008). There is a relationship between workplace environment and subjective wellbeing. Working in a

supportive social environment is a contributing factor to wellbeing (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Prilleltenski & Prilleltenski, 2006) and people who are high in subjective wellbeing experience life and work as enjoyable and satisfying (Prilleltenski & Prilleltenski, 2006). From the extracts it is apparent that the participants usually work in environments that have factors that contribute to their overall wellbeing. These factors, and those less conducive to wellbeing, are discussed below.

Clearly, most of the participants enjoyed the social aspects of the workplace. The social aspect of the sex industry is given as one reason sex workers chose to stay in the industry or return there (Abel et al., 2007; Day & Ward, 2004a; Plumridge, 2001). Humour is a particularly salient feature of the social processes of collective sex work venues, in common with many other occupations, the use of humour helps creates in-group cohesion; it is used as a way of sharing information, categorising the clients and lessening the impact of potentially distressing stories (Sanders, 2004b). During this project, I observed a high level of personal disclosure that would be seen as risky in other settings. Taking risks, including disclosure, helps develop a high level of trust between people and increases group cohesion (Weber, Malhotra, & Murnighan, 2004). While this high level of group cohesion contributes to the wellbeing of the workers while they are in the industry it may also contribute to social isolation of sex workers. The sex industry may become the only place sex workers feel able to express themselves fully; this becomes a long term problem in relation to obtaining adequate social support after people move away from the industry (Day & Ward, 2004a).

Viewed alongside the narratives about problems with clients it seems that unsatisfactory or abusive management causes more problems for the workers than clients. Implicit in the narratives and in the stories that are shared between workers is the notion it is expected that some clients will cause problems and ways to deal with these are discussed frequently. There is less expectation of being abused by managers and less talk about how to deal with these situations, particularly if the manager is a woman. In this industry there is a complex relationship between managers and workers. The managers are often positioned as like family or friends of their staff, they often portray themselves as caring for the well being of the workers and use this familiarity to manipulate staff members to do tasks they might otherwise not undertake (Plumridge, 2001). This lack of distance is not remarkable; managerial distance is lessened by being in the same plane of stigma as the workers (Ashforth et al., 2007). If this works well, the environment is viewed as supportive. However, as evidenced by Sue's story, when things go wrong in this close relationship the worker feels abused and betrayed.

The positive features of sex work include choice of venue and flexibility of hours. Workers can choose which shifts they will do and in many venues are able to choose not to go to work if they don't wish to. Independent workers simply turn off their phone or schedule clients for

days when they do want to work (Perkins & Lovejoy, 2007). Choosing not to go to work is more difficult if the venue is short staffed and one attends because of an obligation to the boss or co-workers (Plumridge, 2001). For sex workers who are mothers the ability to work and spend adequate time with children is a main contributing factor to choosing sex work (Jackson et al., 2007). This flexibility enhances work life balance and reduces the likelihood of burnout (Sprinkle, 1997). In most geographical locations there is a choice of venues so if a worker is not comfortable in one place they can move to another. Although clearly not all workplaces provide optimal conditions for worker wellbeing, it is obvious that within the industry there is an understanding that sex work provides a good social atmosphere and greater flexibility than other occupations. It is unlikely that other work situations allow a staff member to not attend work because they simply do not feel like being nice to the clients that day. This element of choice is fully supported in Aotearoa/New Zealand Law; a worker is allowed to refuse to undertake a commercial sexual activity without giving any reason.

The two participants who expressed most negative views of their experiences were those that stayed working in less than ideal conditions because they felt they had no choice. Sex workers who have little choice or work in abusive conditions are those most likely to report the whole of their experience in negative terms. This is reflected in the literature; research that highlights negative experiences is drawn from populations where the workers are in abusive conditions or perceive themselves as having little choice about venue or involvement in the industry (Vanwesenbeeck, 2001). I argue that the conditions in which the work is conducted is a main factor that informs the workers' understanding of their experiences and thus their subjective wellbeing. One can undertake a stigmatised or onerous job without psychological harm if the environment around that work is understood to be sufficiently supportive. In the same manner that social support is a main contributing factor to overall wellbeing (R. M. Ryan & Deci, 2001); it is the environment rather than the work itself that is the main contributing factor to psychological wellbeing in relation to work (Rego & e Cunha, 2008).

Have it all balanced

While there is a sense of satisfaction from work and some find going to work enhances their wellbeing, a theme that emerged was that the work is understood to be mentally and physically tiring and that good self care strategies must be in place to cope with this. The theme "That's how women deal with it" relates to the client interaction and the self care strategies discussed in that section are quite likely to take place soon after an interaction. In contrast, this theme relates more to how the participants care for themselves outside of the workplace and are not related to particular incidents. This theme is also closely related to social support, a theme that is discussed under the superordinate theme of "Being". Therefore this section explores the general coping strategies of the participants that are not discussed elsewhere.

The following extracts are representative of how the participants understand the effects of their work:

> Nina: 647: I mean it's physically draining if anything

> Sally: 457: it takes me a long time to wind down I'm constantly thinking about it. When I didn't have to be an adult I could sleep whenever I wanted

> Mary: 1509: you know it doesn't matter if you have your barriers up, you are still giving of yourself and you need something to fill yourself back up again

Having an understanding of the effect of the work enables them to develop appropriate coping strategies. The industry can be a fast paced workplace and lifestyle, Elizabeth consciously slowed down the rest of her life to achieve balance:

> Elizabeth: 525: go for walks, nature, read a book, have a very gentle, …it was very, very important to have it all balanced, just slow actually, slower life in many respects.

In contrast to Elizabeth, who chose to spend much of her time with likeminded people, Chloe doesn't cultivate friendship within the sex industry; one of her ways of taking a break is to be with people who are not sex workers:

> Chloe: 464: I have many straight friends, I actually don't have many friends in the sex industry

A recurrent thread was that taking breaks away from the venue or the industry is understood to be vital to wellbeing. All the participants spoke of the need to have regular breaks:

> Sally: 433: get out of the building, especially if you stayed at the parlours, I've done my time in the parlours. You need to get out or you end up eating and sleeping and having sex.

> Elizabeth: 510: I stepped right out and travelled, I mostly, that's my way to step out but throughout, I'm thinking, I would work for three or four months over a period then take a break, um, but also mixing with people who were like minded

> Kathy: 331: I do take holidays, as I said I only work here

Mary, whose description implies that she feels emptied, uses time off to fill up again in a more spiritual sense and to change her thought processes about her involvement in sex work:

> Mary: 1047: I read my books, I read and read and soak up all that lovely knowledge and all those lovely words and all those powerful things, I affirm that we are all here for a purpose, it makes me believe that it's Ok because that is my purpose.

For years Casey spent most of her time doing sex work or associated activities, it was her whole life. Her understanding is that she missed out, however on her return to the industry she is more careful of her time and energy and does activities that are not connected with the sex industry:

> Casey: 730: on reflection there could have been more balance. 707: working can sometimes be too much of a good thing and you spend all your time working and that was my experience of, of working I, you know, didn't necessarily have a lot of balance. What I've got now is much more balanced….I feel that I just didn't have the normal teenage early twenties , when people go out and drink, you know, spend money and I didn't do the normal things and a lot of what I'm doing now is reclaiming the, you know, opportunity to do a whole range of things.

Viewed together, these extracts illustrate the participants understanding of importance of taking breaks from work to achieve work life balance and to counter any negative effects of doing sex work.

Discussion

Most of the participants have good self-care strategies and adequate work life balance. This aspect of self-care in relation to sex work has not been explored in any depth in the literature. However mainstream occupational literature strongly suggests that it is important to have balance to reduce stress (Collins & Long, 2003; O'Driscoll & Cooper, 2002). People in other human service occupations find balance by ensuring they take time out from work and engage in activities that they enjoy (Kendall-Tackett, 2003), practices that these participants clearly engage in. Participants in the Abel (2007) study of Aotearoa/New Zealand sex workers stressed the importance of having a work life balance and good self-care strategies to avoid burnout. Sprinkle (1997) put forth a variety of strategies to avoid burnout; many are similar to those these participants use, such as taking time out, having a good social network and doing lovely things.

Some of the participants chose to spend time outside of work with likeminded people, a coping strategy that is supported in the literature. Because of the specialised nature of the work it is important to spend time with others who understand, to have a safe place where one can be oneself, where there are common understandings and an acceptance of the occupation as normal (Ashforth et al., 2007). For some people time at work provides enough of this sort of support, others do most of their socialising with people in similar occupations (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Many sex workers seek out like-minded people to socialise with (Day & Ward, 2004a). While this has a positive effect in relation to wellbeing as a sex worker the effect is less positive in relation to being a social creature in the wider world, this may further marginalize the individual and may lead to a restricted social life. Day and Ward (2004a) found that after people had left the industry one of the most difficult matters was building an equally supportive social network that was unconnected with the industry.

Being a Sex Worker

The second superordinate theme that emerged is that of *being* a sex worker. This theme is related to the interplay between work and non-work worlds. This section explores the participants' understandings and experiences of being a sex worker in their wider social world. The theme 'doing sex work' is about the practicalities of sex work and is closely related to building and maintaining occupational identity. It seems that doing sex work is fairly straight forward and involves many standard practices and shared understandings. In presenting the analysis of that theme it was reasonably easy to draw out representative extracts. Being a sex worker in the wider social arena is more complex and this is reflected in the telling of these

stories. The diversity of experience and more complex nature of 'being' is reflected in the number of quotes used in this section.

Beginnings

A theme identified in the narratives is that the participants did not enter the sex industry without prior thought. Here I explore the participants' reasons for becoming a sex worker. The participants describe their thoughts about being a sex worker prior to their entry into sex work and what attracted them to this job.

A strong thread in the narratives was that understandings about what it meant to be a sex worker were developed many years before actual entry into the industry. Both Chloe and Sally had developed their beliefs before they entered their teens. Chloe's information came from books and Sally's from real life family stories:

> Chloe: 25: From a young age I had always had a fascination, from high school age I was reading books about prostitutes. 640: and nice to have found the good parts about it, the ones from New York who fly around the world

> Sally: 712: I had a dream about it, quite young, it runs in the family. 717: I used to hear the stories from my mum about her great Aunty and how her gentleman friend had to wait in the car and how they had to put her in a room because granny would not allow them to meet the black sheep of the family, but they remember sneaking and seeing her and she was dripping in gold and furs and diamond rings and this is going back to the thirties and forties and fifties. 734: I was curious about it

Like Chloe, Kathy developed her understanding from media and stereotyped images of the glamorous side of sex work:

> Kathy: 375: first of all I thought that all working ladies were like absolutely stunning and you know, like they all had like size 8 bodies and perfect breasts and perfect everything

These three extracts illustrate an understanding that sex work is a glamorous and lucrative career. By hearing real life stories Sally knew about not only the money making potential of sex work, but also that family ostracism might result from becoming a prostitute, although it seems that being the black sheep of the family might have been perceived as an interesting position rather than one to avoid. Overall, their accounts reflect an understanding that sex work is a positive work option. Nina also developed her beliefs about sex work as a young person, her family viewed it as a possible source of money; a viable option under some circumstances:

> Nina: 260: when I was a kid, I remember my mum saying that "if ever I was in financial strife I would not hesitate in selling my body", she always said that to me and I never had a problem

Other participants developed their beliefs and became interested in sex work during their adult years. For Alice, who started sex work at 34, it meant having sex with a variety of people:

> Alice: 29: The seed was sown when I was in my mid twenties, in the sixties, and I went to Amsterdam and I looked at those window girls, and I looked at them long and hard and I thought "I would like to do what you are doing", not to sit in the windows but I knew that they were having sex with people... as somebody who likes to have sex with different people, um, I think that was when I first started thinking.. "one day in my life that's what I'm going to do" (laughter)

Elizabeth had had watched people gather for meetings at resorts during her travels and thought that sex work would be like that, people simply meeting up for a pleasurable experience that was also work:

> Elizabeth: 737: t times I would think that it was like that occupation where people meet for pleasure

Viewed together it is apparent that these participants understood sex work in positive terms. In contrast Mary held a negative view of sex workers; she grew up in a socially isolated, very religious family and this heavily influenced her understandings. Her explanation indicates her deeply held belief about what sort of people do sex work:

> Mary: 302: I would never get involved in anything like that, how dreadful, I used to think "my god how could those people do that, what kind of women must they be?"

The experiences of initial entry into sex work are as diverse as the explanations given for seeing sex work as an option.   The following extracts illustrate the diversity of entry experience:

> Elizabeth: 9: my flatmate… and I was just hanging out with her and she was picked up by two... a father and his son-in-law and I went along for a ride to wait, and the father-in-law said did I want to give him a blow job and I scarcely (laughing) hesitated really .. I went OK… so for thirty dollars I crossed the divide into sex work

> Sally: 34: quite curious, a friend actually suggested it to me and I was actually offered quite a few jobs when I was younger

> Nina: 1: think it was more I wanted to try it to say I had done it.

Zoe did one job on impulse around age 13 and then started formal sex work later at age 18, in between times she worked casually and privately:

> Zoe: 4: Then again at 15, this old guy who used to sell pot to me and stuff, um he ended up becoming like a pimp to me

Most of the participants entered sex work to make money. Three had this as their only reason and for these participants the work had no meaning other than as a source of income. None of these expressed a positive view of the work before starting. One of these participants, Mary, has found alternative meanings to the work during her time in the sex industry. Their primary consideration was financing a particular purpose: drugs, family or party lifestyle. Sue started to "feed" her drug habit (16); in the following extracts the others explain what they thought:

> Mary: 287: I started because I thought I needed the money, I had a family to support at that stage, my husband had left, I had no money, I had no skills

> Laura: 8: the attraction of money, 19: This is easy, just lie on your back and think about the ironing

For several participants, the attraction of the work was related to their sexuality. Vicky had previous experience as a client and used sex work to explore her own sexuality. The others believed that they could do sex work easily because they enjoyed sex with a variety of people. They wanted to get paid for doing what they enjoyed:

> Chloe: 27: I was into screwing anyone and everyone. Um, yes, so I thought right, I can do this job. I didn't have great drug problems and need of money so that wasn't what made me need to do the job

> Kathy: 24: needed money and seeing the big flashing lights of the parlour, and I thought well you know, I'm sort of a nymphomaniac at heart anyway so I thought well why not get paid for it
>
> Alice: 35: I like to have sex with different people,
>
> Vicky: 60: that's how I got involved, just to have something varied and different because my sex life had been so boring. 68: I had a totally amazing experience with him (a male sex worker)

When Casey began sex work it was part of her long-term career plan. She had wanted to be a sex therapist from the time she learnt, before she was in her teens, that it was possible as a job:

> Casey: 107: no one is going to take me seriously as a sex therapist until I got some practical experience and I was really excited about getting in to it. It wasn't from a feeling about deficit or need or, it was a huge adventure

The accounts reflect the diversity of understandings about sex work and the variety of ways these participants made meaning of their entry into sex work. Interestingly, four of the participants articulated that they had developed their salient understanding of sex work in their early teens or earlier. Most of the participants knew people who had some involvement in the sex industry before they started. By viewing these extracts with other parts of the participants' narratives it is apparent that those who had a positive or neutral view of being a sex worker, prior to starting work, talked about the work positively and have less difficulty being open about their sex work in social settings.

Discussion

It is evident from the data that there is a strong relationship between routes into sex work, beliefs about sex work prior to entering the industry and how the participants cope with and understand the work once they are in the sex industry. Sex workers are often asked why they entered prostitution; routes into sex work are investigated in relation to social influences, poverty or pathology such as drug addiction or history of abuse. Implicit in these narratives and according to the literature, social networks or family are often the first source of introduction to the industry (Abel et al., 2007; Wahab, 2004). As with any decision making process, there are a multiplicity of influences on the decision to enter sex work. However, the cognitive processes that lead one to consider entering sex work and the influence of prior beliefs has not been explored in the literature. In addition to influencing career decisions, prior beliefs influence how an individual makes meaning of the work that they do and are a factor in the development of an occupational identity (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999).

Interestingly, some of the participants developed an interest in sex work prior to their teen years in much the same way as another individual may develop an interest in wanting to be a doctor, fire fighter, or nurse. It is not uncommon for people to develop career aspirations in their youth and often claim it is something they have always wanted to do (Moir & Abraham, 1996). Children frequently aspire to professions, such as athlete or model, where their body is the commodity (Bybee & Wells, 2006). An early desire to be a sex worker has been expressed in

some of the sex worker literature; for example Queen (1994) had ideas about being paid for sex in her preteen years. In common with some of the participants in this study, many of the participants in a recent Aotearoa/New Zealand study indicated that they became interested in sex work because it looked glamorous or exciting or because they wanted to explore their own sexuality (Abel et al., 2007).

Arguably, these participants had an idealised view of being a sex worker. From the narratives and much of the literature, it seems that these beliefs are likely to be idealised (Ros, Schwartz, & Surkiss, 1999) and do not usually include the mundane or dirty aspects of the work, nor do they include understanding about stigma attached to an occupation (Moir & Abraham, 1996). According to Day and Ward (2004a), women do enter the industry with some understanding that involvement will mean their character will be blemished; however they are not fully aware of the consequences of this in terms of the lived reality of being a target of stigma and prejudice.

When people enter an occupation they bring their understandings with them and during the work related socialisation process reconcile their preconceived ideas with the reality of the job. This can be a difficult process if they have negative understandings of the work and they lack the social support and "subcultural armour" to cope with negative stereotypes (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999, p. 426). This difficulty resonates through Mary's narrative. Interestingly, the participants who articulated positive or neutral views of sex work prior to their involvement are those that report the least problem with coping with stigma and their construction of a work and social identity.

Money is commonly understood to be the primary reason for entering the sex industry. Some of the participants in this study were in sex work just for the money and others had an equally strong, or stronger, alternative reason. Those in first group have had the most difficulty with the work; this is vividly apparent in the narratives and through this analysis and discussion. The notion that not having a secondary reason may be psychologically damaging is supported in other sex worker narratives. Queen (1997) states that one should never undertake sex work just for the money, no matter how lucrative the work may seem. The second group have less difficulty, they are more open about their work and mange their wellbeing effectively. Those who went into the business because they were in that milieu, curious or wanted the experience also don't find the work onerous. The notion that it is beneficial to have strong reasons, other than money, for entering sex work is supported in the literature. For example, it has been found that people who chose this work instead of equally well-paid employment thrive in the industry (Bernstein, 2007). Often these reasons are explained as secondary and as factors that maintain involvement in sex work (Mayhew & Mossman, 2007) and they frequently include descriptions of personal attributes that hint at pathology or deviance such as enjoyment of sex or "prior

identification with a 'deviant identity'" (Wahab, 2004, p. 147). They are positioned as factors that entrap women in the industry rather than being viewed as beneficial to the workers.

Several participants entered the sex industry because they perceived that their personal attributes matched the job requirements. Discussed in the section "It's a very special job", the attributes they identify include, enjoying sex, enjoying pampering men and liking caring for people. This is not unusual; Warr & Pyett (1999) cite women who entered the industry because of a perceived ability and pleasure in being sexy, enjoying sex and liking to please men. Some participants in Abel, Fitzgerald, & Brunton's (2007) study chose sex work because it fitted in with their personal attributes and skills. It is common to enter an occupation and construct occupational identity in terms of hereditary, trait type characteristics or personal attributes (Moir & Abraham, 1996). As Mills (2007) stated, nurses may say they were born to it and truck drivers may say they were "born with diesel fuel in their veins" (p.86).

The participants who drew on personal traits and beliefs in the course of talking about their sex work expressed the most satisfaction and enjoyment. The two who routinely faked their responses or refused to have any response had the most difficulty coping with the work. A relationship between personal traits and coping with emotionally demanding work is borne out in the literature. Even if work is experienced as emotionally demanding, workers who draw on their personal traits in an endeavour to be genuine with their clients are more likely to experience the work as meaningful and thus rewarding (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). When people fake their responses they experience a diminished sense of personal accomplishment and are more likely to see the work as unrewarding and emotionally exhausting; in addition they are more likely to objectify the clients and experience symptoms of burnout (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002).

By reading the extracts above and taking into account the other facets of these women's stories in conjunction with the extant literature, it is apparent that if money is not the only perceived benefit of sex work and personal attributes are drawn on then it is easier to cope with the work: It is described as satisfying, occupational identity is easier to create and sustain and stigma has less effect on the individuals.

When these extracts are viewed in context and in relation to the literature, there is an indication that sex workers' prior understanding of the occupation influences how the work is perceived and carried out once they do enter the industry. This is an aspect of the sex industry experience that has not been investigated in the literature. Examples of this relationship include the following: Alice understood sex work as enjoyable sex for money and describes her work as mostly involving sexual encounters that she enjoyed rather than any sort of social service or onerous task. Elizabeth thought sex work was like a nice social time, classified the client encounters as being about pleasure, and she describes most of her experience in the sex

industry in benign terms. Nina understood work as an acceptable way to earn money and is pragmatic about sex work, she enjoys it and has no intention of leaving in the short term, and for her it is a pleasant way to earn income that suits her better than other options. In contrast, Mary held a negative view of sex work and continually struggles with the moral dilemmas of doing sex work; she is clearly uncomfortable with being 'that kind of woman'. These examples illustrate the importance of prior understandings in relation to how sex workers manage their understanding of the work, the way they cope with stigma and their construction of occupational identity.

I am

A theme of self in relation to the work emerged strongly. The participants very much had "I am" as opposed to "I do" explanations as they described both doing sex work and the experience of being a sex worker. Although some used the common turn of phrase "you" it was evident that they were talking about themselves.

Some of the participants understand themselves to being a healer of some sort or a teacher. The following extracts are representative of this thread:

> Mary: 608: sacred temple… mother goddess… reserved only for special people. 1202: I am always the nurturer.
>
> Laura: 544: you are a psychiatrist
>
> Casey: 686: I am a sexual enhancer.
>
> Nina: 510: teacher. 103: therapist

The understandings described above are closely aligned to the concepts that Alice and Sally draw on to describe themselves; they draw on their understandings of cultural practices that are not part of our current popular culture here in Aotearoa:

> Alice: 855: we were the wise women and we were nurtured to that role
>
> Sally: 766: like the geisha thing you are half a wife, you are the wife of the night

Alice positions herself as a person who actively resists oppressive practises. In common with Mary, her occupational identity is very similar to her view of herself in her day-to-day life. While Mary nurtures friends and family, Alice works against male dominance and her other occupation is in the social services empowering women. For Alice being a sex worker is related to her notions of sexual freedom and an act of resistance to male domination:

> Alice: 863: being free sexually is one of the last bastions of male dominance.

In contrast, Laura and Mary clearly understand themselves as sex workers in harsh terms; they used blunt language to describe themselves. :

> Laura: 550: I class myself as just the fuck
>
> Mary: 1192: just, laughter, you're just a fuck to put it bluntly

"Fuck" is a harsh word, for most people, it is not generally associated with care or sensuality. Combined with "just" the act is belittled as of no importance and perhaps also isolated from

other parts of self. Use of the word to describe oneself implies that they see themselves as simply an object and that penis vaginal intercourse is all that the work is about

Mary had stark contradictions in her description of herself as a sex worker. She also described herself as a healer and nurturer; when asked about the contradiction she explained:

> Mary: 1193: j: you say two things, on the one hand you're just a fuck and on the other hand there is the spiritual
>
> m. yeah
>
> j: earth mother, goddess
>
> m: exactly
>
> j: it's a contradiction eh?
>
> m: yes it is, I think it depends on the clients too, which buzz I get from them.

Thus, Mary indicates that much of her identity is constructed in relation to her clients. Outside of work she sees herself as a healing, nurturing person and brings this aspect of herself into her work identity as much as possible, however this is disrupted when a client treats her as "just a fuck". Being a purely sexual object is not a part of her non-work social identity. When there is conflict between the two identities she experiences most discomfort with herself. On the other hand when she is able to draw on her usual construction of herself, she experiences her work as meaningful and satisfying.

From the participants narratives it seems that most have a stable occupational identity that is informed by personal processes, their understanding of themselves, and their role as women and as sex workers.

Discussion

Most of the participants displayed an understanding that being a sex worker is more than and different to being a sex object; this notion resounds through much of the literature (Lucas, 2005; Sanders, 2006). Viewed in conjunction with the extracts in the theme "Beginnings" it is apparent that the understanding of what it means to be a sex worker is developed after entry into the sex industry. The participants that describe themselves as healers or agents for social change also do this type of activity outside of the sex work arena. Their work and other activities are closely aligned.

All the participants except Sue clearly articulated how they saw themselves as sex workers and how the work had meaning for them. The meaning one gives to oneself in terms of occupational identity is important in relation to self worth, self esteem and job satisfaction, in addition it shapes how one represents the occupational identity to the rest of the world (Ashforth et al., 2007). If it is strong and includes positive concepts, the individual is more likely to be able to resist the effects of stigma (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). The participants who had a clearly defined positive occupational identity had less difficulty coping with the job than the two participants who displayed the starkest contradictions. In addition, those who had

the most positive identities were more likely to be open about their work and had the most social support.

I'm not that sort of person

A strong theme in the narratives was the awareness of sex worker stigma. The participants understand that they are represented through popular discourses in a variety of negative ways. They object strenuously to these representations. The reason the women agreed to participate in this project was so that they could contribute to alternative understandings of sex work. In this section their interpretation of popular discourses and resistance to these are explained.

Apparent in the narratives is the acute and relentless awareness of the stigma of being a sex worker. This extract illustrates this awareness:

> Elizabeth: 357: I felt you know, quite, quite, while I was very aware of the, you know… the counter gaze coming back, the very strong judgment coming back

Participants were very clear that common understandings did not reflect their experience:

> Elizabeth: 331: it was just so badly regarded and it just seemed to be in conflict with how I felt and how some of the women I worked with felt. It wasn't, it didn't seem to me to be their experience (laugh) of being down and out and so on.

As can be seen from the following extracts, participants commented on other people's moral judgments about their character or personality:

> Sally: 265: you are known as a slut and you get paid for it and it's your choice and they think they are all weak and you need help and it's not true, it's a strong woman to be in this industry

> Mary: 995: society says that there are that we steal other woman's men and that we have no conscience. 194: A lot of people think that you must be a low self esteem if you do that kind of job, you are just giving it to these men who don't even appreciate you, blah blah, blah, but I actually think that it's more the other way, I think you actually get more power for being able to do that, that they have to come to you and pay you money that they have earned.

> Kathy: 784: everyone's perception um is that all sex workers were sexually abused.

Chloe is worried about the belief that sex workers make lots of money:

> Chloe: 663: That's another thing that bothers me, that society thinks we are making a fortune, which years ago we were, there was a lot of money to be made

She explained that in addition to people in general thinking she is wealthy that it also has the effect of making her afraid that the tax department will not believe her when she declares her income.

The participants articulate the belief that with these sorts of concepts as knowledge, it is understandable that people feel sorry for sex workers, believe that it is a terrible sort of job and that there is something wrong with them for doing it. If people don't know the reality then they cannot be expected to be non-judgemental. The following extracts are representative of this thread:

> Elizabeth: 372: that idea that other women look down and feel very sorry that you would have to do such terrible things cos, it's a nonsense

> Mary: 979: they don't have the information, they don't have informed choice, it's just from what they are used to hearing and seeing.

While displaying some understanding of other people's ignorance there is also a tone of moral superiority for their understandings coming from experience of sex work:

> Elizabeth: 353: I felt so superior actually,
>
> j. superior to who?
>
> e. to, I am a feminist (laughter), but superior to other women, I felt sorry for the poor bastards who hadn't had the insight into this area, …I felt that I could really, um, hold my ground and thought you'll never know, you just do not know,… I think, um and I feel um, much better, happier, stronger for that knowledge

For Alice and Elizabeth efforts by media and some sex workers to sanitise the industry, or to encourage alternative understanding, by saying that most clients don't want sex or focusing on the therapeutic relationship means that the sex part is made dirty instead of accepting that it is a good part of the package:

> Alice: 907: so that's what people think, is that to make it sound better than, you know, having sex, because that's dirty or whatever they think it is

To avoid being judged or feeling subjected to the judgemental gaze, most of the participants were very careful about disclosing their status. Laura worked in complete secrecy. A common thread was that if they felt they would be accepted for who they were and the job they did there would be no need for secrecy. The following excerpt is representative of how some of the participants understood the need for secrecy:

> Laura: 256: if I was more open to everybody and I felt like people would accept me for it, it would be fine, but I was hiding

Several participants implied or spoke of attempts to placate other people in a way which silences the individual and effectively internalises the stigma. The following extract explains how Alice thinks this works:

> Alice: 640: I think that a lot of them would feel better about what they do, if, ah, society recognized what they do and takes it in their stride um, but I think that they often feel that they have to make up that they are not enjoying it to appease other people, i.e. partners, um, anybody else who may know that they are working, which in fact has the opposite effect, so those people start to feel like, "oh dear I don't want to do this

A thread in the narratives was that these women actively work to resist the stereotypes. Clients are a common target for this resistance. Not only do the participants educate the clients about sexual or social matters they also work to change clients' perception of sex work and workers. Elizabeth let her clients know about the need for law change:

> Elizabeth: 606: I remember really wanting to speak my mind, you know that they had all that legal safety that we didn't have and I used to solicit by saying that it was against the law for me to solicit, say very sweetly that it was against the law for me to solicit and wasn't that unfair (laugh)

While careful about the extent of personal disclosure, sometimes this is done so that the client becomes aware that the worker is not "just" a prostitute, they want the client to know about aspects of their life that contradict dominant stereotypes of sex workers. In an effort to change client perceptions, they let the clients know about other aspects of their lives such as higher

education and qualifications, volunteer or community work, recreational interests and family matters. There is a balancing act between keeping the client happy, having boundaries and letting the client know that the worker is more than a sex object:

> Mary: 778: I have to let them know that I'm not just a piece of meat. 783: I want them to know that not all working girls are like what has been portrayed. I want them to see the nicer side. 822: if they go away happy, might change their perception. 914: I want to change that perception

Another site of resistance is family. Sally routinely challenges family members about their stereotypical beliefs about sex workers and encourages them to pass on new and correct information about the sex industry whenever they can in their social worlds:

> Sally: 974: I've sort of told them bits and pieces and it's sort of opened their eyes

> Casey: 359: With my mother I showed up in the suit, and my cell phone and my flash car and said, "This is what I do" and you know "and I love it". And that was that.

Sometimes resistance and education are done with good humour and a sense of glee at getting reactions from other people:

> Chloe: 465: I was a the pub recently, I was playing pokies, I've said it to two guys recently, tart, I quite like that word, tart. I actually quite like telling people that I do that, I quite like seeing their reactions

> Kathy: 560: I walk with that pride and I say, I may go, you know, a people think I shouldn't be doing it so, I'm not ashamed of what I do so why hide it, if I'm ashamed of doing it I shouldn't be doing it

Viewed together these extracts illustrate participants' understandings of stigma and stereotypes and the extent of their resistance in a variety of locations.

Discussion

Despite reporting good coping skills and having a sense in pride in their work, all the participants talked about stigma and stereotypes in a way that indicated that how others represent them is a major concern. When this theme is read in context it is apparent that this affects all areas of their lives and how they undertake their work. This accords with much of the previously discussed literature. People in stigmatised occupations are acutely aware of stereotypes, stigma and misunderstanding about their work and engage in a variety of tactics to counter these (Shih, 2004). Although much psychological research indicates that membership of a stigmatised group leads to poor mental and physical health outcomes, this is not always the case. Many people live with stigma and thrive because they have developed good coping skills (C. T. Miller & Kaiser, 2001). Individuals learn how to cope with particular negative experiences over time, by trial and error or by learning from other people's experiences (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Not all of the participants feel the effects of stigma to the same extent, however. From the narratives it is apparent that most of the participants have found effective ways to cope with the stigma and stereotypes in a manner that is best suited to their situation and beliefs about the work.

Discounting outsider view points to make them less valid or important is a common tactic used by people in stigmatised groups (Chapkis, 1997). Although this is often done by overt condemnation of the outsiders, this is not apparent in these narratives; the participants clearly attribute the erroneous views of outsiders to ignorance. There is a tone of moral superiority for having insider knowledge, which, according to Ashford et al. (2007) is not unusual. Interestingly, there was very little anger expressed in relation to the effects of stigma. The exceptions were Alice and Elizabeth who were explicitly angry about the effects of sanitising the industry by taking the sex out of sex work and concentrating on the other aspects of the job.

As discussed previously, one way to protect oneself against negative aspects of the job is to highlight the positive and more socially acceptable aspects (Day & Ward, 2004a). In relation to sex work, this is often done by shifting the focus from sex to therapy or social service. For two of the participants, this tactic goes too far when media, in an attempt to be supportive, portray the interaction as counselling or non sexual. It was apparent that this invisibilised, or made dirty, a part of the job that is important to some of these participants. Indeed, sex work is primarily about sex in whatever way that is understood and acted out. Reflected in some of the other narratives was the notion that the sex part of sex work must be accepted as part of the package. This resonates in literature that gives voice to sex workers (C. T. Miller, 2000). For stigma to reduce then the whole package needs to be understood and accepted.

According to Shih (2004), there are two types of stigma; public, or external, and self-stigma, or internal. Public stigma concerns judgements and negative stereotypes and self-stigma is the degree to which an individual internalises these within their self-identity. Most of the participants do not appear to have internalised the stigma; they have constructed positive occupational identities that they are comfortable with and are very clear that stereotypical representations of sex workers do not apply to them. The exception is Mary. Throughout her narratives are indications of internalised struggles with the stigma of the work that fits in with her own moral understanding of casual sex and sex for money and her belief in positive aspects of the work. Having these contradictory understandings and living with this dilemma is not unusual for sex workers (Day & Ward, 2004a). She is continually restructuring her self-concept of being a sex worker. Much of her day-to-day struggle is to discount the devalued aspects of her job by replacing these with notions about the valued aspects of her work so that she can restructure her occupational identity. This problem solving coping strategy is a common response to being a stigmatised individual (C. T. Miller, 2000). If this strategy is successful then an individual will be able to gain self-esteem from the positive aspects of their work or identity and give little attention to any disadvantages or consequences of membership in the stigmatised group (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). According to Smart & Wagner, if this is not successful the cognitive processes involved can become a preoccupation that impairs

performance. In addition, stigma can become a chronic stressor that needs constant attention and leads to negative mental and physical health outcomes (Ashforth et al., 2007; Shih, 2004).

People in stigmatised occupations may attempt to separate themselves from their role by acting contrary to expectations both at work and outside of work, a tactic known as disconfirming (C. R. Kaiser & Miller, 2004). At work the disconfirmation is done by revealing aspects of one's private life or acting contrary to client expectations and outside of work this is done by revealing that one is a sex worker and presenting oneself as being contrary to the stereotype. Careful work disclosure as a tactic has been reported in other literature (S. Kaiser, 1987). Although fear of disclosure has been widely documented, the small acts of disclosure as activism have not been investigated in relation to sex workers (Stewart, 2006). Less verbalised but apparent through the narratives is that most of the participants are engaged in what Stewart terms one-on-one activism. This is the act of being honest about what one does. There are a number of different sites for this activism; day-to-day interactions with clients, the immediate social sphere of the individual and the wider community. Both Elizabeth and Alice are community workers in areas where destigmatising sex work is a part of their job descriptions. Chloe and Kathy articulated tales of dealing with potential prejudice and disconfirming stereotypes with a sense of humour. Nina, Zoe and Sally work hard to be seen as ordinary mothers and Mary keeps her clients aware that she is normal. All these tactics are usual for people in stigmatised groups.

Another tactic is to allow oneself to be silenced to avoid confrontation. Being silenced is not the same as being silent. Being silenced means that one cannot speak in a particular manner and must not mention certain subjects (Martinez, 2007). Allowing silence or disengaging from argument can be an effective coping mechanism that reduces stress (C. R. Kaiser & Miller, 2004). However there can be negative consequences. As Alice and other sex worker narratives explain, the individual starts to believe the other position which leads to negative feelings about the self for having engaged in sex work (S. Kaiser, 1987). In addition the individual is not given opportunity to educate the other person about the realities of the job. One may learn over time that it is wiser to keep quiet or to deal with prejudice indirectly, sometimes in a manner that the other person isn't aware that it is a challenge to their beliefs (C. R. Kaiser & Miller, 2004).

It's strengthened me

A very strong theme identified in the narratives is that doing sex work has had an effect on the participants' psychological wellbeing. This section explores the participants' understandings of how being a sex worker has affected them. The participants tell of how this spills over into their non-work life in mostly positive ways. With the exception of Laura, all participants understood that being a sex worker had resulted in positive personal growth.

Reflected in some of the narratives are beliefs that prior to starting sex work some women identified as low in self-esteem or felt that other aspects of their selves needed some improvement:

> Zoe: 597: and a lot of working ladies are low in self esteem when they start, and it takes a while to build up your self esteem level

While some such as Alice and Elizabeth see the benefits as building on existing personal attributes; others see themselves as moving from a place of being victims, or powerless, to becoming strong and assertive, not only in the workplace but also in other areas of their lives.

As discussed previously, learning assertiveness and communication skills are a part of learning how to do sex work and are supported by the culture of most sex industry venues. The following extract is illustrative of the thread running through many of the narratives in relation to becoming assertive:

> Mary: 694: I think at the start I did have that victim mentality because I was hurting so much and I felt so lost, and I just let them walk all over me. I thought that's what I had to do. I thought I had to let them do whatever they wanted
>
> j. do you know how it changed, dramatically or?
>
> m. I don't know, you think you're just, you just decide, … I'm not letting any person treat me like this ever again, whether it be a shop keeper or a person who is trying to sell me something I don't want, a friend taking advantage, a family member or someone who just really wants to push my buttons or you know, I just think I had enough

A conspicuous thread through this theme is that of sex work as having a strengthening effect.

The following extracts are representative of the meanings around strength:

> Nina: 672: if anything, it's strengthened me...I'm not going to be walked over by anyone, especially a man, I know what I want, where I'm going,
>
> Sally: 644: working in the industry has taught me so much about males and being a female and being a woman and having that power of actually, you know, you have got that power and so why not use it. 1009: I'm a lot more stronger and a lot more knowledgeable because if you can survive this job you can basically survive anything, because you have to have your wits about you anyway

The participants drew on other words and concepts to explain that sex work has resulted in personal growth. The following extracts provide examples of these:

> Alice: 88: I always felt that I grew a lot inside, doing sex work,
>
> Vicky: 426: it also gave me a better awareness of myself as a person
>
> Kathy: 542: it's been excellent for my self-esteem

As can be seen from these excerpts above, most of the participants attribute personal growth to doing sex work. In contrast, Laura understood that her self-esteem was lost by her involvement in the sex industry. Within her story it is obvious that she attributes much of the damage to her self-esteem to having to lie about her sex work and how she felt about herself as a liar, rather than the actual work itself:

> Laura: 53: you lose your self-esteem

She explained that it takes a while to build it up afterwards; she did this by taking pride in keeping to a budget, reducing her substance use and looking after her child.

During the interview process, in the milieu of group situations, there was a flow of bodies in various stages of street wear, undress and costume. The women critiqued each other and give praise. Advice about how to maximize "assets" and how to disguise less attractive parts was given freely. Clients give unsolicited praise. As the participants explained, being told that one is beautiful or desirable most days is gratifying. The following extract illustrates an understanding of the effects of this:

> Kathy: 550: going to work you just get you know you get told that, every single every hour you get told how sexy you are and how beautiful you are and you know and it's done oodles for my confidence

There is an understanding that difference is less important than in some other workplaces. As an older woman with a disability, Vicky found that the sex work experience was good for her self-image and confidence:

> Vicky: 258: And it was also as a woman being in the fifties of thinking that my body was good too. Like, you know, being positive about your body because you have to be positive about it to enjoy sex and sex work, yeah. And also for the fact that I also actually had a physical disability as well because of my leg being not normal to the other one but being able to overcome that as well. That was good…. my sexual self image was enhanced

Viewed together these extracts reveal that the attention given to the physical self has a positive effect for the participants. Clearly they do not see this as objectification of their bodies; compliments are understood to be genuine and are used to enhance the part of self esteem related to body image.

Apparent in the narratives is the belief that the sex industry is the site of another side of human existence that few outside the industry get to see. A common thread is that being able to see this other side of humanity is a valuable learning experience. The narratives tell stories of a broadening of knowledge and changes in depth of interaction with others:

> Sally: 645: I think that working in the industry has taught me so much about males and being a female and being a woman
>
> Nina: 712: I've learnt a lot more about men
>
> Kathy: 731: you lose that shallowness about you know, you do see the beauty in everyone, you look past things
>
> Zoe: 657: I've learnt how to be able to look at a person, I'm not saying that I know them, but I can look at a person
>
> Vicky: 168: it enabled me to see another slice of society

Nina attributes her increased knowledge of how other people think and feel to her increased care for and tolerance of others and a reduction in her impulsivity in social situations:

> Nina: 685: it's made me more in check of my emotions. 711: it's taught me to be sort of more nurturing and more caring

Not all the effects of knowing more about people are interpreted as are positive. The effect of seeing the few clients who are variously categorised by the participants as liars, deceitful, perverts, sick and freaks gives insight into the less pleasant side of humanity. Seeing this aspect of humanity is understood in negative terms. Sally says she has become almost

unshockable and nothing that anyone could do surprises her any more. She sees this change in her knowledge about the world as the only damaging aspect of sex work:

> Sally: 667: I would say that I would be damaged because nothing surprises me, nothing would shock me, I've seen and done things that you know most people wouldn't even think of. I accept that there are people out there that are quite sick puppies and they get off on doing this to people

Mary now looks at all men differently, she doesn't view them as potential money for herself as clients, rather it is about what sort of person they are: Are they deceitful predators or hiding an aspect of themselves? What are they really like? She's more suspicious and less trusting of men in general:

> Mary: 130: when I'm out and about and think "are they are client, would they be a client, is the potential there", because there are clients that I have seen that I would never in a million years think that they would be the type of person to do that…

Discussion

"Self esteem is a central aspect of psychological wellbeing" (Crocker & Quinn, 2000). Apparent in almost all of the narratives is the belief that engaging in sex work has enhanced the self-esteem of the participants. According to Crocker & Quinn, self-esteem is socially constructed; it is shaped by situations and the meanings of these. These meanings are informed by both personal understandings and collective representations of a situation. Within an occupational group, collective understandings about being in that occupational group are generally positive and in contrast to negative stereotypical understandings. One of the benefits of belonging to a stigmatised occupational group is the opportunity it affords for construction of a positive identity that might not be available to those in a non stigmatised situation (Shih, 2004). Viewed alongside the narratives in relation to building occupational identity it is vividly apparent that for these participants the construction of positive work identity contributes to overall social identity and self-esteem. When viewed together and in context it seems that there are multiple factors that contribute to the self-esteem and thus the psychological wellbeing of the participants. Perhaps reflecting a notion that there is little about being a sex worker that could contribute to positive personal growth, there is little literature available that address the factors that enhance the self-esteem of sex workers. Queen (1997) stated that the principal factors that differentiate those who live well as sex workers and experience no loss of self esteem from those that experience the work as damaging is that the former are often staunchly feminist, have enough information about sex and are sex-positive. This resonates through these narratives, those that thrive see the sex part of the job as positive, have gathered information about the practicalities of commercial sex and, although most don't identify as feminist, their talk reflects some feminist understandings of being in the world as women who are sex workers.

In addition to the factors discussed above, body image and general self concept has been found to be a predictor of self-esteem (Davison & McCabe, 2005). Women, more than men, have

concerns about how others evaluate their bodies and are also more likely to compare their bodies with others as a part of developing their body image (Davison & McCabe, 2005). Some literature strongly assets that engaging in sex work has the effect of making the individual see themselves as nothing more than an object (Dworkin, 1993; Farley, 2004b). Other literature indicates that this is not always the case (Bell, 1995; Chapkis, 1997). From the narratives in this study, it seems evident that sex work enhances ones' body image. In the industry there is a range of bodies amongst clients and workers. In the back stage arena there is sometimes a milieu of women in various stages of dress and undress, the workers often do "doubles", where there are two women in the room with one client (Chapkis, 1997). One cannot help but see other women's bodies (Dudash, 1997). In the backstage these are relaxed, at ease with themselves. Seeing and comparing bodies in this atmosphere has been described as an empowering and educational experience that reduces body shame (Dudash, 1997). During the course of conducting the interviews I met women of a whole variety of shapes and sizes and degrees of conventional attractiveness all of whom were accepted by the others. Supported by the literature, it seems that there is an acceptance of difference that is rare in the outside world (Spivey, 2005). From skinny to morbidly obese, there is a place for the beauty of every woman to be acknowledged both by fellow workers and clients. The experience can have a profound effect on body image (Dudash, 1997).

Sally expressed great pride in her survival and being able to thrive as a sex worker in what she describes as a cutthroat industry. It is not unusual for people with stigma to thrive and blossom because of difficulties in their work, personal lives or their stigmatised status. This is supported in the literature; according to Shih (2004) the processes that are necessary to cope with having a stigmatised identity can be strengthening. The creation of positive and at times oppositional identity involves noticing and giving heed to the positive aspects of the job and of the self (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Other sex workers also report that the lessons of coping with and resisting stigma have been character building (Day & Ward, 2004a).

Most participants articulated beliefs that their experience increased assertiveness, communication skills and general people work skills. As discussed previously, these are encouraged within the sex industry and learnt by experience and through the workplace socialisation process. Having these skills is clearly a source of strength and pride for these participants. Sex work itself is considered to be empowering, it is one place where women have more control over the sexual interaction than any other heterosexual interaction (Perkins, 1991). Learning to set sexual boundaries and developing sex related assertiveness skills is an important aspect of recovering from childhood sexual abuse (McGregor, 2008). The proportion of sex workers who report a history of childhood sexual abuse is a sizeable minority; around one third according to Potter, Martin, Romans, & Martin (1999). This is a similar to the prevalence rate found in the general female population (Anderson, Martin, Mullen, Romans, &

Herbison, 1993). Some abolitionist focused researchers involved with encouraging sex workers to leave the industry report very high rates of childhood abuse amongst sex workers (Ross et al., 2003). From these it could be assumed that sex workers who need most social assistance are likely to have a history of trauma. These differing statistics and the heterogeneity of sex workers need to be taken into account when addressing the psychosocial needs of sex workers.

From these narratives and the literature it is clear that many sex workers feel able to say no to sexual activities they are not willing to undertake if they are working in a supportive environment. Being in control of the commercial sex act is an important aspect of sex work as discussed in the section "You're the boss in the room". The right to refuse to undertake any unwanted commercial sexual activity is clearly supported within some sectors of the sex industry and now enshrined in Aotearoa/New Zealand Law (PLRC, 2008). This is one of the few places where the right to say no to any unwanted sexual activity without having to give a reason is firmly embedded in both the culture and the law.

Sexual abuse healing manuals position prostitution as an unhealthy re-enactment of sexual abuse and a dysfunctional effect of sexual abuse alongside alcoholism and self mutilation. They also state or imply that sex work needs to cease before one can heal from sexual abuse (Bass & Davis, 1991; McGregor, 2008). However it could also be argued, in the light of the literature and these narratives, that for those who are already engaged in sex work, the potential to access skills that are deemed necessary for healing from sexual abuse in a supportive environment should not be overlooked or dismissed as irrelevant. Clear boundaries and control of sexual acts during sex work needs to be taken into account when developing interventions for survivors of childhood sexual abuse who are also sex workers. I argue that this alternative understanding needs to be honoured when addressing the psychological wellbeing of sex workers who are recovering from the effects of sexual abuse. Sex work may not be as damaging as some literature discussed elsewhere suggests.

Apparent in some of the narratives is the belief that being in the sex industry provides a wider view of the world than one gets in usual everyday life. As can be seen from the extracts, this experience leads to an added depth to their perception of themselves and others: their eyes are opened and their reactions to other peoples' differences change; a phenomena that is supported in the literature (Farrenkopf, 2008; Lea, Auburn, & Kibblewhite, 1999). Additionally, it is probable that the experience of being accepted within the sex work forum provides a learning experience that leads to the ability to accept difference and deal well with other people.

On the other hand having this wider view of human behaviour was not consistently described as positive. Nothing shocks Sally, and Mary is now suspicious of the secret lives of men she sees. Having a changed world view is not uncommon for people who have close contact with victims of crime or the criminals, or others who embody the "darker" side of human life (Lea et al.,

1999). Some therapists who work with sex offenders report decreased trust, hypervigilance and that they see "potential abusers everywhere" (Farrenkopf, 2008; Lea et al., 1999). For example people who work with sex offenders are more vigilant around their own children and more suspicious of other people's motives.   However, it was found that around 17% do not experience negative effects from that type of work and some report positive effects. Like Nina, some therapists who work with offenders state that through that experience they have become more sensitive to the needs of others and have more empathy (Farrenkopf, 2008).   It seems that reaction to seeing the darker side of life is related to many factors including personal history, personality and resilience. Social factors that buffer the effects include a supportive work environment, having a safe place to discuss experiences and general social support (Farrenkopf, 2008; Lea et al., 1999). From the narratives it appears that most sex workers have the necessary work and social supports to buffer the negative effects of coming into contact with the darker side of humanity.

Out and proud?

During the interviews the participants spoke a great deal about disclosure. As discussed previously some of this relates to the extent of disclosure to clients; in this section I draw on their narratives to discuss the theme of disclosure outside of the sex industry.

Apparent in the narratives about being "out", is that the participants who are most at ease with being open about being sex workers are those who don't see anything wrong with the work and to not accept the stigma of being a sex worker. The following extracts explain:

> Alice: 177: I pretty much told everybody from day one, if they asked. Cos I never saw anything wrong with it,
>
> Kathy: 560: I walk with that pride and I say, I may go, you know, people think I shouldn't be doing it. I'm not ashamed of what I do so why hide it?
>
> Zoe: 173: my kids school knows, my mum knows, everybody I know knows

Interestingly, the participants who are "out" do not see themselves as targets of prejudice. They understand that they should be accepted for who they are and what they do to earn a living. They expect to be accepted, and they are. This extract is illustrative of how these participants describe their experience:

> Nina: 257: They all know, all my friends know, and no one has ever had a bad word to say to about it.

Being open is understood to be easier than making up stories or hiding.   Elizabeth has experienced both ways of dealing with being a sex worker:

> Elizabeth: 680: it was much easier to work out and proud. 772: it's really important that you can be out to people

Viewed cumulatively and in the context of their lives it seems that being open generates positive responses. These positive responses then give evidence that it is safe to talk about being a sex worker and this feeds back into the cycle of telling, expecting acceptance and

therefore receiving it. The participants who are open get more family support, more social support and have less conflict around their own feelings in relation to sex work; overall being out is seen as the easier option.

Casey and Vicky are selective about who they tell. For Vicky this was in part because she had a job in the health system and understood the need for discretion about all aspects of her private life. Like other aspects of her sexual identity, being a sex worker was irrelevant in many situations; if it was relevant she did not keep it a secret. Casey finds that clients are more accepting of her status than other women. For these two their selection depends on relevance of the situation and what sort of reaction they expect:

> Casey: 801: it's mostly women who react like that, clients, almost never do.

In contrast, Mary has evidence that people will not accept her as a sex worker, as this extract explains:

> Mary: 990: women that I grew up with, we shared everything together, our lives the birth of our kids, our children marriages and funerals, all sorts, and then when I told them, that was the end of it, I may as well have been a murderer, I may as well have been, I was just totally ostracised, they couldn't get their head around it, yet I was still the same person, nothing had changed except my occupation…and then I started to think that maybe they didn't care about me anyway, or they were totally scared of the whole idea of their friend that they used to think was such a nice person, was in fact not a nice person, is a hooker, "Oh my God", which is lower than filth to some people

This experience has resulted in Mary being secretive about her sex work around the people who's love and support she values most and doesn't want to lose; her extended family:

> Mary: 969: you need to be able to look at yourself and say this is who I am, I'm a prostitute and this is part of me, why do we try to hide it, why do we hide that part of ourselves, because society doesn't accept it and I think that while I've tried to hide it from certain people like my family, that's because they disapprove and I know what they would think if they found out, they would think the worst

Interestingly, she explains her secrecy in terms of protecting them rather than herself:

> Mary: 987: I'm not hiding it because I'm ashamed of it. I'm protecting them because I know what, how it's going to make them feel

Apparent in all the narratives was that lying is difficult. All the participants who talked about lying understood that it means one is ashamed of what one does:

> Mary: 993: if you are hiding something it means that it is wrong
>
> Kathy: 561: I'm not ashamed of what I do so why hide it
>
> Casey: 997: I don't find lying easy

By the telling of the lie the stigma of being a sex worker is made more real and compounded by the notion that one is a liar as well as a prostitute; it can become like a double shame that results in the self-hate evidenced in Laura's story. She explains how this was for her:

> Laura: 43: my family didn't know and it was like I was a second person. 110: I led two different lives, my family would have killed me if they had found out, because it was right on their own back yard. 254: I started hating myself, probably because I was lying. 396: the lying becomes a part of the problem, almost takes over everything

In addition, Laura attributes her increase in substance use at that time to leading a double life and discomfort with telling lies.

Elizabeth had two worlds at the beginning and at the last stages of her sex work career. Initially she was working in a "straight" job and moonlighting in a parlour, she explained her busy life and newfound wealth as having a rich boyfriend. She could not disclose her other employment in either work situation and found that difficult. Eventually she left her straight job and for many years in she was "out and proud". Later she moved to a social service role where she supports sex workers. During her transition out of the sex industry she continued to see clients in secret. Her experience has given her empathy for sex workers who are in a position where they must be secretive:

> Elizabeth: 153: I hated sort of constructing what I did at the time. 168: the two worlds are incompatible really. You know if you are doing two fulltime jobs. 667: It was really interesting from being a little bit, well very comfortable about working I had to go into the closeted underground, I was totally underground, I couldn't tell anyone I was working except the clients I was seeing, so that was really, I didn't, I couldn't tell anyone, I didn't tell anyone, so that was really hard. Actually I'm glad I knew that too (laugh)

Some of the participants represent the work that they do in different ways depending on the circumstances. They work out what sort of response they are likely to get and tailor their explanation accordingly. Casey, who was doing erotic massage at the time of the interview, frequently explained her work as massage therapy. Chloe, who sometimes calls herself a "tart", often explains the work in a way that makes it glamorous or non-sexual:

> Chloe: 455: I told the woman within the first two minutes that I was involved in the sex industry, I said I do cross dressing and stuff

Elizabeth told her mother that she was doing reception work and there was a possibility she might do topless massage, later when her mother had found out her reaction was that she was relieved that her daughter did not conform to stereotypes:

> Elizabeth: 257: I told mother and she said, "no honey, that would be shameful, that would be terrible, terrible" and she was quite indignant about it. (told mum she was a receptionist). 287: she was pleased that I wasn't into drugs

From these accounts it seems that how the participants represent themselves depends on a combination of their own feelings about being sex workers, their own ease with honesty or dishonesty and their understanding of how other people may react to knowing that they are sex workers.

Discussion

It is apparent in these narratives that concealment does not usually reflect the participants' beliefs about being a sex worker; rather, they are directly related to the stigma around prostitution. Throughout the literature it is apparent that most sex workers do not disclose their occupation freely. Most keep work and home separate. Keeping their worlds separate and concealing their occupation is a major concern for most sex workers and is often regarded by sex workers and theorists alike as the main source of stress for sex workers (Day & Ward, 2004; Sanders, 2004a). In common with other people in stigmatised occupations they are selective about who they disclose their occupation to and the extent of disclosure. They decide

how to disclose, may be vague about their work or withhold information about the particulars of the job they do (Ashforth et al., 2007). According to Ashford, and resonating in the narratives, tactics such as this are used to both avoid giving offence or otherwise upsetting other people and also as a protection against the negative views of outsiders.

Occupational stigma is a concealable stigma; it is not like having a visible deformity or different skin colour (Smart & Wegner, 2000). Therefore an individual can choose whether to reveal their status or not. This choice is usually made in relation to what the individual believes the consequences of disclosure will be and is made after beliefs about consequences are formed. Not revealing ones status avoids having to face prejudice however on the other hand it also precludes the possibility of receiving positive or neutral feedback (Shih, 2004), the individual does not get opportunity to gather evidence that some people might not be prejudiced (Smart & Wegner, 2000). As illustrated in the participants' narratives, and supported in the literature, some of these beliefs are informed by knowledge about the stereotypes and stigma around the occupation and others are learned from experience. Sharing stories about coming out, being caught and near misses are part of the socialisation process in the sex industry (Sanders, 2004b). From these sorts of tales, workers learn about possible reactions and how to manage risks of being exposed to stigma.

Having multiple identities to draw on has been positioned as healthy for people in stigmatised groups (Shih, 2004) and separation of work from non-work life as useful for people who do emotional labour (Hochschild, 2003). However, the construction of multiple identities to support a double life and lies often leads to a preoccupation with being found out and may result in obsessive thoughts and nightmares (Smart & Wegner, 2000). According to Smart & Wegner, this results in the individual having intrusive thoughts about their status and leads to impairment of general cognitive functioning; in other words, it interferes with everyday thought processes. As Laura said, "it takes over everything".

As discussed previously, sex workers who are open about their status have been positioned as a part of the exceptional privileged few (Farley, 2004b; Kramer, 2003). The participants in this study came from a variety of class backgrounds; class privilege does not seem to be related to openness about status. However, those who were most relaxed about being sex workers and most open about their status were those with the strongest family and social support as they understand it.

For these participants it appears that experience has had the greatest influence on their willingness to disclose. All are acutely aware of the stigmatised nature of sex work and sex workers and understand that there can be severe and negative consequences to being open just as they understand the difficulties of lying and keeping secrets. Interestingly, many of the participants are "out and proud", their openness is not about being defiant or oppositional,

rather, they seem to accept themselves and expect others to do the same. They are not apologetic about their sex work and refuse to take on the cloak of stigma. For these participants most reactions to their disclosure or openness have been positive or neutral. They are the participants who have the most family and social support. The benefits of this openness are supported in the literature in relation to sex workers and people in stigmatised groups.

Social support

Within the narratives a theme of needing quality social support as a sex worker emerged.

Most of the participants spend time with like-minded people where they do not have fear of prejudice and can get the support and friendships they need. The following extracts illustrate the participants' reasons for this:

> Elizabeth: 513: mixing with people who were like minded, um, and well sex workers actually, mixing with other sex workers was a way of ensuring that you didn't run into negative attitudes,

> Sally: 968: probably my working girl friends and they could sit there and they understand exactly what I mean and I say I'm sorry and they go, no, no, everybody deserves to have a bit of a boo haa

Even within the sex industry one can feel alone. Keeping the worlds separate and not expressing pleasure in the work are two dominant discourses within the industry and in popular conceptions about the sex industry. Both Alice and Vicky see their sex work as part of their sexuality and openly express enjoyment of the work. Vicky saw her sex work as a part of her lifestyle and sexuality and became part of a social group where alternative sexualities were welcomed. Much of her social world involved situations where (444) "there is an understanding of sexuality and sex". Alice had a different attitude to sex work and being sexual with her clients than most of her peers and often she felt isolated because of this. At a conference, she went to a workshop and met other sex workers who share the same understandings of sex work that she did:

> Alice: 116: and it really wasn't until I went to the L.A. symposium of the sex workers and went to a workshop with Annie Sprinkle called "sacred sex" and I thought I'm in a room with other people who feel the same way, or on a similar way or we are going down that path in sex work.. and it was very uplifting to know that

Together these extracts illustrate the importance of having a place where one feels comfortable, where there is no prejudice, there is an understanding of what sex work is about and where there are shared understandings about why and how one is doing sex work.

Most of the participants get their social support from friends and co-workers. Through some of the narratives it was mentioned that although friends or other people in their social world might hold stereotyped views of sex workers or prejudice, that these are not expressed to their face:

> Elizabeth: 516: I had friends too, regular friends who still friends today, so they stayed with me through that period and that was important, I didn't run into attitudes with friends, that were expressed to me at least, I didn't lose any friends

Alice speculated about what her friends might have thought of her becoming an escort:

> Alice: 651: my friends probably just thought, "strange thing to be doing, doesn't seem to be doing any harm to her", they just took it in their stride

In contrast, as described previously, Mary lost her social support network and best friends when she told them she had begun sex work. She was devastated by this and the experience has contributed to her isolation and lack of support for her as a sex worker, mother and grandmother. In her narrative she talks about needing to be strong for her family and that she feels a huge burden of responsibility that she has to deal with alone, she explains how it felt at the time:

> Mary: 922: I think I was really upset and lonely, I felt betrayed, I felt abandoned, yet I was used to that, life has been a series of abandonments of one kind or another

The participants described varying degrees of support and understanding within their families. For Nina and Sue both families provide the type of support that one could expect any well-functioning family to provide for family members. Within these families there is an understanding of the sex industry. Nina's mother is pragmatic about sex work and her brother uses commercial sexual services from time to time. Sue's father has been a driver in the sex industry and has an in depth understanding of her situation. In their narratives they attribute this depth of support to the fact that in the family there is shared understanding of the realities of sex work:

> Sue: 138: j. just who cares about you?
>
> s. my Dad and my mate Ron, he's the guy I had the parlour with. We broke up but now we are really, really good friends and stuff, and you know, and he's my daughter's uncle and he helps me out heaps. He helps me out heaps and heaps. And my aunty, she was my support person during my pregnancy and she's my baby's nana now

Nina also gets solid support from her family:

> Nina: 155: They are really good, my mum looks after my son half the week, my brother who lives here with me looks after him as well

Casey had believed that her parents were supportive but, when she really needed them after an assault and theft at work, she found this was not the case. Her understanding of her father's lack of support is that he thought more about what other people might think than about what his daughter needed:

> Casey: 191: I asked my father to come in and support me that night that it happened and he said "What is Chris going to think?" Which is my ex partner. So I didn't feel so supported… I didn't think he was so bothered about me working but he was concerned about what Chris would think, it's like "it's not about Chris".

While some of the participants don't disclose to social services, the family doctor or institutions, others do. Their overall understanding of their experience is that being a sex worker has not been an issue. Zoe is open about her work to everyone and has experienced no prejudice. Alice received good support from her children's school when her daughter was harassed about her mother being a sex worker. Nina had some involvement with the social welfare system; the social workers were aware that she was a sex worker and although Nina

stated that they didn't seem to have a problem with that, they misunderstood how sex work is for her:

> Nina: 310: but they have never had a problem with me working, you know cos I think they see it as she's doing the lowest of lows to provide for her son, you know what I mean

For Nina this meant that she avoided the subject of work or any issues related to that part of her life.

Some have chosen not to have ongoing monogamous intimate relationships while being a sex worker. It was apparent in some of the narratives that it is difficult to have a relationship while being a sex worker. Difficulties in relationships are attributed to the partner's understanding of sex work:

> Sally: 817: I found that very hard and it's best if you don't have a relationship. Even when they say that oh, we don't mind you doing it, at the end of the day the first thing they throw in your face is your work, that you have had so many cocks in you and it can be quite nasty

For some, the partner treats the women like they are still at work even in non-work time. Alice described how a partner refused to see her non-work imperfections which meant he wasn't supportive when she needed him and Mary told of a partner who was really using her for free sex:

> Mary: 459: I certainly wouldn't have a man while I was working

Discussion

Viewed together the narratives indicate that having supportive people who understand about being a sex worker is important to the participants. As discussed previously, the sex industry arena generally provides good support. Other social supports are drawn from a variety of places. Having social support from people who understand the nature of the work is important for people in stigmatised or difficult occupations (Ashforth et al., 2007; Farrenkopf, 2008). There are few places where sex work is valued or able to be celebrated. Sex workers and former sex workers find that they have a depth of understanding, sharing and support with a very small and select group of people (Day & Ward, 2004a).

One such place of finding social support is in the informal or formal "alternative sexuality" or "sex-positive" community. Being a part of the first group may provide a forum for a shared sense of stigma in relation to sexuality and similar experiences of oppressive practices. Being a part of the second group provides a safe place for full understanding of and celebration of diverse experiences of sexual expression. Queen (1997) describes this as a place where she could maintain her sexual integrity, challenge gender inequality and find mentors to guide her through her "own confusion about sex and feminism" (p.128). Having a place where one can be comfortable, where other people have similar stigma can be an empowering experience (Shih, 2004). While the backstage arena of the sex industry can provide similar experiences, as discussed earlier, the narratives of Vicky and Alice highlight the value of being part of a sex-

positive community that is not necessarily connected tightly to the mainstream sex industry. Perhaps if Mary had access to such a community she would experience less dissonance and distress about being a sex worker.

In the narratives there was little specific talk about helping professionals and sex workers. As illustrated by Nina's account, the more subtle "non-judgemental" reactions do have an effect. It is apparent from Nina's comment that underlying attitudes to sex work are obvious even if these are contrary to what the helping professional says. In this instance the unspoken attitude of the social worker meant that Nina was silenced, she could not talk about her work nor could she access work related services such as subsidised childcare. Many sex workers do not disclose their occupation to helping professionals because of fear of a negative reaction (Jackson et al., 2007; Plumridge & Abel, 2001). There is a general reluctance for helping professionals to actively engage in matters around sex work with their clients (Herman, 2003). Documented reactions range from refusal to provide services to withholding of services until the worker ceases sex work (Day & Ward, 2004a; Ross et al., 2003). Trauma therapist Herman teaches other therapists that even experienced clinicians may experience feelings of dread, disgust or fascination when faced with a prostitute. Plumridge and Abel (2001) suggest that sex workers should disclose their occupation to enable appropriate services or treatments to be offered. This begs a number of questions: In what way will services differ between a sex worker and any other person in a similar situation? If the sex worker is positioned as doing the lowest of the low how differently will treatment options be offered? Will professional support be offered on condition that the client ceases sex work, as recommended in some of the literature (Bass & Davis, 1991; Ross et al., 2003)?

Apparent in the narratives is the experience of not being valued as much as non sex workers. People say they don't have a problem with the individual being a sex worker but when it comes down to acting in a supportive manner that shows how much one is valued, it is a different story. Nina was silenced, her job was devalued, Zoe was verbally abused, her work was devalued and Casey was left to fend for herself, she was given less value than her former partner. People with stigma are given a different quality of support than others; this is often not experienced as direct discrimination (Link & Phelan, 2001). In part this is because the stigmatised individual and thus their needs are devalued. There is a contrast between what people say in terms of being non judgemental, how attitudes are expressed and how they actually act. The contrast between what people say and what they do is also apparent in the thread of the effects of being a sex worker in a relationship. Partners may say they are supportive but when there is conflict the work is used as an excuse to belittle or abuse the sex worker.

Many sex workers decide not to have personal long-term heterosexual sexual relationships. Starting a relationship is often given as a reason for stopping or taking a break from sex work (Abel et al., 2007). Men often cannot understand the difference between work and non-work sex and frequently male partners expect the sex workers to be always sexually available (Pyett & Warr, 1999) or, as reflected in Alice's story, to be always in perfect work persona. Some see the men as wanting the benefit of the money but putting the blame for everything that is wrong with the relationship on the woman being a sex worker (Sanders, 2004a). "Involvement in sex work provoked resentment, jealousy, disapproval and disrespect" in the partners of some sex workers (Warr & P. Pyett, 1999, p.300). This is alluded to in Sally's description of how her previous partners have responded during conflict. Interestingly, only one of the participants named a primary relationship partner as a source of social support. Overall these narratives and the literature support the notion that one option in relation to psychological self-care is to avoid the difficulties described above by not having a relationship.

Overall it seems that these participants generally enjoy good social support and do have people outside the sex industry who value them and do not cover them with a cloak of stigma that is noticeable by the participants. Those who have the opportunity to provide support for sex workers need to note that an understanding of the lived experience of sex work is vital to providing appropriate support and that social supports that the sex workers have in place may be sufficient for their wellbeing.

Letting go is hard

Leaving the sex industry is sometimes a process: it isn't as simple as handing in one's resignation and moving on to the next job. In addition to practical considerations; being a sex worker is a significant part of some participants' identities. To leave the sex industry requires either letting go of this identity or finding another way to express that part. Most of the participants have moved in and out of sex work. Alice was the only participant who took on sex work in much the same way as any other job; she worked continuously for 23 years with a two week holiday every Christmas. The following extracts and contextual details illustrate the experiences of some of the other participants.

Chloe has moved in and out of the sex industry a number of times, the first time she left because she was in love and didn't want to be having sex with anyone other than her partner. Then financial circumstances drove her back to sex work. Most recently she has developed an illness that means she is unlikely to be able to work regular fulltime hours.

> Chloe: 170: I got done by WINZ for living in a marriage type relationship and they cut my benefit off. He was a prick, he was … a real bludger, he hardly worked, I think I had jobs at restaurants and all that sort of carry on and I had no income. 198: I studied and then I did all that, and I worked for three months doing investigations and I got sick. I got a neurological disorder so then I had nine months at home, I was very, very sick and couldn't really walk and had to go in the wheelchair to the mall and all sorts of shit

> and it was really, really horrible. And I had no income. Throughout my life I have always had a job, always earned money and so I thought fuck it I might go back to work

Mary leaves when the pressures of her moral dilemma become overwhelming and returns when her family needs her financial support. Mary could choose to do nursing but to earn the equivalent amount of money she would lose precious time with her grandchildren:

> Mary: 333: I left it for quite a few years after that I didn't know if it was a suitable thing to be doing. 320: yeah, I tried, I think I tried for so long to try and have a normal life and tried not to have to do that and every time I got short of money

For Chloe and Mary, working in a small cooperative brothel is their best option. At the time of interviews neither was considering leaving again in the near future.

Elizabeth started sex work while she was in another fulltime job; she first left because the police threatened her and because it became too difficult to do both jobs. Later, shortly after her return to the sex industry she left that "straight" job to become a fulltime sex worker:

> Elizabeth: 32: Someone at work told me that our workplace had been contacted and tipped off that one of their staff members was a prostitute. So that was my first attempt and I stopped at that point and didn't work again, until about 8 years later. 38: I was curious, hired as receptionist. 76: she was short staffed and then I felt a bit kind of, like I should really, um pull my weight (laughter) so I kind of crossed over and had this dual period of being a masseuse sex worker and a receptionist and then I decided that I would quit that (straight) work and go full on and become a sex worker.

Laura initially left sex work because her substance abuse, which she attributed to sex work, had become dangerous but returned later for financial reasons:

> Laura: 46: I went back to chef-ing and for my son. But there was a stage where, like, I couldn't make ends meet on the benefit so I went back to it because, I didn't stay long because I didn't enjoy it. 55: I think I took control, I just quit. I didn't want to go there in life. 426: I woke up one day and said this isn't me.

Kathy only works in a city well away from where her children live. She has a small business that she runs when she is in the same town as her children. She has no plans to stop sex work altogether:

> Kathy: 768: I spose I'll go in and out you know, I enjoy it and every now and again I need it, you know I do need it, to give me a lift

Zoe also sees sex work as intermittent employment:

> Zoe: 211: I started three times with breaks in between. 485: I don't know where it will take me, I don't know it will be forever, I think I'll have breaks in between

Viewed together these accounts illustrate the variety of reasons for leaving and re entering the sex industry, for some it is mostly about needing a job and for a variety of reasons sex work is the best option. For others sex work is a preferred work option but they feel they need to leave because of the stigma attached to being a sex worker.

Sally was considering leaving the sex industry at the time of the interviews because she doesn't think it is an appropriate job for her to be doing as her child gets older; she was only working when she needed to. Her main reason for leaving is because of the stigmatised nature of the work, she "can't go anywhere without being recognised" (54) and wants to be able to bring up her child in private. This relates to the theme "I'm not that sort of person" where she said she is

known as a slut and doesn't want this attitude about her to affect her son. An additional concern is that it is difficult to get good quality childcare for the hours that she works. She said she will miss "hanging out with the girls" (101), the money and the sex. In opposition to her desire to leave because of stigma there is considerable pressure for her to stay. Because of her wide range of experience and skills her boss wants her to find or train a replacement before she leaves:

> Sally: 38: I work just on and off whenever I need the money, for bills and stuff, weaning myself out of the industry and out of the lifestyle, it's very hard to get out. 46: well it's sort of like a catch 22, because you basically have to swindle your way out of it or find a protégée to take your place so you can get out without that sort of, I don't know how to put it, disappointment

Elizabeth also stopped sex work because of the stigma. Both participants did not want to stop; they believed it was not possible to continue work and to do their other tasks in the world without being judged. In both narratives it is clear that their main concern is for other people, for Sally it is her son and for Elizabeth it was so she could have mainstream credibility in her political work.

 Four of the participants who no longer work in the sex industry continue to have regular contact with sex workers and/or other people in the sex-positive or alternative sexuality community. Alice and Elizabeth work in sex worker support services, Vicky is available to do sex worker peer education and is part of an alternative sexuality group and Laura has recently become part of an alternative sexuality community group.

The next extract is the final one for this chapter and is Elizabeth's explanation of how her last day was for her:

> Elizabeth: 664: it was time to get out and really work hard for changing things from the outside, and I just felt like I was a hazard, actually (laugh) and I didn't want to leave and I continued to work very quietly. 694: I was really upset on the final day I really did know that that was it would be my last time I would work, I did a little weep of nostalgia

Discussion

It is widely acknowledged in the literature that sex workers come and go from the industry and that leaving the industry is not usually something that happens easily or quickly (Abel et al., 2007; Mayhew & Mossman, 2007). Sanders (2007) reports the process as long and complex, with a number of returns to sex work before an individual finally settles into a different type of work. As evidenced in these narratives and in the literature, reasons for stopping sex work are as varied as the reasons for starting. According to Sanders, reasons for indoor sex workers stopping work include starting a new relationship, age and wanting financial stability such as a regular wage and benefits such as pension funds. An additional motivating factor to leave the sex industry is the stigma attached to sex work (Day & Ward, 2004a; Pitt, 2008). Alice and Vicky left for practical reasons in relation to age. Laura because she hated the work and living a lie and the consequences of this, Sue left because she hated the work and wasn't making a living from it.

Here it is interesting to note that while there are numerous reports that examine why people enter the sex industry there are few that ask why people would want to leave. Some studies ask if sex workers want to leave the industry or how long they plan to stay in the industry. It seems that there is an assumption that all sex workers wish to leave the industry. I argue that this reflects notions that sex work is an undesirable job and no sensible woman would wish to stay in that sort of work. However this notion is contradicted in these narratives and in much of the literature (Brewis & Linstead, 2000b; Mayhew & Mossman, 2007; Murphy & Venkatesh, 2006). Many do not want to leave sex work altogether; some want to keep sex work as their main job and others as wish to move in and out of the industry as it suits.

Stigma, prejudice and the damage of this has been cited as a contributing factor in deciding to leave the sex industry (Pitt, 2008). Some who would prefer to work in the sex industry choose not to because experience of discrimination has proven that the social cost and stress of this is too high, as a participant in another study said, "I don't want to have the mental scars from doing a job that I liked" (Day & Ward 2004, p.169). Elizabeth stopped sex work because she knew she would be made ineffective in her new job if it was known she was a sex worker; in short because of the stigma and prejudice. Sally is planning to leave for this reason, although there are issues around child-care her main reason for leaving is that she does not want her son to have a mother who is widely recognised and "known as a slut".

The employment process of sex work is different to other jobs. One can visit a parlour or other service, get work on the next shift and go home and pay the bills the next day (Weldon, 2006), one can buy a cell phone, advertise in a newspaper and start business within 24 hours with few overheads. There is no long interview process, one doesn't have to have a CV prepared and there is no shortage of employers and customers. One doesn't need previous experience, a stable work record or references. It's fast and easy to get into.

Becoming employed in the "straight" world is more difficult. The skills learnt through sex work cannot be attributed to that, a stable work record of some sort is usually required and former sex workers worry about how they would fit into a 'normal' work environment and worry about how to explain what other work they have done (Day & Ward, 2004). Other workplaces do not have the same sense of community and it has been reported that when people in the new workplace find out one has been a sex worker there can be overt prejudice from other women and that the men become "creepy" (Pitt, 2008, p. 7). It is far easier, and more comfortable, especially if there are financial pressures, to return to what one knows (Sanders, 2007).

While there are many individuals who have not been sex workers who advocate for sex workers, there are also a number who are or have been sex workers but are unable to be open about that. They have learned that the cost of being "out" is too high; their contributions to

debates are belittled, their morals are questioned and as an out sex worker one becomes more vulnerable to rape and other assaults (Chancer, 1993; Chapkis, 1997; Day & Ward, 2004). It is interesting that Elizabeth need to leave sex work to be able to fight for sex worker rights; I posit that if an individual in another stigmatised group was fighting for the rights of their peers it would be acceptable for them to openly be a member of that group, in all probability membership would be expected of them. It is not like that for sex workers.

As discussed previously, there are many factors aside from the income that sustain involvement in the sex industry and influence decisions to return to sex work after attempting other options (Brewis & Linstead, 2000b; Day & Ward, 2004a) . Guidelines for interventions to support people to leave the sex industry acknowledge that some people thrive in the industry and do not wish to leave. For those who do, it is recommended that there are good social supports and reasonable employment options available (Mayhew & Mossman, 2007). In relation to offering employment options, it needs to be remembered that there is nothing comparable between working in the sex industry and working in a factory, making handcrafts or learning computer skills.

While practical help is undoubtedly useful, the psychological aspects of leaving the sex industry need to be taken into account. Apparent in these narratives and in Pitts' research (2008) is that there is a feeling of sadness about leaving. This indicates that there is a grief process that needs attention. In other life situations this often involves feelings of sorrow, relief, and anger that need expression and validation. Implicit in the narratives of many sex workers who have left the industry is anger directed at men in general, the sex industry and clients; these are given full attention in the feminist and abolitionist literature. Implicit in these narratives and other literature is sadness about leaving the sex industry and anger or resentment around stigma and the effects of this.

For some, supporting a person to express anger at the sex industry or men may be an easy task. To support a person through the process of grief about leaving the sex industry milieu and expressing anger around stigma is much more complex. To do this well, one must acknowledge both the benefits of doing sex work and the complexities of being a sex worker. Leaving is not like shifting from one job within an occupational group to another, nor is it like moving up a career ladder, it is leaving a whole of occupational group, building a new social and occupational identity and for many involves building a new way of life that means hiding the past and living in fear that the cloak of stigma will find them and descend (Day and Ward, 2004).

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter draws together the threads of this thesis and looks towards the future. As outlined in chapter three, feminist standpoint research is a political act. It aims to reveal the practices of dominant institutions, to enrich understanding of marginalised groups and to increase empowerment of oppressed groups of women. My fundamental goal was to fill gaps in knowledge with a primary aim of providing information that will be useful for both sex workers and for the many people who provide services for those in the sex industry. A secondary aim was to explore and disrupt the knowledges that contribute to the oppression of sex workers. What follows is a summary of the findings whereby I highlight those that challenge common assumptions and relate the findings to practice. I follow this by discussing research issues related to this project and conclude by making specific recommendations for future research and theorising.

Summary of findings

In this study, sex workers clearly understood their work to have meaning beyond that of being a sexual object while at work. Many see themselves as providing a service that has many similarities with other types of human service work. The manner in which sex work is conducted shares many features with counselling, or other similar work, including client management and self care strategies. One of the core principles of the sex industry is that the sexual connection takes place within boundaries that are usually set by the sex worker to fit in with her style of working. Having a work persona both creates boundaries and allows for expression of self. The narratives indicate that the sex worker role is considered to be an exaggeration or variation of usual heterosexual interactions. For most participants the role provides a safe place to express their own sexuality in ways they are unable to in their usual social world.

Learning about sex work occurs over time. For the participants, the most memorable learning experiences were from workplace socialisation processes. How to deal with clients is learnt by trial and error or from other workers. The behaviour of difficult clients is often explained by factors such as a history of abuse, lack of skills or too much alcohol. Most of the participants saw themselves as having some responsibility for difficult situations, either by not listening to intuition or by believing that they attract certain types of clients or elicit particular reactions from clients. The impact of potentially traumatic incidents is diffused by humour, using the support of other workers, taking time out and engaging in activities that express potentially overwhelming emotional responses. These coping strategies are a part of the sex industry culture and well understood by the participants.

Most participants experienced a sense of satisfaction and enjoyment from the work; the reasons for this include having a sense that commercial sex fulfils a wider social need for clients, the culture of the workplace and enjoyment of the sexual aspects of the job. For all but two, money is not the only perceived benefit of doing sex work. Most of the participants saw sex work as having a positive effect on their psychological wellbeing. They include an increase in self esteem, enhanced body image and increased interpersonal skills. Exposure to a wide range of human behaviour has had an impact in both positive and negative ways including an increased tolerance for difference and also an increase in suspicion about other people's motives.

Most work environments described by the participants were considered to be supportive and enjoyable. Sex work provides a social atmosphere and flexibility of hours that are not available in other occupations. Some environments have familial type relationships between workers and management. This can lead to a positive work environment; however when things go wrong the sense of betrayal is profound. All participants take breaks from the work; some deliberately do activities that contrast with the sex industry such socialising as with people who are not connected with the industry or taking part in slower paced activities. Others spend time with likeminded people.

Some sex workers developed an interest in sex work prior to their teen years in much the same way as another individual may develop an interest in any other occupation. Most chose sex work because it fitted with their traits and skills. Beliefs about sex work developed prior to entering the industry are related to how sex workers manage their understanding of the work, the way they cope with stigma and their construction of occupational identity. Those with the most positive prior beliefs were more open about their sex work, had the most social support and developed a positive occupational identity. Having a strong occupational identity, good social support and connections with a sex positive community seem to buffer the effects of stigma.

Most of the participants put considerable effort into managing the effects of stigma and challenging stereotypes. Sites of resistance include workplace interactions with the clients, family, social settings and as part of sex worker support work. Beliefs about how other people view sex workers influences levels of disclosure. Openness about being a sex worker ranged on a continuum from having no secrets to total secrecy. Telling lies was seen as the most difficult task. Those who were most open had less internal conflict about the work and had more social support. Almost all of the participants had social and work relationships they described as supportive. Four were involved with sex positive or alternative sexuality networks. Some found that while people would say they were supportive, understanding or not judgmental, this was not actually the case in real life situations.

Most of the participants moved in and out of the sex industry. Those that were still in the sex industry saw sex work as a long term option although they expected there would be periods when they would be working in other jobs. Stigma and stereotypes attached to sex work influenced the decision to leave for several participants; these are the ones who experienced considerable conflict and sorrow about leaving a job they enjoyed.

A small but noticeable thread through the narratives and the discussion is that for those who do not like the work or have a moral dilemma about prostitution, sex work is a negative choice. The result of continuing to work in the sex industry for these participants is either substance abuse, a continual state of cognitive dissonance or ongoing internal moral struggle. Two of the participants left sex work because of the negative impact it had on their lives. Similar stories are commonly portrayed in much of the literature; however it is likely they are a minority of indoor sex workers in Western countries.

These findings challenge many assumptions: that entering the sex industry is the result of immediate financial need, that sex work is not usually related to sexuality, that sex work is chosen differently to other occupations, that it is inherently psychologically damaging and that sex work is not a long term option for most workers.

These findings reinforce, from an Aotearoa/New Zealand context, what has already been stated repeatedly in many sex worker narratives, both those that are given attention within academia and independent or mainstream publications: Sex workers do display agency, there is meaning other than being a sex object and aspects of the work are enjoyable and gratifying and that the stigma of doing sex work spills over into the wider social world of sex workers in a way that has a negative impact.

In summary, these findings add new knowledge and also reinforce issues that have been given little attention in the literature: Sex workers use workplace practices that are very similar to and considered healthy in other occupations and for some, sex work has been seen as an adult career option since childhood. The workers are generally the ones in control of work interactions and this is supported within the culture of the sex industry, doing sex work may enhance body image, increase factors related to self esteem and build personal skills. In addition, being part of a sex positive culture is a significant buffer against the effects of stigma and for those who have personal traits which fit in with sex work; sex work is indeed a positive option.

Implications for practice

These results have implications for those who work with sex workers such as social workers, counsellors and other health providers. When trying to make sense of sex work and why people choose to stay in the industry, it needs to be acknowledged that most people work for the money, and that there are possibly other strong positive reasons that a person becomes involved in and continues to stay in sex work. It would be useful to shift the perception of some of the factors that sustain involvement in the sex industry so that they are viewed as elements that strengthen and empower the workers rather than as factors that entrap women in a damaging work situation. These factors should not be dismissed as peripheral, irrelevant or mere justifications that make an unpleasant job bearable.

Well informed support and education for these workers for whom sex work is almost unbearable should be in place including support to find reasonable alternatives. In an ideal world, people for whom sex work is a negative choice should be protected from having to enter the sex industry; however this is often not possible. For some, the benefits of the work outweigh the negative consequences to their psychological wellbeing. These benefits need to be taken into account when offering alternative employment options.

Perhaps the intervention most needed in relation to sex work is destigmatisation. Given that the literature and the findings of this study strongly suggests that sex workers manage their health, safety and wellbeing very well and that it is the impact of stigma that creates the most problems for sex workers, it could be argued that it is society that is in need of intervention. For this to occur more research is needed so that the body of knowledge that informs all the elements of stigma works to reduce this stigma.

Research limitations and future considerations

By its very nature all research can only investigate and present a partial view. This thesis presents findings that are a part of the landscape of the sex industry in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In particular, the findings presented here are related to indoor sex workers, however while this is a limitation, it needs be acknowledged that, in common with other Western situations, the majority of sex workers in Aotearoa/New Zealand are indoor sex workers.

The participants self selected. All the participants took part because they wanted to increase understanding about sex workers, dispel myths and contribute knowledge that reduced stigma and challenged stereotypes. My selection criteria precluded potential participants who believed that being in the sex industry had damaged them in some way. The data reflects this. Although there is considerable literature in relation to the negative effects of sex work, it may be useful to investigate this in the context of Aotearoa/New Zealand. It would be interesting to find out if the negative effects are due to doing sex work or due to being a sex worker.

To avoid identifying any participants as Māori, questions about cultural understandings were not asked. As a result, the rich and diverse cultural understandings people in this country draw on were not investigated. In addition, any issues of racism in the sex industry or as a compounding factor in oppression could not be explored and the positive effects of having strong racially based cultural supports as a buffer against the effects of marginalisation could not be investigated.

It may be useful to explore concerns specific to Māori, Pacific Islander and other non-Pākehā sex workers. Considering the similarities in the narratives about doing sex work, it is probable that the practicalities of doing sex work are similar across populations. On the other hand and taking into consideration the diversity of the experiences in the theme being a sex worker, I posit that there are issues around being a sex worker are markedly different between cultural and other locations. Therefore the broader context of sex work may need to be explored for these populations. However, it is the members of these groups who will decide if and when it is appropriate to undertake such research.

According to IPA and FST the ideal researcher is an insider or has intimate knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation. I clearly positioned myself as being aligned with sex workers and in many respects share knowledges. This degree of closeness combined with my desire to disrupt common understandings about sex work meant that interview questions and the findings address some of the common understandings that many sex workers consider are erroneous and are of most concern to the sex workers. Areas that sex workers consider have been over-researched, or pander to stereotypes, such as sexual health and history of trauma, were not discussed. Because the workers who found the work difficult were the exceptions, and there is a plethora of pertinent literature available, issues around substance use and dissociation were not explored in any depth.

Having close associations with the population raised other issues while undertaking this project. I had expected that listening to and supporting the participants would be difficult because I assumed that I might hear stories of abuse and terrible happenings within the industry. I expected that some of the participants and perhaps myself would need counselling or other support. None of these expectations were met. However, I experienced considerable difficulty reading much of the literature. I read widely in an endeavour to have as broad and well informed knowledge base as possible. I read literature that contradicted my own ideas about sex work as well as literature that reflected my own understandings. The most distressing part of the project was reading the literature that could broadly be termed feminist. It was difficult to maintain objectivity when reading what my feminist 'sisters' have to say about sex workers. Within this literature base I read the language of war and the hatred towards non repentant sex workers was almost palpable. I consider that the descriptions of sex workers vaginas were more

women hating than that in any mainstream pornography. It was difficult to work with research that was generated by people who were aligned with those who viewed sex workers as filthy, victims with no mind of their own and suffering from severe psychological disorders - who, when trying to defend their position were viewed as liars who only say good things about the sex industry for financial gain.

Directions for research

Transferring the results of this study to other populations and settings should be approached with caution; however this study has established themes for further investigations.

The participants who thrived were those who had the least separation between work and non-work selves. There is little theorising about sex workers who do not separate work and non-work lives. Although a few speak loudly for themselves and other sex workers, more information about these women's lives would be useful to enable this experience to be included in the literature. More research into the context that enables this would benefit all sex workers as we move towards improving the circumstances within and around sex work.

There is a relationship between paths into sex work and how sex workers cope with doing sex work and being a sex worker. A desire to undertake the work itself is seldom discussed or addressed in the literature (Chapkis, 1997). Reasons for entering the sex industry, other than factors that contribute to financial need, could be explored further. By listening to what the women concerned have to say about their lives an in-depth understanding of paths into sex work can emerge. In addition this process may be normalised.

How sex workers resist stigma and prejudice also needs to be explored. Further information about what enables some sex workers to successfully resist the effects of stigma would be useful so that we can ascertain the buffering factors and then work to improve the context of these lives so that resilience is improved.

One of the aims of this project, consistent with those of FST, was to examine and disrupt practises of power and the dominant discourses that contribute to the oppression of marginalised groups. To confer and perpetrate stigma of such groups is one practice of oppression. From my reading of the literature and linking this to the narratives of these women, I found that abolitionists and in particular some radical feminist arguments contribute heavily to the oppression and marginalisation of sex workers. These arguments and the beliefs that they reflect and reinforce are the major contribution to the stigma around sex work. I argue that the practices and motivations of these abolitionist groups need to be further understood, disrupted and dismantled. To do this, I argue that it is now time to move that gaze away from sex workers and shift it to those who have thus far indulged themselves with researching, judging and perpetrating stereotypes about sex workers.

Researchers and theorists may benefit from spending effort on questioning why the validity of accounts that address the positive aspects of sex work are continually denied by some feminists, theorists and those in the helping professions. Several pertinent questions to ask would be: "Who benefits from the continued stigmatisation and marginalisation of sex workers?" "If stigma is the result of perceived threat or disruption, then what exactly is being threatened or disrupted by the sex industry?" "If prostitution is dirty work, who gains from positioning it so?" "What is it about sex work that nobody else wants to do it?" "If the sex industry is dismantled, who will do that work?" "Where will women such as Kathy prance safely?" "Why is it that repentant whores and those who see themselves as victims are listened to and given support while those who are non-repentant and see themselves as choosing the work are not given the same respect?" "What deters some women from sex work?"

It is easy to understand the motivations of people for whom religious or other beliefs give them an understanding that sex work is a sin. Their motivations are obvious, they are consistent in their arguments, and generally they make no secret of their position. However, for those who purport to support women or wish to empower women, the motivations for acting against the sex industry, particularly the women, are unclear. These are the groups that concern me. It is difficult to argue against a position that changes, has no clear foundation and attacks others rather than making clear and defending its own position. I therefore challenge those who engage in radical feminist abolitionist research and theory in relation to sex work, to engage in a process of reflexivity and make their assumptions s and motivations explicit.

Towards the future

In conclusion, this thesis has examined how indoor sex workers manage their psychological wellbeing and demonstrated that overall these women manage it very well. These are ordinary women doing a job that is in many respects ordinary and the complexities of the work are dealt with in a way that other people in other ordinary jobs manage their work. They belong to a stigmatised group and that in itself is not an uncommon position for humans to be in. These women manage the difficulties of that in much the same way as members of other stigmatised groups do. What we need to do from here is honour women like these for their strength, vitality and beauty. One way to be honourable is to listen, that is truly listen and believe the truth of their stories.

Appendices

Massey University

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Working well: Women's experience of managing psychological well being as sex workers.

INFORMATION SHEET

My name is Jan Marie and I am a Masters student at Massey University. I am supervised by Dr Mandy Morgan from the School of Psychology. At present, I am undertaking a research project for the purposes of a Master's thesis. I am interested in finding out how women who are sex workers manage their psychological well-being.

The main reason for doing this project is because there is very little information available about sex workers who manage their lives well. This has resulted in a view of sex workers that confirms stereotypes and focuses on the harmful aspects of being involved in the sex industry. I hope the results of this project will go some way to challenge these stereotypes, reduce prejudice and improve existing support services for sex workers.

The information gathered will be used for the purposes of this thesis project and any further publications in relation to the project. The research results will be made available to those who work with sex workers such as counsellors and community workers, many of whom continue to see all sex workers as oppressed or victims. The research may also contribute to the design of health interventions that could relieve work stress and increase coping skills among women sex workers.

I am recruiting participants by a method called snowballing; this involves spreading information about the research through personal contacts. So please feel free to pass this contact information on to other women who fit the selection criteria. If you are going to pass this on by email, please get the consent of the person you are sending it to first. If you have received this by email please remember that you need to delete it from your temporary files to remove it from your computer.

I wish to interview women who are sex workers or ex-sex workers who have had a positive experience of their sex work and are willing to share their coping skills. They will be over 25 years of age and have been involved in the sex industry for 3 years or more. They need to have English as their first language.

I plan to interview 12 participants. However, if more than 12 women want to take part then I will include them in the study. No one who fits the criteria and wishes to participate will be excluded; provided they contact me before February 29th 2008 and I am still interviewing in that region. This number has been chosen because researchers have found that between six and 12 people need to be interviewed to get to a point where no more new information is revealed.

Te Kunenga
ki Pūrehuroa

This letter is an invitation to be a part of this research project. I will ask you to describe your experience of managing your psychological well-being during the course of your work. If the interview subject upsets you in any way, I am more than happy to spend time talking over issues with you or can refer you to a counsellor. If you need counselling I can pay for up to two sessions and will support you to organize any further counselling you may need. You can stop the interview at any time, you do not have to answer any questions I might ask and you can withdraw from the study at any time. You can ask my supervisor or me any questions at any time.

Interviews will be at the venue of your choice at a time that suits you. This may be at home, at an NZPC office, or a motel. I will be able to pay any motel costs. I expect that interviews will take between one and four hours. I would like to review the transcript with you; this will take between one and two hours.

Interviews will be recorded on audio tape. I will transcribe the tapes. To protect your privacy, no identifying details will be transcribed. No other person will hear the tapes. The tapes will be destroyed after transcription. If you wish, I will send you a copy of the transcript so that you have a reasonable amount of time to read it and decide about any changes you may want to make.

I will do my utmost to protect your privacy; tapes and transcripts will be kept in locked boxes, and information on computers will be password protected. Your consent forms will be stored securely at Massey University; they will be destroyed after five years. Although we do as much as possible to keep your confidentiality, it is not possible to guarantee that no one will ever find out you have participated in this research. If anything happens (that I know about) that may result in a breach of privacy, I will inform you, my supervisor and our ethics committee immediately.

All participants are entitled to a summary copy of the findings. When the project is complete, I will contact you to arrange where to send your summary copy of the project findings.

If you agree to participate it is important for you to understand your rights as a participant. You are under no obligation to accept this invitation.   If you decide to participate, you have the right to:
- decline to answer any particular question
- have the audio tape turned off at any time during the interview
- withdraw from the study up until one month after you have reviewed the transcript.
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used.
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

My supervisor Mandy Morgan is guiding me through this research process. Both of us are willing to answer any questions that you might have about the project.
We can be reached by phone or email.

Dr Mandy Morgan, School of Psychology, Massey University, Palmerston North
Phone: (06) 3569099 or 0800 627739 ext 2063
E-mail: C.A.Morgan@massey.ac.nz

Jan Marie, School of Psychology, Massey University, Palmerston North
        Phone: 0800 627739 ext 2040 or 0212974681
E-mail: jan@nemus.co.nz

Please contact me if you are interested in being part of this project.

Thank you for reading this information sheet

Yours sincerely

Jan Marie

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 7/57. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Karl Pajo, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 04 801 5799 x 6929, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz

Appendix B: Participant consent form

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Working well: Women's experience of managing psychological well being as sex workers.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM
This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years

I have read the Information Sheet for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the research have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I also know that I am free to refuse to answer any questions, can withdraw any information I supply at any time, and can withdraw from the study at any time, up to 1 month after I have reviewed the interview transcript.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that it is confidential and that this information I supply will not be used for any purpose other than this research. I understand that the researchers will do all that they can to ensure my privacy but it is impossible for them to guarantee that no-one will find out that I took part in this research. I also agree to the researchers audio-taping the interview, and know that I have the right to ask for it to be turned off at any time during the interview. I am also aware that my tape will be destroyed after it has been transcribed.

I understand that the researchers may use brief direct quotations from the interview(s) in their reports of the study provided these do not identify me in any way.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: .... **Date:** ....

Full Name - printed ....

Te Kunenga
ki Pūrehuroa

Appendix C: Consent for release of tape transcripts

Massey University

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Working well: Women's experience of managing psychological well being as sex workers.

AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TAPE TRANSCRIPTS

This form will be held for a period of five (5) years

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview/s conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used by the researcher, Jan Marie, in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature: .... **Date:** ....

Full Name - printed ....

Te Kunenga
ki Pūrehuroa

Appendix D: Interview schedule

Working well: Women's experience of managing psychological well being as sex workers.

The researcher will use conversational interviews to allow her to gather data that is rich in detail. The aim of conversational interviews is to allow participants to raise issues and to talk about issues that are significant to them.   Using this process allows participants to be more open about their experiences and to discuss matters that had not been thought of during the design of the interview schedule.

The interviews will begin with an open ended invitation such as:

> *I am interested in hearing about your experience of looking after yourself mentally and emotionally while you have been a sex worker.*

The interview may also use prompts. These encourage the participant to elaborate further, and ensure the areas the researcher is interested in are covered. These are used in a flexible manner and depend on what the participant has already talked about. Prompts will include:

- ❖ *How long have you worked in the sex industry?*
- ❖ *What venues have you worked in?*
- ❖ *How did you manage your physical and psychological safety?*
- ❖ *How has your experience in other types of work influenced your self care in this job?*
- ❖ *How do you take care of yourself differently in this job than in other jobs you have worked in?*
- ❖ *How did you learn to look after yourself?*
- ❖ *How did your self care strategies change over time?*
- ❖ *In what way did your relationships with clients help or hinder your feelings of emotional or psychological well being?*
- ❖ *Tell me about support you got from other people. Were these people personal relationships, peers or professionals?*
- ❖ *Some people say that sex work is psychologically damaging: what do you think of that statement?*
- ❖ *What advice would you give to someone else starting out in sex work?*

Appendix E: Human Ethics Committee Approval

Massey University

25 October 2007

Ms Jan Marie
5a Pikarere Street
Titahi Bay
PORIRUA

Dear Jan

Re: **HEC: Southern B Application – 07/57**
        Working well: Women's experience of psychological wellbeing in sex work

Thank you for your letter dated 19 October 2007.

On behalf of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B I am pleased to advise you that the ethics of your application are now approved. Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Dr Karl Pajo, Chair
Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B

cc   Dr Mandy Morgan   Prof Ian Evans, HoS
     School of Psychology   School of Psychology
     PN320   PN320

Te Kunenga
ki Pūrehuroa

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