

Women in Sex Work in the Durban CBD: Towards a Broader Understanding of Poverty

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Declaration

This dissertation represents original work by the author and has not been submitted in any other form to another university. Where use has been made of the work of others, it has been duly acknowledged and referenced in the text.

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Chapter One: Introduction

If a single goal were to be named for “development”, it would be the elimination of poverty. The first question in development studies, then, must be: what is poverty?

Two different answers immediately present themselves. A simple definition would be that poverty is a lack of the money, or the equivalent resources, necessary for a comfortable life. But early development theorists found that judging the relative development of countries on the basis of GDP per capita tends to oversimplify a complex situation (Seers, 1979). A more sophisticated and empirically-based definition would embrace a large number of problems seen among “poor” people.

Unemployment – or low-paying, unpleasant and dangerous employment – is often perceived to be the basis of poverty. Poor people generally lack the skills to produce goods or services valued in the modern marketplace, including the creation of those goods they themselves desire. This lack of competency is commonly associated with poor education, including a lack of basic literacy and numeracy.

The inability to generate wealth is tied to hunger and malnutrition, and poor health and disease often results. Desperation leads to crime, and often the victims of this crime are the poor themselves. Domestic violence is one form this crime takes, including the physical, emotional, and sexual abuse of the most vulnerable poor – women and children. The poor engage in many self-destructive behaviours to escape the pain and boredom of their daily lives, including drug use and unprotected sexual behaviour, leading to high levels of teen pregnancy and AIDS.

The demoralising effect of all this trauma is often reflected in the squalid environment in which the poor live. Poor neighbourhoods are often dirty, smelly, and otherwise aesthetically offensive. This sometimes reflects itself in

*Sordid
wretched*

the poor personal hygiene and unkempt appearance by which the poor are recognised. Attached to all this is what Adam Smith felt to be an important part of the poverty experience – the inability to “walk in public without shame.”

In sum, “poverty” can be defined as the low quality of life experienced by the poor due to a variety of interrelated causes. It extends beyond the most prominent symptom – lack of cash – to involve several independent but mutually-reinforcing dynamics. The complexity of this situation suggests that none of these dynamics can be addressed without dealing with the others.

The discipline of development studies has attempted to come to terms with this situation. In the developed world, the theory of “social exclusion” attempts to explain why, in a context of guaranteed incomes, socialised housing, and free public health care, many of the symptoms of poverty persist. In the developing world, “capabilities analysis” has been used to examine the dynamics of famine in countries where food supply is sufficient to feed all.

This dissertation looks at one group of women who experience perhaps the highest degree of poverty, broadly defined, in South Africa, despite having incomes well above the national mean. National average income among the employed is below R1000 per month (StatsSA, 1998). Sex workers (prostitutes) in Durban have average monthly incomes of nearly R10 000 per month, yet still live the lives of poor people.

The present study is concerned with women who sell sex on the open market in Durban’s central business district (CBD) as their primary source of income. This is clearly only one facet of a much larger phenomenon. Sex is traded for support in many different ways, with varying degrees of formality. For example, marriage itself is often, more or less explicitly, about an exchange of sexual services for financial enrichment. Having multiple sexual partners, who each provide some form of sustenance, is another well-recognised

survival strategy. This research looks at the most overt end of this spectrum – the sale of sex on the street and through escort agencies.

This kind of “commercial” sex work occurs in areas other than the CBD. The Point Road area on which this study focuses is the location of the majority of the local escort agencies and much of the street trade, being located at the nexus of the port and downtown areas. But street sex sales also occur on Umbilo Road, in the Umgeni/Stamford Hill area, in poor suburbs such as Chatsworth, and in many other areas. In addition, sex work has penetrated even the most upscale neighbourhoods in the form of informal brothels and cell-phone call-girls. Many of these women place explicit ads in the classified sections of the local daily newspapers. The following table was compiled by calling some of the numbers listed in *The Mercury* on a randomly chosen weekday, and shows the presence of sex workers in the affluent areas of Morningside and Mariott Road.

Number	Location	No/race	Price
202-9767	Davenport Road	2	R180
207-3540	Mariott Road	5 W/A/C/Swazi	R180
207-8289	14 Furnace Road(off Ridge)	3 B/A/W	R160 for 1, R200 for 2
217 002	Overport Road	6 W/A/C	R160
222 595	Bot Gardens Rd	3 W/A/B	R250
236-070	Morningside	1W	R160
252 752	Umbilo	1 W	R80 1/2 hour
301-1623	St George's	1 A	R150
303 5623	Henwood	5 A/C/W	R200
304 9536	West St	4 W/A/C/Swazi	R150
309-1251	Stanford Hill Road	6 W/A/B/C	R170
332 1840	Stanger Street	3 W/A	R180
368 6353	North Beach	8 W/C	R200
462 0742	Kenyon Howden (YellowWood Park)	3 W/2A	R160

Table 1: Sex work sites located in private homes

While focusing on the downtown area, the present study also contains samples from the Moore Road area, just off the CBD in the suburb of Berea, and from the Castle, an escort agency situated in the suburb of Pinetown. These areas were included both to broaden the sample base and to test the uniformity of the market.

Sex is one area of service production that has never been quantified, despite attempts to assign a monetary value to domestic work. Like other domestic work, the market provides paid alternatives to the informal arrangement found in marriage or other home situations. Women, of course, are not the only gender to trade sex for other commodities. This study focuses on women because of their special vulnerability, and because a range of issues specific to women would be clouded by the inclusion of males in the sample. Male sex workers have a distinct *modus operandi* and do not occupy the same spatial areas as female sex workers (Oosthuizen, 1998). A small group of transvestites, who are often arrested as women and present themselves as women in their work, has been included in the sample.

The sex work industry in South Africa contains several distinct sectors. While there is some mobility of personnel between the sectors, each has its own practices and each affects the lives of the women involved in different ways. Two extremes of the industry in Durban's CBD were chosen to be explored – the highly formal practice in upmarket escort agencies, and the loosely-structured street sex trade.

Sex work is illegal in this country, and so constitutes one of the more lucrative facets of the underground economy. In many ways, the sale of sex mirrors other forms of unregulated commercial activity. Street sex workers face many of the same challenges as other street traders and service-providers in the informal economy. Distinguishing between these two types of work on a legal basis obscures their essential similarity.

The fact that sex workers, despite relatively high incomes, live the lives of poor people, challenges income-based definitions of poverty and technocratic interventions based on simply re-directing resources towards the poor. The research shows how sex workers find a variety of ways of squandering their earnings and of keeping their quality of life low, just as the tenants of public housing in the United States go to great lengths to degrade their living environment.

Although no simple solutions are offered, it is argued that the relation of the individual to the larger society is at the core of the problem. A large part of this relationship is self-defined, and so much of challenge lies with the individual. But the hypocrisy of a society that, on the one hand, makes sex work a profitable profession and, on the other, condemns it in the strongest terms, is a major impediment in this process.

Interventions to improve the lives of sex workers, designed either out of concern for the women themselves or aimed at controlling their behaviour, must therefore start with a re-evaluation of social prejudices. On a social policy level, this would involve a review of the legislation criminalising prostitution. On a broader scale, it would involve an increased public awareness of the realities of the profession and the lives of the women involved. Sex workers are as diverse in their backgrounds, personalities, and worldviews as members of any other profession. It is hoped that this small study and subsequent research in the same vein will contribute to a greater public awareness of this reality.

Chapter Two will explain some of the ways development theorists have attempted to take our understanding of poverty beyond the creation of income-based "poverty lines". Chapter Three will look at the international debate and academic study on the subject of sex work, and at the local literature on the subject. Chapter Four discusses the methodology and sample selection in the present study. Chapter Five lays out the findings of the study. Chapter Six provides a discussion of the findings in light of poverty theory.

It is hoped that this work will contribute towards a broader understanding of what constitutes poverty. This understanding is essential in designing interventions that truly improve the lives of the poor.

Chapter Two: Theories of Poverty

The lives of sex workers in Durban parallel in many ways the situation of the poor in the developed world. With their superior incomes, sex workers could, theoretically, access all the goods and services that Durban's first world economy offers. But, as the research that follows shows, this is far from the case.

2.1 Social Exclusion and Deviance

The European theory of "social exclusion" is one conceptual framework in development theory that has been offered to explain the experience of poverty in societies where all basic needs are guaranteed by the state. The question is: why do the poor in the developed world vandalise their free housing, spend their state incomes on drugs, drop out of free education, and engage in criminal activity of all sorts, often with their fellow poor people as the primary targets? The term originated in the French debate about social assistance in the 70s and was broadly defined as "a rupture of social bonds". The parallels between this thinking and research on poverty in the South have recently been debated, and the consensus seems to be that the two areas of deprivation are essentially concerned with the similar phenomena (O'Brien *et al*, 1998).

Exclusion is seen to operate on a number of levels – economic, social, and political (Bhalla and Lapeyre, 1997). In each of these spheres, there is seen to be a breakdown in the relationship between the individual and society. In a world culture in which personal worth is increasingly defined in terms of economic generation and consumption, the focus has tended to fall on the economic.

The positive economic growth experienced in a large part of the developed world in 1990s has not been able to keep pace with growth in the labour supply, and long-term unemployment, especially among youth, has become a

persistent problem. Although European society has been able to care for these people out of its surplus, the exclusion of large numbers of people from the working world has had powerful social consequences. Entitlements and labour protection in the United States are not as extensive, and the result has been extreme income polarisation in the workforce and the creation of the “working poor.” In both cases, relative deprivation has led to an entrenched “underclass” (Kronauer, 1998).

But, as Kronauer explains, the modern trend is away from conceptualising social exclusion in a hierarchical way and towards notions of a “centre” and a “periphery”. The basis for this peripheralisation varies from country to country, with urban ethnic minorities being seen as the prime targets of exclusion in the US, and the unemployed or marginally employed youth being excluded in France. Especially in the US, the presence of a criminal justice system that is directed towards further isolating and excluding deviants, rather than re-integrating them, exacerbates this trend, and the situation is worsened when youth or ethnic identity becomes linked to crime. In an urban context, this exclusion often takes on spatial dimensions, and social services programmes that promote concentration of the poor simultaneously promote exclusion.

Interventions to alleviate this kind of poverty would, conceivably, be aimed at “re-integrating” marginalised groups into the mainstream, or at least in some sort of pluralistic recognition of out-group legitimacy. The difficulty in accomplishing this re-integration is clear from sociological and criminological theories of deviance and reaction-formation (Hewitt and Regoli, 1994). Disadvantaged groups are faced with two choices: they can accept the norms of mainstream society and see themselves as failures, or they can create a new paradigm in which they can succeed by inverting these very same norms. These deviants can achieve a measure of success in mainstream terms by exploiting the hypocrisies of society, but this success rarely leads to re-integration.

The price of social exclusion is particularly harsh for women. If anything, the norms of reaction formation cultures are even more patriarchal than mainstream ones, because they are often based on the pre-social basis for order – violence. Socially excluded men have the option of turning to violent crime as a profession of last resort. Socially excluded women, when needs exceed resources and no alternatives are forthcoming, turn to sex work.

It is difficult to imagine a class more socially excluded than female sex workers. In neither mainstream nor deviant paradigms are their activities considered laudable. The pejoratives associated with the profession are considered the highest insults imaginable, even among sex workers themselves. Sex workers are feared as corrupters of morals, destroyers of families, and spreaders of disease. Their work requires them to open themselves up to the greatest physical vulnerability possible, only to be injured, abused, and humiliated, again and again. On top of all this, their profession is criminalised. In a sense, their very existence is outlawed.

2.2 Capabilities Analysis

In the developing world, Dreze and Sen (1989) define poverty in terms of “entitlement failure”, where “entitlement” refers to all the goods and services an individual is able to command. These include “extended entitlements” that extend beyond legal claims of control to include social and moral claims. Due to their ability to command large amounts of money, sex workers are clearly not deficient in these simple terms.

But Dreze and Sen take the definition of poverty one step further, to recognise that wealth is only a means to the end of human happiness. What is significant is “capability”, or the ability to engage in socially “valuable and valued doings and beings” (Dreze and Sen, 1989, p.12). In this sense, the poverty of sex workers comes into sharper relief. Their work, while valued in fact in market terms, is not seen as socially constructive. Later theorists have extended this reasoning to focus on the sense of vulnerability and

powerlessness that the poor experience, and sex workers are a perfect example of this type of poverty.

2.3 The Informal Sector and the Underground Economy

Like many other marginalised people, sex workers are forced to practice their profession outside the formally recognised mechanisms of income generation. The informal sector was first labelled as such by Hart (1973), in recognition of the fact that many third world people are engaged in productive enterprises that never make it to the national accounts. Since that time, the informal sector has taken on an important role in development thinking. Estimates of the size of the informal economy as a share of the total economy in South Africa have varied from 3% – 41% (Hartzenburg and Leiman, 1991).

Many of these workers are women, performing traditionally female tasks (cooking, brewing beer, merchandising, craftwork and sewing, sex), oftentimes for migrant workers who have become disassociated from their home network of female relatives. Like domestic labour, this “women’s work” has been devalued and viewed as essentially non-productive.

Recognising the informal sector as legitimate has a number of important benefits for the workers involved. Acknowledging the validity and importance of this work alleviates the stigma attached to informal enterprise and causes policymakers to rethink their view of the economy. This in turn has led to government supports for the sector, often with the goal of “formalising” these businesses into the registered economy.

The concept has gained legitimacy by distancing itself from the illegal economy, even though the line between the two is far from obvious. Portes, Castels and Benton (1989) note that all informal enterprises are illegal, in the sense that they evade regulatory controls and gain some of their profitability as a result. But while informal enterprises are illegal in their *process*, they are

not illegal in their *content*. It is, they argue, on the basis of output that informal and illegal enterprises should be distinguished.

This definition leaves sex work in a grey area. Clearly, the service offered – sex – is not illegal, and in many parts of the world its sale is not illegal either. This results in a definition of the informal economy that is culturally specific, hardly a sound basis for international comparisons. Further, this focus on the product, rather than the sociology of work organisation, denies the common interests and needs of sex workers and other women in the informal economy.

Generally speaking, there has been little success in coming up with a definition of the informal sector such that, if one accepts the definition, other associated characteristics follow in a reasonably consistent way (Mead and Morrison, 1996), but the similarities between women street traders and sex workers are clear. Both sex workers and other informal traders enter their respective professions out of an inability to find satisfactory alternative employment in the formal economy. Entry into the informal economy is possible with minimal investment and training, income can be generated immediately, and work time can be organised to allow for child care and other domestic responsibilities. Both groups face similar problems in the form of crime (both against themselves and their customers), predatory males who want a piece of the action, inclement weather, official harassment, child care and other domestic responsibilities, and lack of recognition as legitimate workers.

As legalised sex work in many parts of the world has demonstrated, there is no intrinsic link between sex work and other forms of criminality. Where sex work is criminalised, it is literally confined to the periphery: to the most dangerous parts of the city, to the control of the most dangerous individuals. Drugs, assault, robbery, rape, murder – the stuff of the sex worker's life reads like a copy of the penal code. And once branded through arrest as part of this "contagion", it is almost impossible for a woman to re-integrate herself, for

both practical and psychological reasons. Addictive drugs are a major complicating factor. Far more subtle in effect are the routine, the social circle, and the lifestyle which sex workers develop. Sex work becomes an identity.

For these reasons, a large number of poor women resist the final marginalisation of becoming “commercial sex workers” (Varga, 1996), remaining as long as possible in the more informal network of sexual relationships that provide sustenance. In the end, it seems, the extent to which a poor woman’s survival depends on her sexuality may only be a matter of degree.

Crime is usually tallied as a cost to society, and it is certainly true that some types of crime reduce total productive activity. Violent crime can damage or destroy human capital, and associated medical costs are often a burden to insurers and state facilities. Lost work time must be weighed, as must the time and expense involved in replacing stolen property. Corruption has an even more far-reaching effect, undermining the confidence of the public in the government and, as with other forms of crime, reducing investor confidence. Enforcement and corrections sap public funds. These costs are particularly significant in the developing world, which can ill afford the expense and which lacks the resources to respond proactively.

The “victimless” crimes, however, are different. Since these offences, by definition, involve a willing buyer and seller, they tend to resemble other forms of unregulated economic activity. Marijuana farming, for example, is virtually indistinguishable from other forms of agricultural activity, and the packaging and distribution process involved in its sale represent a very real form of value-adding work. Sex work also falls in this category.

The arbitrary nature of this distinction is illustrated by recalling that the multi-billion dollar alcohol industry was once illegal in the United States, and thus not part of the official “productive” economy. While it is generally agreed that alcohol is one of the most dangerous substances commonly available, what

was once condemned as “demon rum” is today the stuff of big business and high society.

The preceding discussion has shown that sex workers are, in terms of the definitions proffered by the discipline of development studies, similarly situated to other marginalised people. What remains to be shown is how sex workers remain “poor” despite having relatively high incomes. Academic studies of sex workers, while detailing many aspects of their lives, have yet to address this phenomenon.

Chapter 3: Studies of sex work

In those areas of the world where sex work is illegal, there are understandably barriers to making it the subject of academic study. Not only are sex workers distrustful of anyone within mainstream society, but they are unlikely to see any benefit from participating in such research. Most sex workers rely on remaining out of the lime-light in order to survive, and few are able to overcome the shame associated with their work in order to speak candidly on the subject. In addition, the males that control the industry in many parts of the world are even more opposed than the workers to much scrutiny of their activities.

Even in areas where the trade has been legalised, research is difficult. For a variety of reasons, including on-going social condemnation even in countries which recognise the profession, most regulated sex industries are paralleled by a shadow market that continues to operate outside the confines of the law. Within the legalised industry, respect for the rights of privacy of the women involved have limited research.

Much of the work that has been done has been propelled by one social agenda or the other. Since research follows funding, most of the academic attention has been directed to the way sex workers impact on the rest of society, and much of the debate has centred on whether the extent to which sex work can and should be regulated. The advent of HIV/AIDS has resulted in much of sex work research treating the women as an epidemiological problem, with the final aim being to find ways of modifying their behaviour.

3.1 The international debate

In the contemporary world, two contrary trends are informing the debate around prostitution. On the one hand, the sexual revolution and the acknowledgement of homosexuality as a legitimate alternative lifestyle have eroded popular intolerance of most forms of consensual sexual activity. The

secularisation of the state and the fall of censorship laws has diminished the state's capacity to control the sex lives of adults, and the globalisation of western information and culture has internationalised this process. Further, a growing concern for the rights of women and the poor has led to an increased sympathy for their survivalist activities, including non-legal work.

On the other hand, feminism has changed the way we look at gender relationships, and the power dynamics of sexual transactions have been highlighted. In a strange alliance, reactionary religious groups have joined some women's rights advocates in condemning prostitution as an exploitative and evil. Although diametrically opposed on the issue of abortion, these two do agree that women should not be allowed to sell, and men should not be allowed to buy, sex (Posel, 1992).

Since feminist doctrine asserts that responsible women should be allowed to do what they please with their own bodies, this intrusion can only be justified by viewing prostitutes as less than fully competent. For this purpose, they are generally portrayed as victims of the patriarchy, compelled by economic coercion and a background of abuse, and not truly able to make rational decisions about their choice of work (Dworkin, 1992).

Because prostitution is an illegal and socially condemned profession, it draws from, and contributes to, the ranks of the marginalised. This leads to some confusion on the issue of causality. For example, some studies have found that the majority of prostitutes were sexually abused as children (Satterfield, 1981) though others (PENet, 1998) contest this.

But it is unclear whether this abuse generates a pathology which leads women to sex work or whether the possibility of sex work, as a marginalised profession, is only open to those who already see themselves as marginalised. The question of drug abuse brings forward the same causal questions: do drugs force women to enter sex work or does sex work make

the world of drugs more accessible, as the workers are no longer constrained by moral stigma or legal sanction?

Empirical evidence suggests that the causal chains work both ways. Prostitution is only an acceptable form of employment to women already far from the mainstream, and it leads to further removal from social norms. For example, since prostitutes are daily subject to arrest for plying their trade, many are easily lead into other forms of minor crime, such as petty theft and small scale drug dealing (Høigard and Finstad, 1992). Low self-esteem allows women to enter into a condemned profession, and then proceeds to lower their sense of personal worth even further.

The amount of choice involved obviously varies greatly between first world and third world contexts. Without government safety nets, socially-excluded women may have very few real alternatives. The arguments of prohibitionists thus make more sense in the developing world, but ironically it is here that they are the least feasible. It is precisely because of the lack of alternatives that prostitution cannot be eliminated in these countries.

In light of all this dispute, it is not surprising that government response has been equally varied. That a deregulated industry is feasible has been demonstrated in the Netherlands, where prostitution has never been illegal. Since 1988, prostitution has been legally defined as a profession, and sex workers have been required to pay taxes since 1996. However, sex workers are not required to register or receive health checks. Pimping is technically illegal but brothels are publicly advertised and are usually zoned by local regulation.

In the United States, certain counties in the state of Nevada were allowed to legalise a highly regulated industry, with mandatory registration and licensing of sex workers, restriction of prostitution to designated brothels, weekly health checks, and mandatory condom usage. Sex workers are trained in visual inspection for Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), and routinely disinfect

clients with an antiseptic before and after intercourse. As a result, no registered, working Nevada prostitute has ever tested positive for HIV. A 1990 UCLA School of Public Health study of medical records found only one case of gonorrhoea and no cases of syphilis at the Chicken Ranch brothel from 1986 to 1989, despite the hundreds of transactions that occurred during this period. A scientific study by the Durex Rubber corporation on condom usage and breakage concluded that Nevada prostitutes had evolved strategies that significantly enhanced the protection provided by their product, which would be of great benefit if used by the general public (Durex, 1994).

Such a high level of regulation may not always be feasible in the third world context, however. Low government capacity may hinder enforcement efforts, and economic pressures tend to answer every regulation with a “shadow market” catering to those who do not wish to comply. The government may also be hesitant to place controls on an industry that brings in a substantial portion of GDP and foreign capital inflows. Thailand is a case in point. It is estimated that between 50% – 90% of prostitutes in Northern Thailand are HIV seropositive, and child prostitution is rife despite official condemnation of the practice (Truong, 1990). As a result of a condom distribution and health education programme targeting sex workers and their clients, however, the number of men who used condoms at brothels increased from 61% to 92.5% between 1991 and 1995, and HIV infection rates among Thai army conscripts dropped from 12.5% to 6.7% between 1993 and 1995 (Coates and Collins, 1998). Senegal is recognised as having one of the most effective anti-AIDS campaigns in the world – by promoting condom use, it has kept HIV rates below 2% (*The Economist*, 1998).

The experience of Greece, which has the strictest regulations controlling prostitutes in Europe, should be considered before concluding that regulation is the answer. Greece requires registration of prostitutes, medical screening twice a week, and only allows registered sex workers to use the designated health care facilities. In Athens, approximately 400 women are registered, out of a population of an estimated 5 000 sex workers. The majority remain

underground so as to avoid strict government intervention. The ongoing European Intervention Projects AIDS Prevention for Prostitutes (EUROPAP) study has argued against provision of services contingent upon registration (Mak, 1996)

* The question of enforcement of regulations is another problem. Fining prostitutes only requires them to work harder to pay off their debt. Arresting them increases their dependence on male management, jeopardises their child care arrangements, and, if past experience is anything to go by, has no deterrent effect. Patrolling for streetwalkers only decreases the amount of time they have to screen clients and negotiate safe sex, and drives their activities into more secluded areas making them even more vulnerable. Use of condoms as evidence of unregistered sex work discourages use of condoms (Brener and Pauw, 1998).

International figures suggest that prostitution is growing world-wide. The economic problems faced by the former Eastern Block countries has led to an increase in the supply of sex workers in Europe, and even more severe conditions prevail on the African continent. The phenomena of "sex tourism" has become well-recognised, as is the crime of international trafficking in women. These trends call for a re-evaluation of national and transnational policy.

3.2 Local Perspectives

In South Africa, political changes have radically reformed the policy debate. The apartheid regime maintained an arsenal of statutes aimed at controlling the sexual activity of South African citizens, dictating the race and gender of those allowed to engage in sex, and prohibiting material deemed offensive to Calvinist morality. In a few short years, South Africans have seen the repeal of these anachronisms, as well as the advancement of a Constitution liberal enough to guarantee rights to homosexuals.

Despite these advances, South Africa remains a religiously conservative country, with widespread attendance of churches with a hard line on sexual morality. Analysts have commented that the ANC government may be more progressive than the majority that supports it. Recent debates on the death penalty and abortion underscore this point.

Nonetheless, serious discussion has been had since before the 1994 elections on the possibility of decriminalising prostitution. A 1993 study by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) (Schurink *et al*, 1993) paved the way for the Gauteng government to research the matter in some depth, culminating in the 1997 call by then Safety and Security MEC Jesse Duarte for the decriminalisation of sex work in Gauteng (Gauteng, 1997). This was followed quickly by a similar call from her counterpart in the Western Cape (Barnes and Russell, 1997).

These local politicians were soon reminded, however, that they did not have the power to truly decriminalise prostitution, as the matter was governed by the Sexual Offences Act (Act 23 of 1957) a piece of national legislation. The local government officials thus had to resign themselves to “de-prioritising” prostitution, although they are still required by law to enforce the statute upon civilian complaint. This, of course, does little to lessen the vulnerability of sex workers, and does nothing toward regulating the still illegal industry.

However, there has been talk at the national level about reforming the law. National Safety and Security Minister Sidney Mufamadi and Health Minister Nkosazana Zuma have both expressed their support of decriminalisation. The possibility of legal reform was advanced considerably by the 50th Conference of the ANC, where the Draft Resolutions argued for the decriminalisation of prostitution as an AIDS reduction measure. This resolution was apparently withdrawn in the final document, perhaps in anticipation of electoral pressures.

The Sexual Offences Act was also challenged on constitutional grounds, recently. Three Pretoria Prostitutes (Ellen Jordan, Louisa Broodryk, and Christine Jacobs) appealed their 1997 convictions in the Pretoria Magistrate's Court under the Sex Offences Act, claiming that it violates their right of equality, privacy and their freedom of trade, profession, and occupation.

All of this policy debate is occurring in a context of substantial ignorance. No serious attempt has been made to measure the demographics of prostitution in South Africa. Estimates vary widely on the total number of sex workers, but lie in the area of 7 000 to 10 000 in Johannesburg (Gauteng, 1997) perhaps 6 000 in Cape Town, and 2000 in Durban. The trade is estimated to generate R40 million a month in Johannesburg alone (Reuters, 1996).

While some research has been done on the local industry in Durban, much of this has become dated because of developments that have occurred in the transition from apartheid.

* Posel (1993) found that the sex work industry in Durban is highly segmented, with each sector having a distinctive demographic profile and divergent interests. She distinguishes four sectors of commercial sex workers:

- those who work the streets;
- those who work from escort agencies and massage parlours;
- those that work the seamen's and tourist's clubs, and;
- those that work from the classified ads of the local newspapers.

There is also a sector, situated outside the Durban area, which has developed to service the trucking industry. This sector has been extensively researched since 1993 with regard to AIDS interventions by Abdool Karim *et al* at the Medical Research Council (MRC).

Preston-Whyte *et al* (1997) found that sex work in the Durban area was segregated spatially into sectors operating in "suburbia" (an African area

about 15 km away from Durban), “industria” (a formerly residential area extending along a large main road leading out of Durban), and in the CBD. They found great difficulty in penetrating the “suburbia” area, as many of the women involved in this highly informal variety of sex work did not consider themselves sex workers. Their “industria” area is that covered by the MRC study, and the CBD area they discussed corresponds to the subject matter of the present study.

Varga (1996) has produced the most complete study of condom usage among sex workers in Durban. She found that there is great market demand for condom-free sex in South Africa. The use of drugs and financial pressures both mitigate against condom usage, and the stresses of the job often instil a fatalistic attitude towards life.

Further, she found Durban sex workers to be extremely reluctant to use condoms with their personal partners because the presence of a condom provides a distinction between professional sex and sex for pleasure. This attitude has also been found in other communities of sex workers.

These studies, however, leave many basic questions unanswered. The total number and demographics of the women involved in the trade in Durban are unknown. It is unclear how women enter and leave the industry, and how long they stay. HIV seroprevalence and rates of condom usage across all sectors are unknown. The revenues generated by this industry have never been calculated. The practices and behaviours distinctive to each sector have not been articulated, with most research being focused on the street and truckstop workers. And almost nothing is known of the motivations and concerns of these women.

Further, the sex work industry in Durban is currently in a state of flux. The social transformations following from the end of apartheid and the economic challenges of globalisation have impacted on local sex work in a number of ways, and these changes have yet to be studied in an academic context.

The end of spatial segregation has allowed rural displacement to spill over into urban areas, leading to an increase in the number of street children in particular. This has radically altered the age and complexion of street sex workers. According to interviews conducted in this study, an informal network has evolved to funnel underage girls off the street and into sex work by providing them with cheap accommodation. These younger girls are in high demand, in part because they are perceived as being less likely to be infected by HIV. Sex with a "virgin" has even been rumoured to provide a cure for those who are already HIV infected.

The rush of immigrants from the rest of Africa after the elections has affected all aspects of the informal and underground economies. Crack cocaine, a drug that has defined the sex work trade in the United States, has been introduced by Nigerian immigrants (DEA, 1998). In the US, this drug has been found to have as high a correlation with HIV seropositivity as intravenous drug use, due to its pro-sexual, intoxicating, and addictive effects (Ross *et al*, 1998).

Both the youth and the drug dependency of the street sex workers, combined with the simple increase in supply, has decreased the going rate for sex to as little as R20. This has led to an increase in the number of transactions required for any given worker to make a living, and a decrease in the safety and hygiene standards in the industry.

Loss of street sales to young black workers has led many older women to collectivise and work from home or from cell-phone numbers advertised in the local papers. The enhanced discretion of this mode of doing business has caused this sector to become the fastest growing branch of the industry, according to the sex workers themselves.

All of these developments call for a re-evaluation of the state of sex work in Durban.

Chapter Four: The Study

Since the dynamics of poverty are complex, a detailed knowledge of the lives of the poor is required to make sense of the situation. Many past studies of sex work, and particularly those in South Africa, have failed to embrace this complexity in two ways. On the one hand, they have erred on the side of being too qualitative. There is no reliable estimate of the number of sex workers in South Africa or in Durban. There has been no academic study of their ethnic and class backgrounds, their home origins, their ages, their educations and job skills, their working habits, their incomes, or their family structures. On the other hand, past studies have often attempted to generalise about one component of the sex workers' lives, such as their motivations behind condom use or their feelings as women, and have consequently ignored the complexity of the sex workers as individuals.

4.1 Methodology

In response to these deficiencies, this study has taken a two-pronged approach. An attempt has been made to get reliable estimates on many of the key variables essential to understanding this population, while at the same time an ethnographic approach has been taken to profiling the women as individuals. As a result, the findings take two forms: statistical figures and illustrative selections from the interviews of the workers.

Forty-five structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with sex workers, 30 from the street and 15 from two upmarket escort agencies. The interviews comprised 62 questions on a range of subjects, from personal background to client information to opinions and attitudes (see Appendix 1). Each interview took approximately 30 minutes to conduct, and the subjects were allowed to range onto other topics as long as the core questions were addressed.

Since sex workers are only identifiable as such during their working hours, these interviews were conducted on-site between 19:00 and 03:00, both during the week and on weekends.

Compensation was deemed necessary to make up for lost work time. Only four women refused to be interviewed after being offered compensation. The refusal was usually explained by fear of possible publicity, but in one case, inadequate compensation was cited. While it might be argued that this compensation could enhance the "performance" aspect of the interview, the interviewer took pains not to cue respondents as to anticipated results, except where the topic was deemed sensitive and where there was good reason to anticipate a positive response – ~~such~~ such as sexual preference, rape, police harassment, and drug abuse. Thus, the women would be asked which drugs they abuse, rather than whether drugs were abused at all. Surprisingly, these areas garnered as many negative responses as positive ones. It did not, therefore, appear that women were making up stories for the benefit of the interviewer.

The two escort agencies in the study were selected for their reputation as being on the high end of the spectrum, and thus, it was hoped, providing the sharpest contrast to street life. The owners of the agencies were contacted and permission to conduct the study was secured. Both owners were also informally interviewed at some length. The interviews were conducted in out-of-the-way office space provided by the agencies. The confidentiality of the interviews was emphasised, and the owners were only provided with the broadest evaluation of the overall interview process. Fear of collusion with the owner may have biased the results, although the women appeared to be quite candid in their responses and did not differ greatly in their range of views from the street sample. The workers were paid R70 in one case and R100 in the other, which, it was understood, they would be allowed to keep.

The demographic representivity of this small sample was verified by a phone survey of all agencies commonly listed in a variety of media, including the daily newspapers and on-line Durban sex sites.

The street interviews were initiated by the researcher driving through the areas where the sex workers ply their trade, pulling alongside a subject standing on the sidewalk and allowing her to approach the car, and then offering her between R50 and R70 to participate. The researcher identified himself as an academic investigating street prostitution and as the editor of a publication on crime.

Subjects were located by their demeanour and presence in areas known for the sale of sex. These areas were identified through pilot interviews, observation, and "snowballing" with later subjects. An attempt was made to select from the broadest possible range of work areas, and some effort was made to be representative of the visual demographics. Possible errors resulting from this process are discussed in the following sections. The sample was randomly selected in the sense that subjects were drawn from chance street encounters.

In order to verify that the interview sample was broadly representative of the population, and to try to get some estimate of the size and demographics of the "universe" involved, a set of 325 dockets of arrests for sex work offences was analysed at the Point Road Police Station. The jurisdiction of this station encompasses the bulk of the *de facto* "red light district" in the Durban CBD. The possible bias to this data due to "selective prosecution" is discussed in the following sections.

Certain questions lent themselves to quantification, and these were digested into 43 SPSS variables. Not all interviews satisfied all 43 variables. Basic demographic information with regard to the street population was reinforced by the data drawn from the police sample.

Discussion of the sample composition, which follows, will serve two purposes, It will confirm the validity of the conclusions drawn from the interviews, and it will allow some exploration of the basic demographics of the sex worker population.

4.2 Sample composition – Agency workers

The exact number of agencies in Durban is unclear. Some make their presence well-known through extensive ads in the local papers and even on the internet, while others apparently rely on location and word of mouth to bring customers in. Many temporary agencies appear and disappear overnight, without ever bothering to acquire the requisite massage license. Established agencies have also begun opening private houses in the suburbs, to offer clients greater discretion.

Two internet service providers, sex.co.za and syndicate.co.za, claim to maintain the largest sex sites in South Africa. Both have run free listings for agencies, with an eye towards later selling these agencies pages on their sites, and thus have a strong economic interest in being as complete as possible. From these listings, calls were made to the agencies detailed in Table 2. At each of the agencies, the questions required to complete the table were asked.

While the researcher never specified his purpose in asking these questions, it is assumed that the agencies took him for a potential customer. As Table 2 illustrates, the agencies vary greatly both in numbers of women employed and in the rate charged. The larger agencies, as well as some of the smaller ones, refused to provide demographic details over the phone. The smaller ones that refused probably did so due to low numbers of workers, as this lack of selection might drive customers away.

Number	Name	# workers/race	Rate
332 3508	Touch of Class	13	R214

332-9684	Cat Ladies	10 (W, I, C)	R200
332 4765	Nina's	2 (1 W and 1 I)	R180
337 5202	Palace	17 (all races)	R300
332 0260	At Sonja's	7 W	R214
337 3966	Lioness	10 (8 W and 2 I)	R250
304 9512	PlayGirls	5 (2 I, 1 W, 1 C, and 1 B)	R200
332 5411	Secrets	6 (3 I, 2 W, and 1 C)	R160
368 6355	Eurostyle	unspecified number, W and I	R250
368-6120	Mon Chereze	would not say	R250
368 2145	Cupid 2000	5 (1 Chinese, 1 Coloured, 3 I)	R160
23 3673	Lady Fremaine (Morningside)	5 (2 W, 3 I, 1C)	R160
332 7983	Aquarian	5 (1 W, 2 I, 2 C)	R150
465-4993	Felines (Bellaire)	2 W	R
309-2021	Emmanuele (Morningside)	4 (3 W, 1 I)	R190
236-758	HollywoodGirlz (Morningside)	4 (3 I, 1 W)	R
332 3982	Solitaire	4 (1W, 2 I, and 1 C)	R150

This tally includes 99 women. Of the 17 agencies listed, 13 said they had no black escorts, and four said they had no coloureds. Of those that gave a complete ethnic breakdown, 29 whites were listed (49%), as were 22 Indians (37%), seven coloureds (12%), and one black (2%).

Two agencies not included in Table 2 were selected for interviews, with an eye towards creating the greatest contrast to the situation on the street. One was the Castle, which is situated outside the CBD in the suburb of Pinetown, and the other was Jade's, which is located in the heart of Durban's *de facto* red light district. Both are "upmarket" agencies.

The Castle is a complete "gentlemen's club" complex, which includes two bars, a full kitchen, a tattersalls, a casino, a professionally-lit stage for striptease (which features international acts), and large rooms with jacuzzis. It has the highest rates for sex in the area, and a R50 door fee. While some of the women stay in the Pinetown area, half room in the CBD and are transported to work together by the agency's taxi. All but one of the Castle workers reported previously working in the CBD agencies or private houses.

Jade’s has recently undergone a change of ownership and aspires to become a “Castle in town”, with two bars, two stages, a full kitchen, a jacuzzi, and a variety of “theme” rooms. It has the second highest rates for sex in the CBD, after the Palace Spa. There is presently no door fee, but there were plans to change this in the near future, and an increase in the rate for sex was also anticipated. Jade’s has a very small staff, two of whom live on the premises. Two women from private houses who had previously worked in the CBD agencies were also included in the sample, for a total of 15 women interviewed.

Comparing Table 2 to the interview sample, we find that the two are very similar, with whites and Indians are proportionately represented, and coloureds and blacks both playing lesser roles.

Table 3: Ethnic composition – Interview sample – Agency workers only					
Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
White	1.00	7	46.7	46.7	46.7
Indian	2.00	5	33.3	33.3	80.0
Coloured	3.00	1	6.7	6.7	86.7
Black	4.00	2	13.3	13.3	100.0
Total		15	100.0	100.0	
Valid cases	15	Missing cases	0		

4.3 Sample Composition – Street Sex Workers

As there has never been any reliable estimate of the number or demographics of street sex workers in the CBD, determination of the correct sample size and composition is quite difficult. Luckily, however, the police arrest records provide some indication of this information. By comparing the interview sample with information from police records, we can simultaneously test the representivity of the sample and gain some sense of the size and composition of the population of street sex workers in the CBD as a whole.

The police dockets give only basic data on arrestees, and rely almost entirely on arrestee honesty and the personal knowledge of the officer involved for their validity. Identification documents are rarely carried by sex workers, and they clearly have a strong incentive to deceive police officers. One woman, for example, gave her name as “Salina Deon”. In addition, the police do not have any means of tracing the prior arrests at present without a long and laborious investigation. It is therefore very difficult to tell how many different women are arrested over time, or what percentage over the overall population these women represent.

If, in reviewing the cases, large numbers of repeat arrests were to be seen, two possibilities could follow. One would be that these women with multiple arrests were selectively prosecuted because of their behaviour, their prominent location, or their race. Studies in the USA have shown that women of disadvantaged ethnic groups, especially blacks, are “selectively prosecuted” more often than their white counterparts (PENet, 1998).

The other explanation of this repetition of arrestees would be that the sample size had approximated the size of the general population. In estimating the size of wildlife populations, conservationists catch and tag a specified number of animals in a given area. They then return to that area and catch a specified number again. The number of tagged animals in the second sample

is used to estimate the size of the total population. A similar technique can be used in the present situation by counting multiple arrests.

Determining the exact number of multiple arrests is, of course, problematic. In the 325 cases reviewed, there were numerous cases where the information taken exactly duplicated that in another arrest, but there were many more in which slight variations occurred. Comparing the names given with other demographic information taken – such as age, race, and domicile – the following breakdown seems likely:

Table 4: Probable multiple arrests - Police sample					
		Number of arrests	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent Cum Percent
		2.00	33	71.7	71.7 71.7
		3.00	10	21.7	21.7 93.5
		4.00	2	4.3	4.3 97.8
		5.00	1	2.2	2.2 100.0

		Total	46	100.0	100.0
Valid cases	46	Missing cases	0		

This suggests that at least 63 cases - $((1 \times 33) + (2 \times 10) + (3 \times 2) + (4 \times 1))$ - may contain “redundant” information, in the sense that the same individuals are represented more than once. To test whether ethnic bias may be causing selective prosecution, a breakdown of these “redundant” cases results in the following:

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Table 5: Ethnic composition of individuals with probable multiple arrests - Police sample					
Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
White	1.00	7	15.2	15.2	15.2
Indian	2.00	11	23.9	23.9	39.1
Coloured	3.00	9	19.6	19.6	58.7
Black	4.00	19	41.3	41.3	100.0
		-----	-----	-----	
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	
Valid cases	46	Missing cases	0		

This can be compared to the ethnic breakdown of the entire sample:

Table 6: Ethnic composition - Police sample					
Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
White	1.00	51	15.7	15.7	15.7
Indian	2.00	45	13.8	13.8	29.5
Coloured	3.00	53	16.3	16.3	45.8
Black	4.00	176	54.2	54.2	100.0
		-----	-----	-----	
	Total	325	100.0	100.0	
Valid cases	325	Missing cases	0		

This breakdown differs from the general sample in two respects. The number of Indians is significantly over-represented, and the number of blacks are under-represented. This may be due to a number of factors.

Although the demographics of the arresting officers were not recorded, a large portion of the Point Road staff are Indian, including the officer unofficially in charge of prostitution enforcement, Captain Govender. It may be that Indian arrestees feel less free to deceive arresting officers of their own ethnic group, and that black women are better able to capitalise on this ethnic difference to conceal their identity. Another possibility is that selective enforcement does occur, but not in the direction traditionally assumed.

The single most-arrested woman in the set, an Indian woman whose initials are LG, was arrested at least five times. If combined with a possible alias with the same initials, this total rises to nine arrests, far in excess of the next nearest total. This clearly an example of a woman who has been singled out for enforcement efforts, but there are no parallel cases in the sample.

In any event, these figures suggest that, at a minimum, 20% of the cases reviewed were repeat arrests (63/325). While some repeat arrests are undoubtedly hidden, we can conclude with some confidence that **at least** 279 (325 - 46) individuals are working the streets in the CBD. Even with some selective prosecution, the level of repetitive arrests indicates these records include a significant percentage of the entire population. Since one in five is a sure repeat after 325 tries, we can guess that the population is **at most** five times our sample, or 1625 women. But the total could be much less, given the incentive the women have to give false names.

In addition, the arrest sample includes a number of women who are clearly the same people interviewed in this study. Carol, Debbie, Chantal, Sharon, Shereen, Loshni, Kerry, Porche, Storm, and Caroline are definite duplicates, with Kathy, Jackie, Chereen, Nonhlunga, and Daphne being strong possibilities. That means, at the very least, between a third and a half of the

women in the interview sample were also in the arrest sample. Considering that four (14%) of the street women said they had never been arrested, and seven (24%) had been on the street less than a year, these figures are even more striking.

Using the wildlife technique again, we find 10 out of 30 women in our interview sample were “tagged” by arrest, suggesting that the final count should not be more than 837 (3 x (325 - 46 repeat individuals)). This figure is also likely to be on the high end, because of false identification.

The fact that as much as half of the women on the street live in one of five downtown residential hotels (see discussion to follow), as well as field observation, leads to the conclusion that between 500 and 700 women are involved in street sex work in the CBD. For this population, a sample of 30 (between 4% and 6%) is more than adequate in number.

4.3.1 Ethnicity

But are the 30 subjects ethnically representative? As Table 6 showed, the police sample was about 16% white, 16% coloured, 14% Indian, and 55% black. Comparing this breakdown to the ethnic composition of the police sample and the interview sample shows some contrasts:

Table 7: Ethnic composition - Interview sample of streetwalkers					
Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
White	1.00	6	20.0	20.0	20.0
Indian	2.00	4	13.3	13.3	33.3
Coloured	3.00	7	23.3	23.3	56.7
Black	4.00	13	43.3	43.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	
Valid cases	30	Missing cases	0		

While the general shape of the two samples are similar, white and coloured sex workers appear to be over-represented in the interview sample, while blacks are under-represented. Two explanations suggest themselves. Either these numbers indicate selective prosecution of black sex workers and protection of white and coloured sex workers, or they represent a sampling error in the research. If, as was previously discussed, selective prosecution is directed at Indian sex workers, sampling error is a distinct possibility.

This sampling error could be due to subconscious researcher preference for non-black subjects (who were found generally to be more responsive and more fluent in English) or because certain geographic areas of sex work practice were not sufficiently sampled. To test the possibility of spatial sampling error, the point of arrest in the police data set was compared to the point of interview in the interview data.

This variable is not a very precise one in either data set. The difference between the Pickering area and the Winder Street area is difficult to gauge, for example, as many women stand in the alleyways of Mazeppa and Robin Streets, and straddle these two regions (see the map on page 38). The area of arrest is often listed on the reports as simply "Smith Street" or "Esplanade", both of which cover considerable ground.

Table 8: Location of arrest - Police sample

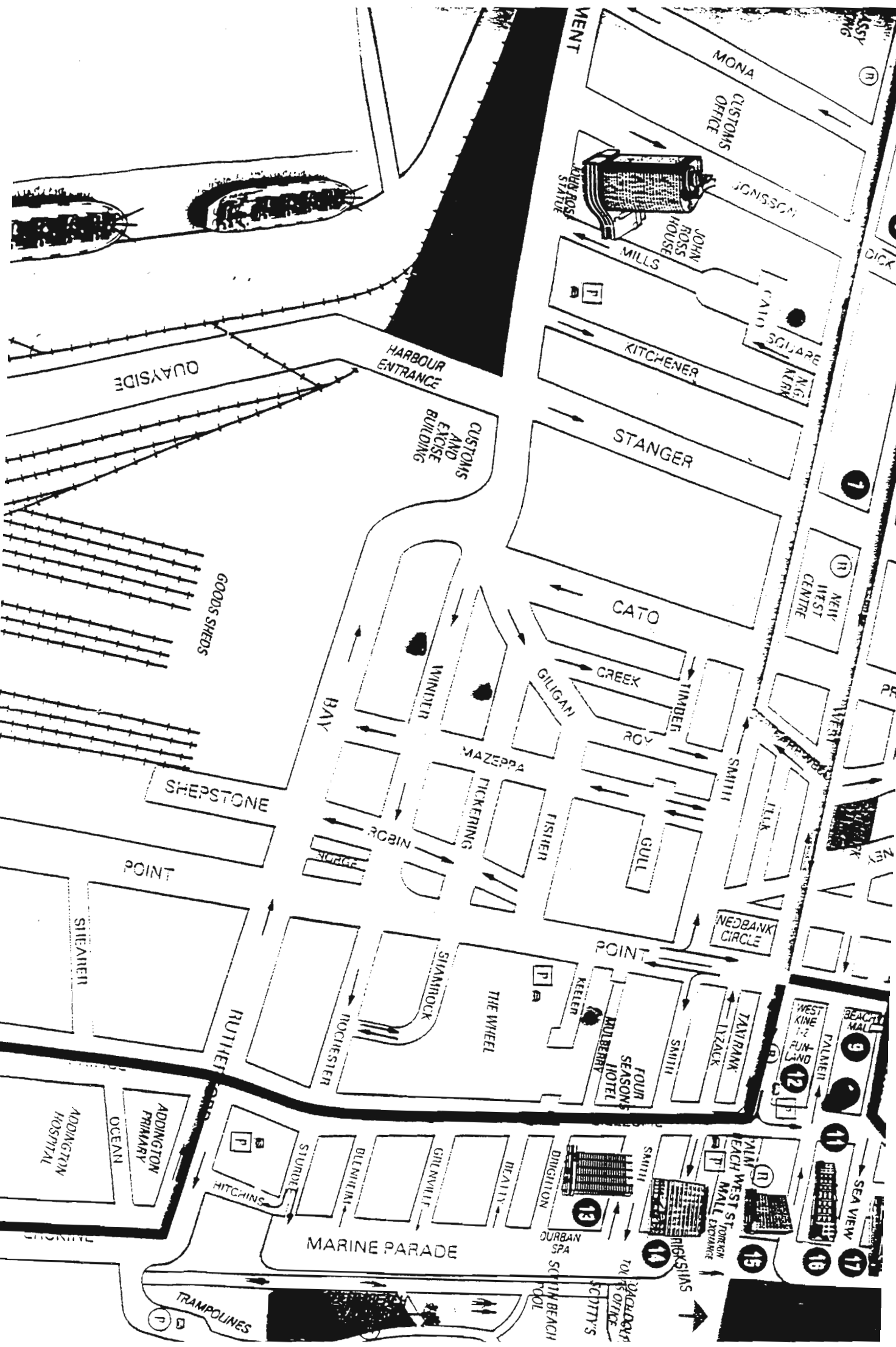
Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
Smith and Cato	1.00	51	15.7	15.8	15.8
Winder/Rochester	2.00	72	22.2	22.4	38.2
Pickering	3.00	31	9.5	9.6	47.8
West Street Mall	4.00	16	4.9	5.0	52.8
Esplanade	5.00	49	15.1	15.2	68.0
Other Smith	6.00	47	14.5	14.6	82.6
Gillespie/Palmer	7.00	10	3.1	3.1	85.7
Smith and Aliwal	8.00	12	3.7	3.7	89.4
Other Point	9.00	10	3.1	3.1	92.5
Other	10.00	9	2.8	2.8	95.3
Marine Parade	11.00	8	2.5	2.5	97.8
Mona Road	12.00	5	1.5	1.6	99.4
	18.00	2	.6	.6	100.0

			3	.9	Missing
			-----	-----	-----
		Total	325	100.0	100.0
Valid cases	322	Missing cases	3		

Table 9: Site of the interview- Interview sample of streetwalkers					
Value Label	Value	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cum Percent	Percent
Smith and Cato Square	1.00	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
Esplanade	2.00	4	13.3	13.3	26.7
Winder	2.50	4	13.3	13.3	40.0
Pickering Street	3.00	1	3.3	3.3	43.3
Gillespie	4.00	3	10.0	10.0	53.3
Other Smith	5.00	5	16.7	16.7	70.0
Albert Park	6.00	3	10.0	10.0	80.0
Moore Road	7.00	6	20.0	20.0	100.0
		-----	-----	-----	-----
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	
Valid cases	30	Missing cases	0		

From this comparison, it appears that, while there were substantial areas of overlap, the two samples are distinct enough that the under-sampling of blacks may be due to this difference. On closer examination, however, this argument is not sustainable. The Point Police sample contained 16 arrests from the West Street Mall, an area in which no interviews were conducted. But this sample was nearly 90% Indian or coloured, and so would not explain the greater number of blacks in the Point Police sample. In addition, the interviews included samples from Moore Road and Albert Park, areas beyond the jurisdiction of the Point Police. But these interviewees were all black. If anything, one would expect the interview sample to contain a disproportionate sample of blacks, based on these examples.

To further explore the possibility of sample bias, a more precise variable can be examined - the area of residence.



4.3.2 Residence

In a combined sample, 82% of the women, both in the agencies and on the street, live in some sort of CBD "daily accommodation" hotel. The top five of these hotels - the D'urban, the Windleigh, Camden Place, the Palmerston, and the Evaleigh - house 50% of the entire combined sample of both the police arrestees and the interviewed subjects. These hotels are marked on the map on page 38 with a blue dot.

An analysis of the race composition of these hotels confirms that it roughly conforms to the race composition of the population as a whole as detailed in Table 6, with blacks and whites both being slightly over-represented, and Indians under-represented.

Table 10: Ethnic composition - Police sample, living in residential hotels only

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
White	1.00	48	18.0	18.0	18.0
Indian	2.00	29	10.9	10.9	28.8
Coloured	3.00	43	16.1	16.1	44.9
Black	4.00	147	55.1	55.1	100.0
<hr/>					
Total		267	100.0	100.0	

Comparing the residential profile of the police sample with that of the interview sample does show some divergence, although the interviewed women were more vague about their exact residence than the arrested subjects.

Table 11: Place of residence - Point Police sample

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
D'urban	1.00	66	20.3	20.3	20.3
Windleigh	1.50	44	13.5	13.5	33.8
Camden Place	2.00	26	8.0	8.0	41.8
Palmerston	3.00	17	5.2	5.2	47.1
Sterling Court	4.00	10	3.1	3.1	50.2
Manhattan	5.00	3	.9	.9	51.1
West Point	6.00	7	2.2	2.2	53.2
Seaside	7.00	11	3.4	3.4	56.6
Evaleigh	8.00	15	4.6	4.6	61.2
Blenheim	10.00	10	3.1	3.1	64.3
Albany Grove	11.00	8	2.5	2.5	66.8
Boulevard Court	11.50	5	1.5	1.5	68.3
Norge	12.00	3	.9	.9	69.2
Mona Road	12.50	4	1.2	1.2	70.5
St Andrews Daily	13.00	11	3.4	3.4	73.8
Other CBD	13.50	27	8.3	8.3	82.2
Umlazi	15.00	8	2.5	2.5	84.6
Other township	16.00	19	5.8	5.8	90.5
Other	18.00	26	8.0	8.0	98.5
NFA	19.00	5	1.5	1.5	100.0

Total		325	100.0	100.0	
Valid cases	325	Missing cases	0		

Table 12: "Where do you presently reside?" Interviewed streetwalkers only

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
D'urban	1.00	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
Camden Place	2.00	5	16.7	16.7	30.0
Palmerston	3.00	1	3.3	3.3	33.3
Blenheim	10.00	1	3.3	3.3	36.7
Mona Road	12.50	3	10.0	10.0	46.7
North Beach	12.75	1	3.3	3.3	50.0
St Andrews	13.00	3	10.0	10.0	60.0
Other CBD	13.50	9	30.0	30.0	90.0
Other	18.00	3	10.0	10.0	100.0

Total		30	100.0	100.0	

Valid cases	30	Missing cases	0
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Comparing Tables 11 and 12 , we see that Windleigh House figures prominently in the arrest sample but is absent from the interview sample. This omission is probably due to the *modus operandi* of the women of Windleigh house. The Windleigh women tend to stand as a group in the alcove of the building, and this situation did not lend itself well to the selection of a single interview subject. Thus, although women were noted in the area nightly, none were selected for interview. This favouritism towards isolated subjects may also have influenced other data, especially that concerning the social networks of sex workers. The one attempt that was made to contract a woman in front of Windleigh was rebuffed because the interview fee was deemed insufficient by the woman approached.

Could the omission of Windleigh have biased the ethnic composition of the sample?

Table 13: Ethnic composition - Police sample, Windleigh House only					
Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
White	1.00	9	20.5	20.5	20.5
Indian	2.00	3	6.8	6.8	27.3
Coloured	3.00	5	11.4	11.4	38.6
Black	4.00	27	61.4	61.4	100.0
	Total	44	100.0	100.0	
Valid cases	44	Missing cases	0		

This profile shows that the Windleigh contains both more black and white women as a percentage of the whole than does the larger population. Failure to sample this particular hotel does not, then, explain the ethnic disparity between the interview sample and the police sample.

It is, of course, possible that the police sample is biased for reasons other than selective prosecution; for example, patrol patterns may have influenced arrests. The fact that 50% of the arrests come from women in just five hotels seems to support this proposition. This relationship can be probed by correlating the point of arrest with the residence of the women arrested.

As was noted, Windleigh House workers tend to stand directly in front of their residence, with 81% of the arrests of women residing at Windleigh being made on Winder Street. This is paralleled at other points of arrest, such as Smith and Cato Square (84% D'urban residents) and Pickering Street (46% Evaleigh residents), with areas like West Street Mall being a point of convergence for women of many residences.

Interviews indicate that the home was often used as the site for conducting business. Many streetwalkers sleep in the same bed in which they conduct business and this fact, in addition to the irregular hours kept, means that very little distinction is drawn between hours working and hours off, a point which will be discussed later. This pattern seemed particularly true for women working out of Camden Place and the D'urban, both of which charge non-residents R10 to enter the security gate at then entrance of the building. If police were to single out these areas as points of convenient arrest, bias in the police sample may result.

We cannot , therefore, conclude that the disparity in ethnic composition between the police sample and the interview sample is due to under-sampling from particular hotels. Indeed, it is not clear which of the two samples is closer to the general composition. The point may, in the final analysis, be insignificant – both samples agree that black women comprise about 45%-55% of the population, white women 15%-20%, coloured women 15%-25%, and Indian women about 13%.

4.3.3 Age

Clearly, age is a topic on which some of the women had good reason to lie. The workers could not be sure that the interviewer did not work for the police, and so would be hesitant to admit to being underage. Indeed, only one of the 30 respondents admitted to being less than 18. On the other end of the scale, it might be argued that older women would also want to conceal their age.

Surprisingly, a large number of women admitted to being over 35 – over 12% of the combined sample. As the table below shows, a disproportionate number of the over-35 women are white – nearly half. Of the women over 40, 60% are white. In the police sample, many of these older white women had their ID books on them at the time of their arrest, confirming their age.

Table 14: Ethnicity by Broad Age Cohorts

RACE	Count	AGE					Row Total
		Up to 18	18-21	21-28	29-35	36 and up	
White	1.00		4	27	9	20	60
							16.7
Indian	2.00		9	21	17	6	53
							14.8
Coloured	3.00		11	25	13	8	57
							15.9
Black	4.00	2	61	96	20	10	189
							52.6
Column		2	85	169	59	44	359
Total		.6	23.7	47.1	16.4	12.3	100.0

Number of Missing Observations: 11

Disaggregated by race, a sharp distinction is seen between the white and the black samples. One third of the white women who reported an age said they were over 35, while just over 5% of the black women were. On the other extreme, one third of the black women were under 21, while less than 7% of the white women were.

Table 15: Age - Combined sample, whites only

	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
18-21	2.00	4	6.3	6.7	6.7
21-28	3.00	27	42.9	45.0	51.7
29-35	4.00	9	14.3	15.0	66.7
36 and up	5.00	20	31.7	33.3	100.0
		3	4.8	Missing	
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	
Valid cases	60	Missing cases	3		

Table 16: Age - Combined sample, blacks only

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
Up to 18	1.00	2	1.0	1.1	1.1
18-21	2.00	61	31.9	32.3	33.3
21-28	3.00	96	50.3	50.8	84.1
29-35	4.00	20	10.5	10.6	94.7
36 and up	5.00	10	5.2	5.3	100.0
		2	1.0	Missing	
	Total	191	100.0	100.0	
Valid cases	189	Missing cases	2		

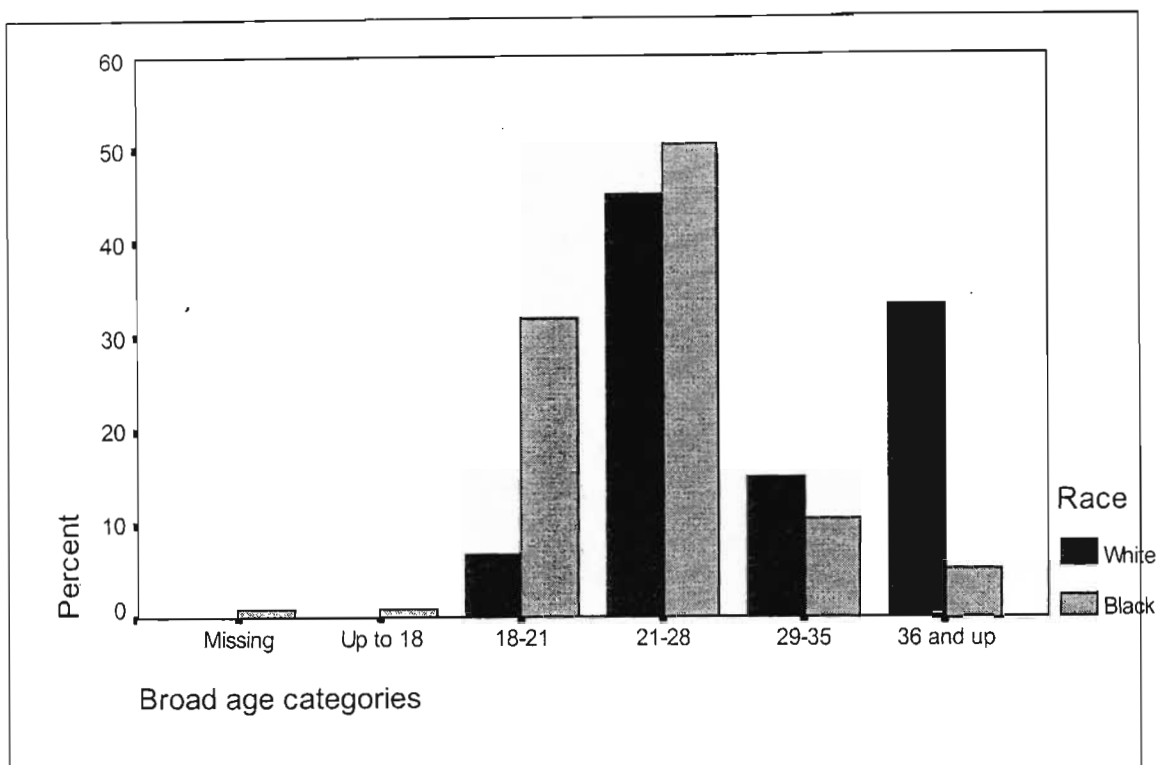


Figure 1: Ages of whites and blacks, combined sample (n = 370)

The graph above indicates that, while the black population shows a fairly regular bell curve, the white sex worker population is divided into two age cohorts. One roughly correlates with the black “20-something” population. The second are an old guard of women who have been working the downtown area for years.

Of the three white women over 35 that were interviewed, all were working the street. Two had been in sex work for over 20 years and the other for over ten years. All were from the Durban CBD originally and had worked there exclusively. All had worked in other sectors, but said they preferred the autonomy of street life.

From the preceding it becomes clear that sex workers come in all colours and ages. As might be expected from such a demographically diverse group, their backgrounds, views, and experiences are very different.

Chapter Five: Sex Work in the Durban CBD

5.1 Personal Background

5.1.1 Home origin

In the interviews, the women were asked: "Where are you from?" The answer to this question generally flowed naturally, although occasional clarification was needed between birthplace and areas of subsequent residency. The women frequently listed a series of towns in which they had resided, in which case the place in which they spent most of their childhood was listed. A surprisingly large number of women were born and raise in the CBD, while another major segment were from places in the Durban metropolitan area outside the CBD. Combining these two with others from KwaZulu-Natal outside the Durban metro makes up nearly two thirds of the entire population.

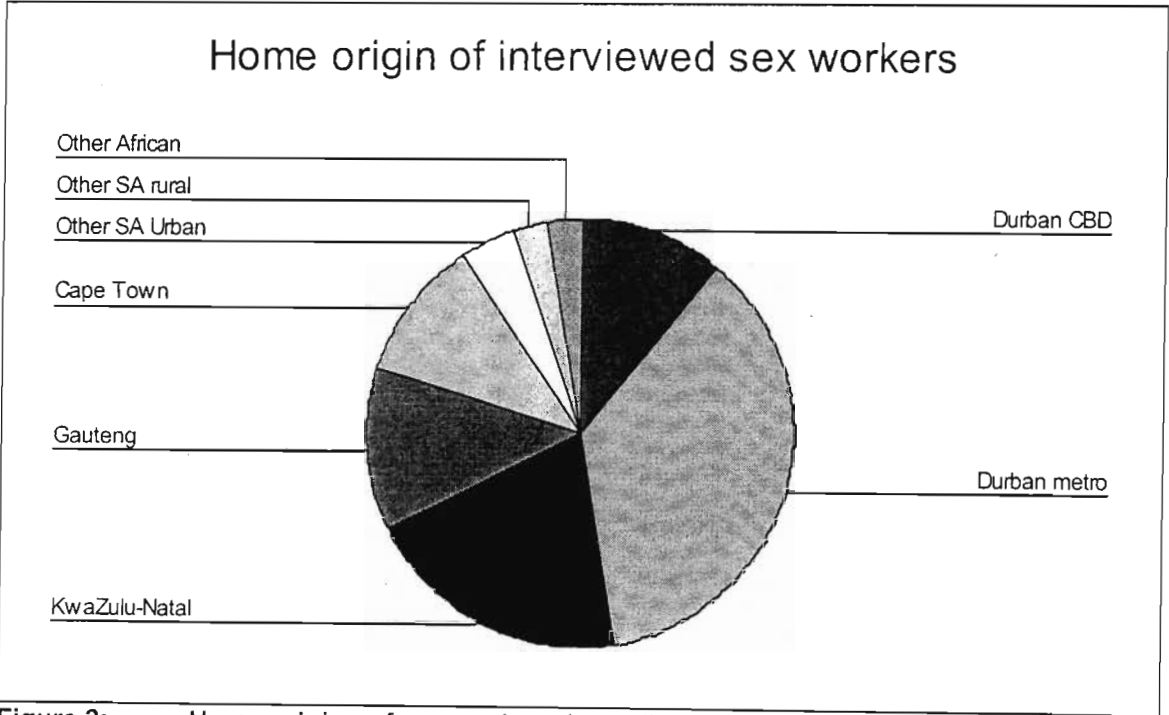


Figure 2: Home origins of sex workers (n = 74)

The above breakdown also includes 29 cases from the police sample which listed home origin (certain forms recorded this information), which were included in the interest of expanding the base. In these cases, there is some ambiguity as to whether cases listing "Durban" as the home area refer to the

CBD or the broader metro area, and so all were classed as metro cases. Striking was the near-complete absence of foreign nationals. The "Other African" category, which includes all women from African countries other than South Africa, has only two members. "Pranable" is one of them:

"Pranable" is 30 year old Mozambican woman, whose father was half black and half Chinese and whose mother was a white Frenchwoman. Her mother and two children are in Johannesburg and she returns there every three weeks to see them.

Before she was born, Pranable's father was given a scholarship to study engineering in France. He returned to Mozambique with a wife and they fled to Johannesburg during the civil war. In South Africa, he became a successful businessman. Pranable's husband was Greek. From the beginning, he and Pranable had sexual differences – he wanted anal sex but she had had an operation for piles at the age of 18 and refused. This seems to have provoked him into sleeping around. He opened a disco, which also did strip shows. Pranable kept the books. This business did not do well, and he was continuously having to borrow from Pranable's father. He also began to sell drugs and began to act like he was using them. After one violent episode, Pranable's father came to her home to take her and the children to stay with him. Her husband shot him in the head and killed him.

Immediately after the murder, Pranable was unable to speak for some time. She attempted suicide on several occasions, and was eventually hospitalised for psychiatric problems. She has only recently gone off Prozac and Valium. With both breadwinners lost, Pranable began sex work in Johannesburg, but was raped twice. A client told her Durban was better, and that crack was not so predominant, so she began migrant work. She says that her clients are generally okay, although there are some "perverts". Her clients are white and Indian. She refuses to do blacks or young coloureds, as they have "different beliefs". She had a boyfriend in Johannesburg but left him because, "it is easier to be alone in this business."

Given South Africa's past, it is not surprising that, disaggregated by race, a different picture of home origin emerges:



Figure 3: Home origins of white sex workers (n = 13)

The majority of white sex workers were from Durban, with a surprising number listing the CBD as their lifetime home.

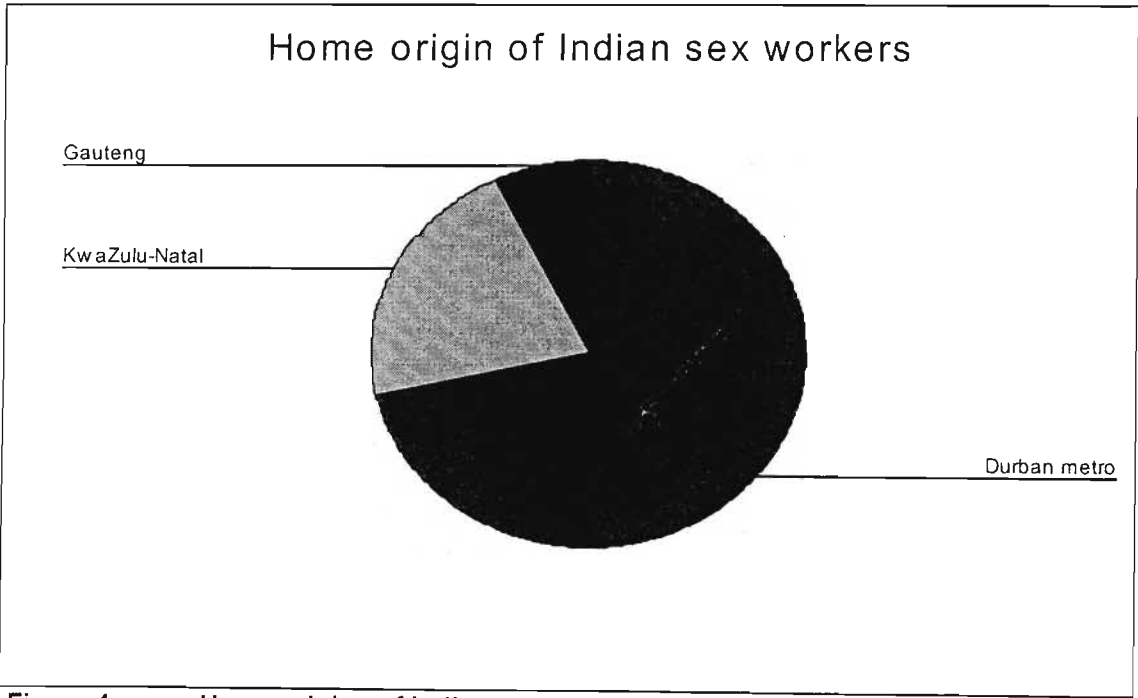


Figure 4: Home origins of Indian sex workers (n = 9)

More than two thirds of the Indian sex workers were from the Durban metro area, with most coming from the Indian suburbs of Chatsworth and Phoenix.

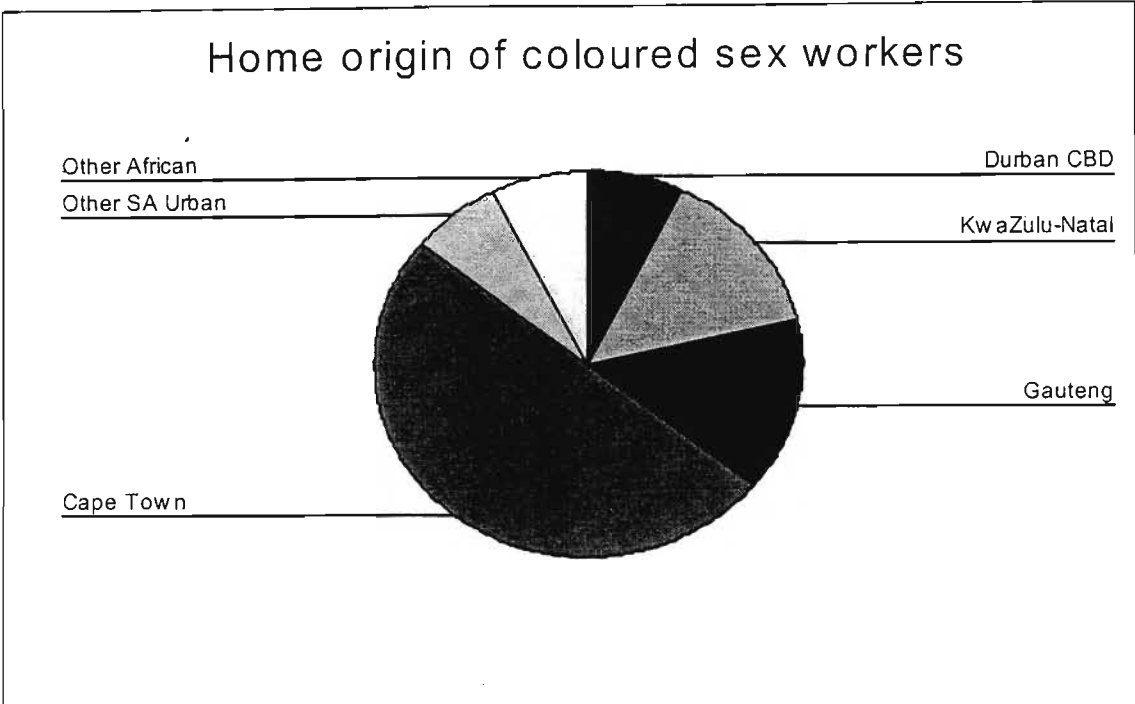


Figure 5: Home origins of coloured sex workers (n = 8)

Nearly half of the coloured sex workers were from Cape Town. Very few were local.

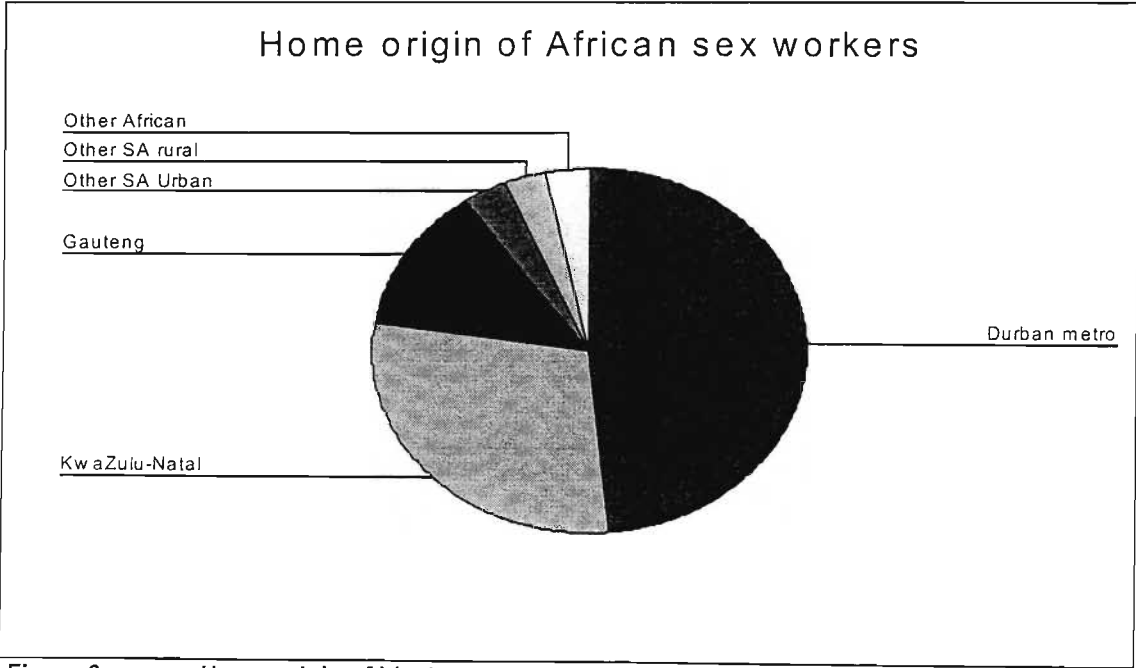


Figure 6: Home origin of black sex workers (n = 15)

Aside from a chunk from Gauteng, nearly all of the African sex workers were from somewhere in KwaZulu-Natal outside Durban.

Of all these groups, the most striking anomaly is the lack of local coloured women. Of the 14 coloureds interviewed, only three were from KwaZulu-Natal. A number of coloured women from the Cape said they sell sex in Durban, to keep their families from finding out. Shereen and her sister are cases in point.

Shireen is a 31 year old coloured woman from Cape Town. Her father is a police officer and her mother is a housewife/midwife. She left school after Standard 8 and did six months of a secretarial course. She got involved with a Spanish guy and had a son by him. The child is presently staying with her mother.

She has worked in a clothing factory at the switchboard and as a wage clerk, and as a waitress and a bar lady. It was while working in a Greek tavern which catered to seamen that she started getting propositioned, and that is how she started in the industry five years ago.

She generally works with her sister doing doubles. The worst thing that could possibly happen would be for her family in Cape Town to find out what they are doing. The family thinks they are waitressing. She says she knows other coloureds from the Cape that are doing the same thing.

She spends most of her money going to Cape Town, sending money to her son, and on her half of R1500 rental at the Palm Beach. She is a Catholic and attends church on holidays in Cape Town. She thinks decriminalisation would be both good and bad, and would encourage more women to enter the industry. She says that health cards are issued in the harbour in Cape Town, and that a similar situation should be adopted here.

She would like to continue to work with lots of people, and she speaks Spanish, Italian, and Rumanian. She could be a translator, and was offered a job at a resort in Mozambique, but declined it because of the weak currency.

She doesn't like men and has never had any real boyfriends. She doesn't like Durban and thinks Cape Town is more friendly.

Contrary to what might be expected, 70% of the women left home after the age of 16. When asked "When did you leave home?", a number of the Indian women related "leaving home" to the dates of their divorces. No woman interviewed reported leaving home younger than the age of 13.

The youngest worker interviewed was Princess, a 15 year old girl from Swaziland who came to Durban with her younger brother and sister after her mother was murdered. She was found working outside the Blenheim, one of the spots sex workers say the young girls can be found. "Club Tease" in the New Rand Hotel on Stanger Street is also a gathering spot for young girls on "ladies' night" (Wednesday) when there is no door charge, as is the Butterworth Hotel. It is said that cheap housing is offered to homeless girls in Albany Grove and "near the Wheel" (possibly Camden Place) as a way of directing them into sex work.

Table 17: Age of emancipation					
Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
13-16	2.00	12	29.3	29.3	29.3
Over 16	3.00	29	70.7	70.7	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	
Valid cases	41	Missing cases	0		

The women listed a number of reasons for leaving home originally. In the interviews in which abuse by parents was discussed, less than a third said

that it was a primary cause. Those who did mention abuse frequently cited stepfathers as the source of the problem.

Table 18: Was the home situation abusive?

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
no	.00	23	67.6	67.6	67.6
yes	1.00	11	32.4	32.4	100.0
Total		34	100.0	100.0	
Valid cases	34	Missing cases	0		

Also contrary to expectations, a sizeable minority were brought up by both parents, and the majority come from working class homes. Parents' professions ran the gamut from being sex workers themselves to school principals and regional retail managers. A large number of the mothers were housewives or worked in clothing factories, and police officers were part of a surprising number of family trees. There were also a group of women who had been brought up in institutional care.

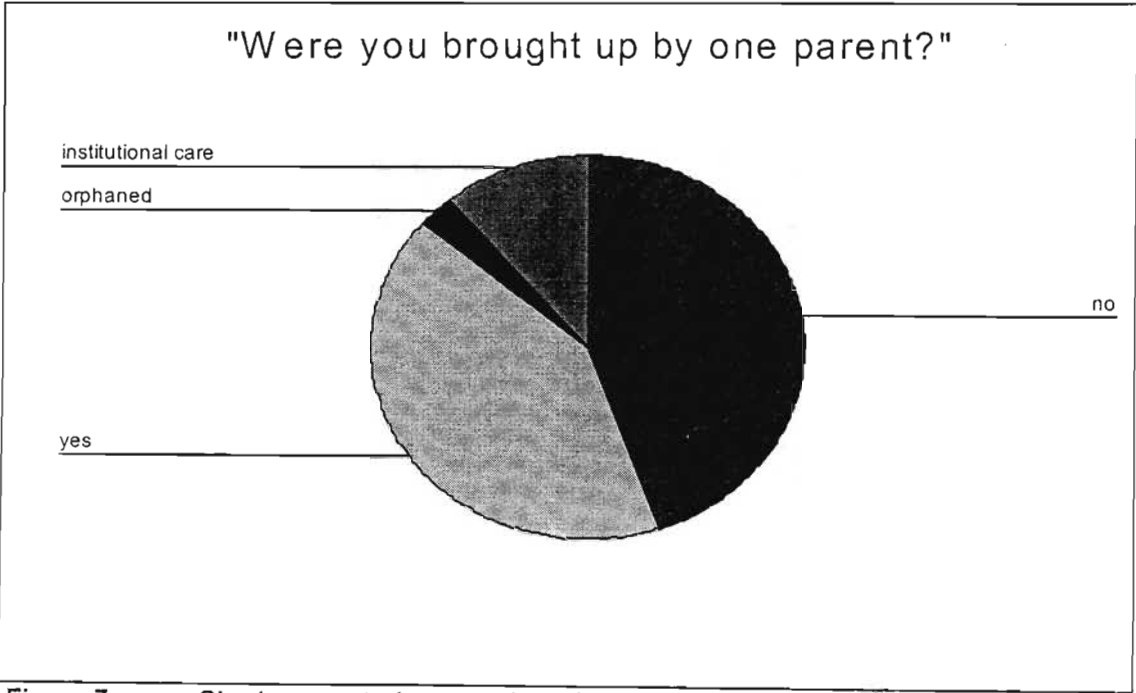


Figure 7: Single-parented sex workers (n = 45)

Table 19: What were your parents professions?

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
Orphan	.00	2	4.9	5.9	5.9
Unemployed	1.00	1	2.4	2.9	8.8
Irregular	2.00	5	12.2	14.7	23.5
blue collar	3.00	18	43.9	52.9	76.5
white collar	4.00	6	14.6	17.6	94.1
professional	5.00	2	4.9	5.9	100.0
<hr/>					
Total		34	100.0	100.0	

"Kim" is an example of a woman who wound up in the profession for non-economic reasons.

"Kim" is a 30 year old Indian woman from Tongaat. She comes from a wealthy family that owns a number businesses (retail and restaurant) and a farm. She left home because of "problems" she declined to discuss. She has had one child, who is with the father's family. She has completed one year of university, studying social sciences, and hopes to return at some stage.

Kim is a diagnosed paranoid schizophrenic who suffered from three years of "amnesia" and depression. For a period of time she was homeless until she walked into an escort agency.

She lives with her boyfriend, who is a former vice-squad police officer. She says he was expelled from the force after killing one fellow officer and paralysing two others after finding them raping a woman. He is her "hero" and the best thing in her life. He has even converted to Islam, since she is strong in the faith. She believes Islamic justice would straighten out this country. She wants to marry her boyfriend in January and become a housewife.

Her health is not good. She just had a tumour removed from her ovaries. She takes lots of vitamin C. She also has very bad eyesight.

5.1.2 Education and work experience

Educational background was, likewise, rather average. The women ranged from having had no formal education to having completed technikon certificates. The median educational achievement was Standard 9, the mode was Standard 8, and over one third had completed matric. "Shereen" was the most extreme example of an educationally deprived background.

"Shereen" described herself as a 34 year old Indian woman from Verulam whose mother had never sent her to school. As a result, she is completely illiterate. She ran away from an abusive stepfather at 16, and was led into drugs and prostitution by "Micky", another street kid. She is off drugs at present.

She has established a good business on her own, working in front of a Portuguese restaurant that the sailors frequent, and having a business arrangement with several taxi drivers who service the harbour. She also has several white clients who visit her at her home at Camden Place. She had a child by a German client-turned-boyfriend, who was killed in a car accident. Recently, she was beaten with a gun butt in the apartment of a wealthy attorney. She is negotiating a settlement with him presently. She also recently discovered she has breast cancer. She says she will be going soon to have it "burnt out."

She has a bank account and substantial savings, and would like to buy a laundromat that she has seen for sale in her neighbourhood. She'd like to run it with several other sex workers. When asked what she likes best about her life, she says she "likes sex".

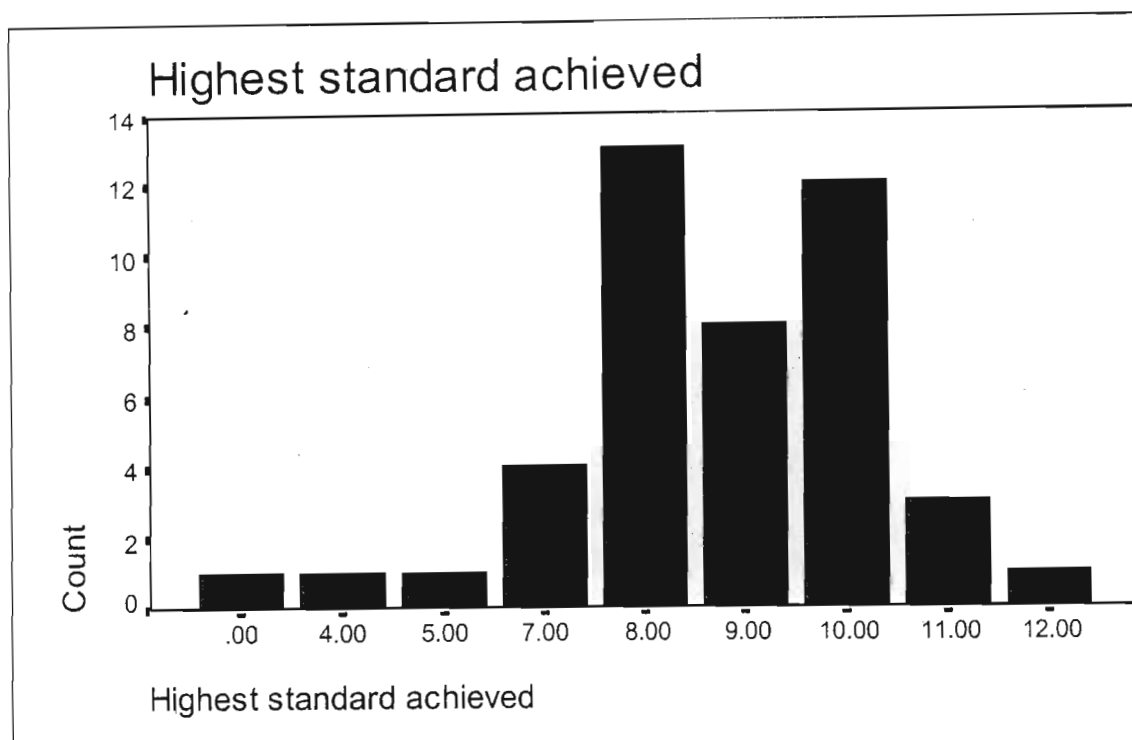


Figure 8: Educational level (n = 45)

“Standard 11” and “12” in Figure 8 indicate one and two years post-matric education respectively, either at technikon or at some training college. One third of the women had had no other employment than sex work, and half had had less than one year. Among the black women, 73% had had no other experience, and 80% had had less than one year’s experience in anything other than sex work.

However, over 70% of the women over 25 had had over one year’s employment. This is partly due to the fact that 25% of them had left sex work for over one year to do some other kind of work, but the remaining 75% had acquired this experience prior to entering the profession. Only two of the women said they currently had employment other than sex work. “Cindi” and “Jacqui” are two women who are not without other job skills.

“Cindi” is a 24 year old Indian woman from Chatsworth, where she lives still. Her mother is a nurse and her father works for South African Breweries. She left home after she got married at 19. She is a trained paramedic, and has been awarded two “badges”. She has also worked as a receptionist and as a volunteer school teacher. She says her life has gotten better since she

entered the sex trade six months ago. She's happy, but wishes she did not have to lie so much.

She started out in a private house in Malvern, but there were "too many ladies" there. She likes the Castle because she gets to meet people and she gets to choose her clients. She thinks her clients are very good, although she tries to feel nothing for them and not to get involved.

She says she is happy but she wonders if she will ever settle down again. She'd like to get married and be a housewife, or to study to become more qualified as a paramedic.

Jacquie is a 33 year old white woman from Cape Town. Her father worked for a canning company and her mother was a housewife. She left home at 17 when she got married. She worked for 10 years for Trust Bank before being retrenched. After three months of unemployment, her brother suggested she try sex work. She answered an advert in the newspaper.

She started out at the first private house in Durban, on Botanic Gardens Road, run by a certified psychologist named "Cathy". She like the privacy of this set up, as she knows many people in town from her previous life. The distance of the Castle from town also ensures this privacy, although she does not like the fact that she has to socialise with the customers and compete for clients.

She has been in the work for three years. She took three months off to take a job with her friend Joanna who used to work at the Castle, but the deal fell through. She had to pay a whopping fine and was depressed to come back but has adjusted and is "stable".

She says this kind of work "makes you or breaks you." The money is a big attraction, when there are no other jobs. She has 2 boys, aged 12 and 9, who she sees every other week, and who are the best things in her life.

She is missing a man in her life and longs for a supportive relationship, although she is scared to enter into one. She has been divorced seven years and in that time had only one two year relationship. Her husband was unfaithful from the beginning of the relationship, but she really feels she cannot live without a man. She has "sort of" been seeing a man for the past 8 months, but he does not know what she does for a living. She still wants to get married again.

She wishes she were still able to have another child, but this is no longer possible. If she had R10 000, she would take time off and look for another job. She has a two year certificate in reflexology and aromatherapy, but needs about 15K to start the business.

She has been arrested once and was jailed for two days. Her former brother in law is a colonel in the SAPS, so she figures they want to avoid too much exposure.

She favours the NP and thinks "whites should have stayed in power in this country. Sad but true."

5.1.3 Time in the profession

About 35% of the women got into the profession on their own initiative, while 46% were introduced to the field through a friend or relative. About 11% were brought in by a boyfriend. "Bianca" was forced by an abusive boyfriend to sell her body to buy drugs for both of them. Kerry-Lee's story shows how getting mixed up with the wrong man can lead to this kind of work.

Kerry-Lee is a 25 year old white woman from the Durban CBD council flats. Her mother was a bit wild and her boyfriend's son got Kerry into drugs at a young age. She was sent to reform school at the age of 13 due to problems at home and at school.

She got started in the work because the father of her baby was also dating agency women. She has worked at the Palace and other agencies. She would like to go back to them, but she "hasn't got the clothes anymore."

On the night of the interview, Kerry-Lee was on both crack and Mandrax, which she says "balance each other out". She was also pregnant. Her previous child was put up for adoption. The father of that child is presently being held for housebreaking on R500 bail, an offence for which she has also been jailed. The present baby was fathered by another man. She uses condoms but no other form of birth control. She doesn't like the injections because she "needs" her periods.

Carol's story demonstrates the ways in which sex work and drugs can become a family business.

Carol is a 25 year old white woman who was brought up in downtown Durban. After escaping from a reformatory school at the age of 13, she spent eight years in Hillbrow. She returned to Durban after the murder of her brother, an SAPS officer. Here she regained contact with her mother, who is also a sex worker, and her sister, who works as a barmaid. The three of them now live together, sharing expenses. It was through her mother that Carol got into sex work, and through her uncle that she was introduced to crack cocaine.

She claims that she is currently off crack, but until recently she and her mother were working out of a hotel directly for a Nigerian and his girlfriend for payment in drugs. She says at one point she was consuming R900 worth of crack a night, but has quit cold turkey due to the encouragement of her sister. Before crack, she was into Mandrax.

She says she would never work in movies, magazines, or strip clubs because, "I have too much pride. I even turn the light off when I am with a customer." Other than her mother, she does not spend time with other sex workers because she does not want to associated with their larcenous behaviour.

She attributes the rough treatment she gets from some clients to their bad experiences with thieving sex workers.

She has no boyfriend now because she "can't afford one. If you have a boyfriend, you have to work 24 hours a day."

Her biggest problem, she says, is that some women don't use condoms, and that as a result her clients want condom-free sex. She wishes it were easier to get a decent job, which says is now impossible if you are not black.

The median time period the women reported having been in the industry was three years, but nearly 40% reported having been in for less than a year, with 20% having entered in the last 6 months. "Linda" provides an example of a new woman on the street.

Linda is a striking 20 year old black woman from Hillbrow. She says she left home last year after completing standard 10 because her stepfather had grown tired of supporting another man's child. She has been on the street for 8 months.

She came to Durban with friends from Hillbrow. She started out working for an agency, but left because, "there were lots of African girls working there, and they became jealous." She lives with two other sex workers now, one from Hillbrow and one from the Free State.

Her clients are generally rich, she says, with nice cars. She also sees seamen, including men from Italy, Russia, the Philippines, and Madagascar. She generally gets about four clients a night, works three nights a week, and takes a minimum of R100 per man, though she can make as much as R500. She has no idea how much she makes a month. She has no ID and so cannot open a bank account.

She says her main problem is that the work is not safe and that you can be robbed. She has never been raped. She would like to go back to school, get

a job, get married, and support a family. She has a coloured boyfriend presently, who works in some sort of mechanical shop. She is interested in commercial subjects, which she studied, and would like to be a financial advisor.

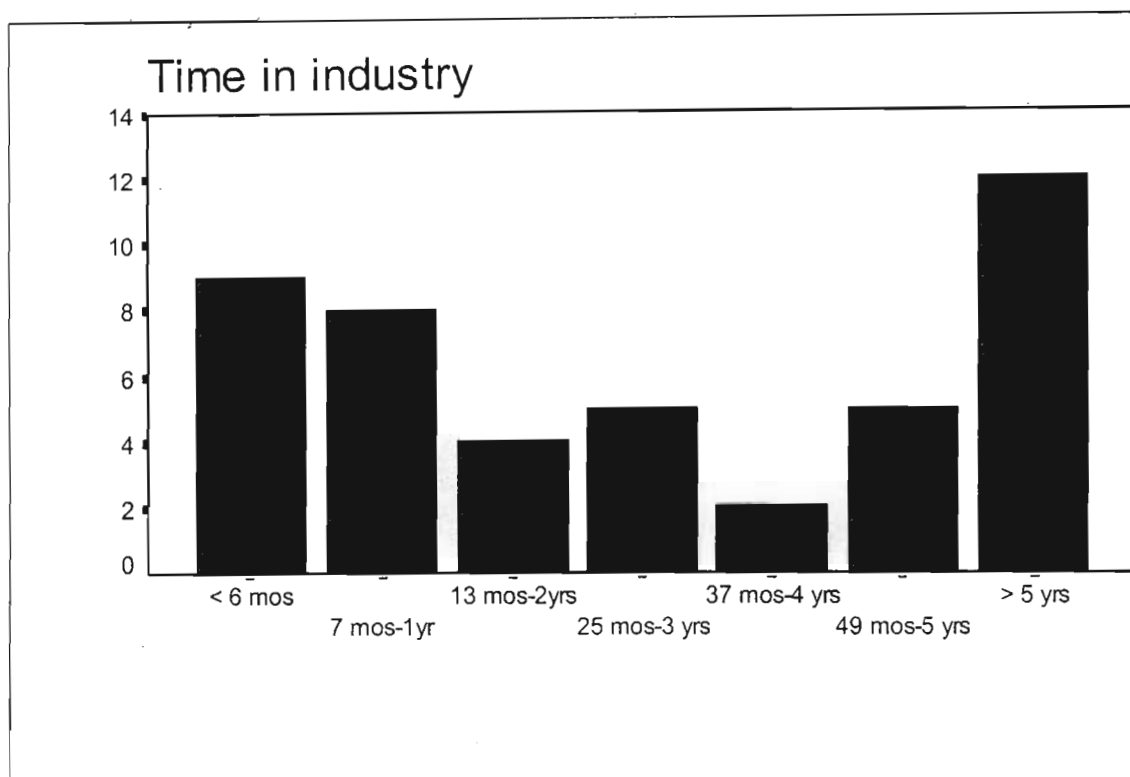


Figure 9: Time in industry (n = 45)

As with age, time in the industry is highly correlated with race. Nearly 70% of the white women had been in the industry for over three years, while 47% of the black women had entered the field in the last year. Of the most recent entries, Indians are disproportionately represented, comprising 30% of the women entering the field in the last year, but being only 13% of the general population. This belies the commonly held belief that young black women are flooding the market.

"Storm" provides an example of one of the older white women who have been in the business for some time:

"Storm" is a tall, thin white woman who says she is 41. She comes from the Durban CBD. Her mother was a housewife and her father was a butcher.

She left school in Standard 7 but worked as a switchboard operator and in sales for four years. She has been in sex work for the past 22 years. She has worked for both the clubs and the agencies, as a stripper and in oil wrestling, and managed an agency as well.

She says things have changed a lot over that time. The streets are more dangerous and rape and violence are common. There is less money and more girls, especially in the last five years. She says 90% of her clients are Indians, and always have been. "If not for the Indians, half the girls on the streets would starve. They are the most unfaithful race." She says truckdrivers are the best clients – they pay well and are pleasant.

She generally sees five clients a night, but will see up to eight or nine on a Friday or Saturday. She says her lover does closer to 10. She works every night to feed her crack and Mandrax habit. She likes to combine the drugs. She says clients come looking for girls to smoke with and she smokes as much as R5000 a night with them. Sex goes for between R50 and R100. Her accommodation is R40 a night and she mostly eats takeaways.

She has three kids – one with her mother, one with her ex, and one in a children's home. If she had one wish it would be to have her kids back. She has to get off the street because her eldest son is becoming an officer with the South African Narcotics Bureau this January. "I will need a rehab for at least six months." She has started a potentially lucrative trade to the girls in the agencies – since they work all night and sleep all day, they need someone to sell them clothes and cosmetics. She also plans to sell her life story.

5.1.4 Children

Two-thirds of the women reported having at least one child, although most reported not presently having custody. It seemed the majority of these children were conceived in a relationship context, and many prior to entering the profession. Indian women in particular seemed likely to have been

married prior to entering the profession, and often at an early age. Children were most frequently cited when the women were asked to name what is best in their lives.

Young black women seemed particularly likely to rely solely on the condom for contraception, with four of the six women asked about the issue saying they used no other form. Linda, despite her matric education, said that, although she knows men intentionally break condoms, she takes quinine tablets from the pharmacy to prevent pregnancy. Most of the women reported not presently being in a relationship.

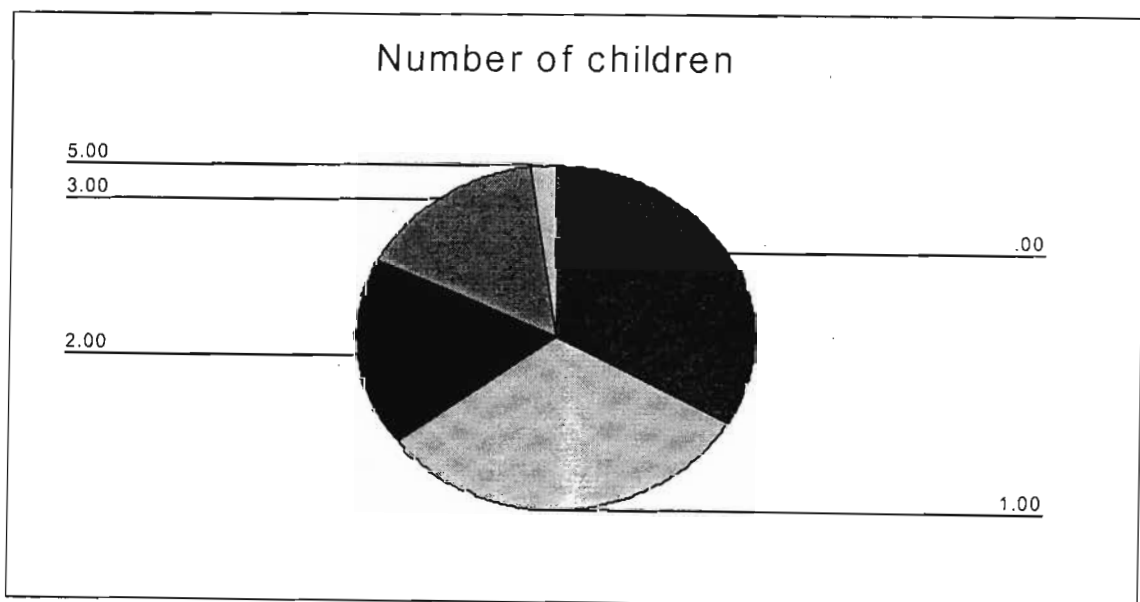


Figure 10: Number of children (n = 45)

The residential hotels where the women live are filled with young children. "Danielle" is one of many women who devote a substantial portion of their resources to providing for children and other relatives.

"Danielle" is a 27 year old white woman from the Transvaal. She currently lives with her pensioner mother, her unemployed sister, two children of her own, and three kids of her sister's. They alternate as group between living in her mother's Margate house and her sister's Umbilo Road council flat. She has been married twice and is not interested in trying again.

She has worked in sales and as a manageress of both a second hand shop and an escort agency (Jade's). She has been in sex work for four years.

Business has gotten worse in that time, a fact which she blames on the poor economy. She made R1000 a night easily a year ago. She has only worked in agencies, the other sectors being too "dangerous", although she has stripped. She has been raped over 10 times. She estimates that there are over 3000 sex workers in Durban.

Her main problems are financial, and her hopes and aspirations centre on money. She'd like to open a business of her own.

5.2 Living circumstances

5.2.1 Housing

As was previously noted, the vast majority of the women are lodgers in one of several downtown "daily accommodation" hotels. Rates in these hotels range between R40 and R90 per night, although all are squalid in the extreme. Failure to pay rent timeously results in the women being immediately locked out of their rooms, and many women experience bouts of homelessness as a result. Most of the hotels have shared bathroom facilities and minimal space. They are decrepit, noisy, smelly buildings, infested with vermin. Two-thirds of the women reported living with someone else, but the average amount of rent paid per woman was still R1200 per month. The highest amount cited was R2700 per month.

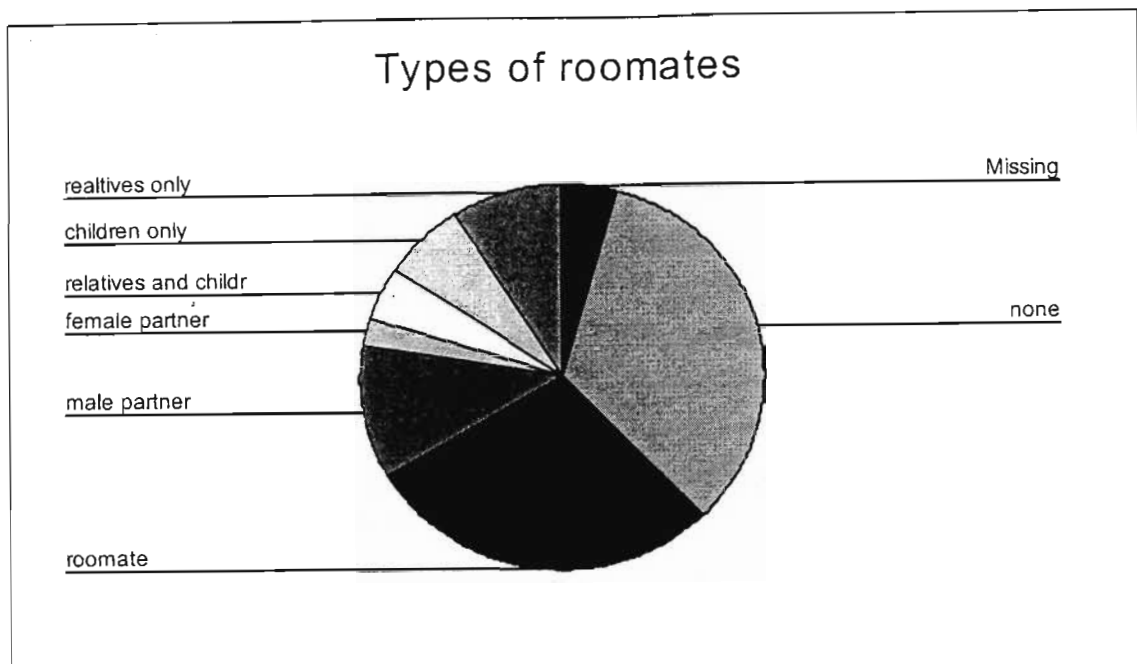


Figure 11: Types of Roomates (n = 45)

The women found various ways to justify the payment of these outrageous rents. One claimed that she was unable to get a lease because she did not have payslips from a regular job. Another was more candid – she simply could not save up the money to lay down a deposit.

5.2.2 Drugs

Despite these high rental rates, many of the women declared drugs to be their major expense. Although the researcher made clear that he was the editor of a criminal justice journal, nearly 50% of the women admitted to regular drug use. In subsequent discussions with other sex workers, it was alleged that some of the women who had claimed to be drug free were, in fact, known drug users. At one of the two escort agencies, non-usage was a requirement of employment, and at the other drug use during work hours was prohibited. While some drug usage was admitted even in these contexts, there were strong incentives against admission.

South Africa's long international isolation, and perhaps deliberate efforts on the part of the apartheid government (TRC, 1998), have led to a peculiar pattern of drug abuse in this country. Drugs not commonly abused in other countries (such as Mandrax and Welconol), are widespread here, while the

street drugs common internationally (such as cocaine and heroin) have been relatively rare.

All this is changing in the new South Africa, however. The opening of the borders has allowed international traffickers to take advantage of South Africa's geographic placement, advanced infrastructure, and overextended law enforcement. Shortly after the elections, drugs of all sorts began to flow through the country – heroin from the east and cocaine from South America. In a process that has been seen elsewhere, traffickers began to pay couriers in drugs rather than cash. This supply quickly generated its own demand among the urban lower classes in South Africa.

The immigration of foreign nationals, particularly Nigerians, has accelerated this trend. The rest of Africa has long been exposed to both the pressures of poverty and access to international trade, and have very strong illegal economies. Nigeria, with its combination of oil wealth and widespread deprivation, is internationally recognised as the source of many criminal syndicates. Although Nigeria produces no controlled substances itself (aside from a small amount of marijuana), it is a hub of trafficking activity (DEA, 1998)

All this has strong implications for the spread of HIV. While there is little culture of intravenous drug use in this country (and thus little market for heroin), there are strong similarities between Mandrax smoking and the smoking of crack cocaine. The difference between these two drugs is that Mandrax is a sedative, while crack is a stimulant with well-documented pro-sexual effects. These effects, teamed with very strong addictive potential, have led to very high levels of HIV seroprevalance in user populations. In fact, studies in the US have shown crack users to be just as likely to be HIV positive as intravenous drug users (Ross *et al*, 1998).

Drugs also increase the incidence of other forms of crime associated with the industry. Sex workers become petty thieves to supplement their incomes,

and one woman said she attributed the increase in client violence to this trend. Being high or in need of a fix also clouds the judgement sex workers rely on to survive. One close contact in the industry, a nineteen year old, was gang raped during the course of this study. Her recent conversion to crack use has been blamed for the incident. This rape was never reported to the police, and the woman concerned can remember very little about the incident. At the time of this writing, she had abandoned her room at the D'urban and disappeared.

Addiction often leads female users into sex work, and sex workers are the prime conduit through which the drug is spread. Women cited a number of reasons for getting into the drug, most of which had to do with dealing with the pressures of the job or the life that led them into the job.

Many of the women commented on the amazing spread of the drug on the streets in just the last six months. They complain that this has led to an increased number of desperate women, which has forced prices down. The universal consensus is that things are nothing like the "good old days", when sex work meant big incomes from high-class clients who treated the women well. The entire industry is seen to be in decline. The addicts will apparently do anything to get their drug money, and so engage in behaviours normally shunned by the other workers, such as anal and condom-free sex. This in turn increases the pressure on non-addicted women to engage in similar behaviours, or to lose their clients as a result.

Addiction has also led some women to engage in other forms of crime, such as drug dealing or petty theft from clients.

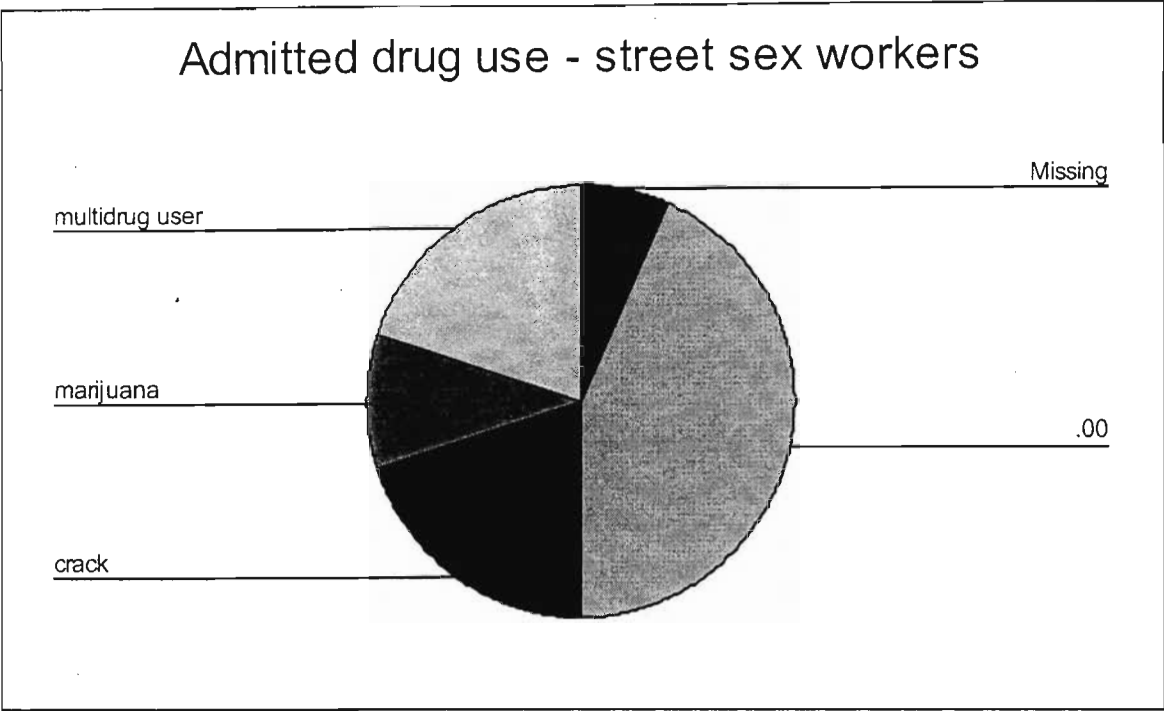


Figure 12: Drug use (n = 45)

The “multi-drug” users in the sample were devotees of crack and Mandrax, either in combination or alternatively. This means that nearly a third of the sex workers admitted some crack usage. Among non-black sex workers, this figure rises to nearly 60%. The only white street worker who claimed not to use crack was later said to be lying by another sex worker who knows her well. No sex worker was interviewed who used Mandrax alone, or who used Welconol. Crack consumption of up to R1000 a night was reported on more than one occasion, although this level of usage was not sustained.

Nohulunga’s story illustrates the way the dealers of this drug have systematically introduced it into the sex work community, creating a group of chemically dependent sexual slaves.

Nohulunga is a 22 year old black woman from KwaMashu who reckons she was one of the first to introduce crack from Hillbrow to the Durban scene. She left home in 1993 at the age of 17 after being brought up by her mother’s sister, who works in a flower shop.

When she first arrived in Hillbrow after leaving home, she shared a room over a club with two other girls from KwaZulu-Natal, and got into sex work because she was "hungry". She got into crack and was sent with her friends to spread the drug to Durban, by offering free samples to sex workers.

She says she has between six and eight clients per night, though business is highly variable. She works every day but Sunday, which, though she does not attend church, she keeps as a day of rest. She charges R100, but can spend as much as R1000 on crack.

She says she would like to go back to school to learn computer skills, and hopes to one day have a nice house with a husband and children. She says she is hit every day and has been raped many times, including by police officers. She was in Westville Prison for three months recently.

Sharon's story illustrates the way the drug contagion spreads beyond the sex workers themselves into the larger community.

Sharon is a 35 year old coloured woman from Cape Town. She has moved between Durban, Gauteng and the Cape several times, as she refuses to practice sex work in her native city. She left school after Standard Four at the age of 15 to work in a clothing factory alongside her mother. She left the Cape to escape the poverty.

She started out sex work in Durban at the Monte Carlo, a seamen's club. She got out of that because of the door fees, and because foreigners want anal sex and refuse to use condoms. She rarely sees seamen now she says because, "they want to stay the night, and I can't because I've got a boyfriend now."

The boyfriend in question is also a coloured person from Cape Town, who claims to be managing three women presently. Sharon tells me that she met him as a client, and that she introduced him to crack. "He lost his shop, his car, his family, everything," she says. Now she must "pay the price" because

he has become dependent on her, but "I've just about had enough. He must find a job now."

She refuses blacks or coloureds as clients. She says, "I can't do coloureds because I am a coloured." She gets between three and six clients a night and charges R100 a client. She estimates that she makes between R300 and R400 a night and works seven nights a week, but has no idea how much she makes a month. She also takes Mandrax to settle down from all the crack.

5.3 Professional Practice

5.3.1 Clients

A surprising 70% of the sex workers stated that they would not take clients of certain races. If black women and crack users are removed from the sample, however, the percentage refusing certain races rises to 94%.

Black men were the most frequently mentioned group that would not be accepted. This prejudice was true even among black sex workers.

Indeed, many of the women of all races expressed an unwillingness to service men of their own race. One coloured woman who had been raised by her black mother said, "I can't sleep with a black man. That's like sleeping with my brother." One white woman said, "I was married to a white man. Why would I want one for a client?" Blacks and coloureds frequently said their own races were too dangerous. Black women said black men did not want to pay for sex. One black agency worker said black men got "too personal", and this seems to be a theme that underlies much of the objection – members of one's own race are seen as potential partners rather than simply as clients. Avoidance of members of one's own race maintains the line between business and private relationships.

"Purity" provides an example of this peculiar prejudice against members of one's own race.

Purity is an 18 year old black woman from Sea Cow Lake, who has been on the street for three years after leaving home to "live life" with her friends. Her father works at Westville Prison and her mother works in a factory. She left school in Standard 7.

She says the street has changed since she started – the clients are now smoking rocks and do not pay well. Her clients are mostly white. She refuses to take blacks because "they like to fuck too much and don't want to pay." She says more than once that she does not like black men. More than half her clients are foreign and she often sees seamen. She works every night and her intake can be anything from one to seven clients, which she charges between R50 and R100.

She says she likes to drink and likes blue movies. She wishes she had more clients. She's like her own house and she'd like to stay at home. She values her freedom. She has an interest in social work.

All the women seemed to prefer older men. The consensus seemed to be that young men had "something to prove" and wanted sex in every possible position.

The women saw an average of three customers per night, although crack users cited numbers far in excess of this, particularly when on a binge. Street walkers reported slightly higher numbers, with a median value of four per night, but this was balanced by the fact that all the agency women worked either six or seven shifts per week.

Table 20: Nights worked per week – Interview sample

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
	3.00	4	8.9	9.8	9.8
	4.00	3	6.7	7.3	17.1

	5.00	5	11.1	12.2	29.3
	6.00	8	17.8	19.5	48.8
	7.00	21	46.7	51.2	100.0
	.	4	8.9	Missing	
	Total	45	100.0	100.0	
Mean	5.951	Median	7.000	Mode	7.000

The rates charged for sex were surprisingly uniform. On the street, sex generally sells at a starting price of R100, and is negotiated down from there. The two agencies where interviews were conducted each had set prices and a pre-arranged split. The Castle charges R350, of which the worker gets R200; Jade's charges R250 of which the worker gets R175. All but one of the other agencies charge less, down to a "negotiable" R150 for sex on the premises.

5.3.2 Income

Although the women were able to say how much they charged for sex, how many clients they had a night, and how many nights they worked per week, none of them was able to give a realistic estimate of how much they made a month. Most refused to try. Very few of the women had bank accounts of any kind. Again, they had a litany of reasons – no ID book, no payslips, don't trust banks – to explain why opening an account was impossible for them.

Based on the information given, however, monthly income can be calculated for each woman. Figures range from a paltry R1200 per month to a staggering R24 500. The low figure was given by a 30 year old black woman living in servants' quarters with her uncle and working Moore Road on a part time basis; the high figure was calculated on the basis of information given by a 20 year old Indian woman working seven shifts at Jade's. The mean income for the whole sample was R9546. The modal value was R11 200 – the income earned by either a Castle escort working the mandatory seven shifts and doing two clients a shift, or a streetwalker doing four clients a night at the standard R100 and working seven nights a week.

While there might be some motivation for exaggerating the rate charged, there is little conceivable motive for overstating the number of clients a night. The women who earned most had no opportunity to exaggerate their fees, as they worked in one of the escort agencies. Mean income in the agencies was R12 707 per month, while the street average was R8126. Street women were able to keep up a respectable income by doing a median figure of four – to the agencies' two – clients per night, but they lost income by not working as many nights. Women who catered to the port received much of this in US dollars.

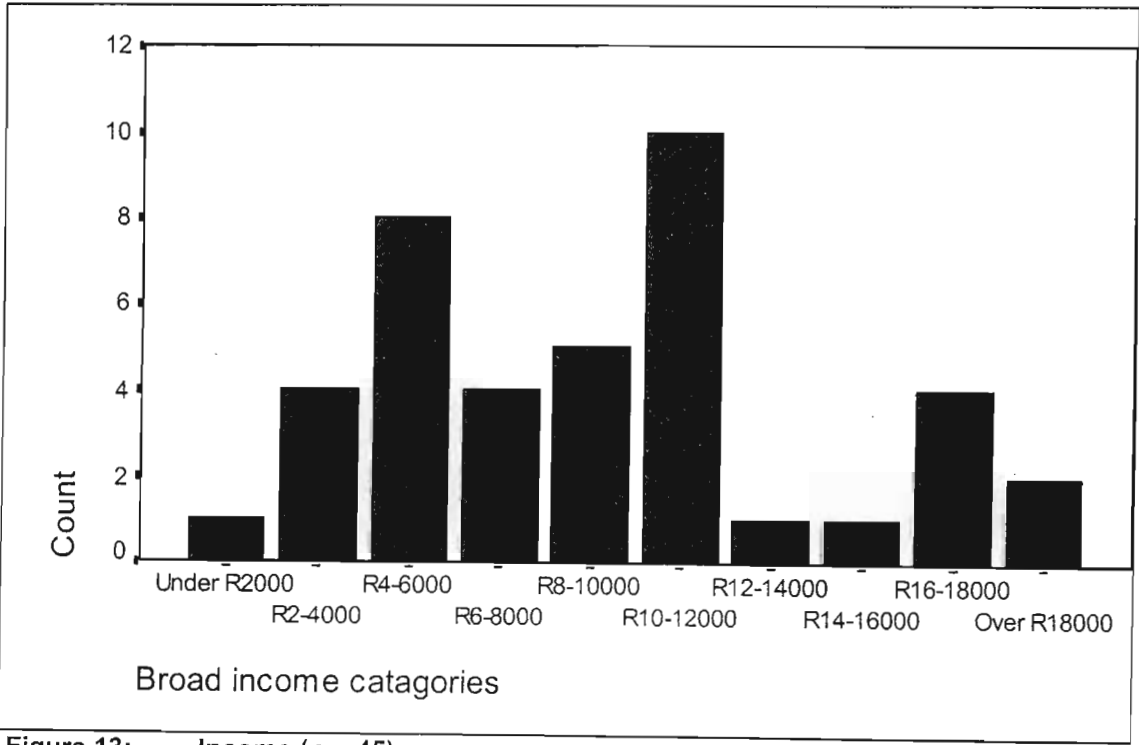


Figure 13: Income (n = 45)

“Shadé” is an example of young woman intoxicated with her outrageous income. Based on the figures she gives, she can earn over R20 000 a month.

“Shadé” is a stunning 18 year old coloured girl, who came to Durban from Dundee via Escort and Newcastle. She left home at 14 due to an abusive stepfather, and spent years in both institutional and foster care. Her mother was a black nurse, and is now dead. Shadé suspects that her mother might

also have been a prostitute at one time. Her father was a white man, said to be both rich and good looking, but Shadé never met him.

She completed Standard 10 and four months of a catering programme through a technikon. She has worked a variety of small jobs, including PR at Edgars, and has only been in sex work six months. During this time, however, she has worked in five different agencies, starting the day she walked into Eurostyle and asked for a job. She has also worked as a model and a stripper. She says she is in the business because she likes sex.

She lives alone in a R2000 a month penthouse on the beachfront, eats all her meals out, and has spent as much as R10 000 on a single shopping spree. She only spends R500 a month in drugs, and, although she has tried everything, does not take anything regularly. She also gives her sister about R500 a month. She has over R10 000 saved, and would save any additional windfall she came across.

She considers herself bisexual, but has not found a woman that really does it for her yet. In her time off she likes to shop, and needs at least 10 hours of sleep a day. She is interested in clothing design.

“Loshnie” is an example from the “survivalist trader” end of the spectrum. She engages in sex work strictly to earn rent and food money for herself and her child, and so minimises the number clients she sees.

“Loshnie” is a 27 year old Indian woman from Pietermaritzburg. She left her husband one year ago due to his drinking and abuse. She comes from a good family, but both of her parents are dead. Her father sold furniture. While with her husband, she worked for SA Diamond for four years. She got onto the streets six months ago while living in the D’Urban.

She only works three nights a week and only does two clients a night at R100 apiece, so she just clears R2000 a month. This barely covers her R255 a

week rent fee. She also smokes and has no fridge, so she wastes a lot of food. One of her two children is presently staying with her, one she sees during holidays at her sister's house. She has worked in the clerical field, but she also has studied hairdressing and has a security certificate. She is waiting for her inheritance to come through.

She has a boyfriend, Selwyn, who looks after the girls in the D'Urban and is "part of the family." She thinks decriminalisation is a good idea, because "not everyone is in this work for a stupid reason." She wishes the cops would stop harassing the women.

While agency women appeared to earn more, some of the street women who has left the agencies denied this. The selection of the top agencies has clearly biased the sample this direction.

5.3.3 Sectors and migration

There appears to be considerable mobility between the sectors. Women working in agencies had often worked in private homes, women on the streets had often worked in agencies or in the seamen's clubs. Street sex work is a rather lonely trade. Aside from being spurned by the larger society, over 25% percent of the women said they did not associate with other sex workers outside of working hours. The reasons they gave for this varied – "I prefer my own company, " "Those girls steal and I don't want to be a part of it." Many worked in pairs with relatives, friends, or sex partners. They said they would take down plate numbers when a friend got in a car, or do lesbian shows together. Most restrained themselves to a core of one to three working partners.

Table 21: Do you associate with other sex workers?

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
no	.00	12	26.7	26.7	26.7
one to three	1.00	28	62.2	62.2	88.9
more than 3	2.00	5	11.1	11.1	100.0

		Total	45	100.0	100.0
Valid cases	45	Missing cases	0		

The street workers cited a number of reasons for preferring the streets – “I can’t work to make someone else rich,” being the most popular. Many women said they were not able to reconcile the eight hour work schedule with their child care responsibilities. Some claimed to have experienced abuse by management, both physical and psychological. Others cited long hours of boredom on the premises. Lack of client choice was deemed very important, as was fear of the fine system. Women reporting for work 10 minutes late are often fined R100. Missing a day or more can result in large fines. This contributes to the large amount of migrancy between agencies and between sectors.

Shaun, the manager of Jade’s, says he decided on the appropriate fines in consultation with the women. He also says the women in his club are free to reject any client they chose. Eric, who owns the Castle, has a similar policy. He says he uses the fine system exclusively, whereas many clubs in town use fines in addition to physical violence. Both clubs operate out of bar areas, so the women have the freedom to approach or walk away from any man who enters. This requires the escorts to be social and to spend quite a bit of their time making a sale, a process that is bypassed in more traditional agencies.

* Very few of the women had “boyfriends” or pimps on the street – “they are too expensive” was the most common response. All the money, and all the risk, therefore lay with the street workers themselves. Apparently this confidence is somewhat justified – 50% of the street women reported never having been raped, and were actually less likely to say they had been raped than women from the agencies. But definitions of what constitutes “rape” apparently varied. Many street women reported customers who beat them or simply refused to pay.

While there is clearly much to be said for the autonomy of the streets, the discomfort of being exposed to passers-by and the elements, and the increased danger of working alone, would seem to mitigate against choosing this sector over the agency route. Street workers said the safety is illusory, that women are raped in agencies and on out-calls. But it seems much of the rejection is based in a desire to avoid a structured work environment. Over 60% of the women, both on the street and in the agencies, reported working in another sector. Most expressed satisfaction with the sector in which they were presently working, although about 30% said they'd rather be working in another sector.

In addition to migration between the sectors, there was some migration between cities. In keeping with the fact that nearly 70% of the women were from KwaZulu-Natal originally, however, three quarters had only worked in Durban.

5.3.4 Arrests and police harassment

One third of the women claimed never to be arrested; three quarters of this number worked in agencies. Contrary to the preceding analysis of multiple arrests, but in keeping with their over-representation among the new entries in the field, one third of the non-arrested were Indian. Three quarters of the women who had never been arrested had been in the trade one year or less. Three of the four street women who had not been arrested had been on the street only six months. It seems arrest is inevitable for street workers, and rare in the agencies.

Table 22: Number of times arrested

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
none	.00	15	33.3	41.7	41.7
once	1.00	7	15.6	19.4	61.1
two to ten times	2.00	6	13.3	16.7	77.8
more than 10 times	3.00	8	17.8	22.2	100.0
		9	20.0	Missing	
		-----	-----	-----	

		Total	45	100.0	100.0
Valid cases	36	Missing cases	9		

X Street workers problems with the police are not limited to arrest, however. Three quarters of the women reported having experienced police harassment, from taunts to requests for money to buy chicken takeaways. The women say the cops can sometimes be bought off for as little as R5, but "spot fines" of the statutory R200 are commonly paid on the street. Whether this money ever finds its way into city coffers is another matter. On a more serious level, the women report police officers demanding sex to avoid arrest, or consuming drugs with the women. Five of the women reported being raped by police, including "Claudia".

"Claudia" is a 21 year old black woman from Maritzburg. She left home at 19 after she got pregnant by an Indian student. Her mother is a cleaner, and she has never known her father. She left school in Standard 8 and has had no other jobs. She has been on the street for nine months.

Her time in sex work has been hard. She has been robbed and raped by both police and civilians. She has long black bruises down the backs of her legs where she says an Indian man beat her with a hammer when she asked for payment. She believes in decriminalisation because it will prevent the police from raping the women.

She stated out working on Umgeni with a friend, but that became "too dangerous". Her clients are mainly Indian, with some whites. She will not go with coloureds or blacks because she is scared of them. She has many foreign clients and enjoys going on board ship. She does not trust truckdrivers however, and fears that they might shoot her.

She believes in God because "he has done so many things for me", including saving her from clients. She thinks men are rubbish and prefers women for sex. She does, however, hope to get married so she can support her child.

While I was interviewing Claudia, a police car pulled up behind us. As he slowly pulled past, I rolled down my window to ask if he wanted me to move. He said, "no, carry on." As he slowly pulled away, Claudia said, "That's one of the police that raped me. That's Govender of X station."

5.4 Attitudes and aspirations

5.4.1 Religion

An overwhelming 81% of the women professed a faith in God. Many of these claimed to be very familiar with the Bible, and Christian books were listed among favourite reading. Expressions such as “I pray constantly,” “I know God loves me despite everything,” “God doesn’t like what I’m doing, but he understands it,” and “I walk with Jesus every night,” were common. A few religious Hindus were also encountered.

Despite the passion of their convictions, only 16% of the women felt free to attend church. They gave a number of reasons for this: “It would be hypocritical,” “I can’t see asking forgiveness in the day and going back out at night,” “People would make me feel uncomfortable,” “It would be like a lie”.

The reasons given by the women who did attend church were also instructive. One young white agency worker said she came from a family that was “mentally disabled”. She herself showed signs of mental illness throughout the interview, and seemed obsessed with classing people and activities as “normal” and “subnormal”. She said she enjoyed attending church though she did not believe in God because of “all the nice, conservative people there.” One woman is a member of the NGK and makes sure her two boys go to church every Sunday, so they can have the moral upbringing that she feels she lacked. Others, especially the coloured women from the Cape, would only attend church out of town when with their families, or for weddings or funerals.

5.4.2 Sexual preference and relationships

While 16% expressed some sexual interest in women, most of the sex workers preferred men for sex. Although “dogs” and “pigs” were words frequently used to describe men, over 60% of the sex workers said they wished to be married at some point. Most of the women felt that men, like all people, are both good and bad. Even of those who were generally positively disposed towards men, many were sceptical about their ability to remain

faithful. Some, however, expressed romantic fantasies about being rescued from their present life by the right man. Just as men were the key to their professions, the workers looked to men for their salvation from the industry.

But the number of relationship opportunities for sex workers is very limited. "Kathy" is one woman who has found a relationship, but it is not without its problems.

Kathy is a 35 year old white woman, who looks older than her age, and smells strongly of alcohol. She is from the CDB of Durban originally, and was brought up in an orphanage since both of her parents died when she was 15. Her father was a stage magician, and her mother, a housewife. She completed Standard 10 and worked as a secretary for 10 years. She says she has only been a sex worker for four years.

She says she got into sex work because of "a hungry baby" and refuses to elaborate. Her two children are clearly a source of considerable pain for her. Her husband, who had a Mandrax problem, introduced her to the work.

She is in love with a man that works car guard outside Club 68, who she points out to me as we drive by. She is presently in the process of getting a divorce, though, and has no interest in being married again. Her present relationship is obviously a troubled one, and it upsets her to talk about it. On mentioning him, she insists that she now only does wanks and blows, and avoids actually giving sex "because I'm smart. I know how to handle clients."

She has been arrested many times for "loitering for prostitution" and "drunk and disorderly", and prefers to spend her time in jail rather than pay a fine. She has never been asked for sex because "my brother in law is a captain. Let's just say the cops know who I am."

5.4.3 Hopes and dreams

When asked to evaluate the state of their lives, the sex workers consistently cited a lack of money as their single greatest obstacle to happiness. When asked to list their biggest problems, their greatest wish, and the single thing that would make their lives better, 24 out of 40 centred their answers around money. Yet when asked what they would do with a windfall R10 000, a moderate but significant amount of money, very few were able to give immediate answers. Most then centred their answers around taking time off to find another job, or using the money to start a business. Other “wishes” they entertained had to do with repairing relationships with men or their children.

The majority of the women regarded themselves as apolitical, although 10% expressed support for the NP and 15% for the ANC. Some far-right wing sentiment was expressed among the white workers. In keeping with the general public trend, 68% said they favoured the death penalty.

Over 70% of the women said they thought a red light district was a good idea. The women who opposed it did so for a variety of reasons – fear of taxes, loss of discretion, enhanced competition, encouragement for other women to join the industry. But those in favour listed as benefits increased safety, HIV controls, prevention of drug abuse, and reduction of police violence against women.

Chapter Six: The Poverty of Sex Workers in Durban ✕

Sex work in the Durban CBD is clearly a highly diverse industry. Women of all ages and races, from all sorts of social and family backgrounds, are involved in trade. Clearly, the social conditions that lead women into sex work exist in all communities and, by all reports, have always been present. Some sex workers are multi-skilled with up to 10 years of other work experience, some are illiterate and have never done anything else for a living. Some women have been in the trade for 20 years or more, while others have just entered the field. Some seem to enjoy the work, or at least the rewards, and some despise every minute of it. The amount of money made and the number of hours worked vary greatly from individual to individual.

There are a few things, however, that most sex workers seem to have in common. Despite high incomes, most live lives of abject squalor. Their concentration in a few overpriced, poor quality residential hotels is at the core of this experience. Sex workers pay, on average, R1200 a month to live in rooms scarcely three metres square and to share filthy toilet facilities, as the pictures in Appendix 2 show. Unattended children roam the halls and the lack of kitchen facilities means vermin are ubiquitous. The advantage of these locations is that they are a discrete distance from other residential areas, they are conveniently located near drug retailers, and clients know where to go to find a willing woman.

Aside from excessive rent, drug dependency exacerbates the chronic cash shortage experienced by most sex workers. Many are reliant on takeaways for all their meals. Quite a few remit money to support children in the care of others.

In the end, however, it remains something of a mystery where all the money goes.

Part of the answer lies in the fact that while the women were able to report the amount they charged per client, the number of clients they saw per night, and

x the number of nights they worked per week, none of them was able to give an accurate guess as to the amount of money they made per month. Their rent is paid by the day, their drug consumption is determined by the cash in hand, few plans of any sort are made beyond the present moment. The hopes and dreams expressed by the women had, for the most part, a fairy-tale quality, filled with winning Lotto tickets and loving husbands who care nothing about the past.

5 The women reinforce their exclusion by avoiding close relationships, beyond a core of perhaps one or two other sex workers. There is no sense of the kind of broader professional identity that could possibly be channelled into collective action. Boyfriends are usually viewed as a liability. Despite deep religious feelings, the church is avoided. Families are either estranged or deceived. Many of the most basic forms of social networks - professional, romantic, faith, familial - are considered unworkable by the women in the business.

6 The exclusion becomes cyclical. Shunned by society, the women proceed to further distance themselves. Drug usage places them mentally on an entirely different level of reality from the rest of society. Their working hours, the spaces in which they work and live, the men who enter their lives for a moment of false intimacy and are never seen again - all aspects of their lives confound the norms that constitute reality for everyone else.

Marginalisation leads to other forms of victimisation, from police harassment to rape to the tyranny of the landlord. The responses that work for other people do not work for them. They fabricate fictions about needing payslips for a current account or a lease. They lose their identity documents, and somehow cannot get it together to have them replaced. Things fall apart, and there is no template by which they can be reassembled in the sex workers' universe.

Vulnerability is therefore one of the most distinctive qualities of the sex worker's life. The illusion of security under which other citizens function has been stripped away for them. They literally stand, night after night, naked and at the mercy of strangers. They lack the strength and protection that work in the mainstream provides. When they are sick, they truly suffer; when they are old, they have little to fall back on.

Sex work and sex workers are legally condemned. What they do and what they are is not socially desirable. In the terms of Dreze and Sen, they are greatly lacking "capability". The overwhelming sense is that they have nothing to give to their community. Yet, in financial terms, sex workers represent a very productive component of Durban's economy. As this research has shown, in the CBD alone perhaps 800 women are employed in the industry, earning an average of nearly R10 000 per month, much of which is in foreign exchange. This suggests an industry generating close to R100m per annum. That the women who produce these millions of rands of services live under the conditions that they do is a tragedy.

To return to the opening question, what is poverty? Does it mean living hand-to-mouth doing work that is dirty, degrading, and dangerous? Does it mean being locked into a lifestyle where there is little prospect to improve? Does it mean suffering from compromised health? Does it mean being continually vulnerable to crime of all sorts, from assault to robbery, from rape to murder? Does it mean being locked into self-destructive behaviours, such as drug abuse and unprotected sex? Does it mean being burdened with unplanned children from a young age and being unable to provide for and protect them? Does it mean living in squalid, filthy, cramped housing and dressing in clothes that are dirty and tattered? Does it mean not being able to show oneself in public without shame? If poverty is about peripheralisation, as Kronauer argues, then there are few who are poorer than sex workers.

What this study has shown is that sex workers are as diverse a group of people as those in any other profession. What they do have in common is

their exclusion from the mainstream, and this effects their lives in some surprising ways. They, like other "poor" people throughout the world, experience a sense of vulnerability that prevents them from thinking realistically in the long-term. They are caught in lifestyle where every moment is a struggle for survival, where there is no time for reflection and no strength to plan.

Those who would design interventions to assist the poor must understand that paying them to live in segregated housing will not resolve the issue and is as doomed to failure as the policy of separate development. The poor cannot be bought out or disposed of. Stowing them in council flats or locking them in jail will not make the problem go away.

What is needed is a shift in perspective, a change in our attitude towards poverty and its causes. If poverty is about peripheralisation, we must work towards a society in which no core is designated absolute. This may mean integration or it may mean pluralism, but one thing is clear. Ignoring or condemning any part of the human "ecosystem" is becoming less and less workable.

Sex workers are just beginning to receive media attention in South Africa, to no small degree because they have begun to pose a threat to the larger society. As one of the world's most AIDS threatened countries, South Africa can no longer allow the sex trade to function unexamined. In an increasingly globalised world, this is but one small example of our growing interdependence.

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Appendix 1: The Interview Guide

1. Name	_____
2. Age:	_____
3. Race:	_____
4. From:	_____
5. Left home when:	_____
6. Why? (abuse?)	_____
7. Parents/their jobs? (single?)	_____
8. Left school when (std?):	_____
9. Other jobs (total time/switches)	_____
10. Months in trade:	_____
11. (How have things changed?)	_____
12. How'd you get started?	_____
13. How's business/why?	_____
14. Have/would work another sector?	_____
15. Why?	_____
16. Movies/magazines/striptease?	_____
17. Other workers known by name?	_____
18. Spend time with regularly?	_____
19. How many in Durban?	_____
20. What kind/underage?	_____
21. What are your clients like?	_____
22. How do you feel about them?	_____
23. Do you have clients of other races?	_____
24. Do you have many foreign clients?	_____
25. Do you see sailors/dockworkers?	_____
26. Do you see truckdrivers/O.O.T?	_____
27. Clients per night:	_____
28. Nights per week:	_____
29. Rate for sex:	_____
30. Monthly income:	_____
31. Main expenses (rent/food/drugs)	_____
32. What do you eat?	_____
33. Health?	_____
34. Where do you stay?	_____
35. Family/partner/roommate/kids	_____
36. Sexual preference/always?	_____
37. Have you ever had kids?	_____

38. What do you do when off? _____
39. Favourite book/movie/TV show? _____
40. Are you happy? _____
41. What are your main problems? _____
42. What would make life easier? _____
43. R10 000? _____
44. One wish? _____
45. What's the best in life? _____
46. Religion? _____
47. What comes next? _____
48. Areas of interest? _____
49. How many times raped (>10) _____
50. Police (arrests/harass/rape/rob?) _____
51. Decriminalisation? _____
52. Red light district? _____
53. Drugs? _____
54. Condoms/Health services? _____
55. Where? _____
56. Political party favoured/why? _____
57. Death penalty? _____
58. What do you think about men? _____
59. Can men be faithful? _____
60. Boyfriends now/past? _____
61. Do you want to get married? _____
62. Other comments? _____

Received R _____ this _____ day of _____, 1998

Signed _____