

**Erotic Enterprises:
An Ethnography of Risk and Opportunity for Female Sex Workers
in Celtic Tiger Ireland.**



NUI MAYNOOTH
Ollscoil na hÉireann M^á Nuad

Student: Emma Heffernan, 91074100.

Supervisor: Dr. A. Jamie Saris.

Head of Dept: Abdullahi El-Tom

**Department of Anthropology,
Faculty of Social Sciences,
NUI Maynooth.**

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Table of Contents

Abstract	3
Declaration	4
Acknowledgements	5
Introduction	6 – 37
Chapter 1	
Mapping the City.	38 - 62
Chapter 2	
Starting Sex Work	63 - 97
Chapter 3	
Sexual Services Market	98 - 123
Chapter 4	
“Playing Games” - Picking Punters and Courting the Market	124 - 157
Chapter 5	
“A Dangerous Game” - Sex Work and Risk.	158 – 192
Conclusion	193 - 209
Bibliography	210 - 229
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms	230

Abstract

This is an ethnographic account of female sexual labour at the height of the Celtic Tiger, when sex like other consumables saw an insatiable increase in demand. Like other industries, the sex industry has relatively privileged and exploitative positions for its workers, and like other service industries, it has been revolutionized by processes of globalization, technological innovation, and an easing in the movement of capital. Much of what is written about sex workers assumes a certain degree of homogeneity, and an over simplistic account of their lives and the choices that are available to them. I explore the meanings and motivations that sex workers ascribe to their interactions with the industry, how women experience the sex industry, how they interact with it and how they experience selling sexual services in their everyday lives. This thesis then links various themes of risk, agency, opportunity, violence, victimhood and illegality within the broader framework of sex work as a form of labour.

Keywords: sex work, globalization, risk, ethnography, Celtic Tiger.

Declaration

I hereby declare that the dissertation submitted by me in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and entitled “Erotic Enterprises: An Ethnography of Risk and Opportunity for Female Sex Workers in Celtic Tiger Ireland” represents my own work and has not been previously submitted to this or any other institution for any degree, diploma or other qualification.

Signed:

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Introduction

In early June 1925 the body of a young woman was found shot dead in the foothills of the Dublin Mountains. She had been shot through the heart. Initially mystery surrounded the identity of this young woman, but she was later identified as “Honor Bright,” a prostitute who lived and worked in the city centre. Honor, whose real name was Lizzie O’Neil, originated from a farming community in Co. Carlow, and had come to Dublin several years previously as an apprentice to a drapery shop. On the night she was murdered, she was last seen in the company of two men later accused of her murder, a Garda Superintendent and a Doctor. A year after her murder, the trial of the two accused opened in the Central Criminal Court in Green Street amid considerable public interest, with many gathered from early morning hoping to be allowed to view the proceedings only to be refused entry by the Gardaí (Finegan, 1995). Opening the case for the prosecution, Mr. Carrigan¹ K.C. described the event as “a hideous tale of a night of debauchery, culminating in the deliberate and cold-blooded murder of one of the unhappy victims of their lust” (*Irish Times*, 1926). The counsel for the defense protested that the accused should not be judged by ordinary standards of behaviour, “[...] because they go on a spree, and fall victim to the two things that men have fallen victim to from the beginning of time - wine and women - that you are not to judge them by ordinary standards, but to treat them as human vampires?” (*Irish Independent*, 1926). It took the jury at the Central Criminal Court only three minutes to find both men not guilty of the murder of Honor Bright.

Honor's body was not claimed by her family, and she was buried in an unmarked grave less than two and a half miles from the scene of her murder. Much of the media coverage at the time of her murder and subsequent trial was concerned with what “lessons” could be learned from the tragedy. A writer to the *Sunday Independent* who signed himself as “Pro Patria” (for one’s country) suggested that the horrible fate of Honor Bright “is the potential doom of many girls now living in

¹ Carrigan was later author of the “Carrigan Report” which Smith (2004) argues was instrumental in authorizing Ireland’s “Containment Culture.” Also see Smith (2008).

the towns and cities of Ireland” who fall prey to “night-walking, country side-roads, dances and drinking.” He continues with:

there are lessons in stones. There are sermons in the police courts everyday. They are all applicable to the ordinary circumstances of everyday life and the Ticknock² tragedy was an arresting, horrifying, incident that makes us realize what must inevitably happen, when humdrum ordinary everyday life is debased by orgies of vice, loose living, and licentiousness. It is time that Ireland woke up. [Irish Independent 1926]

Honor Bright was immortalized in Brendan Behan’s *Richard’s Cork Leg* as well as in James Joyce’s *Finnegan’s Wake*, “all lock and no stable Honorbright Merrytrix,” the “lock” referring to Westmoreland Lock Hospital and “the meretrix” from the Latin for prostitute. A week after her murder trial, Sean O’Casey’s play *The Plough and the Stars* opened in the Abbey Theatre in Dublin. On the fourth night, 12 February 1926, the infamous Abbey Riots occurred. The riots involved two groups of protestors, those who objected to the use of the Volunteers and the Citizens Armies flags in a public house, and those, mainly women, who opposed the presence of the prostitute Rosie Redmond in the second act. This was, apparently, the first time the word “prostitute” was heard on a Dublin stage (Finegan, 1995). The character of Rosie was fiercely criticized because, as one woman reputedly told O’Casey, “I’d like you to know that there isn’t a prostitute in Ireland from one end of it th’other” (O’Connor 1988:196).

Just over seventy years later, on the 29th of December 1996, the body of Belinda Pereira was found bludgeoned to death in her Dublin city centre apartment. She was so badly beaten that the Gardaí had difficulty recognizing her from her passport photo. Like Honor Bright, little was known about her at the time of her murder, except that she was not Irish and she was young and beautiful. Similarly, her grisly murder made headline news across the country. A few days after her murder her identity was revealed: she was a Sri Lankan prostitute who had come to Dublin from London to work for Christmas and New Year. Belinda had come to Ireland from

² This is where Honor Bright’s body was found dumped. A plaque on a nearby wall still marks the location today; the inscription reads “In memory of Honor Bright, RIP June 9th 1925” (Blain, 2008).

London on several previous occasions advertising in *In Dublin*³ magazine. When the details of her lifestyle were revealed, public attitudes toward her murder were less sympathetic. Tabloid newspapers began to refer to her as “Hooker Belinda” or “Vice Girl Belinda” (*The Mirror*, 1997).

I open this thesis with the stories of two women, living in two very different historical, but tumultuous, moments in recent Irish history. As well as the similarly horrific end to their lives, what connects these women is their silence and the discourses they inadvertently produced, both in the lives they lived and in the manner of their deaths. This silence permeates and creates discourses invoking morality, public health, anxieties about social breakdown, amongst others - and requires only that the “fallen” woman, the sex worker, the prostitute, does not talk back. They are rendered silent. Thus implicit in this thesis is an analysis of the imposition of silence, the dangers of particular discourses and the lack of agency attributed to those who work in the sex industry. At the core of my analysis is the notion of sexuality and its link to labour. Rubin (1999:143) suggests that whilst sexuality maybe seen by some as a frivolous topic, in times of social upheaval, it is when people are most likely to “become dangerously crazy about sexuality.” In life, both these women operated outside cultural ideals of the idealized women, and in death, their bodies their silent bodies, were appropriated by various actors for their own ends. They became as the correspondent to the Times wrote “victims of male lust” and in the case of Honor fell prey to “vice, loose living, and licentiousness.” They in effect became political and moral symbols of what happens to “bad” girls - those who transgress cultural ideals of womanhood. Verdery (1999) suggests that the advantage to dead bodies is that “they don’t talk much on their own” and that words can literally be put in to their mouths. Such is the case with Honor and Belinda, but also the countless other nameless and voiceless women who currently sell sex in Ireland. This thesis has as one of its aims an attempt to do justice to those silenced voices, through the interviews and fieldwork notes interleaved herein; I give voice to.

³In Dublin Magazine was later banned under Section 9 of the 1946 Censorship of Publications Act and its owner fined for knowingly publishing material that promoted brothels and prostitution (Brennan, 2002).

History then can be rewritten with the dead, and what makes a dead body an effective political symbol is its ambiguity, “its capacity to evoke a variety of understandings.” According to Verdery (1999):

Their political work is to institute ideas about morality by assessing accountability and punishment, to sanctify space a new to redefine temporalities of daily life to line up people with alternative ancestors and thereby to reconfigure the communities people participate in.

Similarly, Lewis Namier (1942) has written that:

While one would expect people to remember the past and imagine the future when discoursing or writing about history, they imagine it in terms of their own experiences, and when trying to gauge the future, they cite supposed analogies from the past: till, by a double process of repetition, they imagine the past and remember the future.

This thesis then links these various themes together – charted in individual chapters dealing with broader issues such as labour, risk, opportunity, sexual services market, the cartography of the Irish sex world, and the experiential aspects of sex work as told by my many research participants. How these women feel about this world of work, whether they see themselves as actors or victims, and why they work in the sex industry are all articulated through the fragments of interviews and fieldwork notes. Between the silent slaughtered body as empty signifier and the happy hooker as heroic liberal agent are multiple lives of women who work selling sexual services. Like other industries, it has relatively privileged and exploitative places for its worker, and like other service industries, it has been revolutionized by processes of globalization, technological innovation, and an easing in the movement of capital. In Ireland old and new forms of prostitution coexist - traditional street-based work goes on in places that for decades have had a reputation for such a trade, sits cheek-by-jowl with high-priced liaisons negotiated through email and SMS. This thesis serves as a sort of map of this market near the end of the Celtic Tiger boom years, when, much of Ireland genuinely believed that History had ended and a bourgeois utopia of continuous commodity consumption was at hand. During this period, the market for sex served several purposes - a source of anxiety (of diseases, of lost innocence, of

new 'Irish' faces, and of a new harshness to interpersonal interactions) and a source of grudging hope that an older puritanical Church morality had been finally overcome, that mature societies (like some of those on the Continent) managed such things, so perhaps this new Ireland could too. History has, of course, returned with a vengeance, and the market for sex remains, with new narratives clustering around it. For the moment, though, an ethnographically-informed history of the near past, one that treats these women as both products and scriptors of their lives, might provide some signposts for the present.

Constructing the Victim

Many of the discourses on sex work and prostitution talk about the “rescue” of “victims” from a life of selling sex and rarely include the voices of sex workers themselves. It is not that these women do not wish to speak and this thesis proves this strongly, but sex workers have in effect been silenced and categorized as “victim.” Herein, I attempt to negate this view to some extent by showing the vast array and complexity of the lives within this particular world of work. The “victim” as the quintessential image of innocence and passivity is a hugely political and commodified category (Kleinman, 1997). Moreover, these victimizing discourses rely on silence, and what then is more silent than a dead body? The victim has currency within the political discourse, but only if she remains quiet. The silent body, or more specifically a dead body allows certain narratives to be drawn forth, these narratives work best with a silent body as there is nothing, or no one to contradict or qualify the morality tale - the silence is the crucial part of it. The space of the silent body becomes a platform of that narrative, a moralizing discourse that fills the empty space. Moreover, the silencing not only affects sex workers, but also extends to those with opposing views to dominant discourses (i.e. such as activists and academics who advocate for sex worker rights). Those who speak to government or at scientific meetings are accused of incompetence or ethical violations, which prevents empirical evidence and varying accounts of sex work, trafficking, child prostitution from being presented (Steinfatt, 2006:497). Stigma asserts Augustín (2004) “works in all kinds of ways, among them the silencing of results that do not fit hegemonic discourses.” Moreover, as Kinnell (2008) argues, those who do not come from the radical

feminist perspective and view sex work as an “inherent violence against women,” are seen as naive and ignorant, and colluding in the abuse of women. The moral cultural “play” of the “respectable living” speaking for the “unrespectable silent” voices a moral lesson, and consequently how the bourgeois social order is stabilized by this process, is at the core of my point here. According to Weitzer (2005):

in no area of the social sciences has ideology contaminated knowledge than in writings on the sex industry. Too often in this area, the canons of scientific inquiry are suspended and research deliberately skewed to serve the particular political agenda.

We need therefore to understand the theoretical frameworks that shape our opinions, our strategies and what are the presuppositions behind a particular view, and what are the consequences of these suppositions and ultimately what are the theoretical and practical consequences, in terms of social policy and legislation (McLeod, 1982).

Selling Sex: Thesis Organization

This thesis is about women who sold sex in Dublin at the height of the Celtic Tiger, a time when Ireland’s economy went into overdrive, and demand for all sorts of consumables, including sex, saw a seemingly insatiable increase in demand. It explores the way women negotiate the Irish sex markets and strategize to sell sex within an Irish context – how they exploit opportunities presented to them, how they calculate both reasonable rates for services and how they understand and negotiate “risk.” While studies of sex work look at a range of issues such as health, trafficking, drug use, HIV/AIDS and violence, there are a dearth of projects which examine female sex work as a form of labour from an anthropological perspective, with the exception of some key authors such as Heather Montgomery, Sophie Day, Sealing Cheng, Svati Shah, Lorraine Nencel and Patty Kelly. Montgomery’s work on Thailand and Kelly’s work in Mexico have played a key role in the development of my thinking, particularly around issues connected to silencing, agency, choice, discourse and expectations within, and around the sex industry. Montgomery also addresses issues connected to ethics and representation, also key to my thinking in this project. Inspired also in part by recent work on labour by Christina Garsten

(2008), I take the approach herein that sex work and the paths into this kind of work are diverse and heterogeneous, quite unlike the homogenous somewhat simplistic narrative portrayed by both the media and some organizations. This thesis looks at how sex work functions in a neoliberal economy, driven by a competitive market and anchored in both virtual and real worlds. I examine questions of agency, choice, materialism and look at how women articulate their relationship to sex work as a form of labour. Key to this thesis is an experiential insight into the world of sex work. I retell the stories of the women I met through their own words and mine; I also illuminate their emotions, sensibilities and sentiments around this often-controversial subject. Interconnected to this is a discussion of silent bodies and the moral panic around prostitution and sex work, which in its modern moment has focused on the evil of trafficking.

This focus has tended to eliminate any other space for analysis, beyond victimizing discourses and there remains no critical space to say what do we mean by “trafficking?” What senses of agency are there? How are sex workers positioned in relation to the industry? How they live their daily lives? How do they practice sex work as a form of labour? How do they interact with clients, the State, each other? Part of my research also involved looking at the State in terms of institutional responses to prostitution, including State provision, the legal and criminal justice system, healthcare, media portrayal, drug services, the police, and other sex workers and how like most other people, they go about their daily lives of providing an income for themselves and their families. The nexus then between the neoliberal State, governmental regimes and the labour market is illuminated through the stories and experiences of my many research participants. Through fieldwork and interview I also engaged with some agents of the State, particularly An Garda Síochána (the Irish police force); this engagement is salient to the broader concerns of this thesis. The main thrust of this work then is to examine how women sell sex, and to highlight how they strategize to make money from selling sexual services, whilst at the same time protecting themselves from the multiple risks they face in their daily lives. Much of what is written about sex workers assumes a certain degree of homogeneity, and an over simplistic account of their lives and the choices that are available to them. I explore the meanings and motivations that sex workers ascribe to their

interactions with the industry, how women experience the sex industry, how they interact with it and how they experience selling sexual services in their everyday lives.

Nationalism and Sexuality

Prostitution “promotes a flurry of anxieties about, boundaries,” the family, sexuality, the nation state and borders (Rubin 1999). Modern conflicts over sexual values and erotic behaviour have resonances with religious disputes of earlier centuries, in that they are imbued with immense symbolic power. Arguments over sexual behaviours are a medium for displacing social anxieties and diffusing their emotional intensity. Sex, says Rubin (1999:143) “is always political,” but in certain historical periods it is more contested and often highly politicized than in others, and in such moments the domain of the erotic life is renegotiated. The main thrust of this work then is to examine how women sell sex, and to highlight how they strategize to make money from selling sexual services, whilst at the same time protecting themselves from the multiple risks they face in their daily lives.

The 1920’s when Honor Bright was murdered, was a particularly tumultuous in Irish history, when independence from British rule and the formation of a new state in 1922 heralded a new nationalist politics and moral order. Again the 1990’s, when Belinda Pereira was brutally murdered saw the birth of the Celtic Tiger, and heralded a time of great social change in Irish history which saw unprecedented growth in the Irish economy as well as a change in the opinions, values and traditions that underpinned Ireland as a backward introverted society. Both eras, the early twenties and the 1990’s, changed the relationship of Irish society to issues around sex and sexuality.⁴ In the 1920’s as Ireland was attempting to re-brand itself as different from its former colonial oppressor, the role of the female body was pushed centre stage. Again in the 1990’s it coincided with a changing of sexual mores and a re-evaluation of the role of women in Irish life, with women making up a significant proportion of the workforce and an emergence of a more sexually assertive female body at this

⁴ For further elaboration on sexuality, nationhood and transgression please see Mosse (1985); Stallybrass & White (1986).

time (Ghosh, 2002). This thesis was researched and written in such a moment and attempts to articulate sex workers voices amid these dominant discourses.

Constructing the Nation

Nation-states regulate “where, when, and with whom their citizens engage sexually,” by creating and enforcing legislation, but also through the propagation of “sexual ideologies and idealized morality that support state agendas with regard to the regulation of sexuality” (Manderson *et al* 1999: 193). In other words they create and reproduce what Rubin (1999: 152) terms a “sexual hierarchy.” Whilst sexually active women may be seen as transgressive and a threat to the new nation state, even more threatening are women who sell sex. Maintaining social order and handling unruly bodies (such as the prostitute body) then becomes central to construction and articulation of the new nation state.

Smyth argues that since the foundation of the State, control of women’s sexuality and reproduction has been on high on the Irish political agenda (1996:121). Moreover, McMullan (1996:37), argues that the representation of “Ireland-as-woman” moved from the “symbolic to the legislative domain” in the new constitution. The role of Irish women as “homemaker” and “mother” is enshrined as a “Fundamental Right” in the 1937 constitution, with article 41.2 stating that “the State recognizes that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved” and with article 41.3 going on to say that “The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home.” Mc Mullen (1996:38) argues that the regulation of the female body is first a “figurative element” in rebellions against the colonial oppressor and then “a literal mechanism for sustaining political legitimacy within the newly established state” and that “the private female body serves the body politic and the states legislative control of women bodies in particular (but sexuality in general)” in censorship, reproductive rights, economic discriminations against mothers and married women, and until recently, divorce, becomes a central tenet of national security.

The foundation of the Irish Free State in the early nineteen twenties, heralded a new moral order of censorship and restraint, and included various acts such as the Censorship of Publications Act (1929), the Criminal Law Amendment Act (1935) the formation of the Committee on Evil Literature and repressive new laws in the Dance Halls Act of 1935 (amended in 1997) which in the words of Flann O'Brien was "designed to control dancing- by then a vast industry and a country wide neurosis - and to wipe out abuses bearing on everything from sanitation to immorality." Together the Church and State as guardians of morality, enacted repressive legislation (Smith, 2004). Through out my fieldwork I came into contact with organizations connected to State and Church as well as ideas generated through them, by both the women I was working with and other key actors in the area. This thesis outlines these encounters and sets up a dialogue between sex workers, the State, the Church and the broader mores of Irish society.

The power of respectability and nationalism and the social need it filled (in terms of cohesion) meant that those that did not fit with the norms of society were condemned. Moreover it was not just the subversive acts themselves that were considered despicable, but the entire person taking part in these acts, were shunned and excluded from society. Those who wished to re-enter society had to pay a price for readmission (Mosse, 1985). How sex workers see themselves, describe their work to themselves and those who will listen, how questions of respectability, humiliation, shame permeate their life worlds were all visible in my numerous encounters and are also contained this thesis. How the sex worker constructs not only the self, but also the encounter between the self and the world of sex work, is thus a key trope in this study.

Good and Bad Girls

How women construct their relationship to the world of sex work, how their lives are interpreted for them in the media or through other kinds of societal discourses loomed large in my fieldwork. Reform and moral panic are a way of reducing women's autonomy and mobility. Much of the anxieties associated with moral

panics, particularly in relation to sexuality blur the lines between “good” and “bad” girls (Ghosh, 1999). The “good” girl / “bad” girl (Madonna / whore) dichotomy exists in many patriarchal societies, where the “bad” girl becomes the trope for female sexuality that threatens male control and domination” (Kempadoo, 1998). In the case of sex work it is the difference between those who are forced into sex work (good girls) and those who “choose” it (bad girls). Selling sex is not the choice of “good” women. Both Honor and Belinda suffered awful deaths, yet the horror of their deaths was somehow diminished by the way they “chose” to earn a living. They sold sex for money. Women who choose to sell sex and take part in “risky behaviour” are seen as somehow complicit in their own demise, and are seen as somehow less deserving of societal protection and justice. Steven Egger (2003) refers to these as the “less-dead,” those who before their deaths were virtually “non-existent,” based on prevailing social attitudes. Like sex workers, the homeless, vagrants, migrant farm workers, runaways, the poor, anyone on margins of society also fit into this category, in that they were essentially ignored or devalued by their communities.

The “prostitute” has occupied quite a unique place in history, honoured or surrounded by fascination or castigated as criminal. This ambiguity often results in societal ambivalence to the welfare of those working in the sex industry. Prostitutes are seen as a threat to social order (McLeod, 1982). The prostitute as “whore” is used as a boundary marker to produce cultural ideals of what is a “good woman” the whore or “bad woman” therefore demarcate women’s sexuality as monogamous, heterosexual and reproductive. The designation “whore” or “slut” is therefore used to control women’s sexuality within these cultural boundaries. According to Whelehan (2001) women can be labeled a “whore” by violating cultural standards of behaviour in relation to dress, speech, and manner and by their real or perceived sexual activities. They are categorized as deviant, dirty and dangerous. These kinds of ideas find their way into many sex workers sense of self and I heard on a number of occasions how these categorizations filtered into some of the women’s view of the world and their place in it.

The Sexual Services Market

The sexual services market is a multi-million euro global industry.⁵ The exchange of sexual services for economic gain often referred to as “the worlds oldest profession” is not a new phenomenon with written documented evidence from 3,500 years ago making the distinction between “chaste” and “unchaste women” (Bullough & Bullough, 1996). Nowadays, most major urban centers around the world have thriving sex industries. In fact, alongside “traditional” prostitution, which in itself can take many guises, most modern local sex industries also include other commercial activities such lap dancing clubs, strip clubs, fetish clubs, sex shops, phone sex, escort agencies, independent escorts, as well as the production of pornography and sex tours to developing countries.

Like other commercial enterprises, sex markets are subject to local context and circumstances. There are several ways in which the buyer and seller come into contact. Sexual services markets comprise of outdoor or street-based sex work which are face to face encounters on the street, clients kerb crawl in known red light districts, indoors through internet WebPages, visiting brothels or phoning escort agencies, responding to advertisements in the printed media (though this has been made more difficult in Ireland with the government and police crackdown on this sort of advertising), visiting massage parlour and saunas (May *et al*, 1999). Though in Ireland, the most popular are face-to-face encounters with street-based workers, as well as escort agencies and independent escorts, with contact increasingly mediated through mobile phone and Internet technology.

Similar to other service industries, the sex industry is subject to the forces of globalization. The Irish sex industry has been dramatically transformed in the last 10 years or so, particularly in response to changes facilitated by globalization, technological advances, including the proliferation of mobile phones and Internet. The increasing fluidity of the global economy and the permeability of national borders within Europe especially, coupled with changes in the labour market, economic growth, migration, expansion of the EU, as well as advances in technology

⁵ The global sex industry is estimated to be worth over \$187 Billion (Havocscope, 2010).

such as cheap air travel, ease of online bookings, have facilitated the mass movement of people seeking better opportunities for themselves and their families. As well as increasing the mobility of some sex workers, these changes have also altered the way women engage with the industry and how they contract for sex work. In the recent past, covert advertisements in magazines, offering a mere hint at what carnal delight might be on offer, have given way to explicit internet websites, allowing potential buyers to view an array of women in various locations around the city, as well as a menu of services, price lists, and graphic photos.⁶ Indeed, far from looking like an exotic enterprise, the sex industry, especially in the escort sector of the market, resembles many other branches of the service industry in the formal economy, in dealing with the effects of globalization by finding new and innovative means of accessing their potential market as part of their economic strategy. Indeed this virtual community of buyers, sellers and organizers shape the state of the online sex market, in terms of what is sold, how it is sold and by whom. A myriad of factors combine to shape the sex industry and there are multiple realities and experiences within it. Research into the sex industry and those working in it, therefore needs to account for this complexity (Lopes, 2005a).

Moral Panic

During the 20th century sexuality has been the “potent focus” of moral panics, sex workers have been implicated in the spread of disease, homosexuals for the spread of AIDS and pornography for increasing violence against women and children. Cohn (1972) suggests a moral panic is:

a condition, an event, a group of persons materialize to become defined as a threat to the social order; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical way by the mass media; the moral barricades manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnosis and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible.

⁶ These websites provided a good point of access for me in the early phase of my research for contacting women working in the escort sector of the market.

Whilst the issue of some women been “coerced” into the sex industry some basis in truth, its real meaning is lost through, distortion, exaggeration, sensationalism which obscures not only issues of migration, poverty, opportunity (amongst others), but also the variety of experiences. Empirical evidence does not support the “fact” that millions of women (anything from 600,000 to 4 million according to various reports)⁷ are being trafficked into the sex industry and several commentators question the both veracity of these figures and the questionable data collection methods (Murray, 1998; Weitzer, 2007, Pisani 2008, Augustín, 1997, 2006; Kempadoo, 2005; Sanghera, 2005; Chapkis, 2005; Gozdziaak & Bump, 2008 amongst others). Understanding the role of the mass media in creating a moral panic, is crucial according to Cohen (1972), in relation to “defining and shaping social problems,” their reporting of “facts” being enough to generate mass hysteria, anxiety, indignation and panic amongst the wider society. Threats to the social order are often framed as trafficking: which during the Celtic Tiger included anxieties of mobility (in particular the mass movement of women), globalization, consumerism, the erosion of traditional mores and values (including sexuality), the erosion of Irish culture, xenophobia, and being subsumed into the EU. Chandiramani & Misra (2005:141) writing about moral panic and sex suggest that:

Sexual panics occur when an event or series of events related to an aspect of sex, which are usually brought to society’s attention by the media, become the subject of widespread public concern and eventually lead to illogical and irrelevant changes in the law.

⁷ The US Department of State produces an annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, which has been open to broad criticism from a range of sources including CAATW’s (2007) report *Collateral Damage* and Sonderlund (2005). Several organizations suggest varying estimations on the prevalence of trafficking, for instance the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking estimates 4 million (2011), the ILO in 2005 suggested that there were at least 12.3 million people in forced labour throughout the world, with 1.4 million of these involved in commercial sexual exploitation. They also estimate that 2.5 million are involved in forced labour due to human trafficking with 1.1 million in commercial sexual exploitation. The same year the TIP (2005) report put these figures at between 600,000 to 800,000. Feminists are divided in how they define trafficking as indicated by arguments between various factions particularly around the issue of consent, definitions of trafficking and ideology (see Doezema, 2002, 2005; Kempadoo, 2005; Sanghera, 2005; Ditmore, 2005). The Irish Government in 2009 produced its first “Annual Report on Trafficking in Human Beings”. In 2009 66 cases of potential trafficking in human beings (both labour and sexual exploitation) were reported to the Gardaí, of which 49 were adults. Also see report by Dept. of Justice, Equality and Law reform and An Garda Síochána Working Group on Trafficking in Human Beings (2006) and Ward & Wylie (2007).

In this instance the movement of women, often unaccompanied (with no male to “safeguard” them) generated this response. Rofes (1998) suggests that’s “during a sex panic, a wide array of free-floating cultural fears are mapped onto specific populations who are then ostracized, victimized and punished.” Examples include the AIDS epidemic during the 1980’s when homosexuals were treated as pariahs, the white slave trade in the nineteenth century, trafficking in the 1990s, the peak of the sex panic occurring prior to the 2006 World Cup in Germany when “40,000” sex slaves were expected to invade Germany.⁸ The target groups are often small and the threat non-existent, but the hysteria over these threats to social order are “translated into calls for absolutist positions, moral barricades and quick fixes” (Shepard 2006:430) and many of these laws “continue to constrain individual’s rights long after the panic has passed.” Often governmental concerns about migration and border security, as well as international concerns about trafficking, lead to a collapse in the boundaries between these very different issues. In this instance conflating sex work with trafficking of persons for sexual exploitation, leads to rigid transnational policies that affect peoples right to free movement as well as sexual expression. Writing about Russian female migrants Sarsenov (2006) argues that:

The itinerant woman therefore simultaneously upsets (at least) two inter-related representational modes: nationalism’s dependency on images of female passivity, modesty, and purity, and, secondly, the cultural taboo attached to female mobility, resulting in sexual stigmatization of the unaccompanied female traveller. In otherwise unconventional, rebellious, and parodic works of the late 1980s and early 1990s, this ‘double bind’ produces staple images of female immigrants with a particular emphasis on their promiscuity and/or their trading of their bodies.

The issue of “trafficking” involves a discussion of human trafficking in terms of the movement of bodies, government and NGO policy, and moral panics. Reminiscent of the hysteria caused by the “white slave trade” of the nineteenth century, the issue of human trafficking has taken on such significance globally that the idea of what constitutes a trafficked body is familiar to most – namely the innocent young girl captured, tricked or forced into a life of sexual slavery by evil men, or what Cohen

⁸ Newspaper headlines such as “40,000 Women Sex Traffic for World Cup” World Net Daily (2006): “It’s going to be an invasion” The Guardian (2005) fed the frenzy. Later, research by the IOM (2006) suggested that an increase in trafficking did not occur during the World Cup.

(1972) terms “folk devils.” I suggest that this analysis is simplistic and, in reality, boundaries between subject positions in the chain of “trafficked” bodies are blurred, dynamic, and contestable. There are a multitude of reasons why women migrate and many women’s migrations are facilitated by already existing networks of friends, family and acquaintances (Augustín, 1997). Shah (2004) suggests that:

historical tropes of helpless female victims, male predators, social reform are marked in their similarities to contemporary reformist representations of women as exploited subjects of a growing and increasingly globalized and exploitatitive market for sexual commerce.

Indeed, these simplistic accounts of the “trafficker” and the “trafficked” not only ignore the multiple relationships between those who migrate and those who in some way facilitate migration, but it also the obliterates the differences between these migration stories (Agustín, 2005). Also it detracts attention from the more mundane stories of everyday poverty, structural violence and gender inequality.

Traditionally Ireland has been a country of emigration; however since the mid 1990’s rapid economic growth has resulted in an influx of almost 500,000 migrants with the numbers of male and female almost equal. The importance of this shift is fundamental to the complex nature of a moral panic. If we are to believe many of the discourses surrounding trafficking, whether it is on an international stage such as the UN, or on a more local level such as in the national press, thousands if not millions of trafficked women are flooding Europe’s major cities. The increasing fluidity of the global economy and the flattening of national borders within Europe especially have facilitated this movement of bodies primarily in an East to West direction. Alongside an increase in migrants there is also an increase in migrants selling sex. However, migration that results in the selling of sex is positioned as very different from all other migration and is produced as a particular kind of problem. Female migrant sex workers have been conflated with “trafficked” migrant workers. While those trafficked do not comprise the majority of migrants or indeed sex workers, they are the most controversial.

Much of the media interest in sex work has focused on the issue “human trafficking,”⁹ and has been framed around ideas of invasion, power and control. These voyeuristic and often hysterical reports on sex trafficking portray Ireland and indeed Western Europe as being vulnerable to transnational organized crime.¹⁰ In the midst of this, is the victim, the epitome of despair, powerless, exploited, terrorized, stripped of history, cultural and political contexts - a female in need of a saviour. Again this romanticized notion of the maiden in need of rescue resonates with the imagery of early Irish nationalism, where the female body is represented as being violated by outsider forces. This has now transfigured from a nationalist discourse to this kind of global consciousness, where a sort of economic savagery is condensed in this one kind of image, namely, the trafficked female body. While the media continues to provide strangely alluring tales of sexual terror to feed the public desire for ever more salacious accounts of abuse, this does little to inform us of the diversity in the lived experiences of women who come to Ireland to sell sex, or indeed Irish women who sell sex. The media representations are always oddly similar to one another; yet, the lived experiences of the women involved are radically different from one another - it is the differences, nuances and complexities that I wish to consider in this thesis.

Through a case study of Aija, a sex worker I encountered through my fieldwork, I examine the disjuncture between the image of the “trafficked” body in popular discourses, on one hand, and the narratives of migrant women, on the other - women who feel disconnected from and / or are unable to identify with such descriptions. Aija was just one of many women whom I encountered in the field who articulated

⁹ Human Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation is often shortened to “human trafficking” or just “trafficking” in the media and by certain NGO’s, which tends to make invisible other forms of informal (and sometimes highly exploitative) labour such as carers, farm labourers, sweatshop labour, domestic workers, restaurant workers etc. Women are overrepresented in the informal sector, especially in the domestic, caring and sexual services markets. However out of these options, sex work is the most profitable (Agustín, 2006).

¹⁰ Newspaper headlines warn of the scale of human trafficking including “*Human Trafficking is the new ‘slave trade’*” Irish Times December 2001, “*Warning of Human Trafficking in Ireland*” Irish Times June 2005, “*Women trafficked to work as prostitutes*”, Irish Times October 2005, “trafficking in misery” Irish Times, May 2006, “*Warning on People traffickers*”, June 2006 Irish Times, “*32 human Trafficking cases only ‘tip of the iceberg’*” “*Ireland seen as ‘risk destination’ for sex trafficking*,” 7th May, 2006 Irish Independent.

such concerns, I have as much as possible in this project included such voices and concerns.

Aija: transforming attitudes about the world of sex work

“What is worse than a boring life?” said Aija as she flopped down onto the chair at a city centre coffee shop. She was elated, having just finished her last day on a “start your own business course” at a local private college. “Now”, she said excitedly “I’m going to beauty school!” “You’re what?” I asked incredulously. “Yes,” she continued, “I’m going to start my own business as a beautician; you know I can’t do this forever.” By “this” she meant sex work.

I had met Aija two years previously through a website used by Independent Escorts to advertise their services to clients. Aija had come to Ireland in 2005 from Latvia, like many other Eastern Europeans of her generation to make a better life for herself and her family, attracted by the roar of the so-called Celtic Tiger economic boom. Indeed, Aija was one of several women I met from Eastern Europe working at the high end of the escort market. However Aija’s initiation into the sex industry was a difficult one for her. I asked her how she came to be in Dublin:

That’s a very difficult story because when I came to Ireland first, I was working in Latvia for 24 hours and 48 free, I was working in a shop, so somebody just came up and he said ‘*oh do you want a job in Ireland?*’ I just thought yeah I want a better life, away from here, why not?

Aija was promised a job as a housekeeper, but on arrival things did not work out as she had hoped. Her passport was taken by those who had facilitated her migration, and she was taken to an apartment in Limerick and forced to work as a prostitute, receiving up to eight clients a day to pay off large debts owed to those who facilitated her migration. After nine months, she escaped to Dublin, by tricking her bosses into believing the police recognized her as working in a brothel. Here, she rented a hotel room in the city centre and began working as an independent escort, advertising on one of the many Internet sites offering escort services to the Irish market.

Two years later Aija still works as an independent escort and has extended her business empire even further. As well as facilitating migration of women from Riga to work in Ireland, she has recently invested in the property market in Riga, and bought a four-bed apartment, which she rents out as a brothel managing it remotely from Ireland. She reckons her annual income is approximately €400,000, where as in Latvia the average industrial wage is closer to €4,200.¹¹ This work allows her to support two apartments in Dublin, one, in which she lives with her four year old son and nanny, the other she uses for entertaining clients. She regularly sends money home to her family, and has managed to save a deposit for a home in Ireland. I asked her if she feels she has a choice in what she does, she said:

Yeah I have a choice, you have to start something, I did a start my business course, this is a business, it doesn't matter if you are an escort or a hairdresser you provide a service, it's a job. I think its not anybody else's business what you do with your body, you know in just two hours you get a €1000, no it's a thousand two hundred and fifty, yeah you know with extras and tips. I want to give my kid as much as I can. I want to reach what I want to reach. I am very independent, I am an Aquarius, and I need money if I want to make my future. I can buy the things I want in my life, I can do what ever I want, I can make my own future.

Ireland was in the middle of an economic boom and sex workers were only one group of workers who came to Ireland in the hope of making a better life for themselves. In many ways Aija represents everything that is symbolic of the Celtic Tiger, young, upwardly mobile, ambitious, industrious and entrepreneurial. But unlike many other economic migrants who came to Ireland during the boom years, Aija, as a sex worker is positioned very differently to other migrants.

However, as a “victim of trafficking” Aija sexual transgression is allowed, she was forced, and selling sex is not the choice of “good” women. She is thus afforded some societal protection. But what happens when a trafficked body traverses socially imagined boundaries and chooses to remain in the sex industry and becomes an independent sex worker, the antithesis of what a victim should be? Aija's story is not

¹¹ In 2005 average salary in the Services and Industry sector in Latvia was €4,246 per annum (Europe in Figures-Eurostat Yearbook 2008) Published by the European Commission Office for the Official Publication of European Communities: Luxemburg.

one that's credited in the trafficking literature.¹² She was not “rescued”; she simply made the best of a bad situation and restructured her position to the industry.

The excessively powerful narrative that tells the story of trafficked bodies to the public is salacious and suggestive of an Other vast world that lies beside ours but rarely touches; but it is fundamentally based on speculation and a series of assumptions: the story of the innocent young girl forced into a life of sexual slavery by evil men available in 19th century works such as WT Stead's *The Maiden Tribute to Modern Babylon* is being retold anew to explain and legislate for the modern movement of women. Aija's story, like that of other women I have worked with, acts as a series of provocations: to rethink the dynamics of victimhood, choice and agency, migration, and, of course, sex work.

The World's Oldest Profession?

Viewing prostitution as “the world's oldest profession,” allows it to be normalized and seen as a natural part of the social order, and as such “inevitable” and thus prostitution becomes separated from the multiple social, political economic and cultural factors that contribute to how sex work is performed in any given time and space (Whelehan, 2001). Prostitution is both normal in society and a normal part of that society, using both senses of normal. In other words, statistically, most, if not all, societies that circulate commodities circulate sexual bodies as commodities. At the same time, each society has particular types of prostitution, and specific ways of constituting moral understandings around these types of transactions. Deconstructing the lives of sex workers, and examining the totality of their experiences, engenders a deeper understanding of how sex workers “as a dehistoricized stereotypical figures” are constructed and of how commercial sexual activity is actually experienced in different contexts (Kelly, 2008). These women are not a homogenous group, and they are not just sex workers as this thesis will show through the stories of women such as Aija and the many other women I met. Their lives are infinitely more complex and their identities more fluid than many depictions

¹² See Doezema (2005:64) for a discussion of how the “aware sex worker” disappears from hegemonic discourses.

of them suggest - they are mothers, daughters, sisters, consumers, nurses, teachers, drug users, patients. In short, they resemble most other people in their engagements, kin relations, feelings and emotions they are not dissimilar to any other individual, but with one grave exception; they take part in a mostly illegal and highly stigmatized activity. Their work often means they are simultaneously demonized and pitied, as well as subjected to violence, exploitation and social marginalization. Part of this research is to de-exoticize sex work and the women who sell sex, by focusing on their daily lives, their lived experiences as women who work selling sex to support themselves and their families. The lives of these women are far more complex and fascinating, than some of the literature and the media representations would imply.

Sex Work as Work

they're paying me money, you know it's like, I think that escorting is the same thing as cutting hair or doing nails, or something, you know it's not a huge difference you do your job with your hands, I do mine with my pussy and that's it, it's just a job, a way to earn money.

Marie 46, independent escort based in the UK

This is a business, you're selling a service, it's part of your job, it's a job. Like other jobs, but one to make much more money and you pick your clients, it may not be the best job in the world, but to make so much money, there's not much else I can do instead. For me, I would be working in a bar or a restaurant, but I don't want that life.

Katie, 24 independent escort from Spain

Prostitution like other forms of consumption and commodification is much more complex than simply evidence of male domination, it can also be the "site of ingenious resistance and cultural subversion" and we need to move beyond reducing the sex worker to a passive object in the male sexual landscape, but to one of agency, where the sex worker actively participates in the existing sexual order (Chapkis, 1997:29). This approach forms the core of this thesis, sex work also, I firmly argue, needs to be constructed as a form of labour and "definitions of prostitution must come from the labour process of prostitution, not the reformers moralisms." White

(1990: 11) argues that “prostitution is a capitalist social relationship not because capitalism causes prostitution by commoditizing sexual relations, but because wage labour is a unique feature of capitalism: capitalism commoditized labour.”

“When erotic labour so viewed as work, it is transformed from a simple act of affirmation of mans command over women, and instead is revealed to be an arena of struggle, where the meaning and terms of the sexual exchange are vulnerable to cultural and political contestation” (Chapkis, 1997:57) Chapkis argues that we need to move beyond universal moralizing stances, to appreciate the “the complex realities of women sexual labour” and “how women experience and define their sexual acts in commercial transactions.” By allowing sex workers to articulate their everyday experiences of selling sex, in many ways the “work” part becomes the central narrative, whilst the morality tale around the sale of sex diminishes.

Chapkis posits that the reality of sex work is far more varied that either rhetoric can express. “Sex workers all perform erotic labour, but their accounts of that experience vary dramatically, from the “happy hooker” to the “sex work survivor.” The sources of those differences “lies less in the nature of erotic labour, but rather than in the social location of the worker performing it, and the conditions under which the work takes place.” (Chapkis, 2007:98). Sex workers position within the industry is predicated upon several factors including social class, social capital, education, connections, and physical appearance. Indeed, women know where they fit in on the food chain and position themselves accordingly, and are often critical of other girls who get above their station. Like other social institutions prostitution does not exist in a vacuum, and cannot be divorced from its social economic and political context. No one has infinite degrees of freedom; all our choices are mediated by multiple factors including gender, inequality, poverty and social class, amongst others. Paul Farmer (2003:286) argues that individual narratives can only be understood with the “larger matrix of culture, history and political economy.” Similarly Bourgeois (1996) writes, “individualistic psychological determinist approaches misses the larger political economic and cultural context. It ignores historical processes and the effects of unequal power relations around class, ethnic, or gender and sexual categories.”

Focusing only on the sensationalist media representations tends to obscure the complexity of these women's lives and overwhelm all others parts of the analysis. When sex work is viewed as work, all others sorts of interesting things come into focus, such as health and safety concerns, childcare is a big concern for many sex workers with young children, how they organise their daily lives, how they manage their clients. When viewed as a labour issue, selling sex seems like a rational choice for many women, when viewed alongside their alternative sources of income. It also allows these women to be situated in their communities as not only sex workers but as wives, mothers, sisters, friends and so on. The prostitute argues Chapkis (2007) "is a shape shifter alternately embodying sex, crime, gender violence work." She "is simultaneously a worker, a victim, a collaborator, a renegade and a police statistic. Each of these positions represents a strategic account constituted by giving expression to a complex field of power and resistance."

Whilst academic interest in prostitution seems to be spread across a wide number of disciplines including sociology, medicine, feminist literature, legal studies, criminology, and psychology and perhaps to lesser degree, anthropology, gaps in the literature remain. In an Irish context, however, this work has scarcely begun. Indeed we are behind Europe in this respect, particularly the UK, where the last number of years has seen an upsurge in research, particularly in Glasgow (Barnard *et al.*, 1993; Bloor & Mc Kaganey, 1990; McKeganey *et al.*, 1992; Carr & Goldberg, 1996; Mc Kaganey & Barnard, 1992 & 1996; Cusick, 1998; Gilchrist *et al.*, 2001), and in London (Day & Ward, 1990; Ward *et al.*, 1993; Gossop, 1995; Day *et al.*, 1999; Scambler, 2007). While these studies may have some resonances with women working in prostitution here, they cannot be simply transposed onto an Irish cultural landscape. Local and global, structural and contextual, features impact on how identities are constructed and maintained, as much for sex workers as for anyone else (Brewis & Linstead, 2000). We, therefore, need to develop our own specific body of knowledge, situated within an Irish social-cultural and economic climate. This study has at its core such an objective.

The lack of Irish material is especially ironic given that prostitution flourished here in the nineteenth century (Ryley-Scott, 1996). By the early twentieth century, much

of the discourse surrounding prostitution in Ireland was dominated by the prevailing ethos of the Catholic Church, which understood prostitutes as “fallen women” in need of rescue, often within an institutional context (Luddy, 1992). Currently the literature on sex work in Ireland is underdeveloped, with a small baseline of published research (McElwee & Lalor, 2007), mostly retrospective or historical studies (Luddy, 1992, 1995, 1997, 2007, 2008); Luddy & Murphy (1989), journalistic accounts (Reynolds, 2003; Mullins, 1996; Harrington & Keogh, 2003), as well as reports published by various health boards, Government Departments and bodies (McDonnell, *et al* 1998; O’Sullivan *et al*, 1999; O’Connor 1994; O’Connor *et al*, 1996; Childcare & Family Support Services, 1998, NACD, 2008) and NGOs (Ruhama, 2005; Migrants Rights Centre, 2006; Irish Human Rights Commission, 2008; Immigrant Council of Ireland, 2009). These works largely view women working in prostitution as social policy problem, and thus there has been a paucity of research on the lived experience of working in the sex industry in Ireland today, the public health data on prostitution has lagged behind that of other hidden populations, such as intravenous drug users (Saris & Comiskey, 2003). While we have a general sense that under the aegis of the Celtic Tiger the market for sexual services has expanded, we lack even anecdotal data to discuss this trend. This serious lack of reliable data in the Irish context only serves to misinform and sensationalize sex work, reproducing deeply held prejudices and false stereotypes. My work will go some way to filling these gaps, while connecting to various intellectual literatures.

Methodology

This is a multi-sited ethnography, or what George Marcus (1995) terms “mobile ethnography.” This mode of inquiry argues Marcus not only:

investigates and ethnographically constructs the life worlds of variously situated subjects, it also ethnographically constructs aspects of the system itself, through the associations and connections it suggests among sites.

This approach allowed me to track women through the various aspects of their lives and also allowed me insight into how the sex industry functions on a macro level. It

also allowed me not only to see women in their place of work but also allowed me to be part of the more quotidian aspects of their lives. Multi-sited ethnography has allowed me into peoples homes, their workplaces, their websites, their chat rooms, shopping with them, at the graves of their children, queuing in an STI clinic, buying a multipack of condoms in the local shop, in court, the prison, community drug projects, homeless hostels, the night bus, on outreach, their hospital beds, they place they call home, however temporary that might be, their hotel rooms, the intimate moments of their lives. Like the women who moved around the city, between different sections, State bodies, the women themselves, the NGOs- allowed me to be part of their interactions with the State in terms of policing, the judicial system, social care provisions, and see first hand the various connections and contradictions within the system. On the whole, street-based women are much more likely to come in contact with the State in the context of sex work. Like everyone else they simultaneously occupy multiple realities and positions in society and sex workers in their need to navigate various institutions, social systems and so on, and in so doing how they represent themselves is fluid, it may change from “victim” to “survivor” to “drug addict” to whatever given who they are talking to or what they want. The women I met during my research represented themselves to me in a particular way, but ethnographic tracking/presence allowed me to see the changes in self representation that is key to understanding how different ideas about sex work are constructed within different sectors.

As well as ethnographic fieldwork for 5 years, which included an audit of the printed and electronic media, this study relied on qualitative methods in the form of interviews. I conducted open and semi-structured with key informants. As a way of mapping the formal response to prostitution as a “social problem”, as well as provide a map of the institutional responses to, and supports for sex workers in Dublin, I also formally interviewed members of the Garda Síochána,¹³ health care personnel, policymakers, outreach workers, prison staff, community drug workers, journalists as well as academics with an interest in the area. In order to gain access to women working in prostitution I spent five years working as a volunteer outreach worker

¹³ Irish Police Force

with two different agencies. As well as meet street-based sex workers and gain an overview of how street-based sex work was mapped in the city centre, working as an outreach worker allowed me to chart the institutional response to sex work in Dublin city from two very different ideological perspectives, one with a community based drug project with a harm reduction ethos, and the other a religious based group based on a “rescue” model. It also allowed me to see first hand how street-based sex work is organized spatially in the city and allowed me to gain an understanding of how these women negotiate this space and how they interact with one another, their clients, the general public and the various State bodies charged with caring for them. Ethnographic fieldwork consisted of observations and informal conversations in a diverse range of settings including the women’s prison, Garda Stations, Drug Clinics, hotels, apartments, the court, homes, the red light district, and homeless hostels. “Deep hanging out” to use Geertz’s (2001) term facilitated my encounters with women that lead to more structured interviews. As such I am not privileging interview data above participant observation, as there was a dialogical relationship between both methods of research. Therefore interleaved throughout this thesis are both snapshots of ethnographic experience and encounters, on the streets etc, as well as data from semi-structured interviews. My interviews were taped, transcribed and coded using QSR Nvivo 7.

Terms used

I would never class of myself as a *‘prostitute’*, I’m a working girl, I know it’s mainly the same thing, but I don’t like the name prostitute, it’s not a nice name. I just say *‘working girl,’* I don’t tell everybody neither. Nobody knows me business.

Jane, 32 street-based sex worker

Earlier in this piece I spoke about deconstructing various discourses or understandings about sex work, here I wish to outline how this is understood in the literature so to equip the reader with a firm grasp of the complexities of the language used. The term “prostitute” is a derivative of the Latin verb *prostituere*, which literally means “to set up for sale” (Carr, 1995). Hoigard and Finstad (1992) define prostitution as “buying and selling sexual services for cash payment.” May *et al*,

(1999) go further and define sex work or prostitution as “the performance of sexual acts solely for material gain,” and say it differs from other types of sexual relationships by its explicitly contractual nature. Whilst many sexual partners have implicit expectations or contracts about obligations and rewards, it is only when the contract becomes explicit, is that the activity is regarded by the law as “prostitution.” Generally, the accepted definition is that it is the commercial exchange of sex for money.

I use the term “sex industry” to describe the sexual services market in its entirety, and the term “sex worker” to denote an individual selling sex. I also use the term “prostitute” when citing an original source that uses the term. The term “sex work” encompasses prostitution itself as well as other activities such as erotic dancing, pornography, phone sex, striping etc. I use both sex work and prostitution interchangeably throughout this thesis. The term “prostitute” is often used in historical accounts of sex work, though in this day and age, it seen as derogatory and a highly stigmatizing term often seen as a judgment (Pisani, 2008). However some within the industry itself, particularly those involved in the sex workers rights movement, have re-appropriated terms such as “prostitute” or “whore” as part of their identity. Also the terms (or the assumptions embedded in the terms) used to describe those working in the sex industry are also highly contested. Anti-prostitution groups often refer to sex workers as “prostitutes” and prostitution as “commercial sexual exploitation,” suggesting that sex work is inherently a violence against women. Pro-sex worker and sex worker rights groups tend to use the terms “sex worker” and “sex industry,” suggesting that it is less stigmatizing, and legitimates sex work as a form of labour. The term sex worker has become more popular in academic articles and in some government publications (NCAD, 2008) and by international organizations such as UNAIDS (2002) and the WHO (2005). Indeed a controversial report by the United Nations Labour Organization (ILO) called for recognition of prostitution as an economic sector (ILO, 1998).¹⁴ The choice of terms used within debates about prostitution are seen as a reflection of the

¹⁴ This controversial report was heavily criticized by some feminists (Raymond, 2003;) but also won a prestigious publishing award at the Frankfurt Book Fair (ILO press release, 1998). The report suggested that the advantages of a “regulated commercial sex sector would also bring it into the taxation net of the economy” and allow governments “to formulate labor policies needed to deal with the several million people thought to be working in the sex industry.”

views of the user, usually placing the sex worker within the dichotomy of “victim” or “agent,” she is either the victim of circumstances and the actions of others, or she is an agent of a commercial enterprise (McCracken, 2006).

Following Kelly (2008) I argue that sex work should be recognized as a form of labour. While I appreciate class and gender based violence inherent in much of the world, such exploitation is not exclusive to sex work, but is found in many types of work that poor women throughout the world must perform, such as domestic services, child care, sweat shop work etc. This thesis can therefore be read as an argument for the decriminalization of prostitution and the recognition of sex work as a form of labour. Connected to my view that sex work should be viewed as a form of labour I concur with Kempadoo (1998) in that prostitution and / or sex work is not an identity, but an income generating activity and form of labour or occupation, the definition stresses the social position of those working in the sex industry as labourers. Furthermore, Ong (1991:295) argues that ethnographies of working women in various locations encourage the investigation the kinds of power such women are subjected to, both in their workplace and within the broader society. In each specific location, varying “modes of industrial and social domination promote certain cultural forms and identities, whilst simultaneously undermining or suppressing others.” Thus varying “production systems,” combined with “state policies and cultural forces both limit and enable workers struggles.”

In Dublin, street-based sex workers tend to refer to themselves as “working girls” or as “working” as Jane discusses above. Many detest the term “prostitute” because of its negative connotations. Escorts tended to refer to themselves as “independents” or just “escorts.” Their clients were referred to as “punters” or sometimes “clients.” Clients they saw several times and or had an ongoing arrangement with were referred to as “regulars.”

Numbers

A key element in examining a social problem is to determine its extent (Bullough & Bullough, 1996). Whilst there have been several attempts at counting the numbers of

sex workers with a specific population, using a variety of methods from capture-recapture (Bloor *et al*, 1991; McKeganey *et al*, 1992), (Minh *et al*, 2004); multiple methodologies, mapping, census, multiplier methods, (Vandepitte *et al*, 2006) most have met with limited success. In referring to attempts at estimating the numbers of prostitutes in Victorian Britain, Sigsworth & Wyke (1973) suggest it was “an exercise comparable in futility with attempts by theologians to estimate the number of angels who could be accommodated on the head of a pin.” Not a lot has changed today.

Several commentators acknowledge that the numbers of women engaged in various forms of prostitution are impossible to obtain due to its covert and individualistic nature (McCleod, 1982), as well it being a highly stigmatized activity. Also, reliance on police records can lead to misinformation, as they may fail to include those who manage to evade the law, or part-time sex workers, as well as sex workers who rarely come into direct contact with the police or social services (it is predominantly street-based sex workers who come into contact with State institutions in connection with their work) such as those working through agencies, in brothels, independent escorts or those working infrequently. Increasingly former street-based workers who have moved indoors are now dealing with clients directly through their mobile phones, and are therefore less visible to the eyes of the State. Also it is suggested that anti-prostitution groups will tend to overestimate numbers of women working in prostitution, whilst government agencies may underestimate numbers, failing to accurately account for those who do not access services, or those who work only part time or occasionally (Vandepitte *et al*, 2006). Similar to those taking part in other illegal or highly stigmatized activities, many are loath to admit their involvement, due to fear of prosecution or other punishments, shame, embarrassment or worry their friends or family will find out. An interview with the manager of the Dublin based Women’s Health Project, a sexual health and support service for women working in prostitution, in 2006 estimated there to be about 800 sex workers in the city.

Ethics

My main challenge when it came to ethics was assuring anonymity for my study participants. I cannot stress enough how frightened some of these women were about their identities and the nature of their work being revealed to family and friends because of the stigma associated with prostitution. Many were afraid to talk to me for fear that I was either an undercover Garda or a journalist. One of the challenges I faced was to disguise these women enough so that they would not be recognized without losing the essence of their stories or their experiences. I was nervous about putting pen to paper in case I did not do a good enough job of hiding their identities. This was particularly relevant to women working on the street as many of the service providers who work with them, have done so for years, and are well aware of their histories and the awful truth is that many of them are readily identifiable to these workers, because of the violent attacks they have been subjected to through their line of work.

Due to the clandestine and illegal nature of many of the activities surrounding prostitution I use pseudonyms throughout the thesis. Also, as some street-based women are well known to service providers, in some instances I have altered the location of event, the timeframe involved and other personal details in an effort to disguise and protect my informants. Ethical approval for my research was granted in May 2005.

Access

Again, the study population itself meant access was extremely difficult and from when the idea was first conceived to reach women working in the sex industry, took over two years of “hanging out.” Sex workers in Irish society are largely invisible, in part because of the social work of Irish society, which are structured by the ways the Gardaí do their job and the way that Ruhama,¹⁵ amongst others who constitute

¹⁵ Ruhama is a religious based NGO (funded in part by the HSE and the Department of Justice) “which works with women affected by prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation” (www.ruhama.ie). They work from an abolitionist perspective and are involved in

themselves as moral guardians, produce (with different levels of success) different moral representations of Irish society. Most of the street-based sex workers, I met through drug clinics, community drug projects, the woman's prison, some snowballing, and also many became familiar with me as a result of five years outreach work within their communities. Some women I met only once and then they seemed to disappear into the ether. Others I met occasionally and several became key informants and I became part of their daily lives, went with them to hospital appointments, met for coffee or food, went shopping, visited them in prison, and went to their houses, played with their children, and accompanied them to court. Many of the street-based sex workers lived chaotic lifestyles haphazardly connected to any services, lived in an out of hostels or B&B's, sometimes sleeping rough when they could not get a hostel bed for the night or were again kicked out for starting fights or felt too restricted by curfews etc. One woman I spent time with her where she slept when she could not get a hostel bed, an abandoned factory on the north side of the Liffey. She kept some of her possessions there, all she owned in the world in several plastic bags, their handles worn thin from being lugged from place to place.

I also had huge difficulty accessing the escort population. I became quite despondent and thought I would never get to talk to anyone when it all seemed to take off. I had tried phoning several of the women whose details I got from their WebPages, but as soon as the word "research" was uttered most hung up. At one stage I even replied to an advert on *In Dublin* website looking for a receptionist in a brothel. I discussed the matter with a Garda¹⁶ who I had been interviewing as part of my research who said that I would be taking part in an illegal activity, also my own consciousness would allow me to conduct any covert research, if I was going to meet with women working in the industry then I was going to do so in an open and honest way. Eventually I decided to email the women. It seems totally logical now, but this was not something I immediately thought of. I emailed hundreds of escorts working in Dublin; with about one in ten replying. Whist some ignored my emails, others declined to be interviewed citing fear of me being an undercover police officer or worse, a news

counselling, befriending, development, education and outreach. They are very vocal on issues of "trafficking".

¹⁶ Irish Police. Gardaí is plural and Garda singular

reporter. Others were just not interested in talking about their work to a complete stranger.

Most who agreed to speak with me did so tentatively. Rosa was the first escort I met, and after that first night I became more confident in my approach and once the women were convinced I was who I said I was, they were willing to meet with me. A few I ended up scanning my ID and emailing it to them. Some were happy to meet from the initial email. I suppose when I started out I had an idea of what to expect but this was quickly turned up side down by the virility of women I met, from different backgrounds, different ages, different experiences of life and of the job itself. In many ways what struck me was how ordinary these women were, how ordinary many of them felt their lives were. In many ways there was little to make them stand out from the rest of the population, yet they were all taking part and earning their living from, a highly stigmatized (mostly) illegal activity. What struck me most about these women was their strength of character, their resilience in the face of oppression and adversity from a society that pities or feels repulsed by them, whilst at the same time finds them strangely alluring.

Chapter Overview

This thesis is divided into an Introduction, a main body consisting of five chapters and a conclusion. In chapter one I provide a historical as well as geographical overview of the world of sex work from an Irish perspective, from the infamous Monto to the contemporary challenges faced by sex workers today. My second chapter provides details of women's accounts of their entry into sex work. These accounts of how they became involved in prostitution highlight a diversity of experiences as well, as highlight underlying structures such as social, economic, and political contexts involved in this process. When sex work is viewed as "work," it can be understood as a rational choice for many women, when viewed alongside their alternative income generating strategies. Women enter prostitution for a multitude of reasons and it is often the circumstances under which women enter prostitution that will determine much about how she experiences and practices prostitution. Chapter three charts the changes to the Dublin market, the decline of

street work and its ongoing impact on sex workers. It will also look at how the market is constituted and how various sectors of the market are stratified, as well as noting the increased mobility of sex workers, the connections and networks that tie sex workers to each other and to the many other actors in the industry, their clients, their co-workers, the police, taxi drivers and a multitude of others. The sex industry has changed dramatically over the past few years, so has how the women involved practice selling sex; they are quick to follow innovations and adapt to find a way that selling sex fits more comfortably into their life styles. Chapter four concentrates on the relationships sex workers have with their clients, from how they select and reject clients to how they market and manage sexual encounters with them. The fifth chapter is primarily concerned with the issue of sex work and risk and looks at the risks the women confront in their daily lives, from risk of murder, rape and assault to domestic abuse from their partners, as well as their attempts to manage the risks with varying degrees of success.

Concluding Thoughts

Whilst traversing the globe to sell sex is not a new phenomenon, new technologies have transformed the adult entertainment business, professionalizing the sex industry and has altered ways in which face to face interactions are initiated. Just as in the market for labour, there are very exploitative positions and very privileged positions, so too in the market for sex and our analytical frameworks have increased dramatically in the anthropology of work for understanding things like globalization, mobility, migration, deterritorialized transnational elites etc. We also need to similarly deal with the complexity of modern market for sex, which is one of the main areas of globalization, which are often mired in the exotic quality of prostitution or discourses on trafficking. In the next chapter I will provide a cartography of the Dublin sex industry illuminating the geographical, the historical, social and cultural context of sex work in Ireland. This begins with an overview of the field site and provide context for the sex industry in its particularly Irish construction.

Chapter 1: Mapping the City

[...] The Mabbot street entrance of Nighttown, before which stretches an uncobbled transiding set with skeleton tracks, red and green will-o'-the-wisps and danger signals. Rows of flimsy houses with gaping doors. Rare lamps with faint rainbow fans. Round Rabaiotti's halted ice gondola stunted men and women squabble. They grab wafers between which are wedged lumps of coal and copper snow. Sucking, they scatter slowly. Children. The swancomb of the gondola, highreared, forges on through the murk, white and blue under a lighthouse. Whistles call and answer [...]

Lynch and Stephen enter 'Nighttown' Episode 15 'Circe' *Ulysses*, James Joyce.

It was my first night as a volunteer. Moving through the streets of Dublin, quiet, dark and in silence, I felt unsure but yet reassured due to the reassuring presence of a seasoned volunteer. Filling flasks with hot water, checking that the van was well stocked with pot noodles and chocolate, we zigzagged through Dublin's sex districts. We were flagged down by a dark, serious looking man who told us his girlfriend had been gone for far too long. I was told he was a pimp, particularly dangerous, so we moved on after a brief discussion. Protesters sat in an old rusting Nissan Micro at the top of Arbour Hill; two women, middle-aged and motherly, their success the volunteer told me, evident in the vanishing sex industry on this particular street. We rumbled along through quiet empty streets across Dublin's Northside – deciding quickly to cross the Liffey and move to some of the South side's sex districts. Nightlife flashed by, people vacating restaurants, emptying out of cheery pubs onto cold, dark streets. The city assumed a different aura, a cartography of street workers and slowing cars with male clients replaced the jovial shouts good night. As a researcher and volunteer, Dublin city's geography was now one marked by difference. Across by the Burlington Hotel, then along the canal we moved, Sarah stopped us telling us she didn't want tea – she had to work a little longer. Three large women dressed in long black boots, torn fish net tights and short skirts moved swiftly into a woman's health clinic. I am told that many women travel from England

to work the Dublin streets-also enjoying the success of the Celtic Tiger boom. Young women decorated the corners of Fitzwilliam Square, some chatting, others standing in silence. A young woman called Lucy stopped us, standing teeth chattering, coat hanging off her shoulders, she asked for a cup of tea to warm her up. As she chatted, she thumbed through a large wad of cash-telling us she had to repay a taxi driver a large sum of money. My first night as a volunteer was filled with voices, stories of women living in this parallel world. Sitting in the half light of the van, Lucy told us about her drug addiction, a mother cruising the streets looking for her with a baseball bat, a partner who jokingly pushes her into the polluted waters of one of Dublin's canals, and a bruising addiction. Lucy's words hung in the air as we said our goodbyes. Sitting in the van and driving back to Dublin's northside, I reflect on the women I have encountered when a woman frantically waves us down – tea and pot noodles are made, a story is told once more, one of a life drowning in drug overdose, abuse, loss, anxiety around HIV and sex work. It was my first night as a volunteer, my first night listening to burning stories of loss, abuse and distress. My first but not my last, there were many other nights like this first one, filling flasks, making tea, handing out pot noodles, gazing into the hollowed out eyes of drug addicted sex workers, listening to their stories because no one else would, or simply, because these women couldn't speak about what kind of work kept them away from their homes all night long.

Fieldwork reflection 2006

I open this chapter with two reflections, one from my own fieldwork, my attempts to chart the Dublin sex industry through volunteer work, the other a quote from James Joyce, an evocative description of an older Dublin and its red light district. The Dublin sex industry has changed dramatically since Bloom entered Nighttown over a hundred years ago; my frequent journeys around Dublin in the capacity of volunteer captured in my numerous fieldnotes stand testament to this. In its heyday Monto (Nighttown in Joyce's *Ulysses*) was reputed to be one of the largest red light districts in Europe. Its proximity to the docks and the British army barracks in Portland Row ensured a steady trade. The foundation of the new State and an outbreak of Puritanism in the 1920's heralded the downfall of Monto and meant a more dispersed, less organised sex industry for many of the following decades. Many

women who previously worked in Monto were “rescued” and sent to Magdalene institutions¹⁷ and others dispersed to other parts of the city centre. It was really only in the 1980’s that sex work, as we would recognize it today, began to re-emerge. Huge social changes occurred in Ireland in the intervening years, including the decline of the influence of the Catholic Church, globalization, increased migration, technological advances as well as more open attitudes to all things sexual. These changes as well as affecting society as a whole also impacted on the organisation of the sex industry. By the time I started my fieldwork, the Dublin sex industry had already begun to change rapidly. On our frequent night trips around the city, volunteers told me that some street-based sex work was moving indoors and over the course of my fieldwork I also charted the dwindling numbers of women on the street, marking a new turn in the nature of sex work in Ireland.

In this chapter, I concentrate particularly on two most recent historical times in the history of the State, the formation of the new State in the 1920’s when Honour Bright was murdered, and again the 1990’s when Belinda Pereira was murdered. Both are significant in that they are times of important social, economic and political change in recent Irish history. I attempt to situate the lives of both these women in the times they lived and in the case of Belinda, provide context for my own research, and the economic boom Ireland experienced beginning in the 1990’s after years of recession in the 1970’s and 1980’s. As the consequences of the Victorian moral crusades still resonate in many of our social and legal practices today, I will also discuss how some of these ideologies underpin current legal and social attitudes to sexuality and to prostitution in modern society. Part of this then involves a discussion of how sexuality is constructed and how representations of the prostitute body underscore modern opinions about prostitution. Whilst women continued to sell sex on the street from the break up of Monto in the 1920’s, it needs to be highlighted that it was dispersed and disorganized. Not until the 1970’s and 1980’s did prostitution in Dublin city start to become more organized. Whilst street prostitution continued to

¹⁷ The 1990’s in Ireland saw the start of the publication of several shocking reports into widespread and systematic abuse by Church run (and State sponsored) institutions (network of industrial schools, orphanages, reformatories, and hostels). Reports include the Ryan Report (1990), Ferns Report (2005), Murphy Report (2009), Cloyne Report (2011) amongst others. Also see Smyth (2008); Arnold (2009).

account for the majority of women working in the industry, a number of women particularly those not addicted to heroin, which at that stage had reached epidemic proportions in some parts of the city, started moving indoors, either working out of houses or flats in the city or in the new “mobile brothel” vans that toured more rural locations (Kelly *et al*, 2008).

Irish society, however, seems mostly ambivalent towards prostitution (once it is out of public view). Yet, there are still certain issues that grip the public imagination when it comes to prostitution, namely street-based sex work, and migrant sex work (mostly framed as “trafficking”). Much of the discussion surrounding prostitution in the public domain focuses on issues of “visibility” and “invisibility” – the public unease with the visibility of street-based sex workers, but also the invisibility of “trafficked women” causes concern. Over the course of my fieldwork and particularly in my capacity as a volunteer outreach worker on the streets, we frequently encountered protestors sitting in their cars, hoping to scare sex workers away. To a degree, these kinds of protest were successful with many women moving away from the targeted areas. The visibility of the protestors forced many sex workers into “invisibility,” encouraging the women to work either elsewhere or to as the volunteers put it “move indoors.” Embedded then in this issue of visibility / invisibility are the notions of silence and stigma.¹⁸ While the women I encountered on night excursions or in interviews felt free to speak to me, telling me their stories in an intimate and in-depth fashion, they and I were keenly aware of the multilayered and complex discourses imposed upon them. Inherent in the silencing of the sex worker is the ongoing construction of multivalent and often conflicting discourses. Street-based sex workers are constructed as diseased, sites of contagion, a threat to the social order, or as what Mary Douglas (1966) describes as “dirt” or “matter out of place.” Luddy (2007:17) argues that it is not only the visibility of sex workers that creates anxiety amongst the general public, but their use of public spaces, and the contamination of that space. Prostitution is seen as a site of contagion, implicated in the spread of disease and immorality, and moreover, prostitution itself is believed to

¹⁸ Issues of stigma, shame and embarrassment were inherent in many of my discussions with sex workers (particularly street-based workers). For more discussion please see Goffman (1963), Pheterson, (1988); Link & Phelan, (2001, 2006); Kleinman & Hall-Clifford (2009); Parker & Aggleton (2003).

be contagious.¹⁹ Conversely, “trafficked” women are often pitied, as abused and violated women. Driving around the streets of Dublin, speaking to the women, encountering protestors, watching sleek sports cars and SUVs kerb crawling, I became all too aware of how public space and the understanding of sex work have an intimate, dynamic relationship. Sex workers are constructed in many ways, so too are their clients; partygoers, nighthawks and those living in certain neighbourhoods are also responsible for this ongoing construction. With the Celtic Tiger and large influx of migrants, one recurring image and discussion became that of the “female migrant sex worker” or as it was more explicitly articulated-that of the “trafficked woman.”

Critical and central to contemporary mediatized images of sex work then has been the construction of the “trafficked victim” (Cheng, 2008). Over the course of my ethnographic work on the street, amongst NGO’s or with the police, the recurring image of the trafficked victim²⁰ (always young female migrants) impacted on my research process, my investigations, and my negotiation of the industry as a whole. I constantly had to justify my position and my belief that sex work should be decriminalized and sex workers should enjoy the same rights as other workers. In my introduction I spoke about Aija one of my key informants, “trafficked” as a young woman, she escaped and started her own business working as an escort. Her story encompasses the diverse identities that many women who work in the sex industry simultaneously occupy - victim, whore, entrepreneur, survivor, mother, daughter, and drug user amongst others. Their identities, stories and worlds span the gamut of complexities inherent in any study of the sex industry. The simplistic narrative of the “trafficked victim” propounded by the media and some NGOs elides the complex worlds lived by many of those who engage in sex work (Busza, 2004, Agustin, 2009). This thesis hopes to problematize these complexities and highlight through the stories of my research participants how nebulous the boundaries are between the different categories of sex work. Aija’s story along with a number of other women evinces the belief that there are multiple lived experiences with sex work and sex workers themselves. My frequent encounters with Aija firmly entrench this view in

¹⁹ Whilst notions of stigma and contagion are distinct concepts from a theoretical perspective, in everyday community life in these two separate concepts “tend to slide in each other.” Das (2001).

²⁰ Kleinman & Kleinman (1996) argue that mediatized images of suffering have currency, and are subsumed into “processes of global marketing and business competition.”

my study of sex work. There is no doubt there is a huge amount of exploitation and violence in the sex industry, and over the course of my research I have heard countless horrific stories, but prevailing societal attitudes, including those of the NGO's and State agencies charged with the care of some of these women, to those that earn a living from sex work as well as the laws that govern how this work takes place, largely contribute to how sex is sold. There is little public concern for the health and safety of sex workers, particularly those who have chosen sex work rather than those women who were "trafficked" and "forced" to sell sex.

Monto - Historic Dublin

There has been a dramatic change in the sexscape of Dublin city centre in the intervening years between the murders of Honor Bright and that of Belinda Pereira, some of which I chart later in this chapter. Unlike many other red light districts in the late 19th and early 20th century's Europe at the time, prostitution flourished in Dublin's "Monto" (derivative of Montgomery Street) as immortalized in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, was reputed to be the biggest red light district in Europe. Indeed a Dublin magistrate in 1901, described it as "one of the most dreadful dens of immortality in Europe." At the height of its popularity from 1860 to 1900, it is estimated that Monto contained at least 1,600 prostitutes (Fagan, 2000). The tenth edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica said in a footnote in an article on world prostitution:

Dublin furnishes an exception to the usual practice in the United Kingdom. In that city police permit "open" house, confined to one street, but carried on more publicly than even in the South of Europe or Algeria.

The brothel area was about a quarter of a square mile in extent and was spread over several streets and lanes. Mecklenburgh Street Lower was the most notorious street in Monto with the brothels side by side. Locally Monto was known as "the digs" or "the kips" by the women who worked there (Finegan, 1995). Those who frequented the delights of Monto included sailors, high-ranking officers in the British Army, businessmen from the country as well as medical students and of course James Joyce himself. Its most infamous guest was the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII

who is reputed to have entered the brothel area through secret underground passages reserved for distinguished visitors (Finegan, 1995; Fagan, 2002).

The Monto brothels were divided into three categories, first, second and third class brothels. First class brothels were also referred to as “flash houses” were elaborately decorated, with expensive carpets, mirrors and private rooms replicating celebrated brothels in Paris. The women who ran these establishments were referred to as “Madams” and often had their names emblazoned on the fanlights over their hall doors. Many were former prostitutes themselves and often ran more than one brothel, the most famous being Annie Mack, who at one time owned or controlled more than eight brothels in Mecklenburgh Street. Other high profile madams include Bella Cohen and Becky Cooper. Indeed Bella Cohen features in James Joyce’s *Ulysses* where no 82 Mecklenburgh is the setting for the famous brothel episode, which encompasses a day and night in June 1904. The girls were dressed in the height of fashion and many were from good homes in the city and country. The cheaper brothels on the other hand had turf fires (coal fires were the preserve of flash houses) and linoleum floors and the girls would often sit outside trying to entice passing trade. Many of these types of establishments had religious pictures concealing lengths of lead piping used by the bully boys should trouble arise with clients. Its popularity as well as the madam in charge determined prices in each brothel. In flash houses according to Finegan (1995), a minimum of ten shillings was charged; alcohol and sex were extra and payment of at least five pounds would be expected to be left on the bedside locker or mantelpiece the next morning. Mecklenburgh Street Lower mostly contained flash houses.

Important dates in the social calendar, such as the horse show in Ballsbridge and the Punchestown Races in particular were important to Monto with the most attractive girls from the flash houses sent to the event in a spectacular pony and trap to attract the attentions of male attendees and entice them back to Monto later in the evening. The Madams were also highly aware of the movements of the British Army and on arrivals of a new regiment to the city; visiting cards would be sent to the officers’ messes. Also Madam Arnott would also send her most beautiful girls to Grafton Street on Saturday mornings, similar to the courtesan of Paris who would coast the

Bois de Boulogne and the boulevards. Also, the most attractive prostitutes would be seen at other important social events such as balls, the Theatre Royal and the Gaiety theatre.

Despite public opposition and several attempts to shut it down, the Boer War brought new business to Monto. On the return of the Irish Battalion of Yeomen from South Africa in 1900, a weekly magazine *Irish Society* published an “Ode of Welcome.” It was signed “JRS, Knocklong, Co Limerick.” What the editor failed to realize, but the general public did, and caused the issue to sell out, was the first letter of each line when read vertically read, “the whores will be busy.” Generally, Oliver St John Gogarty is credited with authorship (Fagan, 2002).

After the foundation of the Free State in 1922 and the ensuing moral order of censorship and restraint, serious efforts were made to close down the brothels of Monto, particularly due to its proximity to the Pro-Cathedral, the principle Catholic edifice in the city. The main architect for the downfall of Monto was Frank Duff, the Founder of the Legion of Mary and several other catholic moral purists who in collaboration with the Dublin Police Commissioner conducted a police raid that resulted in 120 arrests in March 1925 and sounded the death knell for Monto (McAvoy, 1999). Many of the former prostitutes were “rescued” and ended up in Magdalene penitentiaries, or in hostels run by religious orders; the prevailing attitude that a “fallen” women was beyond redemption unless she spent the rest of her life in an institution (Luddy, 2005). The close relationship between the Church and State took charge of what were deemed to be acceptable social and moral standards. According to McAvoy (1999) “as Ireland was in the process of adapting to Independence, sexuality became a focus for a paternalistic Church and government in their efforts to construct a stable, Catholic society” and that protective and prohibitive legislation and social policy enacted during this period subtly placed the blame for sexual nonconformity on women. Faced with the threat of industrialism and economic individualism in the twentieth century the Church attempted to retain control of society by placing the “good” women firmly in the home as “mother” (Inglis, 1998). Indeed as I mentioned earlier, the control of women’s sexuality and reproduction has been on high on the political agenda since the foundation of the

state, (Smyth, 1996:121) and moved from the “symbolic to the legislative domain” by enshrining the role of Irish women as “homemaker” and “mother” in the 1937 constitution (McMullan, 1996:37). This control over the female body manifested itself through legislation, particularly the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1935, The Dance Halls Act amongst others, as well as through censorship, lack of reproductive rights,²¹ economic discriminations against mothers and married women and until recently, divorce, all of which were constructed as threats to national security. Unmarried mothers in particular were seen as the epitome of moral corruption, one that could lead them to prostitution. According to Luddy (2005) “the shadow of the prostitute looms large in discussions of unmarried mothers and venereal disease” and the need to control both were seen as moral justifications for regulation and control.²²

The consequences of the Victorian moral crusades in terms its “apparatus of social medical and legal enforcement” with still resonate today in our “social practices and ideologies,” medical and legal frameworks and our attitudes towards sex families and the law and are still highly contested as well as still impact on how “sexuality is experienced” well after conflicts have passed. Many of the laws set forth in this period are still on the statute books today and or have only recently changed, for example homosexuality was only decriminalized in 1993.

Historical Representation of the Prostitute Body

In the course of the nineteenth century, just as the female Hottentot came to represent the black women, the prostitute woman came to represent the sexualized woman (Gilman, 1985). Like many other scientists at his time Lombroso was fascinated by the natural world, and his belief in female inferiority was typical amongst men of his social class in the nineteenth century (Rafter & Gibson, 2004). Female sexuality was seen as pathological, and “the prostitute as the essential sexualized female” “the

²¹ The 1935 Criminal Law Amendment Act banned the import, sale and distribution of contraceptives. Women were able to get doctors to prescribe the Pill as a "cycle regulator" or to fit devices such as the cap. In 1969, the Fertility Guidance Clinic was established in Dublin and used a loophole in the law to give away the Pill for free. (It was thus not being sold.) Most rural and working class women had no access to contraceptives (O'Toole, 2010)

²² For more discussion please refer to Luddy (2005); Smyth (2008) and Ferriter (2009)

embodiment of sexuality and all that is associated with it - disease as well as passion” (Gilman, 1985:221). Laqueur (1992: 212), writing about discourses of sexuality during the nineteenth century suggests “the social perversity of prostitution was thought to be visited on the individual bodies of prostitutes.” As much of the nineteenth century literature concerning prostitution was based on the medical model, prostitution was seen as a public health problem, and much of the literature was concerned with analysis of the physiognomy and physiology of the prostitute body. Studies such as those by Parent-Duchatelet in 1836 of Parisian prostitutes, Tarnowsky's study of Russian prostitutes, Schrank's study of Viennese prostitutes, and Lombroso's study of Italian prostitutes all pointed to a physical type - certain characteristics that made prostitutes inherently and biologically different from “normal” women. According to Gilman, Tarnowsky, one of the earliest criminal anthropologists,²³ created a scale of appearance of the prostitute, at the higher end of the scale a “Russian Helen,” at the lower, the Hottentot. Yet she claimed prostitutes could not hide their true nature and hidden within their beauty were the signs of criminal degeneration, the “black thick hair, the strong jaw, a hard spent glance” and “some show the wild eyes and perturbed countenance along with facial asymmetry of the insane” these defects however could only be seen by the trained observer, the scientist, who could “identify the true prostitute, for prostitutes use superficial beauty as bait for clients” (Gilman, 1985:226).

Like other nineteenth century scientists Lombroso believed prostitutes bore innate characteristics, which defined them as different from “normal” women. Lombroso defined prostitution as the archetypical women's crime and separated “prostitutes” from “honest” women. Some of the more bizarre characteristics attributed to prostitutes at that time, included obesity, with some gradually becoming “positive monsters of fatty tissue” (Lombroso & Ferrero, 2004:122). They were also believed to be hairier, had bigger calves, forehead anomalies, misshapen ears, enormous lower jaws, had reduced cranial capacity and circumference, lacked wrinkles, were less sensitive to pain, tended towards lesbianism and were what he referred to as “morally insane” (Lombroso & Ferrero, 2004). It was suggested that “the prostitute has a greater atavistic resemblance to the primitive women, the vagabond Venus”

²³ For more on early criminology see: Rafter (2009)

(Lombroso & Ferrero, 2004: 148). All these characteristics reaffirmed the popular polygenetic argument, and pointed to a de-generation in women, placing prostitutes further down the evolutionary scale, nearer the Hottentot, the epitome of the “primitive” sexually lascivious female (Gilman, 1985). Zola’s 1880 novel *Nana* (Parmée, 1992), about a Parisian courtesan, in many ways encapsulates the characteristics of the atavistic sexualized women, the primitive just hidden beneath the beautiful facade. Only in death, is her mask is lifted, and her true nature revealed:

Now Nana was left alone, lying face upwards in the light of the candle, a pile of blood and pus dumped on a pillow, a shovelful of rotten flesh ready for the bone-yard, her whole face covered in festering sores, one touching the other, all puckered and subsiding into a shapeless, slushy grey pulp, already looking like a compost heap. Her features were no longer distinguishable; her left eye entirely submerged in discharging ulcers, the other one a sunken, fly-blown back hole. A thick yellowish fluid was oozing from her nose. Starting from her cheek, a reddish crust had overrun the mouth, pulling it into a ghastly grin. And on this horrible and grotesque death mask, her hair, her lovely hair, still flamed like a glorious golden stream of sunlight. Venus was decomposing; the germs which she had picked up from the carrion people allowed to moulder in the gutter, the ferment which had infected a whole society, seemed to have come to the surface of her face and rotted it.

Such imagery argues Gilman (1985) reveals the innate fear by which the Other, the sexualized women, was conceptualized in the nineteenth century.²⁴ The Others pathology is revealed through their anatomy, both black women and prostitutes bearing the stigmata of sexual difference. The rotting corpse is a visible sign of the sexualized female corrupting an entire army, analogous with the prostitute body corrupting a nation. Regulation was how this “the Social Evil” was dealt with.

Historical Aspects - Regulation of Prostitution

Much of Western history can be read as ambivalent towards prostitution, indicated both by the widespread toleration during much of this history, but a toleration interspersed with periodic condemnation, legal regimes prohibiting it, and even by

²⁴ Horn (1995:110) argues that it was not only female criminals and prostitutes that were made objects of new forms of “surveillance, prevention and punishment” but this extended to “normal” women, who were increasingly targets for social medicine, social work and social hygiene.

the attempts to abolish it. Western societies it would seem have tried to regulate prostitution and control its excesses (Bullough and Bullough 1996). Regulation is generally understood as the States intervention in the running of prostitution which determines the degree of control the State has over sex workers, and can occur in a variety of ways, such as permitting brothels or toleration zones, to compulsory STI testing, or where registration is required (Outshoorn, 2004). Most legal approaches to prostitution include abolition, criminalization, criminalization of clients, regulation, tolerance, legalization and decriminalization (Ditmore, 2006). Critical to shaping approaches to “prostitution regimes” (Outshoorn, 2004:6) however, it is not only laws that impact on prostitution regimes, but a host of other factors including historical contexts, political and ideological discourses and existing evidence bases (Kelly *et al*, 2008). Political and ideological issues have their foundations in and are used to frame prostitution in certain lights, these may include public health, morality, social problems, human rights, law and order, national security, migration, labour / employment, capitalism and globalism.

In Ireland the regulation and organization of prostitution has its birth in its colonial and military past. In the 1800’s The Contagious Diseases Acts (CDA’s), were instigated as a result of the alarm caused by the prevalence of venereal disease in the army, which in 1860 was at a rate of 369 per thousand soldiers (Hyam, 1991). The first of the CDA’s was enacted in 1864 and provided for the compulsory examination of *any* woman (invariably working class) deemed to be a “common prostitute.” If infected with venereal disease, she was then forcibly detained in a Lock Hospital and registered as a “common prostitute.” Men however, were not subjected to the same checks (Luddy, 1995). The pilot began in 1864 in several British garrison towns and port areas, as well as in Ireland in The Curragh, Cork and Queenstown (Ryley Scott, 1968; Hyam, 1991). Initially only military and navel towns were subjected to the CDA’s, but as momentum built for its expansion to other towns and cities throughout England and Ireland, two groups formed to oppose the principles of regulation, The National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious diseases Act and the Ladies National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts (LNA) (Bullough & Bullough, 1987). As one of the main crusaders against the CDA’s, Josephine Butler through the LNA produced a “Ladies Manifesto” which not only

denounced the Acts as a “blatant example of sex and class discrimination arguing that it deprived poorer women of their constitutional rights though forced examinations,” but also argued that the Acts officially endorsed “a double standard of sexual morality, which justified male sexual access to a class of “fallen” women.” They rejected the prevailing social attitude that “fallen women” polluted men and instead portrayed them as “victims” of male pollution, which entailed a powerful identification with the fate of the registered prostitute (Walkowitz, 1982). Many of the current attacks on sex work by feminists have their roots in earlier campaigns against male vice and the double standard (Walkowitz 1982).

The emergence of feminist scholarship has given rise to new views of prostitution by attempting to look at the issue from a female perspective, rather than the more traditional male point of view (Bullough & Bullough, 1996). The issue of prostitution was at the heart of what is known in the literature as the “first wave of feminism” towards the end of the nineteenth century. Since then the issue of prostitution as well as pornography have been highly contentious issues both in the feminist literature and in relation the women’s movement in general.²⁵ Indeed according to Walkowitz (1982), previous generations of feminists attacked white slavery, pornography, homosexuality and prostitution, as “manifestations of undifferentiated male lust.” These well-organized campaigns brought thousands of women, especially middle-class women, into the political arena where they challenged what were seen as bastions of male privilege, the police, the government, and the military and medical establishments. According to Walkowitz (1982) the “vitality of the women’s suffrage campaigns of the late 19th and early 20th centuries cannot be understood without reference to the revivalist quality of this anti-vice campaigns” which often ran in tandem with the struggle for the vote. Whilst Walkowitz argues that these early feminists did “achieve some permanent gains for women,” she argues that they also lost control of the movement as it diversified, partly due to inherent contradictions in the arguments.

²⁵ Other issues include contraception, abortion, motherhood and family including childcare and gender roles, issues around childbirth, rape and domestic violence, equal pay and work opportunities (Watkins *et al*, 1999)

Sexuality, Social Change and the State

As we drove around Dublin city, meeting women, giving them tea and listening to their stories, I recognized that their lives and worlds were continually in an encounter with the forces of the State. My ethnographic research vivified these theories in a real and stark way, and were in constant dialogue as I moved from the field to the academy. Theoretically, sexuality is well documented in the broader interdisciplinary literature, so I will briefly outline some relevant aspects. Bernstein & Schaffner (2005) argue “in order to understand the regulation of sexuality we must situate its broader political context exploring the mutual constitution of public and private, family and nation and sexual and social life.” Like any other human behaviour, sexual behaviour is learned within society, is socially and culturally organized or scripted (Gagnon and Simon, 1999). Foucault argues that sexuality is not a “stubborn drive” but an “especially dense transfer point for relations of power” (1979:103). Power, he argues, is in essence what dictates its law to sex, placing sex in a binary system: licit and illicit, permitted and forbidden. Powers’ hold on sex is maintained through “language or rather through the act of discourse” that creates a rule of law by the very fact it is articulated (1979: 83) with the pure form of power resting with legislation and to “deal with sex power requires nothing more than a law of prohibition.” This power over sex is exercised the same way at all levels, whatever the devices or institutions it relies, acting in a consistent manner through “the endlessly produced mechanisms of law, taboo and censorship” as it infiltrates family to State, to institutions, to the individual: “the form is the law of transgression and punishment, with its interplay of licit and illicit.” Yet what makes this power is so successful Foucault (1979) argues, is its ability to mask itself, to hide its machinations.

Following Foucault, Weeks (1993) argues that every human society has normative expectations about sexual practices, and certain practices are by their definition, transgressive. Cultures differ in how these transgressions are managed and with how much force “normality” is enforced. As the erotic is experienced subjectively, it is therefore a “sensitive conductor of cultural influences,” and consequently of social and political divisions. Sexuality according to Weeks (1993:7) not a “natural

phenomenon;” but is a product of social and historical processes rather, and “invention of the human mind.” This is not to ignore that “palpable social present of sexuality that shapes our lives, publicly and privately” but what Weeks is arguing is that sexuality be defined as a historical construction, which manifests itself in a multitude of cultural forms acquiring meaning through social relations. Similarly, Donnan & Magowan (2010) argue that sex has no natural basis “outside culture and history.”

According to Rubin (1999:153) modern Western societies assess sex acts according to “a hierarchical system of sexual value.” At the top of this pyramid are heterosexual reproductive married couples, followed by unmarried monogamous heterosexual couples, followed by most other heterosexuals. Established long term lesbian and gay couples are verging on respectability with bar dykes and promiscuous gay men floating just above the most despised sexual deviants, namely transsexuals, transvestites, fetishists, sadomasochists and sex workers, particularly prostitutes and porn workers, followed closely by those who transgress generational boundaries. Individuals whose behaviour ranks high on the scale are rewarded with legality, respectability, social and physical mobility, institutional support and material benefits. Whilst those with occupations and behaviours lower down on the scale are deemed to be mentally insufficient, have defective personalities or mental illness, or criminal; they often suffer loss of social and physical mobility, loss of institutional support and economic sanctions. Stigma, asserts Rubin, keeps some sexual behaviours as low status and effectively punishes those who engage in them.

Rubin plots her sexual value system or sexual hierarchy on to what she refers to as the “charmed circle.” According to this system, natural and normal sexuality is heterosexual, marital, monogamous, reproductive and non-commercial. Ideally it should be coupled, relational within the same generation and occur at home and not involve the use of pornography, sex toys or any other roles other than “male” and “female.” “Bad sex” is homosexual, unmarried, promiscuous, non-procreative and commercial, and is seen as unnatural, and abnormal. It may involve masturbation, orgies, sex toys, pornography and roles other than male and female and may take place in “public.” Rubin highlights another aspect of the sexual hierarchy involves

“the need to draw and maintain an imaginary line between good and bad sex.” Most discourses on sexuality define small portions of sexual activity as safe, good sex, politically correct, legal, healthy and mature. This “line” then distinguishes this from all other sexual behaviour, those seen as reprehensible. Arguments then ensue over “where to draw the line?” and what behaviours are permitted to cross the line into acceptability. Sexual acts that are deemed as acceptable are seen as “morally complex.” For example, she says that heterosexual acts are deemed as great or awful, free or forced, healing, destructive, romantic or mercenary, whereas acts that fall on the wrong side of the line are seen in terms as repulsive, and uniformly a bad experience, devoid of emotional or any other nuance. McLeod (1982) suggests that what is considered sexually perverse is temporal and subject to prevailing social conditions.

The State then, by criminalizing and disenfranchising certain sexual behaviours and identities creates a “sexual hierarchy,” with those engaging in transgressive behaviour, deemed immoral or dangerous to society. These then become the target of social control, criminalization, violence, harassment and marginalization (Seidman, 2005). The concept of a sexual hierarchy provides a useful analytical device for identifying and interrogating how a culture evaluates sexual practices, relationships and expressions, its practical value in the way it exposes rules for evaluating “legitimate” and “illegitimate” sexuality (Miller & Vance, 2004). Whilst the organizing principles that various members of a culture use for ranking standards of sexual legitimacy may vary across cultures, Miller and Vance argue that they are deeply implicated in all sexuality and rights based questions, since people lower down on the hierarchy are often subject to discrimination and abuse. They go on to say that the sexual hierarchy “metes out rewards and deprivations with material as well as symbolic resources” and a sexual hierarchy intersects with other social hierarchies and inequalities including class, race and gender, allowing different types of stigma to reinforce each other. They add that the greatest influence – and harm – of the sexual hierarchy is in the way it “animates and is embodied in a range of State interventions, especially criminal law.” These theories I discussed are best articulated by the lives of some of the women in this thesis, dead bodied and other women.

Prostitution in Dublin- The Interim Years

It is a cold night, sleet falling heavily, from under my warm, snug hat I embark on another night's volunteering. Tonight we drive around quiet streets. We stop for a woman called Sarah who asks for some pot noodles for her children. We sit and chat for a while, another young woman approaches us, heavily pregnant, I hand her a cup of tea. A few nights later, we meet Louise again, she tells us a story about being attacked, dragged to a van by a group of men, her swollen lip and badly beaten face tell us the story of how severe a fright she must have had. Rescued by a group of passerby's; the grim reality of life on the streets strike me as we sit together drinking warming tea.

Fieldnotes 2007

Dublin's night-time streets are not only marked by partygoers and sex workers and their clients, but also by the presence of NGO's and religious groups. Over the course of my fieldwork, I volunteered with a number of these different organisations in order to understand their objectives, as well as gain insight into how prostitution is understood from an institutional perspective. On one of my nights volunteering, being driven around by a Catholic nun, during a conversation with one of the sex workers, she asked my companion whether she was "a nun or a woman?" I retell this story not because I find it humorous, but because it reflects the ongoing insidious relationship that the Catholic Church has in contemporary Ireland's public sphere.

Yet, the past few decades has seen the gradual erosion of the influence of the Catholic Church over the day-to-day lives of Irish people, but it nonetheless remains in the background. Whilst the vast majority of the Irish people still consider themselves Catholic, people who self identify as "non religious" make up the second largest group in the State (2006 Census).²⁶ The decline of the Church in the religious sphere, according to Inglis (1998), correlates with its decline in influence over other aspects of Irish social life, especially in areas such as politics, healthcare, education, social welfare and the media. Religious capital is no longer a prerequisite to acquiring other forms of capital, such as economic, political and social power. The

²⁶ See <http://www.cso.ie/census/Census2006Results.htm>

Church, in losing control of key areas of influence, is losing its source of political and social capital as well its symbolic capital, which legitimated its “moral monopoly” (1998:213). Ultimately suggests Inglis, the symbolic domination of the media has replaced the symbolic domination of the Church in Irish society (1998:208). Since the foundation of the State, the Church has had a huge influence in how Irish people constructed their worldview and how they lived their everyday lives, however this was to change dramatically from the early 1990’s. On the nighttime streets of Dublin, however, religious organizations can still be seen. Indeed two of the religious organizations, The Sisters of Charity and the Good Shepherd Sisters, which ran the Magdalene laundries,²⁷ now run Ruhama, a Dublin based agency whose remit is to work “with women affected by prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation” (www.ruhama.ie). They provide a range of services including outreach, counselling, education, referral amongst other services, using a “rescue” based approach. The Legion of Mary are also still involved in street-based prostitution, mostly it appears giving out religious medals. Susie, a street-based sex worker, has had several encounters with them and like other street-based workers finds them simultaneously amusing and annoying, but also a welcome relief from the monotony of a slow quiet night, as Susie said:

you have people coming up with their miraculous medals, you know coming up, I don’t know who they were, you know sometimes that would be nice coz you’d have someone annoying you or something and they come up and you’d end up talking to them and then other times they be there and you’d be ‘*go away I’m tryin’ to work*’ and there’d be twenty cars or something and you’d be like ‘*yeah in a minute*’ and you be like ‘*fuck off yous are ok one night, tonight yous are...are just are in me territory*’ kind of you know, things like that.

The Celtic Tiger

You can make maybe a thousand or more a day, that’s not a lot. Ok, I take €250 per hour, so if you see 4 guys a day, that’s a thousand, they can

²⁷ Ruhama is funded by the State through the Departments of Justice and Health Both the Good Shepherd Sisters and the Sisters of Mercy have refused to meet with the Justice for Magdalene’s, a support group for women who had been in the laundries. According to the *Irish Times* (25th June 2011) the Good Shepherd sisters alone received over €14 million in funding from the HSE since 1996, yet since publication of the Ryan Report both congregations say they are unable contribute to costs of redress for people abused as children in these laundries, which they ran (McGarry, 2011).

pay you in one day, one months rent. Sometimes, they just text me and say *'oh, are you going to be soon in Dublin?'* *'Or in Galway'* they just ask me. Or sometimes I just post them a message on my website and write *'oh are you looking for me in Dublin?'* and if there's enough guys I just go over for a maybe two or three days make a couple of thousands and come back.

Liana, independent escort

After high unemployment high and emigration that defined the 1980's, the 1990's, and the dawn of the "Celtic Tiger" was a time of huge social and economic change in Ireland. The previous fifty years saw Ireland progress from a closed insular economy and to one that embraced the global capitalist system, moving from a principally agricultural and traditional manufacturing based economy, to one increasingly based on the hi-tech and globally traded services sectors (Inglis, 2008). In 2003 the services sector accounted for 66% of employment and farming just 6% (Sweeney, 2005). In this thesis, it is impossible to highlight the complexity of the now deceased Celtic Tiger,²⁸ however, in short, reasons for Ireland's economic success have been attributed to EU membership, access to the Single Market, our low corporation tax rate and presence of large multinational corporations, a trend of immigration rather than emigration,²⁹ increased participation in the labour market (by women in particular), investment in education, social partnership agreements and a stabilizing of public finances (ERSI, 2011).³⁰ Ireland went from being one of the poorest States in Europe to one of the wealthiest. GNP doubled in size (Sweeney, 2005) and we reached almost full employment; in the years between 1996 and 2006 unemployment fell from 12% to just 4%. Indeed by 2004 Ireland was ranked as the most globalized nation on the planet (Kearney, 2004).

²⁸ For more on the post Celtic Tiger economic meltdown, property crash, recession and subsequent mass emigration and unemployment please see http://www.esri.ie/irish_economy/.

²⁹ Between the years 1991-2000 the total labour force expanded by 43%, creating almost half a million jobs in the Irish economy. During the years 2003-2007 employment increased by 77%, resulting in acute national labour shortages. This in turn attracted an unprecedented number of immigrants to Ireland; net migration increased from 8,000 per annum in 1996 to a peak of almost 72,000 per annum in 2006 (Smyth et al, 2009).

³⁰ Reference website: http://www.esri.ie/irish_economy/

According to Eriksen (2007:8) some of the prominent features of globalization³¹ include disembedding or de-localization, acceleration or increased speed in communication³² and transport, standardization, interconnectedness, increased movement such as migration, business and leisure travel, cultural mixing, vulnerability, including the weakening and even obliteration of boundaries, and re-embedding. Eriksen (2007:9) argues to understand globalization in its entirety, we must see both its benefactors as well as its victims, the “globalizers” and the “globalized,” those who are part of the process and those who are excluded - the human detritus of these transnational economic processes. One of the most remarkable developments during the Celtic Tiger years was rapid social mobility, and expansion of the middle classes (Mc Williams, 2006). However, even though the burgeoning middle classes saw a dramatic increase in their standard of living, there were still major gaps between what Inglis (2008) calls the new globally orientated cosmopolitan elite, and a local underclass, dependent on the social welfare system.³³

Rapid economic change was also accompanied by social change, which in turn put huge pressure on both politicians and legislators to adapt to these changes. Bacik (2004) enumerates several important changes, which transformed the social and political landscape, especially for women at this time. These included the election of Mary Robinson as Ireland’s first female president, a landmark case known as “X case” in which a suicidal 14 year old rape victim was granted permission for an abortion by the Supreme Court, as her right to life prevailed over that of her foetus. This decision followed a huge public outcry after the High Court initially refused her permission for an abortion.³⁴ Contraception was finally legalized in 1992, followed

³¹ It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss globalization in greater detail, for more discussion please see Sassen (1996); Tsing (2000); Ong & Collier (2005).

³² In 2006, an estimated 59% of all households had a home computer, compared to 46% in 2004 and the total number of subscriptions to mobile phones reached 4.4 million users in 2006 with the mobile penetration rate increasing from 93% to 103% in the space of a year from 2005 to 2006. Revenue in the mobile sector alone topped 1.8 billion in 2005 (CSO, 2006).

³³ whilst the poverty gap declined from 20% in 2004 to 17% in 2007 (Russell *et al*, 2007), the EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (CSO, 2007) estimated that in 2006 8.8% of the population experienced debt paying for everyday expenses (food, clothing, heat etc), with 6.9 % of the population living in “consistent poverty,” with almost 33% of these being children.

³⁴ Abortion is still criminalized (in most circumstances) on the island of Ireland. The IFPA estimates at least 147,881 women travelled to Britain for abortion services since 1980. In 2010, the European Court of Human Rights found that Ireland’s abortion laws constituted a violation of women’s human rights and that travelling abroad for abortion services placed significant psychological, physical and financial burdens on women (Donnellan, 2011).

by the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1993, and the legalization of divorce in 1995 (Bacik, 2004:21). Key events during the years of the Celtic Tiger symbolize seismic shifts in thinking, and in tandem with globalization and increased immigration, represented a move towards a more culturally diverse and liberal society. It was these changes that also transformed the nature of sex work as Liana in the opening piece highlights. As we move through this thesis, I too will demarcate these changes. As I highlight throughout this chapter, the nature of sex work in Dublin changed rapidly over the course of the Celtic Tiger with many women altering the way they work. Several moved away from street-based work, and with the explosion in Internet and mobile phone technology (plus other factors I enumerate later) were implicated in the expansion of the indoor sex markets. The online nature of the indoor market also complicated the research process and made accessing sex workers as research participants more challenging.

Prostitution and the Law

I don't know whether I said this to you the last time, I do in a way think it should be legalized 'coz I think girls would be a lot safer, you know. Like at the end of the day and they're out there and they're doing it, it's not just because a cop says '*get off here*' or '*get outa here,*' '*get away from here,*' you walk back around, I've done it myself, you walk back around the corner and you try and hide from that copper, you know what I mean? Like at least if it was legalized, now I'm not talking about seedy little brothels, I'm talking about a proper place like, like say this hotel was going to be a brothel, and men, from wherever, come in, and even like instead of giving your pimp, if you had one, your money, the government take it, I don't know, you know, that's sounds like out of this world, 'coz it sounds so unrealistic, so if the girls are willing to give that, the best part of their money to a pimp, throw twenty quid off every job they do, if it's going to be legalized, you know twenty quid tax off everybody, you do know what I mean like?

The interface between sex work, the State, and the legal apparatus around prostitution, is best articulated through the experiences of my many research participants, such as Susie, a street-based sex worker, in the above example. I first met Susie on the steps outside Holles Street Hospital, where she had recently given birth to her first child, a daughter. Susie was allowed home after the birth, but her daughter was in Special Care Baby Unit on methadone detoxification for several

weeks. Susie has worked on the streets on and off for more than ten years, but is now “mostly off” drugs (except recreational hash and some tablets) and in a CE scheme. Like, Susie, many of the women I worked with expressed a desire to have sex work recognized as a lawful profession and yearn for the respectability and “normality” associated with work in the formal economy. Security, safety, recognition by the State (in terms of paying tax, PRSI etc), reduction of stigma and independence, were all posited as key reasons behind the desire for legalization (and decriminalization). While more broadly the debate about legalization or decriminalization is a controversial one, I would like to first of all map out how my research participants view it. Susie further articulated her views on legalization thus:

legalized in the sense, somewhere that the girls can live in a house and pay taxes and just keep...’coz if there was a house I knew I could work in, pay tax, I’d do it, d’you know what I mean? I’d know I was safe in a house, yeah I would.

Life working on the streets in a profession not legally recognized (and highly stigmatized) often results in harassment from the Gardaí as well as imprisonment. I gathered many narratives of imprisonment and also conducted some interviews from inside one of two woman’s prisons in Ireland, The Dochas Center, part of the Mountjoy Prison complex. Jane was one of four women I met there. Jane was from the inner city, plump, with years of hard living etched on her face. In her middle twenties when I first met her, her long peroxide-dyed hair is usually tied back into a ponytail. She is missing several front teeth, something she is very embarrassed about and when we first met she would only speak to me with her hand covering her mouth. The rest of her teeth are rotten from years on methadone. When she was released from prison she became one of my key respondents and spoke about her life on the street and in prison as follows:

Emma: and what were you in prison for?

Jane: prostitution, shoplifting yeah

Emma: and were you actually convicted of prostitution

Jane: charged yeah

Emma: really?

Jane: yeah I got them all rang in together, you see I’d twenty offences, so I got them all ran into each other, I got three on one, two months on the other, d’you know, all like that, so I ended up with ten months

Emma: and did you have a load of bench warrants and stuff?

Jane: that's as well, so touch wood I've a clean slate now, I'm out of prison four weeks and I haven't touched heroin, coke or anything, so touch wood...

The application and enforcement of prostitution laws and government policies play a major role in determining how the sex industry operates in a given time and place. Susie in her negotiation of the sex industry speaks about the difficulty of working with the current prostitution laws in Ireland, laws which in turn directly affect her working conditions and the health and welfare of all sex workers. Societal attitudes to prostitution, especially street prostitution, also affect the extent to which identities and activities within the sex industry must be hidden.

Selling sex is not illegal in Ireland, but activities that make it possible, such as soliciting or brothel keeping are, thus making it very difficult, if not impossible, to sell sex (in public) without breaking the law. The law mainly views prostitution from a public order and nuisance perspective, and promotes a double standard, where the “public visibility” of prostitution is of most concern, rather than the sale of sex itself - the focus on the control, containment, and most importantly the concealment, of sex work (Bacik, 2004). Selling sex in public is criminalized through the offences of “loitering” and “soliciting.” The legislation currently rests upon two pieces of law^{35, 36}, the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1935³⁷ and the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1993³⁸ (the principle intention of this law was to decriminalize homosexuality). The 1993 Act abolished all references to “common prostitute,” as well as repealed much of the old legislation, and the offences of loitering and soliciting became gender-neutral offences. The traditional terms of loitering and soliciting are retained as the basis for prosecution, and in practice, “predictive identifying evidence” is still required for conviction (Bacik, 2004:155). The new Act also increased penalties for soliciting and loitering, with increased fines for the first

³⁵ There is growing momentum amongst some feminists and some religious organizations to adopt the “Swedish Model” (which criminalizes the purchase of sex, and not the sale) in Ireland.

³⁶ It is beyond the scope of this thesis to delve deeply into the history of prostitution in Ireland. For more information please refer to Luddy (1992, 1995, 1997, 2007, 2008); Luddy & Murphy (1989); Ward (2010). For more analysis of legislation in relation to prostitution please see Interdisciplinary Report on Prostitution in Ireland, IHRC, Dublin.

³⁷ <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1935/en/act/pub/0006/index.html>

³⁸ <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1993/en/act/pub/0020/index.html>

two convictions and the possibility of prison for a third conviction. Pimping and procuring are both criminalized through the offences of organizing prostitution, by controlling or directing the activities of a prostitute, coercing a person to become a prostitute, or living off the earnings of a prostitute, as well as brothel keeping. In June 2008, The Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008³⁹ criminalized trafficking for the purposes of sexual and labour exploitation with penalties for conviction including fines and life imprisonment. The law as it stands has a negative impact on the working practices and health and safety of street-based women, as Mandy, who I first interviewed in the women's prison, illustrates:

yeah I used to always get hassle [from the Gardaí], you'd be only up there fuckin ten minutes, up Benburb Street, you'd be only up there fucking five ten minutes and the cunts are coming and they're on your case for the night, d'you know telling you to 'move on' and telling you if they come back in fifteen minutes and if you're still standing there they'll put you in the station for the night, and you'd get charged for soliciting and all. So yeah 'coz they give you a caution and if you don't do what they tell you to do, they can hold you under caution, because they asked you to move, and if you're still standing in the spot they asked you to move from like. If I was on one side of the canal, and they thought I was, and I could just walk over to the other side of the canal, it's a different street altogether, and like they told me to get off that street and I went to the other street, and they told me to get off that street, and I'd just go home because they are the only two streets, I'd go on, and I wouldn't to go to a few other streets up that way like.

The section of the Act that has the most impact on the lives of street-based sex workers, is one concerned with the public visibility of sex work - "loitering for purposes of prostitution." This part of the Act states that where members of the Gardaí have:

reasonable cause to suspect that a person is loitering in a street or public place in order to solicit or importune another person or other persons for the purposes of prostitution may direct that person to leave immediately that street or public place.

Louise and Liz, two street-based sex workers illustrate how this section of the Act impacts on them:

³⁹ <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2008/en/act/pub/0008/index.html>

Emma: and do you ever get any hassle from guards?

Louise: around here they're pigs

Liz: they caution you, they give you five minutes, *'if we see you in ten minutes we're arresting you'*.

Basically this means any woman "loitering" in the street can be asked to "move on." I will discuss this in greater detail in chapter on sex work and risk. This places the women at increased risk of potential violence, because as they spend most of the night avoiding the Gardaí rather than taking on clients, it takes longer for them to get the money they need, they have to work for longer and later into the night. Avoiding the Gardaí often means having to move to areas what are less well lit, less populated and less familiar to them, placing them at further risk. Also it brings the women into direct conflict with members of the Gardaí, which means the women are then very reluctant to report crime, as they have an acrimonious relationship with them. I talk about this in greater detail later in the thesis.

In this chapter I have given a historical as well as geographical overview of sex work as it exists in an Irish context, from the infamous Monto to the contemporary challenges of sex work. This chapter has spoken to the vagaries of sex work as an industry, lifestyle choice and object of surveillance, and has illuminated aspects of the life world of women who chose to work as sex workers. By giving voice to these women I have in a sense opened a space where the issues of silence, and the categories constructed by various parties, such as NGO's, the Gardaí, the State through legislation, and the media are interrogated and challenged. Voices such as Aija and Liana in their attempts to make a better life for themselves in Ireland, Jane, Mandy, Liz and Louise trying to negotiate life on the streets and Susie her struggle to make money and at the same time avoid the police. In the next chapter I show how these and other women enter and negotiate the world of sex work. Contrary to many mediatized and other discourses surround entry into the world of sex work, there are many different ways that women enter the industry and a myriad of ways of working within the industry.

Chapter 2: Starting Sex Work

I have already mapped out a cartography of the world of sex work in the previous chapter, as aforementioned critical to this thesis, is the argument that sex work should be recognized as a form of work. This chapter is primarily about women's accounts of their entry into sex work. Part of this is to gain an insight into the how women became involved in the sex industry, and the alternatives they were faced with. I have divided each section into stories from street-based and escort groups as in most respects, they are separate population and are seen as such by each other, as well as by the police, social services and the wider public. I will introduce Marie and Rosa, independent touring escorts, and Aija and Liana, independent escorts, as well as Martina, Louise and again Susie who are predominantly street-based sex workers.

Getting Started

A myriad of factors combine to shape the sex industry and there are multiple diverse realities and experiences within it. Research into the industry therefore needs to account for this complexity. Sex work is far more multifaceted and sex workers accounts of their experiences are more interesting and multilayered than is often suggested by dominant discourses and the media. Focusing only on the sensationalist media representations tends to obscure this complexity and obliterates any other analysis into lived experiences of those working in the sex industry. However, sex workers accounts of these experiences can only be understood within the larger matrix of culture, history and political economy (Farmer, 2003). As Bourgois (1996) writes, it is less about individual psychology but more about the larger political, economic and cultural context. One simply cannot ignore historical processes and the effects of unequal power relations around class, ethnic, or gender and sexual categories. Like other social institutions prostitution cannot be divorced from its social economic and political context, including the actions (and inactions) of the State, inequalities, health and welfare, the realities of social and sexual marginalization, opportunities for education and training, male violence, poverty, gender relations and the social organization of desire (O'Neill, 1997:15). As I

mentioned in the Introduction, the “sources of different experiences, lie less in the nature of erotic labour, but rather than in the social location of the worker performing it, and the conditions under which the work takes place” (Chapkis, 2007:98), and this is what must be interrogated. The circumstances under which women enter prostitution will determine much about how that woman experiences and practices prostitution (Kelly, 2008). Whilst those working in the sex industry may experience different circumstances and patterns of entry, these circumstances may also be interlinked with their ability to control their working lives and effect a degree of choice over remaining in sex work (Sanders *et al*, 2009). This chapter looks at the choice women I met made to enter prostitution and how they frame their entry into the sex industry.

Some Background

Sex for sale is “part of the fabric of society,” and the reality of economics on the planet (Leigh, 2008). Kelly (2008) suggests that like all other workers, sex workers operate within a larger framework of dependency and inequality, and each woman that enters the sex industry, does so somewhere along a continuum ranging from “choice” (which may be very limited) to “force.” In life we all presented with choices. No one had infinite degrees of freedom and the choices we make are situated within our moral, social, political and economic worlds. However, when it comes to sex work, the issue of “choice” has been a highly contentious issue amongst feminists, sex workers and activists alike, and has been at the core of feminist divisions about prostitution.⁴⁰ The radical feminist perspective argues that

⁴⁰ Sex work is a hugely contested issue within feminism. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyze all the contributors and their varying viewpoints in this polemical debate. In simple terms, feminists tend to come from one of two opposing groups, those who view sex work as a legitimate form of labour (often referred to as sex positive feminists) and those who see it solely as a violence against women (sex radical feminists). For further reading see Augustín (2007); Barry (1979, 1995); Bell (1994); Chapkis (1997); Farley (2003, 2004); Jeffreys (1997); Mac Kinnon (1993); McLeod (1982); O’Connell-Davidson (1998, 2002); Delacoste & Alexander, 1988); Doezema (2005); Outshoorn (2005) amongst many others. Feminists and activists (as well as sex workers themselves) in various locations around the world tend to align themselves with these factions to one degree or another. Those who view as an inherent violence against women tend to advocate for further criminalization of prostitution, whilst those who view sex work as a form of labour tend to advocate for decriminalization of prostitution and promotion of sex worker rights. Others argue that we need to move beyond the Voluntary / Forced dichotomy, as it divides sex workers, reproduces the “whore/ Madonna” dichotomy and has replaced the “abolitionist” model internationally and does little to improve the human rights of sex workers (Doezema, 1998; Kempadoo, 1998). There are several UK

sex work is “in and of itself, a violence against women,” and that no woman can freely consent to sell sex (Kinnell, 2008:27). Moreover, Kinnell argues that this is a “meaningless shibboleth” and deflects attention away from violence as sex workers themselves articulate it, as well as from the structural conditions that allow it. She also suggests that “violence” from the radical feminist perspective does not mean the assaults, rapes, and murders inflicted on sex workers, but instead means the commodification of women’s bodies through charging for sexual acts. This is considered the essential harm, the “violence” which damages women. It is also asserted that no woman has consented to the sale of sex, as women do not enter prostitution voluntarily, and consequently every such act is a sexual assault, so sex work *is* violence (2008:28). Sex workers who protest that they have chosen to sell sex, are dismissed as delusional and damaged, the victims of “false consciousness”: only to be pitied, but disregarded by those formulating theories or policies.

As Kinnell argues, this discourse not only ignores the presence of male and transgender sex workers, but is elitist in its dismissal of sex workers’ accounts of their experiences. It also suggests totalizing experience of women’s relationships to their bodies. Furthermore, clients are demonized as controlling and sadistic, neglecting frequent assertions by both sex workers and their clients that it is the sex worker that is in control of the interaction. It also ignores physical harms inflicted on sex workers such as rapes, assaults and murders, as there is no incentive to distinguish between acts to which the sex worker has consented, and acts that cause physical harm or death. Moreover, it colludes with the violence, as there is no differentiation between the society that “forces” a woman into prostitution and the violence expressed in the assaults, rapes, and murders. Similarly, there is no incentive to examine violence against sex workers or punish those who perpetuate this violence, or to reduce this violence and make sex work safer, it is sufficient to abhor the sex industry and demand its elimination. Kinnell suggests that why policy

based sex workers rights groups including the English Collective of Prostitutes and the International Union of Sex Workers, which won a landmark for inclusion into the GMB, one of the U.K.s biggest trade unions (Lopes, 2005b, 2006). In the Irish context, a recently formed group called SWAI (Sex Workers Alliance Ireland) has set up to advocate for sex workers rights in Ireland. This group however has met with opposition from several women’s groups. SWAI is comprised of sex workers and their allies and has links with many of the NGOs working on the ground with sex workers in the Republic.

makers have embraced the radical feminist perspective with such fervour, has little to do with challenging the subjugation of women under patriarchy, but the rhetoric of “rescuing” women acts as a smokescreen for all sorts of other objectives such as protecting property values, social values and votes. Therefore politically difficult proposals advocating sex worker rights and efforts to improve the working conditions of sex workers, can be rejected as legitimating violence against women, as sex work itself is seen as inherently violent from this perspective (Kinnell, 2008). Likewise, Kelly (2008) argues that the radical feminist perspective not only undermines rights due to sex workers, but also that the condemnation of sex work is reductive and essentializes the female experience, as well as fails to understand how class differences and culture shape women’s lives. When sex work is viewed as “work,” it can be understood as a rational choice for many women, when viewed alongside their alternative sources of potential income.

There are multiple routes into sex work, as I have highlighted in the voices of the women contained herein (O’Neil, 2007). Whilst most women cite economic need as their primary reason for entering prostitution, most women make rational economic decisions about the choices available to them in terms of alternative income generating activities, and, working in the sex industry. They may be constrained by a lack of education, other employment opportunities or otherwise may only be in a position to work in low-income generating jobs (O’Connell Davidson, 1998). Others drift in through friends and family already working in the industry. Most of the sex workers I met became involved through already established networks of friends and family. Some may feel they have little choice and become involved in order to support their drug habit or supplement their welfare payments, such as Susie or Louise, whose alternative means of earning the money they need to fund their drug habit is stealing. Others become involved for a specific reason, such as to pay off debts or to fund their education. Those who are skilled or well educated and have experience working in the formal sector may also decide to sell sex, by conducting a cost-benefit analysis, and may decide to combine sex work with other sources of income, or move into sex work altogether. As well as affording a high degree of autonomy, working in the sex industry can be very lucrative and women can accrue a substantial amount of money in a relatively short space of time, especially compared

with most other professions. This can be hugely attractive to pay off debts, supplement other incomes, pay tuition fees, or to help out friends or family in debt.

For instance Laura who was a hotel manager in Birmingham for years before she came to Ireland, and began working in the industry, when her father's car rental business failed and he became ill. Similarly those willing to travel to Ireland seeking adventure and opportunity, may end up working as sex workers, especially so in the years of the Celtic Tiger when Ireland offered huge opportunities to migrants. Some grasped at chances offered by others to facilitate their migration and may be afterwards were forced to work to pay off large debts owed to those who facilitated their migration. Aija who I spoke of in my introduction was desperate for a new life away from long hours working in a shop in Latvia, and jumped at the chance to work in Ireland, "I was bored I want something else for my life, so I took that chance" she said. Indeed many at the higher end of the sex work market, have come to Ireland with the sole intention of working in the Irish sex industry, as it is seen as a relatively open market in terms of access and initial set-up. Aija introduced several women from her homeland and also from other parts of Eastern Europe to Ireland and helped them with initial set-up such as getting social security numbers, finding accommodation, providing references (for landlords etc) and getting set up on the escort websites. One of the girls she became quite friendly with, Liana, became one of my regular informants. Liana came to Ireland with the help of Aija and with the intention of making enough money to buy a house in her native Latvia. She says of her decision to come to Ireland:

Aija told me about the money she was making and I thought yes I want that too, I can make a new life for myself, buy my own house, I could never do that working in a factory in Riga, so I just decided to do it, do it for me, to make my future.

Likewise others such as Rosa and Marie come to Ireland with the sole intention of making money by selling sexual services. They travel intermittently as touring escorts, but are based outside of Ireland. Many who travel here to work in the industry it, is seen as safe place to work with very little State intrusion. This section of the market tends to be ignored by the police, the legislators, and the general

public. On occasions neighbours make complaints about possible brothel running, which means the Gardaí are forced to investigate, which may result in being moved on or criminal charges. But, on the whole mostly of the girls working at the escort end of the market work alone or with one or two other girls, and try to be as discreet as possible, so they rarely arouse suspicion amongst the neighbours. Also some escorts who live and work permanently in Ireland such as Aija and Laura, rent a separate apartment for work purposes, often in another suburb or closer to the city centre. Many sex workers also work part time or at times in their lives when they are in need of extra income. Also as working in the industry sex workers require very little “upskilling,” they can drop out of the industry for months and or even years and slip back in with relative ease. Though in the case of street-based women, there have been some issues with women on the street and their work patches, as their former patches have now been claimed by a new worker, and this in turn has lead to some friction amongst street-based workers.

Apart from the obvious large sums of money involved, several other factors make the sex industry a rational choice for many of women I met during my research. Ireland is seen as an easy place to work for those at the escort end of the market, it is English speaking, and those working alone or in groups are able to avoid any confrontation with the police. It is also well established in terms of potential client base and getting set up online can be done in a few hours at relatively little expense. Many sex workers are highly mobile and in the practice of sex work many of the skills required to sell sex are transferable to other geographical locations, and from other occupations, and with some cultural tweaking many of they women do really well. Factors that I mention in my introduction, such as flattening of borders within Europe, cheap flights and ease of access to short term holiday lets and apartments in Dublin also make it a viable option to potential workers. Also Dublin city is quite small and easy to navigate so for women who come from Europe and much of the UK, working in Ireland is an attractive option. Also there appears to be very little involvement of pimps in the street-based and independent escort sectors of the market, so the women have a large degree of autonomy and are very much their own bosses. Indeed many of the women who have previously worked in brothels opt to leave as a result of how the brothels sector operates.

The sex industry also offers a huge degree of flexibility in terms of working hours, which means women can combine sex work with their childcare needs etc. Many of the women I met have children and are single parents; so childcare is a huge issue. If they can afford it, some of the escorts have nannies, such as Aija who has a live-in nanny to care for her son. Because sex work can and usually does take place outside of usual crèche hours, leaving the children in a crèche is not an option for most women. Sometimes women feel they have no option but to leave their children alone (this was seen as reasonable behaviour and the only choice available for many street-based women). This of course has repercussions on subsequent risk taking behaviour and the types of sex women are then willing to sell. Because they may be in a rush to get home to their children, they may need to make money quicker, so have to take on clients they would normally reject, or provide sexual services that they normally would not, such as anal sex or sex without a condom. As they can charge higher prices for these services, they are able to make the amount of money they need and get home as soon as they can. Some of the girls I met wait until the children are asleep and then sneak out, but spend most of the night worrying about the children left alone. Also because of the social stigma attached to sex work (especially street-based work, even amongst escorts) many women could not ask friends or family to mind the children, as they could not explain their absences late in the evening and into the night.

As I argued in the previous chapter the circumstances of entry into the industry, will largely dictate the degree of control woman has over her means of production, in terms of position within the industry, and subsequent working conditions. One's social location affects the degree of choice one has how these sexual services are sold, such as the type of sex sold, where this sex is sold, and to whom it is sold to. It also determines the commercial value of the sexual service sold. As in any other industry, there are privileged positions as well as hugely exploitative ones, and a whole spectrum of positions between these two extremes. Those in more privileged positions will have more choices and options open to them, than those further down the scale.

Some women choose sex work, over a wider range of options than other women. Escort Marie works part-time and usually sees only one client a week. Part-time work selling sex has helped fund her return to education. Others such as Louise or Susie have less choice in what they do, both left school early and as they see it, with no training or qualifications, their only other option is stealing, in order to make ends meet. For these women sex work puts food on their table, feeds their children, pays the bills, as well as pays for extra treats such as birthday and Christmas presents. However for some, their situations do not have to be permanent, whilst there is little social mobility in sex work, there are opportunities for those willing to exploit them. Aija, for instance who I spoke about in my introduction, had a difficult initiation into the industry, but she was able to gain more control and changed her position in relation to the sex industry, from working in a brothel paying off debts to running her own brothel and setting up as an independent escort. As a result she has more power and autonomy over her day-to-day working life. Conversely women selling sex in exchange for drug money are much more limited in the choices they make, as they are working to fund their addiction, and sex work is the only work available to them that offers the means to earn substantial amounts of money in a relatively short space of time, what Mandy refers to as “instant money.” In the next section of the chapter I talk about how women articulate their entry into the sex industry, firstly looking at street-based sex work and the fraught relationship between sex work and drug use.

It is difficult to ignore the connection of problem drug use and street-based prostitution.⁴¹ Indeed it is difficult to say whether drug use is a precursor to sex work or visa versa (McKeganey, 2006). Many of the women I met attribute their entry into sex work to their drug use. Mandy a street-based sex worker explains:

well I have no choice when I'm strung out or that...none of my family give me money or anything like that when I'm on drugs you know they know I'm only going to spend it on drugs...and I've to go robbing or something like that or even getting a job it wouldn't be enough, when

⁴¹ There is a huge literature, including ethnographic work, on street-based sex work and drug use including: Bourgois (1996) Day (2007); Shedlin (1990); Glossop et al (1995); Bloor & Mc Kaganey (1990); Bloor et al (1990) McKeganey (1992, 1994); McKeganey & Barnard (1996); O'Neill & O'Connor (1999); Gilchrist, (2005) amongst many others.

you're strung out and you have a big habit and that you're not going to get bleedin' three or four hundred pounds a day in your job that why I ended went out working as well because I had a sky high habit like.... I was taking like an eight of gear and an eight of coke a day.

Many of the women I met at the street-based end of the market, particularly those with chaotic drug use, saw their only alternative means of income generation to be stealing. Some tried it and got caught and others were too afraid of getting caught to try it. Others again had already been caught and were afraid their faces were too well known in the local shopping centres to be able to get away with it again. Many of their friends who were also problem drug users were already working in the sex industry and it was seen as "easy money." In the next section I introduce Louise, a 32-year-old street-based sex worker, whose life has been dominated by issues of poverty, marginalization, drug use and homelessness.

It was late one evening when I was walking home from outreach; I was tired and looking forward to going home to bed. I had just turned onto Benburb Street when I bumped into Louise on her way home from a busy night working further down the quays. I had known Louise for several years at this stage, firstly through outreach, and then as a participant in my research. At that stage Louise had been working in prostitution for more than ten years and was problem drug user for over 15 years. She also has spent time in and out of prison, been homeless and made several attempts to get off drugs and get her life back in order. At the moment she seemed to be doing fine, she got her drug use back under control and had moved into a new flat after years of homelessness, and sleeping rough. Anyway, tonight I got the feeling that Louise wanted company. Although it was after midnight, she invited me back to her flat; she wanted to show me her new wallpaper. So with the promise of a cup of tea and Jaffa cakes I went with her flat several streets back from the Liffey. I had been to Louise's on several previous occasions and had seen her flat in various states of array and disorder, but tonight it was surprisingly tidy. Like many of my other informants that used drugs, Louise was a poly-drug user, using a combination of methadone, cocaine, heroin, hash and tablets. By now she had got her heroin use down to two bags a day and was also on a Methadone Maintenance Programme taking 90mls of methadone per day. She still uses cocaine and benzos occasionally, and for Louise she felt this was under control. She was trying to stay off alcohol as

she always said “that stuff would kill ya” always said with a laugh, but her eyes told a different story.⁴² Louise’s father was an alcoholic and choked on his own vomit after one of his drinking binges when she was nine. Her mother brought her and her siblings up as a single parent surviving on welfare. Louise’s alcohol consumption was a major source of concern and at the same time amusement to her, as when she was off alcohol; she felt she had much more control over her life, even though her drug use remained high. Her alcohol use was the barometer she used for how stable or chaotic her life was, regardless of her drug use.

Field notes, 2007

Louise had grown up in Ballymun,⁴³ an area described as “the most notorious Irish experiment in high rise living” (McDonald, 2000:238) and “the States worst planning disaster” (2000:251). By the 1980’s Ballymun had become synonymous with drug use, anti-social behaviour, extreme deprivation and poverty, social exclusion and marginalization. During this time and again in the 1990’s, heroin emerged as a considerable problem in the poorest, most socially excluded areas in the capital (Saris, 2008). This also coincided with the emergence of new disease, eventually called HIV, which in relation to drug use was a major source of moral panic during this time.⁴⁴ It is no coincidence that many of my informants in this, the street-based sector of the sexual services market, come from the most disadvantaged parts of Dublin.⁴⁵ Like many other socially excluded communities in 1980’s Dublin,

⁴² For a recent ethnographic account of on polydrug use in Dublin, please see Saris & O’Reilly (2010).

⁴³ Seen as a fast and cheap answer to Dublin’s housing problems, Ballymun was a government inspired experiment in high-rise living and consisted of 3,068 dwellings in seven fifteen storey towers, as well as nineteen 8 story “spine blocks” and ten 4 story blocks of “walk up” flats and 452 terraced two story houses. Although much sought after at the time of construction, Ballymun was seriously under-serviced and rapidly declined to become one of the most notorious ghettos in the country. It is estimated by the mid 1980’s that Ballymun had over 1,000 drug addicts, an unemployment rate of 45%, one in six were single parents, and up to a third of the 12,000 were on a waiting list for housing elsewhere (McDonald, 2000).

⁴⁴ Newspaper headlines such as “AIDS Plague now strikes 17 Dublin babies” *Irish Independent*, 1st December 1986; “No hope for AIDS babies” *Irish Independent* 12th January 1987; “Heroin growth to pose a new AIDS threat to Galway” *City Tribune*, 28th April 1985; “Heroin Free in Dublin’s streets – TD” *Irish Press*, 9th September 1981; “Heroin freely available in Dublin: doctor” *Irish Independent*, September 1981; “Addict tells of AIDS fear” *Irish Press*, May 22nd 1987; “Mythical figures that haunt the country” *Sunday Independent*, October 4th 1998, dominated the media.

⁴⁵ The spatial distribution of relative deprivation appears to be quite stable over time. The underlying dimensions of social disadvantage include demographic decline, labour market deprivation and social class disadvantage. In 2002 the most deprived areas of Dublin included Coolock, Darndale, Ballymun, Cabra, Finglas, Ballyfermot, Inchicore, Cherry Orchard, Clondalkin, Crumlin, Walkinstown, Tallaght

Ballymun was characterized by high levels of intergenerational unemployment, low educational attainment, poverty and social marginalization. On top of that many were from dysfunctional families or families where alcohol and drug use posed significant problems, absent parents, other family members already involved in drugs and or criminal activities.⁴⁶ There were not many opportunities for young women and like many of her peers Louise left school without any qualifications and very poor prospects. By the time Louise was 18 most of her friends, if they were not already dead from an overdose, were living on social welfare, were single parents and had at least dabbled in drug use. Like many women in this study Louise was first introduced into drugs by older friends or family, and she began taking drugs when introduced by her then boyfriend when she was 15:

I was going out with a fella who was into drugs, he was on heroin, I didn't do the classic kind of lead up to drugs which is the usual, alcohol patches, whatever, whatever, whatever, I went straight in and I smoked heroin, and then I tried everything else afterwards, but I was going out with a fella and he was strung out on heroin, and I didn't know what it was, I knew the name but he'd even be saying he was sick, but I didn't know what he meant.

For two years Louise was what she describes as “a closet junkie,” her boyfriend supplied her with heroin, so she did not have to score it herself:

he used to sell it or go out and buy it, you know like nobody knew, and then when I finished with him, that's when it all blew up, when I was 17 and ‘*oh she's a junkie*’ and everybody thought that it was only then I was getting into it, but I have been into it for a long time:

Louise eventually dropped out of school and her drug habit spiraled out of control. With no other means to support her drug habit, she began working in prostitution:

and parts of the inner city. Little has changed (except parts of the inner city, which experienced gentrification and change in social composition and deprivation profile) since the early 1990's (Hasse & Pratsche, 2005).

⁴⁶ The authors of a 1998 study by the Western Health Board suggest that there is a link between drugs, homelessness and poverty emerge as crucial and central issues when examining risk factors and subsequent problems for individual involved in prostitution. Similar to other studies in Ireland they note that physical and sexual abuse featured very strongly in the backgrounds of their interviewees (Mc Elwee & Lalor, 1997; WHB, 1998).

I went mad and about a year or two later I went on the game, for the first time. I went downhill very, very quickly, it was like a certain death, and then I was trying out everything else and I mean everything, I would be changing drugs, I'd go through stages, try different things and going out drinking and dancing and doing E, you know and I thought this is great I'm clean now, but I was just changing, switching and swapping.

Eventually after stealing and selling her mother's jewellery, Louise's mother could not cope with her behaviour anymore and asked her to leave. Louise moved in with friends in the city centre where her drug use increased significantly. She then became homeless and lived on the streets, staying in hostels or sleeping rough in an abandoned building near the Luas works. She was taken back into the family home several times and the cycle continued of getting out of control and then being allowed to move back home, continued for several years. Here Louise explains the effect drug use had on her family, especially her mother:

she said she loves me but she couldn't take any more, I was coming back and forward like and I was upsetting the whole family, like not only her, I have a little brother and a little sister, I was upsetting them, they were finding, d'you see bins.⁴⁷ They were finding them you know, and my little sister was only five, now she couldn't damage herself you know but like what if there was an open one or you know all that you know, I see it now though at the time I was like she doesn't give a fuck about me, she only cares for the other two, and she was like *'look I can't take it any more'* and then my aunt said I could come up to her, but I didn't want to be imposing on them and then it was like I had literally nowhere to go, and I knew a girl and a fella that were homeless and they brought me to Charles street and they got me into a hostel and then I deteriorated again and then my Ma had to kinda take me back and then I'd do well for a while and then I'd go off the rails again and I'd go back and forth, to the hostel, it was just like, it was really bad state to be in. Like I couldn't get off and then I went into Cuain Dara.⁴⁸

Louise went into a residential detoxification unit in Ballyfermot. She managed to get through the programme, but things went rapidly downhill again when she was released:

⁴⁷ Sharps Boxes for disposal of used needles, syringes etc. Often used as part of a "Harm Reduction" initiative.

⁴⁸ Cuain Dara is a HSE funded detoxification unit.

I'm going to get clean you know and I went in and I did me detox and everything, and that was grand and I came out since I left there I went to the pub and then two days later I was having a smoke and because I was clean well I wasn't clean but because and slowly got back into the whole thing and that's when I went back working as well, coz like when I became homeless and everything goes like that, working kinda comes straight back into play, you know I don't go out when I don't do all the other stuff like...the only person I harmed doing that was meself I harmed those close to me, but the only person a really harmed was myself, you know I don't go out robbin' old grannies or anything , its just me and is harder when you're trying to get clean, you know I have to accept that I made choices, so it's a bit weird that way , and I'm here now.

Like Louise many of the women I met who had worked at the more chaotic end of the street-based market, she had prolonged periods of homelessness interspersed with periods of relative stability. Stability often meant reduced their drug taking and finding stable accommodation in a hostel or a B&B. Stories such as Louise's highlight that sex work, under these conditions, often took place under highly constrained social and structural circumstances. Many of their life choices were limited by multiple and overlapping social and economic problems such drug addiction, homelessness, mental health issues, medical problems, lack of education, or difficult childhoods. These compounded already constrained circumstances of poverty, structural violence and social exclusion. Marginalized groups in society all too often bear a disproportionate amount of health problems (WHO, 2000). Paul Farmer (2005:7) argues that:

Human rights violations are not accidents; they are not random in distribution or effect. Rights violations are, rather, symptoms of deeper pathologies of power that are linked intimately to the social conditions that so often determine who will suffer abuse and who will be shielded from harm.

Whilst, I am not arguing that all women growing up in such constrained environments turn to prostitution as a means of supporting their lives, but when faced with a very limited range of alternatives, prostitution is one avenue that some poor women chose. For many at this end of the market, holding down a job in the formal economy would be extremely difficult due to their chaotic lifestyles. Sylvia, a 40-

year-old mother of three from Darndale, for instance had worked in a coffee shop, but as her drug habit worsened, her wages could not support her habit as she explains:

Yeah, I was getting into debt, between bills and drugs, and whatever, I needed money. Anyway I'm sure the bastard was about to fire me, I was all over the shop.

Sylvia was eventually fired from her job, when she failed to show up for work on several occasions. Shortly afterwards she became involved in prostitution and her life spiraled out of control. She became homeless and lived in a car, with her three children for over a year.

As sex work provides a very good income compared with alternative income generating activities, it can however lead to increased drug use, and in turn even more chaotic lifestyles. Women like Sylvia are now caught in a vicious cycle of needing more and more money to feed their ever-increasing drug habit. This in turn has implications for increased risk taking behaviour, both in terms of the type of sex they are willing to sell and their drug using habits. Some women spoke of not selling sex unless they were stoned or drunk, so again this can lead to increased drug use, again requiring more and more money to pay their dealers, so they spend more and more time selling sex, and the cycle continues.

Many women often get drawn into prostitution when they see the amounts of money their friends are making. Indeed the majority of the women I met, in all sectors of the market became involved in prostitution through already established networks of friends, family or acquaintances. I first met Mandy in the women's prison where she was serving a three years sentence for a string of offences. Mandy had a difficult childhood, mostly spent in care. As she explains:

I was in a lot of homes and that when I was young, I then started to rob and that, when I was young and I got locked up in Oberstown Detention Center and I was in there for four years, and then when I got out I got out of there on me eighteenth birthday, I was in there when I was fifteen and got out when I was eighteen, got four years but I just done three years, and then when I got out, I started getting into when I got out a few of me

friends started smoking. I started smoking the gear and got to like it and got strung out on it, and after a few years I was strung out on gear I ended up on coke, and then been strung out for a few years when I started banging up, then I started on the coke I got very bad, and that's why I started going on the game.

Mandy started working when introduced by a friend:

I never knew about the game, it was through a young one that was on the game for a while, I didn't know. A friend of mine from Tallaght, but I didn't know she was on the game and she asked me to go up with her one night and I went up and she ended up leaving me up there and I had no money to go home and I ended up staying up there until about three o'clock so I ended up doing the car thing to try and get me money home but I didn't do business with your man that night like, I think he knew like that I didn't do it so I just didn't do it, so I just gave him half the money back and he gave me a lift up to Tallaght.

Similarly, Liz who like some of the other women I met, was up "watching a friends back" and became introduced to prostitution in this way. Watching someone's back usually means accompanying them whilst they wait for clients and taking down client's car registration numbers as well as making sure their friend returns from their interaction with their client at a pre-arranged time. It is primarily done to reduce risk, as the clients are aware that they are being watched, but also to alleviate boredom and loneliness on a slow night. Sometimes money or drugs are exchanged for this service. Due to the stigma associated with prostitution and drug use, this would only be done by a close friend or family member, due to the fear of being exposed as working in prostitution. Liz explains how she became involved in sex work:

I didn't know Louise when I started, I was on heroin and I was very sick like and me cousin was doing it, and I started like coming over and watching her back, and eventually I started doing it myself, you know...

Again, Martina had a similar experience. Martina has been working on the street for the last three years. She lives alone in a one bed Corporation flat in the city centre. She has two children, both of whom are in care due to her drug addiction. She started taking drugs relatively recently when introduced by a friend several years ago but now smokes three to four bags of heroin a day as well as taking a couple of benzos.

She tried cocaine once but didn't like it as it made her head spin, so she's happy to stick to heroin "as its working." She started on a Methadone Maintenance Programme (MMT) a few times but was hassled by other girls at the drug clinic so left. As well as a long list of medical complaints including asthma, depression, anxiety, and anorexia, Martina was absolutely devastated when her children were taken into and is trying desperately to get them back. She was mid thirties she first starting working when her friend introduced her to it explains how she became involved:

about a year a year and a half, a friend got me into it, you know what I mean? She asked me to go down with her one night, and I said, where are we going like, and she just said its just a thing to help to get money for your drug use, and that, you know what I mean, and I says "right!" so we went down on Benburb Street, and she asked me to get dressed first and I did, got dressed up and from there on. It was hard, I was nervous but I done it, you know what I mean?

Likewise, Sylvia had a similar experience when accompanying her friends Alison down to Benburb Street one night:

I went down with a friend watching her back, you know taking registrations of the cars and that, and when she was gone this car pulled up, and I was shaking and I looked him up and down and I said "yeah I am" he brought me up, I'll never forget it, to the park...

Again, Lorraine, who has worked in the industry since she was nineteen, had a similar experience when she was watching her friends back:

yeah me friend was out working and I was coming down with her taking registrations and I was there one night sitting there one night in me tracksuit with me hood up, just sitting on the ground and my friend was beside me and a van stopped and she said '*are you looking for business*' and he said '*yeah, but with her*' and I said '*sorry I don't work love*' and he said '*no I want her*' and she said '*are you doing it*' and I said '*I'm not doing it*' and she said '*if you don't I'm not fixing you up,*' she was fixing me up with a few lines so I wouldn't be sick and she said '*I'm not fixing you up if you don't get in the van with him.*' so I got in the van with him and I made my first hundred quid...

Many of the street-based women I met saw their only other option as shoplifting if they wanted an independent source of income. Some tried it, had to stop as they were being recognized in shops or were too embarrassed to do it or feared getting caught. Indeed it was much more likely they would end up serving time in prison for stealing than for soliciting. Jane started working when she was a teenager and has been working for the last 10 years; her main reason for entering prostitution was to find her drug habit and she hadn't got the nerve to shoplift:

I'm working since I'm say 16, or 17, the reasons for working was because I hadn't got the balls to shop lift, I hadn't got the nerve to go in and shoplift, don't ask me where I got the nerve to go and do prostitution, but it just seemed easier, so my first time I walked down the road and the fella just kind of pulled in, so I didn't have to do anything, so I got in, done whatever and I got paid and it just seemed so easy so I just kept on doing it like, so I'm 27 this year so I'd say I've been on it about 7 year.

Similarly Lorraine had a similar experience:

I started at seventeen on heroin and I used to shop lift but I got noticed so I had to turn to prostitution to feed me habit, I'd done it 11 years ago. I stopped because I was raped and then went back doing it about 8 months ago or maybe a little over, because I was on crack cocaine.

I met Lorraine in the Dochas centre where was serving a nine month sentence for shoplifting and outstanding bench warrants. Lorraine has been in and out of prison almost yearly since she was sixteen. She was brought up by her Da and her Nan after her mother died when she was ten. She started taking drugs when she was sixteen; starting on hash and then heroin "coz I thought it was cool," even though she kept getting sick she thought she was "being a big woman." It wasn't long before she was hooked and had to support her habit by "robbin' and shoplifting."

Both Lorraine and Jane had served time in prison for shoplifting, as had Sally who I also first met in the women's prison where was serving a three month sentence for shoplifting. It was a particularly hot the first day I went to the Dochas Centre

(Women's Prison).⁴⁹ One of the prison guards gave me a guided tour of the prison, the "cells," though they were more like bedrooms and at the top of the building the padded cells. Lately, the guard mentioned, that due to funding cuts they were running a basic service, so many of the workshops previously available to the women were no longer available. Overcrowding also seemed to be a huge issue and the padded cells were often used for ordinary prisoners. The central courtyard was quite beautiful if you could somehow ignore the thirty feet high surrounding walls. Many of the prisoners were out sunbathing, lying in ones and twos, rubbing butter on to their skin much to the annoyance to the prison nurse, whose offers of sun screen were laughed at. Susan the prison guard introduced me to some of the women as we sat out on the grass, I told them what I was working on and that I would love to talk with them about their experiences. Sally, Jane, Mandy, and Lorraine took up the offer. Sally is thirty-five with three children, all who are now in care. On the day I met her, Sally was very emotional as she was on a "benzo detox" and spent most of the time talking to me whilst crying into a sodden tissue. Sally started taking valium as a teenager, when introduced by her older brother and his friends:

em I would always have hung around with people that were older than me and because I'm an only girl and because my brothers are very good looking blokes, there would have been plenty of young ones hanging around always and they would have befriended me, to get to them, d'you know, and because of that, I always palled with girls that were older and I always done things that were older, for me age d'you know what I mean? So I grew up quicker than what I should have...so I was kinda started taking drugs... like I was sitting in pubs drinking at thirteen d'you know what I mean? A bit of make up on me it's amazing what you can do like, they were all like sixteen and seventeen. yeah and I was going along with them telling me Ma and Da I was going to the pictures with me friends and I was sitting there in the pub with me oldest brother and his girlfriends and that...so I was kind of that's the type of life I would have had, I would have always hung around with people that are older and done older things...

⁴⁹ A process and outcome study of female drug using prisoners admitted to the Dochas centre indicated that during the 6 month follow-up 7.5% of the study participants had died, which the authors suggest highlight huge the risks associated with female drug users and release from prison. Whist in prison some of the main issues resolved around in-reach services, due to lack of coordination within service provision. Issues upon leaving prison were housing and gaps in services from release to reintegration back into the community Comiskey *et al*, (2006).

As Sally's drug use worsened she spent many years homeless and sleeping rough.

Sally got into sex work when she was living in a homeless hostel in the city centre:

they just weren't working anymore so...and heroin wasn't something that I was mad into because my veins aren't very good and it takes me a long time to get a vein and I didn't know how to use my groin...I never even tried at that stage to use me groin so its was something I stayed away from...heroin was kinda something that you just dabble into for a couple of weeks and then your veins would go, so there was never any real need to go out and make a lot of money as I said I'd have me GP and I'd always have plenty of tablets or Phy to sell, so I could get heroin out of that...then when I moved into the homeless hostel I lost me GP because I was outside his catchment area, so I was just on the basics what I was getting at Trinity Court was just enough for myself so I was back down to nothing extra, nothing to sell and I was only getting then me benefit, which is hard to live on when you're living on the streets because you know when you're living on your own and you're buying messages for one person, it costs more because you're when you're buying for two or three, its cheaper to buy for two or three for a week., so its hard. So a lot of the girls that lived in the hostel were on the game and they were coming in with plenty of money, and of course I suppose resentment jealousy saying *'jaysus I'd love to be able to do that'*, it was always in the back of me head, Jesus how can they do it like? God the thoughts of a man putting his hands on me, anyway they started telling me *'no you say to them exactly...'* I found it vary hard to believe that. I thought that when they handed you the money that you were their property type of thing, and in me head that's what a prostitute is, that when they hand over the money they are allowed do with you as they please, but they were telling me, no it wasn't like that, you ask them what they want, whether it's a blowjob, a wank, sex, whatever it is, and you arrange a price and that is all. And if they say well if they say *'well, I want to be able to touch you'* then if that hasn't been arranged then they don't touch you, but I ended up going over one night with one of the girls out of the hostel...it was by accident that a man came up and asked me for sex and I said *'one twenty'* and he thought I said *'two twenty'* and he gave me two twenty, and it was all kind of over with, I won't even say two minutes, it was I'd say it was over quite quickly within two minutes although it was disgusting and he was smelly it was horrific... although saying that, I had lived with a man for nine years that I didn't love and that had ripped the heart and soul out of me and to lie there and get paid to get two hundred and twenty euro for two minutes, say like from the interaction of starting to talk to him to getting back out of the car ten minutes, for ten minutes of me time and getting paid for it, to be with somebody that I had totally despised that I had ended up wanting, actually physically wanting to stab him to death when it came to it, it was either his life. I felt less, I felt more of a prostitute with me ex-partner, hanging around with him at night time, not wanting to be with him, and him touching me knowing that I didn't want to be touched I felt more of

a prostitute I felt more degraded you know I didn't feel human, he looked on me as nothing that I wasn't even that I was worthless, that's the word, worthless. I felt more worthless in that relationship and having sex than what I did getting paid for it was more like I started power tripping then off it, it was real like I decided when they came up to me, it wasn't them. It wasn't would they take me, it was would I take them? And I would only take them when they would give me exactly what I'm asking for, where some of the girls would be jumping in and out of cars they'd be doing a lot of jobs for a little amount of money, where I'd do two or three jobs and get a lot of money and that was the way it went.

Like other chaotic drug using sex workers I met, Sally's complex and powerful narrative highlights issues of social exclusion and crushing poverty, one of limited life chances, ideas of possible betterment, and embodied subjectivity (even stigma). It encapsulates many similar narratives of some street-based sex workers, the individual struggle for survival and dignity against the backdrop of everyday poverty and broader structural violence. Sex workers like Sally are rarely a topic of headline news and or public indignation. Stories like Sally's do not sell newspapers. Everyday poverty is not sexy, and there are no calls to make Sally's life better.

Working in prostitution as well as supplement their welfare, allows many of my informants certain independence and a degree of autonomy. Whilst many women did see their individual agency constrained by their circumstances, as was implicit in their narratives, very few linked it to broader issues of inequality and structural violence. That night I met Louise coming home from work we got into a discussion as to why many of the women she knew working on the street, came from what were seen as deprived areas. This is what she said:

like all the underprivileged areas are kinda like that y'know, I was reading something in an article and it was saying, you know the way everybody blames the parents for this and that, the actual article was saying, not to blame the parents, but to blame the government for sticking these people in such poxy places, but basically in such poxy places for so long and doing nothing about it, and when I read that I actually thought that this is true like, if I think of Fatima Mansions, Dolphins Barn, here [Ballymun], even Tallaght, well parts of Tallaght not all of it, do you know what I mean? And its only parts of Tallaght, y'know what I mean, but town around Merchants Quay, the boardwalk, you know places that they never put a lot of money in to, and they them blame people for the way they turn out...

There are many ways women enter prostitution and most of the women I met were introduced by already established networks of friends and family. Some became involved through women they met in the various hostels they stayed in around Dublin. Others became involved through their drug addiction and particularly at the chaotic end of the market, having to score rather than “be sick” mean they needed to be able to earn a lot of money fast. As they become more organized and stable and their drug habit is more under control, they work for a variety of reasons, such as to provide for their children and pay household bills and other debts, to supplement their welfare incomes or if they are in employment, supplement their wages. The relative speed and ease that money could be earned is also a significant factor, combined with the flexibility sex work allowed them in terms organizing their day.

The Escort Sector of the Market

In this section, I discuss how many women at the independent escort end of the market, became involved in sex work. As opposed to street-based sex workers, drug addiction does not appear to be a problem for women working at this sector of the market. Whilst some of my informants use drugs such as cocaine and hash recreationally, it did not appear to escalate to problem drug use, nor was funding a drug addiction one of the reasons they entered prostitution. Again, in this sector of the market women entered prostitution in variety of ways, and for multiple reasons. Some were more constrained in their choices, such as Aija; others had more freedom to choose from a range of alternatives. However, similar to women working on the street, economic need was cited as the main reason for their entry to sex work. Indeed many of the women I met were from middle class backgrounds and were well educated, such as Rosa. Some had successful careers in tandem with sex work such as Kate and others left their jobs in the formal economy to pursue a career in the sex industry, such as Laura who has a degree in hotel management and spent years managing a hotel in the UK before moving to Ireland. Indeed some women became very successful within the industry by expanding into other more lucrative sectors of the broader sexual services market, such as running brothels, producing pornographic material and website design. Aija, for instance, as well as sell sex very successfully

through an independent escort website, also runs a brothel remotely in Riga and has set up a web design package for escorts looking to get into the business. Similarly, Kate who is a porn actress, has now recently started to produce pornographic movies, as well as sell sex in London and Dublin, explains why she's chosen sex work over her former job as a hairdresser:

Actually no because I think it's kind of business as well, its self-assessment because it doesn't matter if you're a hairdresser or your an escort, you sell you provide a service, if you are an escort you don't do this just for good sex, you're doing it because it's a job because you know when you are a hairdresser you cut with your hands but in the same time you can get somebody hand job and you get more money than by moving a scissors!

Sex Work and Globalization

Increasingly national borders are no longer able to contain ideas, money or even people. Migration has become more complex in recent years and many migrants over the course of their lives call more than one nation home (Altman, 2001). The United Nations (International Migration Report, 2006) estimated that in 2005, the number of international migrants in world reached a staggering 191 million, almost 3% of the world's population. In 2005, developed countries hosted 60 per cent of all international migrants (115 million), up from 53 per cent in 1990. The proportion of females among all international migrants was nearly 50 per cent in 2005, up from 49 per cent in 1990. In developed countries, female migrants accounted for 52 per cent of all international migrants throughout the period, but their share was markedly lower in developing countries, at 46 per cent. By 2005, female migrants outnumbered male migrants in Europe, Northern America, Oceania, in Latin America, and the Caribbean.

Like many of the women I met working as independent escorts, people migrate for a whole host of reasons, such as to find work and improve their lifestyles, improve their education, for personal reasons, such as family or relationships, to seek new experiences and adventure or they may be forced to migrate due to political instability or persecution. Often referred to as "push" and "pull" factors within the

migration and transnationalism literature, their choices are seen as complex and requiring quite a lot of thought and some degree of planning. Yet, migrant workers in the informal sector of the economy, particularly those engaged in sex work, are often regarded as “passive subjects,” rather than normal people seeking new experiences and adventures, or simply like many other migrants, to improve their lives. Many of the journeys these women make are framed as “trafficking” using a victimizing discourse (Agustin, 2007).

Often when women are unable to secure work in the formal sector either in their own countries or abroad, they must resort to the informal sector, which is often unregulated. The last few decades have seen an increase in dubious international markets for female labour particularly in the domestic, sex and entertainment work and marriage industries. There are very few legal ways for women to migrate within the informal sector; so many seek the help of others in facilitating their migration (Wijers, 1998). To work in people Europe many people are faced with two options, to enter as a tourist with the appropriate visa, and overstay or with an offer of a job and the appropriate documentation. Others get help even getting into the country, such as Aija. So those intending to travel often seek the help of (some unscrupulous), people who sell information, document and services and facilitate to a greater or lesser degrees, their migration process. When travelers cannot afford to pay for their services they go into debt. Those who sell these services are often family members, friends, acquaintances, independent entrepreneurs or any combination of these. These services may range from documents such as passports, visas, work permits, to cultural information, basic logistical information and services, such as transportation and housing, to contact with potential employers. Being involved in selling sex does not alter this process (Augustín, 2007). Indeed being involved in the sex industry can make the process more difficult; as the industry is not fully decriminalized thus sex workers cannot obtain work visas, and thus often end up in exploitative work conditions (Murray, 1998). Many of the women I met at this, the higher end of the market came from a variety of countries, including Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Brazil, Spain, the U.K., Russia, France, Australia and Sweden.

The independent escort sector of the market can be further subdivided by those who are normally resident in Ireland, such as Aija and Liana, and those who travel to Ireland for short trips to sell sex as part of their tours, but are resident in another country, such as Marie, Rosa and Kate. I discuss the vagaries of the market in more detail in my next chapter.

From Swinging to Sex Work

I first met Marie with her husband in a pub near Dublin airport; she was on her way back to her home in Leeds, after spending the weekend working as an escort in the city centre. Marie was a haggard looking woman her forties. She has two young school-going children from a previous relationship. Her first marriage had broken up six years ago and since then she had met and married Mike, a plumber from Manchester. Marie spent most of her career working as a carer, but had always wanted to be a nurse. Last September her dream came true and she got accepted into a nursing school near her home in the North of England. By the time I met Marie she was already half way through the first year of her training. Our first meeting was a little rushed as her taxi was late picking her up from her hotel in the city centre, and she feared missing her flight. By the time she arrived I had been waiting for over an hour and was worried she had gotten cold feet, and wasn't going to show up, even though we had exchanged several emails and texts at this stage. I had just ordered my second orange juice and looked up when this ordinary middle-aged couple entered the bar. I looked away again and stared out the window, trying to imagine what Marie would look like. They stood looking around and then approached me, "are you Emma, she said?" "Oh my God Marie, nice to meet you!" I said. "This is my husband Mike," she replied as she introduced the tall thin man standing beside her. "Oh!" I said trying not to sound too shocked, "very nice to you too" I mumbled, feeling a little awkward. I was only expecting Marie, and really had not dreamt her husband would accompany her. Marie's husband sat at the bar drinking Guinness whilst she excitedly began to tell me about her nursing course. She was currently working on a geriatric ward and was really enjoying her training, but was dreading her exams in two weeks time. After a while she began to tell me how she got started in sex work, she began:

yeah this is just a short thing, with the degree the money the money I'm entitled to is fifty English pounds per week, which isn't a lot, in euro its probably...sixty euro...like I've got two children and its not enough to pay for my child care, that's why I started to do this... it's made a hell of a difference in my life, yes, I don't think I'd be here now, I wouldn't be studying my nursing career, I think I would have like probably give up at the start, like I get £50 a week, I started in September I didn't get my first bursary until January, it was backdated but I didn't get my first bursary until January, it was nice lump sum but even at £50 a week it wasn't enough to go on, my travelling per day was £10 a day by train, and when you go to university you've got all your fees to pay, your drinks your food, so I wouldn't be here, I wouldn't be doing this, if I wasn't doing this I wouldn't be able to afford anything, so...

She and her husband have been swinging regularly across the north east of England for the last number of years, so that was how she decided she was going to make extra money:

well obviously we're both swingers so that was the line I was going down and I had a look at the website and I had a chat with a couple of other escorts, well people I've got friendly with now and I drink occasionally and I don't smoke my friends are just the same as well you know, I don't know anyone that deals with drugs you've got to understand.

Marie became involved with sex work through swinging and felt the transition from having sex with strangers, and having sex with strangers and getting paid for it a relatively easy decision to make "I was doing it anyway I thought I might as well get paid for it." One of her friends introduced her to brothel work but she quickly decided it wasn't for her:

well you can be but it's not very nice like you tend to work nights which is late nights you start it dark and finish at eight in the morning drunk men and that's something I knew of and I didn't want to do that, and so I work for myself back in England and I probably see about one person a week but you tend to find at the end of the month or the beginning of the month you tend to get all your customers then because that's when they get paid and then the rest of the month is dead quiet you don't see anyone and so that's just enough just to get me by.

One of her clients in the brothel in Manchester recommended the Irish Escorts website, so Marie explored the option further:

I had a look at the website and they give you all the details on there like how much it costs, and you've got to make a profile and Belfast I went to Belfast twice, that was in November and I guy I met in England had come over from Belfast, he was from Belfast, and he told me all about you know you can take a lot of money over there because English girls are quite popular, so... that's when I looked at Ireland Escorts, but I actually got it recommended.

This was her first time to work as an escort in Dublin, although she and her husband had visited several times before. This time Marie was on a reconnaissance mission. She had come over to see if it would be easy for her to set up as an escort in Dublin. She had previously worked as an escort on several occasions in Belfast but decided to come to Dublin after their apartment got raided by the vice squad, which left her terrified:

but when I was in Belfast, we got chucked out of our apartment, because, in Belfast it's changed now, the vice squad have come down heavily the girls, if you look on the internet its, its quite good for you to get feedback there, look at the amount of girls who are working in Belfast, in total you get four maybe five. They came through the apartment, a whole lot of them, there was like four or five of them came through, they went through our stuff as well, to see if we was taking drugs and things like that, and they said right yeah, it has come to our attention that you're, you're working from here, blah, blah, blah, and they asked us to leave.

She was also worried about paramilitary involvement in organizing prostitution in the North, as she had heard several stories from other girls on the Internet chatrooms and there were rumours that terrified her even more:

yeah anybody, because the paramilitaries or whatever you call them, they have got their own girls working for them, or whatever they're pimping then girls out, or whatever they're doing, I don't know what they're doing. Yeah they're in control up there, they've made it that hard for girls to go up there.

Marie's initial trip to Dublin was a success. After advertising her tours on the Ireland Escorts website the week before, she had several appointments booked before she ever left home. Over the weekend she had made over €2,000 and had seen eight clients. I met Marie several times over the next few years on the frequent trips to Ireland. Sometimes she based herself in Cork and other times in Dublin.

Similarly, Rosa lives in the UK and tours Ireland as part of her circuit. Rosa was the first escort I met. I had been trying to interview escorts for several months, when earlier that day sent out several emails to women advertising on one of the websites asking if anyone would like to take part in my research project. I was not too hopeful of a reply.

Tired, I put it out of my head and went to bed early. It was pitch black when I was awoken to the sound of my phone ringing; "Hi Emma it's Rosa" said a heavily accented voice. "Who?" I replied, "Rosa, you email me. Can you come meet me now?" "God no, not now, I'm asleep," I muttered, trying to find my watch. "No, no! I leave tomorrow, you have to come now" she replied. I scribbled down her address. Excited and a bit nervous I leapt out of bed, got dressed and drove an hour into the city centre, having to ask directions in a 24-hour garage. Rosa was staying on the edge of the city, down near the docklands. I pulled up outside the gated apartment block, newly built and heavily secured, in a part of Dublin that was slowly being gentrified. The streets were deserted and I felt really alone. I pressed the buzzer, and Rosa opened the gate remotely and gave me directions to her second floor apartment. I was so nervous; here I was at 2am in the morning heading into a complete stranger's apartment, one that I had emailed from an escort website. It was too late to let anyone know where I was going, so I had to bite the bullet. I thought what was the most dreadful thing that could happen to me? At worst I'd be murdered and my dismembered body thrown out to sea. At best, I might finally get to interview a real live escort. The world seems so black and white at 2am. The door opened and there stood Rosa, a petite attractive woman in her fifties. She seemed genuinely pleased to meet me and welcomed me inside. The apartment was warm and cosy, with beige and cream decor, and deep pile carpets, neutral I thought, perfect for short-term holiday lets. What I assumed to be Rosa's flat mate was watching TV in

the sitting room, with the door slightly ajar. Rosa led me to her bedroom. The room was sparsely furnished with only a locker and a big double bed. In the corner beside the door Rosa's packed suitcase. With nowhere else to sit, she invited me to sit on her big double bed. Rosa sat on the middle with her legs folded underneath her, I perched on the edge. Do you mind if I smoke, she said? "No not at all" I replied, "please go ahead." "So what do you want to know then?" "Everything" I muttering anxiously. Rosa laughed and said, "well, that's a long story so..."

Rosa was from a small town in the hinterland of Sao Paulo, Brazil. She and her two younger siblings grew up in an affluent neighbourhood, her father a local businessman and her mother an architect. When she left school Rosa trained as an accountant, then not wanting to work as an accountant; she moved to the city and into the travel industry where she spent 12 years working for a travel agent, eventually becoming regional sales manager for the company:

When I was teenager and finished college, I trained to be an accountant; I'm not a stupid person who's never been to college. I qualified to be an accountant; I just don't want to be an accountant.

Her boyfriend at the time then lost his job and decided to immigrate to Spain, so Rosa decided to go with him. After a few months the relationship turned sour and Rosa decided to move back home to Sao Paula, but could not settle, she explains, "I was not happy in Brazil" and then decided to give it a try in Europe again. "Then I buy a plane ticket and went to Barcelona." With no visa to work and no money, she was unable to support herself and as she says herself, "I was very poor then." Her luck changed when she met Gloria, a fellow Brazilian in a bar in Barcelona who introduced her to pole dancing in a strip club:

and I'm started with a strip club and there you do dance and you drink with the customers and if something else happens you just take it, or not, that's how it happened...

Rosa spent several years working the clubs in Spain and eventually got married to one of her clients. The relationship broke down and they divorced after 4 years. Anxious for a new start, Rosa and her two-year-old daughter headed for the UK, first

to London where she briefly worked in a brothel but lost her job when the brothel was raided by the police. She began trawling the Internet for opportunities and found an agency in Kilkenny were recruiting new escorts:

then I had to job to do, I just start to look on the internet and search and I come for the first time to work for somebody else in Ireland, an agency in Ireland, and I went to Kilkenny!

Even though she was paid well in Kilkenny she was bored and lonely:

I was in the middle of no where, I was there for 5 days all by myself and it was so quiet, no customers coming around, then I come to Dublin and I find another job with somebody else again and I due to work for a couple of day and it was better, but I don't like to be tied up with people to work because they work in time and money, I don't work in time and money... I work to make customers happy, you know, get to know the customers. And I left, I went back to England. And just after Christmas time I said I go by myself and I arrange a place and I come for a week, and I did like my time here, because the customers they have respect for you, they are polite they are clean, you know. It's amazing Irish customers, they always ask you for the shower!

Rosa then to moved to Edinburgh where she has lived ever since. Rosa has worked in the sex industry for over fifteen years now, stopping and starting to suit her family life:

I have periods I'm stopping and start because I have been marriage and the time I have been pregnant ...and have a baby and I have a few relationship in between...its like when I'm single I work in the sex industry.

Although based in Edinburgh Rosa regularly travels between Dublin, Chicago and London as part of her international tours. Her workday is very flexible and she works when she feels like it, though rarely late at night:

Normally I don't work late nights, because I need my beauty sleep! It all depends... when I come to Ireland normally I leave my telephone on until quite late by now ... the nights its very rare and what you get is much people drunk and its no good to take the risk, you know... and I switch my phone on when I feel like really... its not like in the

mornings... not in the afternoons...sometimes it can be early morning... sometimes it can be lunchtime... sometimes it can be late nights, say from nine o'clock to one.

Like Marie, Kate came to the Ireland Escort's website when recommended by a friend in London. By the time she came to Ireland to work she had already built a career in the industry, first in pornographic movies and more recently started producing and starring in her own movies, as well as managing an S&M website. Kate initially came to the industry through a boyfriend:

through a boyfriend, yeah, I had a boyfriend, yeah I had some pictures taken and we started searching on the internet and the first thing we find is glamour industry, this and that, and we contacted some people, and I started off obviously with some nude pictures and I split up with the boyfriend, and I realize that people are really friendly and I make some money so that was really all about it.

Kate also comes over to Ireland for a couple of days every few months and tries to see as many clients as possible within her short stay. She says:

Here in Ireland it would be 6 average 6 though it can go up to eight or nine, you know it depends how long they are staying for and how your day pans out you know, it depends whenever I get a booking, you know when I come here I try to work as much as I can.

Though she also sells sex in London, she finds coming to Ireland really easy and the money is better than in the UK. Like many escorts who travel from the UK, Kate either rents a short stay apartment or books into a city centre hotel. When it comes to clients, she only sees a set number of clients a day, she says it's too mentally draining to see more than six clients a day, so it suits her to work on and off:

I only see a certain amount of people, you know for health reasons, probably the most I've ever done in a day is six and I was absolutely exhausted, it's not the physical part, it's the mental part, you know talking over and over about the same subjects over and over again to different people, and it does actually take a lot out of you, it's a funny thing to say, but you really work the mental parts, like I do domination as well, and that takes a lot out of you as well...

Many of my respondents felt that childcare was a huge issue, particularly when they were working and this meant that they had to leave their children home alone when they went out working late at night, this again has repercussions in terms of increased risk taking behaviour, women would be anxious to get home as soon as they could and would maybe not vet potential clients like they normally would or that they would take on clients they would normally refuse, just so they could make their money as get home. The issues of childcare came up again and again in my interviews and one conversely one of the reasons they women outlined as to why prostitution worked for them, was that it could also fit around their childcare commitment, like they could work when the children are in school etc.

Indeed, many of the escorts that traveled from the UK found it much easier than working in the UK. Apart from the relative anonymity, they found it easier to find short-term accommodation and were a lot less likely to suffer any interference from the State. Several of the brothels Marie worked in the England had been raided by the police and it was harder to get work as there seemed to be a surplus of brothels, so decide to give Ireland a try when recommended by an escort she worked with:

I thought I'm not giving it away for free back in England, we have so many massage parlours over there that escorts don't get much work and there's so many escorts to choose from...

These ease at which women can come to Ireland and work in the escort market, is a huge factor when it comes to working here, particularly for those who come from another country and only want to supplement and other income like Kate or Marie, or like Rosa, who works full-time as an escort.

Like Kate, other escorts reported money as being a significant factor in both starting in, and remaining in, the industry. The money coupled with flexible working hours and the huge degree of autonomy also made the work even more attractive. Obviously there are vast amounts of money to be made, but what makes earning so much money so attractive, was the speed at which it could be earned. They did not have to wait for a pay packet at the end of the month, and could work for longer or

more often should they need extra money, or less if they needed a holiday or wanted time off. Obviously as with all other work in the informal sector, they were getting cash in hand and did not pay tax, but were also not paying into pensions. Worried about their futures, some of the women invested their money in property, such as Aija or Rosa and others such as Marie, paid off their mortgages and set money aside for her children's education. Many saw sex work as something they would do for a short time or intermittently, such as Marie who intended to finish after she qualified as a nurse. Others had made a career out of it and planned for their future within the industry, even when they could no longer sell sex, such as Kate.

The option of flexible working hours is seen as a major advantage to sex work. Many are able to work around their children's needs, childcare arrangements, and their own lifestyle. This is especially true if the women's partners are unaware of their involvement in the sex industry. Whilst some do not work when in relationships, others try to work when their partners are at work or otherwise occupied. Aija's boyfriend thinks she is a cleaner and she could easily explain her absences by saying she needs to work an extra late shift with her employers. It is also convenient that Aija's boyfriend works in a restaurant, so is busy with work most evenings. Aija usually works from 11am to 11pm at night. Now that she has her own apartment she is much more independent. Before renting her second apartment, she worked for a Madam in a city centre brothel. She paid the Madam €100 per day for the use of a room and for laundry. Aija booked her own clients and worked independently from the brothel, some of the girls that worked there fulltime were employed directly by the madam and paid her half of their earnings. And unlike Aija who was able to maintain her independence and access clients through the Ireland Escort website, the fulltime workers were linked to one of the many other websites and agencies advertising brothels, so their appointments were made by the brothel receptionist. Whilst Aija was able to work whatever days she wanted and had the use of the room for an entire day, getting her own apartment made things a lot easier for her in terms of managing her clients. Several times when we were out together for lunch or dinner, her clients would ring and she would consult her diary and book their appointments. Some were regulars and there was a fair bit of banter and others were new and she was businesslike, but flirty, on the phone. Also having a nanny to look

after her son made is much easier for her to travel down the country for appointments as well as work late into the night if need be.

Similarly Marie enjoyed the flexibility and autonomy working in the sex industry offered and could fit in her escorting trips to Ireland with her shifts at the hospital and her course work during the day. Marie keeps track of all her appointments in her diary:

I write everything down in my diary, I'm very organized! Well a lot of them are like hour bookings and some of them have sex, some of them don't, because I was quite surprised when I first came here because one guy said to me, he said *'oh my wife doesn't give me oral, so all I want is oral, even with a condom.'* You know a lot of them are quite particular ... yeah, so I've got, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, that was my busiest day, I did ten. Jesus like that was €2,000, the day before was €1,200, though it was my choice to do the ten... yeah I think you've got to be organized, because otherwise you just lose track of things, because people just turn up.

Marie was one of several escorts I met when I first started my research and we became quite friendly, we spent a lot of time talking about nursing. I used to meet her on an evening for dinner or on her last day, as she was packing for the airport and not seeing clients.

Issues of flexible working hours and autonomy are also seen as positive element of sex work for girls working on the street. Lorraine mostly works at weekends and has working in prostitution for 5 years on and off:

yeah I'd go out at nighttimes about nine ten o'clock, and I'd work right through until six the next morning, because I don't know where to go anyways, so I'd stay out there and make money...

For much of the last five years Lorraine has been homeless and staying in hostels when not in prison. She was always delighted when a client would want to spend the entire night with her and would book a B&B or a cheap hotel. "At least" she says "it's a bed for the night, you know it's fuckin' miserable standing out there in the fuckin' cold." Because many of the hostels operate a curfew, Lorraine could not return if she passed the curfew time. I asked her how many clients she sees a night?

She replied “it could be five or could be ten it all depends whether it’s a good night or not you know a busy night...” And what night would be a good night? I asked. “Friday night or a Saturday night are good,” she replied.

Mandy who was mostly based around Baggott Street works every second night. Like Lorraine the weekend was when she made the most money and saw the most clients:

the weekends I’d go out working and then if I made a few quid on the Saturday night I’d try and make a few quid on the Saturday that would do me for the Sunday...it would do me the whole day and the whole night and then I’d probably go out working on the Monday and then I wouldn’t go out working until the Wednesday...I’d stay in all day Tuesday I’d make the Monday on the Monday it would go like that I would make the money for the next day the whole day...no I wouldn’t work every night I would work every second night...you know...

When it came to punters Mandy said:

I don’t know it depends...some nights you’d probably get seven eight punters you know...some nights you probably only get four ...some nights you’d probably only get one punter.

Martina works most night from eleven or twelve until 3 or four in the morning.

On the other hand Aija found the opposite to be true, and that days during the weekdays were busier than weekends. Aija talking about her busiest days explains:

Aija: Tuesdays they are our busiest days...Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Emma: Really?

Aija: Yeah... because on Mondays people just move from their houses and go to work... Tuesdays... they can relax...Wednesdays, sometimes it is busy, sometimes not...and Thursdays, it just before weekends and Fridays... they have to bring their wives for dinner or something like this... you know...or they have parties...so Tuesdays and Thursdays are the busiest.

Emma: I would have thought the weekends would be busy?

Aija: Ha! On weekends husbands have to stay at home with wives!

There are probably several reasons for this difference in when clients want sex. Perhaps they are different client groups and further research with clients of sex

workers could illuminate this. Clients of street-based workers may seem to be more opportunistic in their approach. It takes time to be more organized and book an escort and follow through with the appointment. Or indeed maybe they are the same clients, but find street-based sex workers and escorts sell different types of sex. Sex with a street-based sex worker may seem as “riskier,” due to its public nature and therefore a greater chance of getting caught with your pants down by the Gardaí. Also chaotic drug using sex workers may offer services such as unprotected sex, if they were desperate for a fix. It is difficult to say whether clients of street-based sex workers and of escorts are separate populations. My own impression is that they are mostly different. After spending 5 years as a street-based outreach worker the clients the women describe are very different from each other, though there may be some overlap.

Concluding Thoughts

From my own research in the street-based population, drug addiction and economic needs were the main driving forces in entering prostitution. Many saw their involvement in drugs and prostitution as individual choices and a matter of individual responsibility. Whilst implicit in their narratives, they did not implicate issues of structural violence or severe poverty, but instead talk about concerns in their immediate environment, such as feeding their families, paying bills and funding their drug habit.

Women’s accounts of their entry into prostitution highlight a diversity of experiences, as well as highlight underlying structural processes such as social, economic, and political contexts. When sex work is viewed as “work,” it can be understood as a rational choice for many women, when viewed alongside their alternative sources of potential income. Women enter prostitution for a multitude of reasons, pay and flexibility amongst them, others to escape unhappy relationships such as Sally, to fund their drug habit like Louise and Susie, to pay for house hold bills, to fund their further education like Marie, for some women sex work provides them with financial independence to pursue other avenues in life. It is the circumstances under which women enter prostitution will, determine much about

how that experiences and practices prostitution. According to Kelly (2008) the practice of prostitution is constantly evolving, as are the circumstances which women enter prostitution by the social, political and economic context. Through ethnographic accounts of sex workers lives she argues, it becomes apparent that highly polemical feminist debates that pit women's subjugation against woman's liberation "simply cannot capture and fundamental truth about the nature of prostitution." In the next chapter I discuss the sexual services market, as it exists in Dublin.

Chapter 3 Sexual Services Market

I like to start at nine in the morning or that's when my phone goes on and usually I leave the house when I've got an appointment booked, I'm not far from work and the most I could see in a day is three men...

Laura, independent escort.

well my nursing came first and then I thought, gosh I thought right I've got to earn some money I've got to give up my job as a full-time carer, in time to start my degree, I've got to earn some money, I have to earn some money, I couldn't go sit at a table in Tesco or Asda, or weekends I would never see my children you know what was I going to do? So... I think you have to put things into perspective, that's what I did and I've got a very, very level head, I know what I want and my goal in life is to be a nurse to do me nursing and hopefully as I'm doing that I'm providing some money to provide a good stable, give my children something as well, I put money away, I put money away into the children's banks as well, I do have too much and I don't want to get used to that money because when all this finishes, it will stop and I'll have to stop, and there's only so far you can go because age does go against you a lot

Marie, student nurse, mother of two and escort.

In this chapter-following on from the women's accounts of their entry into sex work I chart the most recent changes to the Dublin market, the decline of street work and its ongoing impact on sex workers. Given that I ceased fieldwork over a year ago, it will be hard to capture all of the most recent changes particularly in relation to the economic recession. Part of the discussion in this chapter, is concerned with a number of issues, how ones relative position in the industry determines how, where, and to whom you sell sexual services, how the sexual services markets are stratified between the various sectors such as street-based work and indoor work. It will also look at how the women themselves describe the various markets and the various actors involved therein. Many different actors make up the sex industry and are instrumental to how the sale of sex manifests itself in any given sector of the market.

If I wanted to buy or indeed sell sex tonight, I would have a few decisions to make. How do I go about selling sex? Where can I buy it? How does where you enter the

market condition how, where, and to whom you sell sex? What is it to sell sex if you are a crack addicted homeless mother of two, or if you are an Eastern European woman eager to build a new life in the West, or a struggling student nurse who whose trying to fund her studies and feed her family? How does your relative position in the market condition the type of sex you sell and what is it to sell sex, what in fact are you selling?

Over the course of my fieldwork, I met many women from the different sectors of this broad business, one key theme however which permeated our encounters was how the women constructed sex work as “work,” how many of them (particularly within the escort sector) had a keen sense of the market they found themselves in, and a business acumen that allowed them to source clients and market themselves. The opening quotes from two very different women highlight how they see and operate within the sex industry. For Marie a sex worker (independent escort) and student nurse based in the north of England, sex work is simply a means to an end, a way of supporting her children and allowing her to achieve her dream of becoming a nurse. At the time of my research, Ireland was a buoyant economy and Marie told me that it was much easier to get work in Ireland. In between hospital shifts and her real life in the UK, she would come to Dublin to work as an escort.

Laura, is an independent escort from Swansea in Wales and has spent the last five years working in Ireland, also described the business of sex work in simple terms. Keeping a separate apartment for work which she rents with another girl, she told me that she only sees three men a day as she doesn’t want to arouse suspicion amongst her neighbours: The voices of these women highlight how the nature of sex work has changed, and how for many of my respondents, it is something routine, normal, and acceptable.

In the interim years between the downfall of Monto and the early nineties, the issue of prostitution disappeared under the radar, with the prevailing view that the industry had vanished or had much reduced (Kelly *et al*, 2008). Whilst street prostitution continued to account for the majority of women working in sex work, some women particularly those not addicted to heroin, which had reached epidemic proportions in

some parts of the city in the 1980's,⁵⁰ started moving indoors, either working out of houses or flats (Kelly *et al*, 2008). Throughout my fieldwork, particularly on the nights I travelled as an outreach worker around the city, this decline was the subject of much discussion amongst the volunteers and indeed, the women themselves. Prostitution re-emerged in a visible way through the printed media, particularly through *In Dublin Magazine*. However, in 1994 Section 23 of the Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act prohibited the advertising of brothels and prostitution, and in 1999, following complaints from the public, the Censorship of Publications Board banned *In Dublin Magazine* from advertising sexual services, effectively shutting it down (Brennan, 2002). Whilst this heralded the end of brothels and escorts advertising in print media, Ireland's first escort website, "Escort Ireland" was established the previous year, and was eager to take over the magazines' role in the advertising the sale of sexual services to the city.

The impact that recent economic, social and political changes have had on other service industries, have also affected how the sexual services market is organized in Dublin particularly over the last two decades. The last few years have seen a shift away from the traditional image of the "red light districts," as the industry constantly reorganizes and reinvents itself and is quick to absorb new innovations and modern technology as part of its modus operandi (Plachy & Ridgeway, 1996). As I mentioned previously, several factors have had a big impact on the global sexual services market, including globalization, the moral panic surrounding HIV, more porous national borders within Europe and the expansion of the EU, changes in the labour market, economic growth, migration, as well as advances in technology. Indeed, far from looking like an "exotic" enterprise, the sex industry, especially in the escort sector of the market, resembles many other branches of the service industry in the formal economy, in dealing with the effects of globalization by finding new and innovate means of accessing potential markets, as part of its economic strategy. Whilst the adult entertainment sector has always had a close relationship to technological innovation, this explosion of technology changed the

⁵⁰ Several studies have examined the increase in availability and use of heroin, as well as an increase in heroin related deaths beginning in the late seventies, such as Dean *et al* (1985), Smyth *et al* (2002), Kelleher *et al* (2005), amongst others.

way face-to-face interactions are initiated and has been wholly embraced by all sectors of the sexual services market, with its main impact on indoor workers, particularly independent escorts. As well as this, technological advances also facilitate a more seamless movement of sex workers through the various aspects of their working and personal lives. One of the obvious aspects about these changes is that specific space, gives way to virtual space and local markets and sellers, give way to a more globalized version of markets and sellers. Indeed, in this section of the market, these virtual communities of buyers, sellers and organizers shape the state of the online sex market, in terms of what is sold, how it is sold and by whom.⁵¹ It is important to note that as well as the sex workers themselves, there are also many other people that make up, shape the sex industry including sex workers and their clients, including other sex workers, taxi drivers, local police, politicians, local residents, NGO's and activists, landlords and brothel owners, managers of websites and religious orders amongst others. In many ways, these actors determine how the practice of sex work takes place.

Whilst the way women sell sex has changed, so has the profile of women selling sex in Dublin. Up to the early 1990's the market was predominantly made up of Irish sex workers, now the reverse is true, especially in the escort sector. Mobility is key to the expansion of the independent escort sector of the market and during the Celtic Tiger sex workers, like many other types of workers, were on the move like never before. It was not only sex workers who were on the move, but so too were their clients as "sex tourists" to various parts of the world.⁵² Whilst there are no figures available for the numbers of escorts that travelled to Ireland during the boom years, a quick trawl through the Internet websites indicated there were over four hundred women from various locations throughout the world advertising on Ireland Escorts website alone. As well as the ease of mobility, two important factors are implicated in the changing profile of sex workers, flexible working hours and the relative anonymity of working via the Internet. As well as reaching new markets, the security of online bookings, allows women to maintain their anonymity, making them more accessible to potential clients, as well as offering a more discreet service, all advance bookings -

⁵¹ It is illegal to advertise prostitution in Ireland, however most of the websites advertising sexual services in Ireland are UK based and thus not subject to Irish law.

⁵² It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore this phenomenon in detail. Please see Brennan (2002)

their flights, their accommodation, their clients can be done remotely, before they ever leave home. Their way of selling sex fits comfortably into their lifestyles. This is what Sanders (2005) terms “the new ecology of sex work.” This new ecology has replaced the older order of prostitution defined by street work, identifiable brothels, hard copy marketing, all controlled by key figures in the sex industry and “is armed with sophisticated entrepreneurial skills and information technology such as computer-mediated communication.” I would add to Sanders, that the most significant difference is to be found not in just the platform of communication, but rather in the emergence of an autonomous entrepreneurial and highly mobile sex worker.

Stratified Markets

This section of the chapter will look at how the sexual services market is stratified in Dublin. The sexual services market is highly stratified. My research suggests that each sector is highly segregated and well differentiated, and there is little scope for social mobility between the various sectors. However within each sector there is some latitude to improving ones status and ones working conditions. As in the market for labour and indeed in other service industries, there are very exploitative positions and very privileged positions, so too in the market for sex. The position any one sex worker occupies within the industry is predicated upon several factors including, but not limited to, social class, social and cultural capital, education, connections and networks, opportunity / life chances and to some degree, physical appearance. As sex work does not exist outside society, but is part of the fabric of it, therefore issues such as gender and class that impact on the broader society, also impact on ones relative position when gaining access to and maintaining your position within the sex industry. The ability to attract, interact with, and sustain relationships with clients is based on these factors, including the existing class structure. The social class you already belong to will largely determine your structural position within the industry - how and where you sell sex, to whom you sell it to, your income generating potential and your working conditions. In crude terms, the lower down the socio-economic scale you are, the more exploitative your position within the industry is likely to be, as your position in the industry reflects

income distribution and class within society as a whole. In an Irish context, the market is basically understood to contain two broad sectors or places of work, - namely “street-based” sex work, and “indoor” work. As Rosa, an independent escort understands the market comprised of three categories as:

if you look and classify sex workers in three different ways, the first one is street girls, most of the street girls is drug addicted, they do it to get drugs, yeah, then massage parlour girls, that’s common in the UK, they do it for the money, and private girls they do it for because that’s the choice they make for themselves, yeah ok? I don’t say everybody enjoy the job... it’s not about enjoy, but it’s much more about being confident in what you do, because I believe like, that whatever you do in your life you need to be happy to do it. I will not be escort if I don’t want men touch me...you see...and I don’t like people they doing something they not happy to do to.

Indeed escort and street-based workers would see each other as separate populations entirely. Escorts tended to see themselves as more “professional” and look down on street-based sex workers. As Marie commented:

all they want is a fix; most of them are off their heads on tablets. They’re not professional prostitutes; they might only turn two or three tricks a night, just to get enough for their next fix. All the ones on the street are addicts. They only work to feed their habit. They don’t give a fuck; they’ll do anything for their next fix...

The indoor comprises by far the largest sector and can be further subdivided into brothel or escort agency based work, and “independent escort” work. The bulk of my informants came from street-based and independent escort sectors of the market, though some had previously worked in brothels and escort agencies. As Liz explains:

I’m not working for a pimp it’s hard enough doing this job without handed over some cunt your money. I used to work in an agency up in Camden street and I’d work from 10am to 7pm you know for The Beast I’m sure you’ve heard of him, well I rang in sick one Sunday and he made me hand over €1000 to him the bastard, that was when I was drinking, I got out of there, I’m not giving some cunt me money, like last night I earned €900 euro and the night before €750.

Hence, the majority of my analysis will concentrate on these two sectors – street-based sex work and the Independent escort sector of the escort market. It was not a calculated decision on my part which part of the market to concentrate on; it was purely down to access into a hidden and stigmatized population, thus my research methods had to be convenience sampling and some snowball sampling.

Weitzer (2000) suggests that street-based sex work and indoor sex work vary in respect to social status, control over working conditions, experiences at work, adjustment to their work and impact on the community. From my own research it is apparent that street-based sex workers and escorts would never come into contact with each other in the course of their work. Also access to different levels of the market is different again with visibility being the key determinant, in how a client approaches a sex worker and how a sex worker sells her services. There is an obvious direct relationship between visibility and anonymity. Street-based sex workers are the most visible and the most vulnerable, as they are more likely to be subjected to violence and there are also issues of stigma. As you move up the sexual services hierarchy the sellers (and the buyers) become more and more invisible, until they disappear completely into the virtual world of Internet based sex work.

Independent escorts such as Marie, Laura and Aija working at the higher end of the market are more autonomous and have more control over their means of production, than those operating at the lower end of the hierarchy, namely chaotic drug addicted street-based sex workers such as Jane and Louise. Escorts tend to have the social capital required to expertly navigate the sex industry and extract the most from it, in terms of better clients, incomes generated and the conditions under which they sell sex. Marie's movement back and forth between the UK and Ireland, and switching between her roles of student nurse, mother and sex worker illuminate this most clearly. At the opposite end of the spectrum chaotic drug using sex workers have a much more reduced capacity to influence their day-to-day working lives and are often under pressure to feed their drug habit, to find a bed for the night or to meet curfews if they are staying in a hostel. To add to this, their structural relationship to the State compounds their vulnerability and inability to act, they are often homeless for periods of their lives, their children may be in care, their drug addiction is out of

control and they may have a myriad of other social and medical problems. In between these two extremes are a multiple of possibilities, but within broad categories of street-based work, brothel-based work, higher end escort agencies and finally independent escort work. For the purposes of this thesis I have divided my analysis between “street-based” and “escort” based sex work.

My fieldwork encounters on the street or with escorts stand testament to this diversity and range of experiences. Phoenix (1995) is critical of the often reductionist approach used by researchers that assumes that sex work is a singular activity (i.e. selling sex) involving a limited set of relationships. This she says creates “closure” she argues and that any analysis of sex work needs to incorporate the diversity and complexity of activities, and nexus of relationships, that sex workers encounter in their daily lives. Understanding issues such place of work, mode of client contact, employment status, peripheral activities, formal relationships entered into, and negotiation of risk and protection, highlight this complexity. Phoenix (1995) suggests that in order to describe the diversity and complexity of sex work is necessary to distinguish between different work places. Similarly the physical spaces in which these encounters take place can also be placed on a hierarchical scale, ranging from street-based sex work with its associated stigma, constant threat of violence, working in all weathers, to high class escorts operating from luxury apartments and top hotels. Street-based workers are based on the street, and this is where the initial contact and negotiation with clients occurs. As Lorraine explains:

like I just stand on the corner, they come and ask you your price, and you ask them what do they want, and you give them your price...and then if they have a car and you go off, and you do it in the car...

The encounter itself may then take place in a variety of places including cars, trucks, quiet lanes, B&B's, hotels, or client's homes. In Dublin, the last few years have seen a decrease in the visibility of street-based sex workers, with many working indoor from their phones and only going out when necessary. Whilst some in this sector of the market have moved “indoors” with regular clients, usually this initial contact with clients will have occurred on the street. The distinguishing feature of street prostitution argues Phoenix is not only that it takes place on the street, but is also tied

up with greater issues of risk, protection and control. With these risk and protection strategies, and control mechanisms involve a unique set of relationships of the parties involved.

Definitions of “indoor” work can appear confusing, because in recent years many former street-based workers (particularly the more organized and less chaotic ones, in terms of drug use, homelessness etc) have moved “indoors” and access clients via their mobile phones. Usually this is referred to by the women as “working off my phone.” However, to do this they need to have an already established client base, or a pool of regular clients. These they would have initially met through their street-based work. Most escorts, unlike street-based sex workers, have never had to access clients this way and predominantly use the Internet to attract and initiate contact with clients. Many street-based workers do not have a sufficient pool of regulars, so that they can work exclusively indoors. Plus they are usually in the position where they are waiting for the clients to call, so cannot always be guaranteed they will, so they may still have to some street-based work to make up any deficits in their income. Thus, many have to supplement their indoor work with some street-based work. Also, if they have been out of sex work for months or years they would again have to build up a base of regular clients in order to be able to work off their phones. Sylvia a chaotic street-based worker, who had been homeless for many years with several hospital admissions for drug overdoses over the last few years, describes the changes in the sex industry as follows:

Sylvia: I usually work over the phone

Emma; oh do you?

Sylvia: rather than being on the street you know

Emma: and is that a new thing for you? Did you used to work on the street more so?

Sylvia: yeah all the time on the street, but now having a phone I gave clients the number and all they have to do is ring me

Emma: and where would you meet like?

Sylvia: as far away from the street as possible, if you know what I mean

Emma: and what made you do that, start using the phone?

Sylvia: because of the police

Emma: they hassling you? Would they just ask you to move on or would they actually bug you?

Sylvia: well I got arrested, so had to use a different name because they know me as Elaine, I had to change my name again to try and get out of the police station, they actually kept me for a night yeah, it was horrible

Issues with the police came up time and time again in my meetings with street-based sex workers, particularly around issues of safety and the legal situation regarding soliciting. Constantly being told to “move on” by the Gardaí created a huge amount of stress for sex workers, and made finding clients difficult and they had to resort to more extreme measure to access clients. I discuss this in more detail later in this chapter and again in chapter 5, which deals with sex work and risk. Jane when she was released from time in prison found it difficult to resurrect relationships with her old regular clients, and found the work environment of Benburb Street very stressful as it was very hard to find clients:

ah yeah at the minute I haven't been doing much work, it's gone really bad anyway down in Benburb street, unless you have one or two clients that ring you, you know...I was only thinking the other night about going back over to Baggott Street, you know, I'm afraid you know its been so long since I was there, and when I was over there Jesus I couldn't believe the amount of money like, what the prices are like.

Similarly Liz, who also used to work on Benburb Street four or five nights a week, mostly works from her phone now. She has several regular clients so avoids the street as she feels it is much safer. She spent a night in the police station a few years ago and doesn't want to get caught again:

yeah I mostly work off me phone now but tend to stay around Baggott street and work with Louise, its safer I think and the cops don't bother you as much.

Again, as many sex workers in all sectors of the market, may only work part time or infrequently to either supplement their incomes from other sources or to suit their childcare needs, when it comes to street-based sex workers, if they have been out of street-based work for whatever reason for an extended period of time, they need to go out again and build up a pool of regular clients again. Indoor work tends to be safer than street-based work (Church *et al*, 2001; Kinnell, 2006) and also many find street-based work debasing and embarrassing, and are acutely aware of the stigma

associated with street-based work. Some of the main reasons women move indoors are the ever present threat of violence, being hassled by the Gardaí, the stigma associated with sex work, ranging from comments from passers by as they stand on the street, to being recognized by friends and family (who as well as pass by may be potential punters). Also, many women report feeling more comfortable with their regular clients as they have an ongoing relationship with them. I will discuss this in more detail in chapter 4.

Street-based Sex Work

In chapter one, I recalled my nightly ethnographic trips around Dublin city; I mapped out the different areas in the city where sex work predominates. Briefly there are primarily two red light districts in the city centre that have been relatively stable over the number of years. Whilst there are other areas in the suburbs where women sell sex, my research amongst street-based sex workers focuses only on those selling sex in the city centre. Indeed many women from these same suburbs come into the city centre rather than be recognized by both passers by and punters in their own localities. The areas are north of the Liffey radiating from Benburb Street and stretching up to Kings Inn, Arbour Hill and Stoneybatter. Many of the women working there refer to it as “Benburb Street.”

On the southside the red light district centres around the Grand Canal, commonly referred to as “the canal,” Fitzwilliam Square, around the Pepper-Canister Church, Fitzwilliam Square, around the back of the Burlington and Mespil hotels, Baggott Street, Waterloo Road, and the many lanes and quiet streets in the area, stretching up to the edge of Ballsbridge and Donnybrook. Often the women working there refer to the entire area as “Baggott Street” or “the canal.” During the day this area is a hub of activity with many offices and businesses, but as night falls and the office workers head home to the suburbs, the area is transformed to a red light district. Many of the office buildings are deserted leaving lots of dark alleyways for encounters. The entire area is very dark and deserted at nighttime. Some of the women working on the southside have been there for years, with several coming up from various parts of the country and some flying from UK as they find working in Dublin easier than in their

own country. These more established sex workers seem to have fewer issues with drug use, and tend to keep to themselves and are reluctant to engage with services. As Ann, who has now been in the area for almost ten years said “I just want to make me money and go home, I don’t want chocolate, pot noodles, rosary beads, medals or tea and sympathy, d’you know what I mean?” The geography for escorts is completely different and often virtual and I’ll engage with this later in the chapter.

Baggott Street Vs. Benburb Street

Both the red lights areas are viewed very differently by the women selling sex there, in that a different “type” of women sell sex there, and a different kind of sex is sold. Women working on the southside are seen as more organized, cleaner, less strung out, more attractive and thus able to make more money. This was something that surprised me when I started working on this project, as I had just assumed that both areas were viewed as similar by the women working there. I was soon put straight by Sally, who regularly works on Baggott Street and hates the thought of working on Benburb Street

I’d prefer Baggott Street because less from this side [the Northside] would go over there because it’s a higher class over there, whereas here you can go up to Benburb Street in a tracksuit...you can go up like a knacker...you know what I mean? Where as on Baggott Street you have to make the effort...

The south side is seen by the women as a better place to work in many respects, the women report getting less hassle from the local Gardaí. Indeed many of the women reported having a good relationship with police officers working in the area. Several years ago the Gardaí in the area worried about the violence towards sex workers and started to compile a file of those sex workers based in the area, basically including a photo and basic personal details including names addresses etc. This was done partly in response to the murder of Sinead Kelly in 1997, but also as a way to keep tabs on the women working in the locality should any of them go missing. The murder of Sinead Kelly had a profound effect on the women working on the southside of the city, and many still talk about her murder and many of the women I spoke to will not work where Sinead was murdered, by the railings at the side of the canal. Also

several women report that this area was seen as a better location by the clients, which means the women could charge higher prices than on the northside. It would appear too that clients are aware of the hierarchy that exists between the two sides of the Liffey, and it has been suggested by the women I talked to that clients on the northside are more “dodgy.” Clearly they are aware they can buy a different type of sex there, as the women working there are more chaotic in terms of drug use and social circumstances, and are often desperate to fund their next fix, so may engage in riskier sex.

Many of the women see the northside as the place to go if you are prepared to take more risks. They are seen as a different “class” of worker, similarly the clients are viewed as more risky and willing to pay less money for the same services. Liz comments on the difference:

Well over on Baggott Street you get two fifty for a B& B and that’s only an hour, but here one, one fifty, that’s the difference.

Similarly Jane comments on the price differential between the two locations:

Well over there I start at eighty euros for a hand job, a hundred euros for a blowjob a hundred and seventy for sex or a bit of everything for two fifty.

As well as attracting a different class of client, the men on the Southside were willing to pay more money and were willing to pay without trying to bargain the women down or ask for riskier services like sex without a condom. Jane says:

I’d rather Baggott Street, I’d rather here [Benburb Street] because I know the area, but I’d rather the clientele from Baggott Street here, do you know what I mean? Because the clientele that’s here are dirty young fellas, they’re nothing but fucking scumbags.

From my own experience during outreach many of the women are homeless, some living in hostels etc. More of the chaotic drug addicted sex workers tend to work from the northside. Many of the hostels and B&B’s that women live in are much closer to the northside. There are several hostels in the vicinity of Benburb Street many that operate with a curfew, so if you miss your deadline, you will not get a bed

for the night. The problem then arises as the walk over and back to Baggott Street takes too long to make enough money in time before curfew. The physical space itself on the Southside is more conducive to sex work, in that it is not quite as residential as the northside, and thus there are no protestors, which is a major source of annoyance and stress for the women on the northside.

Susie laughs now when she remembers the “mistake” when she had just started in the business and not sure where to go, went to Benburb Street and was quickly told by one of the other girls there going down to the “wrong” area:

I done Benburb street but then a girl said to me *‘Jesus you’re too good-looking, you’re spotless for down here, they’re all cheap brassers’* and I laughed because I didn’t have a clue cause I was only starting out and she said like *‘I’m not being smart’* she said *‘but if I was you I’d go over to Baggott Street’* she said and when I heard the price of the money I got afraid and the first night I went over I made eleven hundred, and I was really afraid because I said *‘Jesus if I can make this much, I’ll be dead within no time’* that was what was going through my head but like, in one way I’m was saying like lovely I’ll be able to pay some bills and whatever...Jesus I got me drugs in no time you know...that’s why I actually stopped working over that side the money was too good...it can be very frightening.

Claire an outreach worker who has worked with street-based sex workers for over five years described it below:

well yeah in the beginning I just assumed they were the same you know, but yeah there’s a ‘north’ side and a ‘south’ side, and never the twain shall meet, the south side would be posher I guess, the northside has changed though, you know since the Luas came and displaced the women who had been working there for years, but yeah definitely the women on the Northside would be more chaotic in terms of their drug use and are often much more in need of interventions and services, both for their addiction and other issues such as homelessness, mental health problems, help in relation to their kids who may be in care, you know like, well a whole range of both health and social issues. I’d say 99% of those on the Northside are addicted to something, drugs, alcohol, whatever, but on the Southside yeah a lot of them are, but not all of them. They are definitely less chaotic and seem to have a better grip on their lives.

I too had similar feeling about the women after my own experiences as an outreach worker; those on the Northside just seemed a little more desperate. The new Luas line built in 2004, saw a dramatic change in the way women in the northside worked, with many having to change their work practices. Before the start of the building works for the Luas, the area around Benburb Street was quiet and fairly dark, with a few residential houses, but mostly a few pubs, business that close in the evenings and some abandoned buildings. Since the Luas works started that has all changed, the area as well as having a regular tram running through it, has brought many more people into the area and with the Luas works is much illuminated with street lights. This had the effect of pushing the women further back into the more residential areas behind Benburb Street and into direct conflict with the local residents. Again it was the visibility of the women (and their clients) that was the subject of much of the controversy. The residents mounted nightly protests with pickets in the evenings and the local politicians became involved and the local Gardaí.

This had a huge impact on the women who had previously worked from Benburb Street. Not only would their clients not stop because of the guards and the protesters. They were now being hassled on a nightly basis by both the Gardaí and the local residents, so working there became untenable. Some of the women moved over the Liffey to the Southside and worked from there, others have still attempted to work in the area but it has become more unpredictable, and they ended up playing a cat and mouse game avoiding the Gardaí and at the same time being visible enough so potential clients can see them. Even on evenings when I did outreach the women were constantly being told to “move on” by the Gardaí, this had the effect (something I talk about later in my chapter on risk) of making the women more desperate, they would take chances on clients they would have not gone with before, as they have less time to assess clients. As well as also means they are down the money they would have earned and now again are having to take client they would not normally approach to make up for the loss. Also it is harder to find a dark lane, so many of the places where they used to take clients are gone, which means the women are pushed further down the river towards the Phoenix Park,⁵³ which at night

⁵³ The Phoenix Park at 1752 acres is a well known patch for male sex workers and is seen as extremely dangerous at night by street-based women.

time is almost in complete darkness. Several of the women were attacked when they went down to the Phoenix Park and many are extremely frightened of having to have sex there, especially with clients they are not familiar with. As a result of the increased police presence on the northside, there is quite an acrimonious relationship between some of the women and the Gardaí, the women feel the new younger Gardaí hassle them much more often and feel the female Gardaí give them a particularly hard time.

Louise used to work on Benburb Street, but has recently had to move to the Southside for two reasons, which said, “the moneys better and the police leave you alone.” She understands why the residents keep ringing the police, as she would not want her children to be hassled by punters either. Nowadays she works with Liz whom she meets on Baggott Street and they both work together; though she had known her previously from the methadone clinic. Liz adds to the conversation:

yeah they [the police] actually help you, they're very good, they'll come around and ask you if you're alright, like if there's anyone dodgy they'll come around and tell you about him, they don't keep moving you, not like over here you know.

Louise has only come back to sex work after a brutal rape 11 years ago and working alongside Liz makes her feel safer. Louise mostly works from her phone and mostly sees regular clients and only works when she needs more money or her regulars do not make contact.

The law as it stands makes sex workers more vulnerable and their working conditions more dangerous. As loitering and soliciting are both illegal in Ireland, sex workers are always on the look out for the police, the women can be “moved on” by the Gardaí and this can happen several times a night. Either the women keep moving and keep being told to move on until its gets to the stage where they get arrested or just decide to either go home or to move down to the Southside. As a result of this the women are much more reluctant to report any violent incidents, and do not feel they can approach the police with genuine concerns for fear of being arrested, for other offences, such as outstanding bench warrants. Outstanding bench warrants are one of the main reasons why many women will not report crimes against themselves

to the police. Like Louise for instance is constantly on the run from the police because of her outstanding bench warrants and even after being badly beaten up by two men late one night, she refused to report it to the Gardaí. Some of the Gardaí I spoke to also feel that this approach is not working, as they know the women do not want to approach them but there are obligated to investigate when the residents ring and report the women. Indeed many of the Gardaí feel that it is a waste of resources and instead they should be concentrating on other crimes. Niamh one of the guards I interviewed has been working in city 10 years based in a city centre Garda station. Over the last few years her attitude towards the women has softened, in the beginning she said “basically if I was on nights and they heard I was on nights, basically they would all scatter” “oh really” I said “yeah I used to arrest them! I’d arrest them, I’d caution them, I’d tell them to move on, if they didn’t move on I’d arrest them, sure they’re committing an offence! So, they used to all move on!” Now she feels after spending time working on various undercover operations into the sex industry that prostitution should be legalized, and the law should be made clearer. She articulated her view that sex work should be legalized as:

oh I think it should be legalized definitely the government might as well be earning money out of it as well as these people who are doing anything illegal, like we would say that one of them could be making up to five million a year, so why not give half of that to the government?

In spite of this, however some of the women have good relationships with the Gardaí. Many of the respondents felt that they had a lot less hassle from the guards when working on the Southside, basically as the north side is more residential, the residents and sex works come into direct conflict.

Indoor Prostitution - Escorts

The indoor sector of the sexual services markets is by far the largest in my study. As I mentioned earlier this has changed significantly over the lifetime of the Celtic Tiger and women from all over the world sell sexual services on the Irish market. While traditional forms of advertising, such as in the printed media, offered a mere hint at what might be on offer, these have given way to computer mediated interactions

including explicit internet websites, which, as well as allowing potential buyers to view an array of women in various locations around the city, and choose from a long menu of available services, price lists, and graphic photos. It also allows the women themselves to become more autonomous, adopt flexible work practices and offer increasingly specialized services in what is a highly organized sector of the industry. Rosa referring to this change said:

Ten years ago I used to work in a brothel, you know, sometimes just waiting for clients, it sometimes was so boring, these days I can book my clients, get on a plane and go anywhere, meet anyone, get my money and be home again in a day or two, it's like instant almost...really, I am only limited by my choices, and of course my imagination...

Today the escort sector of the market is widely dispersed throughout the city, with women selling sex and accepting “in calls” in a variety of city centre locations and throughout the suburbs. Likewise, they travel to a variety of locations by “out calls.” What links them all together is the Internet and the websites they advertise their services on. Just by typing “escorts in Dublin” into Google results in over 300,000 hits. While most of these escorts’ websites are advertising brothels, many linking to the same brothel, under countless different names, others link to sites where “independent escorts” advertise their services. Currently there are two main websites used by independent escorts working in Ireland. Part of my research involved analyzing the content of these websites, escorts, chatrooms, blogs, any links, client reviews and message boards of sex workers and their clients and any other interested parties who sign up for membership. For reasons of confidentiality and anonymity, I will not name these websites directly, but instead use a pseudonym of “Ireland Escort.”

Typically the homepage offers links to various other parts of the website, including an “about us” section, escorts, reviews message boards, chatrooms, contact information, links and FAQs. The home page also offers links to some of the newest available escorts as well as runs an “interview” with a current escort, entering the live chat rooms, watching free adult movies, and registering for their mailing list. In an effort to reduce the number of false bookings or “no shows” they also offer a €10

discount for online bookings. They also warn escorts that they do not allow duplicated adverts, fake photos or profiles, or name changes should an escort get a bad review, agencies to advertise as independents, nor allow escorts to re-advertise should that have bad debts from previous adverts. Fake photos or enhanced photos are a major source of annoyance for clients, and other escorts alike, as is apparent from the review section and from discussions with my informants. The website administrators are very eager to please clients and are on high alert for fake photos and encourage clients to report escorts purporting to be something other than they advertised. As many clients seem to choose escorts from their photos, as well as their reviews, this is an area of potential conflict between escorts. In particular the idea that some girls Photoshop their photos is a great source of annoyance amongst escorts and clients. Aija has an ongoing argument with another girl on the website who allegedly Photoshop's her photos to make her look thinner and younger:

one girl is so fat, she wears all this lingerie to hide it, and she won't take it off, and she lights all these candles, so clients can't see the rolls of fat, she's so fat, one of my regulars went to see her and she's so fat, and she been saying things about me, you know so I just told her she was fat. I've met her in real life and she is sooooo fat, you should see her...all I did was edit the background to hide my apartment, you know.

This is a serious bone of contention for Aija as she is really careful with her diet and exercises regularly as a way of attracting and maintaining relationships with clients. She is also strong in her admissions that her photos are genuine and that they are a true representation of how she really is. Attracting and maintaining long-term professional relationships with clients is something I talk about in more detail in my next chapter. Rosa, who is now in her fifties, on the other hand, uses a soft focus lens to produce pictures that hide her age, as like Aija she knows there is a premium on youth and beauty in sex work, something most sex workers are acutely aware of. Rosa has had several episodes of liposuction and had regular botox injections. She is very aware that in order to make the most money that she must be looking her best and that there is a time limit as to how many years she can work at the high end of the industry, and still charge the highest possible prices.

The website contains at anyone time almost one hundred profiles (at the height of the Celtic Tiger, say 2006, these numbers were double that), and by clicking on a geographical location, from cities such as Dublin or Belfast to small rural towns like Killarney or Letterkenny, potential clients are provided with a list of available escorts in their chosen area. By clicking on the relevant location say Dublin or Westmeath, escorts are further broken down into four categories, “resident escorts,” those permanently resident in Ireland, “touring escorts,” those who are resident elsewhere but visit Ireland are part of their circuit, “TV/TS Escorts” and “Dominatrix.” Clicking on any of these options brings up a list of available escorts within that section, with a short biography indicating, name, location, nationality, languages, sexuality, duo partners (usually their working partner, which means they can offer threesomes), statistics (height, build and measurements), ethnicity, hair colour, eye colour, whether they do incalls and /or outcalls, whether they are will to travel within the country or are available for international trips with potential clients, as well as a thumbnail photo (usually semi-naked in lingerie, and sometimes with face obscured). You then have the option of clicking on their full profiles. Aija would have classified herself as a resident escort, though she toured if requested throughout Ireland. Liana, a sex worker also from Latvia, introduced to the market by Aija, was less fond of travelling and tried to build up a regular supply of Dublin based clients. Both Kate and Marie classed themselves as touring escorts. Many of the women I met had friends they worked with (referred to as “duo partners” to sound more attractive to clients) or travelled to Ireland with as part of their tours. As well as cut accommodation costs, this was also a safety measure, in that women felt safer when working in pairs rather than in an apartment alone, and a way of reducing loneliness when away from home for several days or weeks at a time.

For a fee of up to €130 (some sites charge less to advertise, but many women complain their services are not as good) per month each escort has her own profile page. This comprises a more detailed version of the options listed above and also includes, a short biography, price lists or rates, schedules, details of upcoming tours including dates, locations, and whether they do outcalls of incalls, and range of services offered (listed as “sexual favourites”) which are often described through

acronyms,⁵⁴ such as GFE (Girl Friend Experience), PSE (Porn Star Experience), OWO (Oral With Out [a condom]), CIM (Come In Mouth) etc. The range of services may include some or all of the following: French kissing, BDSM, lap dance, Tie and Tease, Massage, Watersports, GFE, PSE, OWO, Sex Toys, Anal (though this usually involves an extra cost, usually €50), CIM, Facials, Oral on me (the escort), Role Play, Striptease, Spanking, 69, Uniforms, Swallowing (though like anal sex, mostly involves an extra charge). I will discuss their various services in the next chapter.

Many escorts include links to their own personal websites, usually an extended profile of personal details, photos, tours, links to other websites, blogs and photo gallery as well as links to other adult entertainment websites such as such Punterlink, Adult Friend Finder or Adult Network, where they also advertise their services. Indeed as Aija became more of an expert in the market, she began to diversify and part of the service she now offers to new escorts is to help them with web design. Each profile also includes a link to the review section, where clients post reviews and rate their experience with the escort on a scale of 1 to 10. The escorts rely heavily on getting good reviews as a form of advertising to potential clients, and often direct potential clients to look at their reviews and their current clients to post good reviews. Again, the review sections can cause a lot of conflict with the women working on the sites, as evident from the blogs and chatrooms as well as discussions with my informants.

Escorts are allowed offer a rebuttal to the posted review and sometimes rival escorts post negative reviews by posing as clients. Bookings are made either on line (usually with a ten euro discount) or via mobile phone, with touring escorts often suggesting their Irish, British or USA mobile numbers. Locations are described by area code or to their nearest landmark, such as the GPO, or and also if there is parking available, if it is wheel chair accessible and whether showers and drinks are provided. To interact on the site in any meaningful way, you first must become a member. This is easily done by registering an email and password and then obtaining a username. Much like social networking sites such as Bebo or Facebook, members are given their own profile page, where they can load images, create an avatar, complete an

⁵⁴ Please see Appendix A (List of Abbreviations and acronyms) for further elaboration.

“about me” page, link to other users or “friends,” upload links, view posts, blogs, reviews, and make comments to other users of the site. On one site alone there are over 8,000 registered users comprising escorts, clients, voyeurs and other users.

Social Mobility Between and Within Sectors

There is very little social mobility within the Dublin sex industry or between each separate sector. It is highly unlikely that a chaotic drug addicted woman from a working class inner city background, would work as a high end escort at the top end of the market, or similarly it is almost unheard of that an escort would sell sex on the street. Whilst at each level there are different markers of success, being successful in any sector, does not mean promotion to the next “level.” Whilst some street-based workers may have worked in brothels, they are not necessarily the same brothels that high-end escorts would have worked in. For instance Marie, when she first started in the sex industry began working in a brothel in the UK, but she found the working conditions difficult, especially the late nights and drunken clients. She then set up as an independent first working in the UK and seeing clients there, but soon started travelling to Ireland when a client recommended it as a better place to work:

Yeah as I said he just told me about the set up here, and to be honest, I’ve had no problems at all. I’ve not worked in a brothel over here or anything; I’d prefer to be independent, especially after my experiences at home. It’s easy to work here, you know if you compare the two.

For instance in street-based sex work a marker of success would be that you had a pool of regular clients, so you could work off your phone instead of having to solicit on the street. Similarly with the escort population, as well as having a pool of regular customers, having your own apartment, used exclusively for work purposes, or getting really good reviews are seen as marks of success within the industry.

Other Girls

Most of the sex workers I met seemed to have an ambivalent attitude to other sex workers – they are at the same time their greatest competition and potentially their

closest allies. This is most apparent in street-based work, when competition can be fierce but also women need one another as it can be dangerous, lonely and sometimes boring on a slow night. The women can be a great source of support for each other. Linda who has worked on Benburb Street and then moved to Baggott Street since the Luas works were completed had this to say:

The girls look out for one another here, you know if someone is having a bad night and I've been good, I'll put my hand in my own pocket, like if she's standing there and no punters pick her up, I'll put my head down when the punters drive by and she'll get a turn, you know we take turns, or like if she goes off and we make sure she comes back and say are you alright there, love. We have to look out for each other, there's no one else, and it's like that. Though some of the girls are greedy, they won't take turns and look out.

Obviously street-based sex workers meet face to face, whereas escorts meet virtually through chatrooms, message boards and through the review sections and only meet face to face with each other if they specifically arrange to do so. Within street-based work, there is a sense of camaraderie in that they are all in the same profession and must be civil to one another, but when resources are scarce such as a reduction in client numbers, then tension between sex workers can increase due to the increased competition. Some of the women work in pairs and go down to their patches together, but others prefer to work alone and not interact with the others, even though it is safer to work with another woman. Martina works by herself and never interacts with the other women. Even in the clinic where I first met Martina and before she started inviting me to her flat, she did not tend to interact with other clients of the clinic. She described her rationale to me as "I don't mix with them; I keep to myself, walk around and stay on my own because I don't want to get involved in that crowd type thing."

With regards to other girls working in the same area, most seemed to have an ambivalent attitude towards them, unless they knew them personally. If it was quiet then there is fierce competition for the few clients but otherwise they would chat to each other, sometimes then women work in pairs and looking out for each other, either taking car registrations or just noticing when they last saw such and such a

person. Most of the women tend to work the same “patch” and do not like when others encroach on their territory. Again with the Luas works I mentioned earlier, many of the women who had previously worked on the northside were now forced to work on the southside, and this caused some conflict with the women already working there. Also if women have been out of sex work for months or years, they will often find other women are now using their patch and again this causes conflict. There is also an issue when a new sex worker comes on to the scene, as the women tend to price fix (usually price per service), and there are ructions when someone drops their prices, also many women feel that clients like to see a new choice of women on the street, so they often resent new girls out working. A patch can be a number of streets, as the women may have to move to the edge of their patch, or even off their patch, or an area they are comfortable working in to avoid the Gardaí if they are patrolling the area and moving the women on. Susie referring to other girls says:

they're alright they are, some of them are nice, some of the girls like, if you're on their patch, or you're only new, there'd be killings over it, you know what I mean like, say if I was there and another girl came down and she was only a new comer, like I'd go mad because she's taking my patch and the punters have never seen this girl before and she only fresh started, you know what I mean, they'd go for her quicker than they'd go for me, you know what I mean because they know me so well like, she's only a fresh girl like, this is her first time working so they'd go for her, because she's never done it before you know what I mean?

This was evident when I did outreach, some nights if the guards were stopped around Benburb Street the women would move to the Southside or further down the quays towards the Phoenix Park. The park itself is in almost complete darkness at night and many of the women are terrified of being taken into the park by clients and not being able to have their screams heard. I talk about this at greater length in the chapter of risk and sex work. Jane has had a couple of bad experiences with other girls:

Emma: and do you know any of the other girls?

Emma: did they ever try to hassle you or anything?

Jane: one tried to rob me phone, but I gave her a wallop with me bag and she legged it

Emma: and is there much competition?

Jane: not really no, coz I get down here they all come out late, so I'd be down early, done mine and gone.

Conversely, sex workers can be a great source of knowledge and comfort to each other. Keeping secrets is a given in sex work, and the friendships that do form are based on mutual trust and understanding. Street-based sex workers will often informally teach new girls the “tricks of the trade,” such local prices and also give some instruction on how to act with clients, such as what services to offer, how to ensure payment, safety tips and how much to charge per individual service. Part of this seems to come from a genuine feeling of camaraderie, but also as a part of a business strategy, in that new recruits will not undercut pricing in the area, and thus be more popular with clients. Price fixing is a regular occurrence, with escorts tending to fix prices per unit of time, for instance €250 per hour and street-based women per service, such as a handjob for €25.

Taxi Drivers

Many of the women have close relationships with taxi drivers, in that they bring clients to the women and are a form of informal security. As I discussed earlier, many women do not trust the Gardaí and often rely on taxi drivers instead to protect them. Many women (predominantly escorts) use the same taxi drivers to ferry them to various parts of the city for outcalls and often pay for them to wait. Others rely on taxi drivers as a safety mechanism, in that they get to know them, and then they drop them off to their various “out calls” around the city and then collect them afterwards. The women feel more comfortable knowing that someone knows where they are, and that they will be missed should anything happen to them. Street-based workers often rely on drivers to bring them business, usually in exchange for 50 euro or sex at some stage. This is particularly relevant for tourists who may not be familiar with the Dublin street-based sex markets, and rely on taxi drivers to bring them to the red light districts. Susie has a taxi driver she has known for several years:

I used to have a taxi fella Danny and he used to collect me from Ballymun when I was staying there, and to wherever I was going and bring me home as well and he never wanted money for it or nothing,

well, the odd time he'd come up and say will you do a job for me, but he would always pay me, you know he was just a nice fella and then if he couldn't collect me then his brother would. Yeah and the same thing with him, if you're using the girls then pay them, you know its unbelievable like and you know that was like my safety net, they were my safety net.

Similarly Jane has a driver she relies on to bring her clients:

and the taxi man you'd arrange with him, now you see you'd always have your little deals going on, you know what I mean, with the taxi man, the taxi man, they're like a kind of chauffeur and they bring the men up to you and like the ones for England, from Scotland, from anywhere and they tell them the price like they could say look its four hundred quid with this girl for an hour and your man says yeas and he says you've to give me fifty quid for me you know what I mean and I'd yeah ok an hour and he'd go back up and get him and come back in twenty minutes! You know what I mean?

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted a number of factors, the increased mobility of sex workers, the connections and networks that tie sex workers to each other and to the many other actors in the industry, their clients, their co-workers, the police, taxi drivers and a multitude of others. The sexual service markets are very diverse and made of a variety of people, from escorts like Aija, a strong and entrepreneurial young woman with a keen sense of the market constantly changing the way she worked to maximize her profits and improve her position in the industry. Indeed in any other profession, Aija as an independent contractor hustling to sell services in a competitive environment, would be lauded for her business acumen and entrepreneurial spirit. Or Marie, a student nurse and happily married mother of two children who works part time to supplement her income as she follows her dream of becoming a nurse. Or Louise, Liz and Susie, all struggling to make ends meet, feed their children, pay bills and fund their drug habit. As I mentioned in this chapter the sex industry has changed dramatically over the past few years, and so has how the women involved practice selling sex; they are quick to embrace innovation, especially the now ubiquity of the mobile phone and internet as technological revolutions for the industry. Sex workers are quick to adapt to a way of selling sex that fits comfortably into their life styles, whether they are a crack addicted homeless mother of two, or an escort and part time student working at the top end of the

market. As I showed in the previous chapter, women enter into sex industry in multiple ways, but most stay due to the huge sums of money available as well as high degrees of flexibility and autonomy offered in the street and escort based sectors of the Dublin sex markets. Indeed a feature of both the street-based and independent escort sectors of the market is how much relative control over their working lives these women have; they are very much their own bosses and are not answerable to pimps or faceless traffickers. In the next chapter I discuss how women routinely assess as well as select and reject clients based on certain criteria, and also how they actively engage with the industry by marketing themselves to clients.

Chapter 4: “Playing Games” - Picking Punters and Courting the Market

Men they are like butterflies, they just fly from flower to flower to flower...

Aija, independent escort

Whilst this thesis is about women working in the sex industry, and I did not interview any clients as part of the process, I felt it was necessary to include a discussion of the clients. Without clients the industry would not exist. Sex workers have much to say about their clients and the interactions they have with them, which in turn illuminates the industry as a whole. Clients of sex workers are a notoriously difficult group to access due to their almost invisibility, and consequently there is little academic research focusing on them in comparison to sex workers (Barnard *et al*, 1993; McKeganey & Bernard, 1996; Bullough & Bullough, 1996; Monto, 2000, 2001). Contrary to popular discourses and media stereotypes, the selling of sexual services is not just men as “buyers” and women as “sellers,” but is a much more complex market consisting of a range of purchasers and sellers in a variety of settings. Women also buy sex from men and other women, and men also buy sex from other men as well as women. The expansion of the sexual services market means that all tastes and desires can be catered for in a multitude of settings, with the possibilities of buying increasingly specialist services reflecting the diversity in sexualities, sexual expression and identities (Sanders *et al*, 2009). However for the purposes of this thesis I concentrate on men who buy sex from women, as the majority of the women in my study only sold sex to men, or less frequently to couples, always made up of a male and a female. The frequency of male contact with sex workers in the general population is not known, though various estimates have been made (Day *et al*, 1993). A recent study in Ireland (Dept. of Health, 2006⁵⁵)

⁵⁵ The Irish Study of Sexual Health and Relationships carried out by the Department of Health and the Crisis pregnancy Agency (2006) was the largest of its kind undertaken in the State (n 7,441). Its remit was to examine sexual behaviours, knowledge and attitudes in Ireland, a recommendation of the National AIDS Strategy 2000. Whilst most of the report dealt with other aspects of sexual behaviour, a very small section of it examined men’s experiences of purchasing sexual services in Ireland. Only

indicated that 6.4% of Irish men admitted paying for sex, with 3.3% having done so in the “last five years.” This study also suggested that men in the 25 to 34 year age bracket were most likely to have paid for sex “in the last five years” whilst men over 54 years of age were most likely to have paid for sex “ever.” The authors felt that there were indications of an upward trend in the purchase of sexual services, especially amongst younger age groups; however they acknowledge that it is impossible to say for sure, if there is a change in the patterns of behaviours between the different age cohorts, or simply because those in the younger categories still had to “catch up,” with their older counterparts. They also acknowledge that due to the sensitivity around matters of a sexual nature in Ireland, and in particularly in relation to commercial sex, that respondents may have under-reported purchasing sexual services, and suggest that it is perhaps more widespread than the report indicates.

Public perceptions of sex workers’ clients are often built on stereotypes of psychologically unhinged, sexually perverted, social outcasts. However, this is far from an accurate representation of the “average” male client. Research to date, indicates that the typical male client of female sex workers would perhaps not stand out from the “average” man on the street with many of the women describing their clients as “ordinary” (Perkins, 1999). The Irish Study of Sexual Health and Relationships Report (2006) suggested that men in higher professional and managerial occupations were more likely to have paid for sex, than those in any other cohort. Rates of men paying for sex amongst the skilled manual group came second to those in professional and managerial occupations, followed by those in lower professional occupations and again followed by those in clerical positions. Men in the unskilled manual cohort were the least likely to have “ever” paid for sex. Single men, followed by those in a casual relationships or cohabitating with a partner were most likely to have paid for sex, whilst married men were less likely to have paid for sex over their lifetime or in “the last five years.” A survey carried out by one of the Irish escort websites posted similar results (Irish Escort Clients Survey, 2006: escortsurveys.com). The survey was carried out amongst men (n252) in Ireland, who use escort services. The average age of respondents was between 25 and 44 years

one woman admitted buying sexual services and it was felt this was too low a number for statistical analysis.

old, and the majority indicated they were married or in a relationship. Most of respondents were Irish or British, had completed third level education, and were working in areas such as, self employed, Executive / Senior Management, Sales / Marketing / Advertising, Engineering, Accounting / Finance positions. Over half of the respondents had a gross annual income above €40,000, with almost ten percent indicating they earned over €100,000 per annum. Indeed, testimonies of the women I met revealed the variety of men seeking sexual services. Many of the women I interviewed referred to their clients as “ordinary,” “just normal,” “average” or “genuine.” As Louise says:

most of the lads are just ordinary; you’d be surprised, like your next-door neighbour, you know nine times out of ten, they’re nice.

Or similarly Susie describes her average client:

you couldn’t pick him out of a crowd, yeah you’d meet him in a bar then the next night you’d meet him up there [red light district], you know.

Or Marie, an escort from the UK has a similar description:

yeah, business men, now I mean big business men with a lot of money, lonely men, you know there’s all different types, but mostly it’s just your average bloke.

Why Men Pay for Sex

Reasons as to why men purchase sexual services has been well explored in the literature (Campbell, 1998; Sanders, 2008; McKeganey, 1994; McKeganey & Barnard, 1996 amongst others), but our understanding of the male client role is less understood (Sanders, 2008). As Jane quipped when I once asked her why do men buy sex? She replied with “well, ‘coz they can.” Several authors have posited reasons why men buy sexual services. Broader factors including the prevailing social and cultural conditions, the increasing commodification of sex and the normalization of the commercial sex industry, are implicated in the choices available to men, as well as reasons connected to pleasure, such as the desire for sex, fantasy, and sexual

gratification (Sanders *et al*, 2009). Together with the relative anonymity provided for those in stable relationships, prostitution provides an opportunity for others to participate in more extreme sexual activities and for a small minority purchasing sexual services is a means of social, rather than sexual interaction (Day *et al*, 1993). A quantitative study in the United States of 1281 clients of sex workers suggested the desire for fellatio, especially if it was unavailable from their stable relationship, was one of the main reasons men seek sex workers with 81% of respondents indicating oral sex the most desired service from a sex worker (Monto, 2001). Similarly a Dutch study indicated the main reasons for seeking out the services of a sex workers included loneliness, not having a partner, not having sex with a regular partner, a particular sexual service not provided by regular partner, such as oral sex or S&M, sexual kicks from visiting sex workers, sex addiction, stress or as reward for hard work (De Graaf & Van Zessen, 1996). An Australian study indicated that married men were less likely to seek sex workers for company, and more likely for the variety of sexual partners, and because their private partners either inability or refusal to have sex with them (Perkins 1999). A study in Glasgow indicates that one of the main reasons men buy sex from women was the attraction of being able “to ask for anything” (McKeganey & Barnard, 1996:53). However, Monto (2000) argues that “there is no single or simple reason” why men visit sex workers. Marie talking about her client’s sexual preferences:

well a lot of them are like hour booking and some of them have sex, some of them don’t, because I was quite surprised when I first came here because more than one guy said to me, he said ‘*oh my wife doesn’t give me oral, so all I want is oral, even with a condom,*’ you know a lot of them are quite particular.

Similarly one of Sally’s clients wanted a service he wasn’t able to get from his girlfriend:

you get some weird jobs, like one fella wanted me to give him a wank with me feet, and I thought that was really funny, ‘*What your girlfriend wouldn’t to that?*’ I said, ‘*You mean to say even messing like?*’ You know messing with your partner? You’d mess like that wouldn’t ye? And he was real ‘*no!*’ and he paid me eighty euro to do that, and it was real and things like that, I find, I found that sad, that he had to go to a

working girl. Because I would find that playful in a relationship, I suppose it would depend on your attitude to sex what is playful and what isn't playful.

Not surprisingly, the Irish Escort Clients Survey (2006) indicated that majority of respondents admitted using female escort services for “sexual gratification” with respondents participating in a wide repertoire of sexual acts. So, in short, according to the available data, the average Irish punter, is aged between 25 and forty five years old, is well educated, in a well paying job, is married or in a relationship and visits escorts for sexual gratification, engaging in a wide range of sexual activities (perhaps ones that are unavailable at home), and will most likely have been punting for more than a year. Yet this does not tell us the full story.

Discussion

Performing sexual labour involves a “complex dynamic of negotiation, refusal and submission.” Sex workers learn to extract the highest possible price for their services, and develop skills to assess clients for potential risk and adjust their own behaviour accordingly (Kelly, 2008;152). Before I started the project I had always assumed that the sex worker was the passive person in the interaction and did what the client, any client, wanted. I never understood the complexity and variety of the relationships between sex workers and their clients. Just as clients of sex workers do not have sex with anyone willing to sell, sex workers themselves do not randomly engage in a commercial exchange with anyone one will to pay. The sexual services market is as diverse as those working in it, and different sectors of the market seem to sell different products. In the prostitution sector, it is not only sex that is sold, the market is made up of disparate groups of people looking for a variety of services and both clients and sex workers can chose how and to whom they buy and sell sex. Whilst making money is one the primary reason anyone earns a wage labour, the same is true for sex workers, and like anyone else they would rather do so in a comfortable environment and with people they actually like spending time with.

So what exactly is being sold and how do sex workers strategize to extract the most amount of money from clients? This chapter attempts to answer a number of questions, such as what exactly are these men actually buying when they employ the services of a sex worker? What are the women selling? To whom do they sell it, and how do they sell it? I discussed in previous chapters how the sexual services market is organized in Dublin. This chapter takes a more micro-view of the relationship between sex workers and their clients and explores how and why women select and reject clients, how they categorize clients, and how they market themselves to clients.

Sanders (2008) contends that sex work is often understood through “false dichotomies,” which distinguish commercial and non-commercial relationships as dissonant. Instead she argues, particularly in relation to regular clients, some commercial sexual relationships can reflect the traditional romance courtship rituals, modes and meanings of communication, sexual familiarity, mutual satisfaction and emotional intimacies found in ordinary relationships. She argues that there are similarities in the acting out of sexual scripts⁵⁶ and in the processes of sexual engagement and emotional desires, satisfaction and vulnerabilities between men in conventional and commercial relationships. Aija in talking about what clients are actually buying, suggests that it is more than sex:

a lot of guys don't look at how beautiful you are, they look at what do you do, because maybe you can be, I mean there are a couple of girls and they are really pretty and they are getting all the bad reviews, maybe they don't offer certain services, maybe they are not friendly, you know there are more guys who are saying if an escort is friendly and chatty and smiling and laughing, then they like her and feel more comfortable with her. But if she is like *'take off your clothes, I'm going to fuck you'* they don't like that.

As I discussed in a previous chapter, your position in the market largely determines how you sell sex, but even sex workers at the bottom end of the market in terms of

⁵⁶ Adopting Bancroft (2000) Sanders explains sexual scripts to be styles of interaction between men and women around sexual behaviour. This script is “a set of shared conventions based on mutual dependency, and sets out the boundaries and roles that determine control, power, initiation, pleasure and so forth” (2008:401).

reduced choices, still choose to reject and accept clients based on certain criteria. Whilst at the escort of the market, this may be more explicit, in that buyers tend to buy services from a list of available services, sex workers working on the street also have a list of services or sexual acts they are willing to engage in, though obviously this is not as explicitly stated, as it is for escorts on their web pages.

“Normal” Transaction

Most of the women seem to have a good working relationship with the majority of their clients, and most of their interactions pass off without any incident. Most women report seeing a broad range of clients from across the social and cultural spectrum, from plumbers to politicians to businessmen and doctors, and from across the age spectrum, from young men looking to lose their virginity to older married men, or widowers or lonely men who want company as well as sex. The women also report an increase in trade during any event that brings an influx of men into the city, such as important sporting fixtures such as GAA matches with its legions of fans from down the country, or for rugby or soccer internationals, by fans from all over the world. Here are some of their experiences. Lorraine says:

Jaysus yeah you'd be busy when there's a match on, you know, like all of them in their jerseys, nice lads usually, though drunk as skunks some of them, you'd make serious money that night alright.

Likewise Liana noticed an increase in trade during the Ryder Cup:

Yeah lots of golfers the last time, you'd be shocked if I told you who.

Escort Marie sees a variety of clients:

You get a lot of businessmen, very clean, very tidy, you know very smart men, intellectual, quite nice, easy to get along with.

As does Aija:

Yes they are Irish, actually they are different nationalities, sometimes, they are from everywhere really.

Women do not randomly take on all clients, and potential clients are subject to a selection criteria. Like other social practices, sex work is governed by ritualistic behaviour, and once the sex worker is happy to proceed with the encounter, several rituals usually take place. Again experiences vary due to the social location of the sex worker, as well as the type of client they are negotiating with. The price is nearly always negotiated upfront and payment is made prior to any activity taking place. As seen in a previous chapter, escorts produce a list of potential services and price lists on their website, so most clients and sex workers would agree on what services would be bought and how much it was going to cost in advance. As escorts usually charge a fee per unit of time, it is usually understood the amount of time that would be booked in advance, such as an hour or two hours etc. Extras (anal sex, duo partners etc) are also listed on websites and these are usually added to the cost of the encounter. Some escorts offer special discounts for bookings lasting several hours. Both in the escort and street-based markets prices tended to remain stable over time. It is up to the individual workers to offer discounts or drop their prices, however as I discussed earlier, this was met with resistance from other workers in the same location and often the cause of friction amongst working colleagues. Street-based sex workers have a price list for what different services cost, say for example a blow job might be €50 and a hand job €20. This price is dependent on several factors including location (Benburb Street or Baggott Street), economic need, drug use and the need to score urgently, availability of potential clients or on the client's perceived ability to pay. For example Jane raises her prices if she feels the client is able to pay more:

Well if he came up to me in a big Merc well yeah I'd charge him more, it makes sense you know like. I might charge him double if I thought I'd get away with it.

Picking Punters and Selection Criteria

However women do not accept all clients who try to avail of their services. Depending on circumstances, which I outline in detail below, clients are rejected or accepted based on selection criteria. Potential clients are placed on a "hierarchy of

acceptability” or a “scale of desirability”; depending on a sex workers own personal selection or rejection criteria. Most of the women I met described clients they would prefer over others, and certain attributes were prized over others. The selection process was primarily used as a risk reduction strategy, but also as an income generating strategy. Many sex workers reported relying on their “gut” or “sixth sense” as their primary tool in client selection, with risk of danger or attack being foremost in their minds. This was often built on years of experience as sex workers, a tacit knowledge from past experiences. The assessment often involves a visual inspection of clients (this is obviously easier in street-based work), a visual inspection of the environment (whether it be their car, their homes etc) which includes looking for hidden weapons or extra men hidden in backs of car and vans, an assessment of a clients general demeanour, such as the questions they asked, or how they behaved, background noises during phone calls, their tone of voice, if they were acting “weird” or “strange”, or if they sent inappropriate texts or emails. Sex workers expect certain rituals to occur during the initial phase of the interaction with a potential client, and if a client deviate from “normal” or expected behaviour, they may be come suspicious, which may involve a more thorough inspection or rejection, depending on the situation. Some women reject clients on the basis of their nationalities or ethnicities. Other are rejected because for being too drunk, for asking too many questions, for being too quiet, are suspected of being undercover journalists or police, or are too unkempt / smelly, or if they are known as a “dodgy” client. Assessment of clients also allows sex workers to place clients into categories including ordinary or average, regular, weird, or dodgy. Certain categories are deemed as “safe” and therefore acceptable; others are seen as “not safe” or “potentially risky” and might cause the clients to be rejected, depending on other factors at play at the time.

Liz, for instance speaks of using her intuition in selecting potential clients and ensuring her safety:

for me like I'd get in the car and I'd give them me number, and then like the first time I'd meet them I'd go with me gut instinct, like I wouldn't get in if I didn't feel they were ok, like I've often turned punters away.

Again Lorraine suggests that something in a client's attitude would make her wary:

Emma: and what would make you wary?

Lorraine: just their attitude, you know depends on how chatty they are, what way they are looking at you, you know the way they speak to you. Sometimes it-'s whether they lock the door or not, or if he starts touching you, you know small little things; your common sense takes over.

Likewise Susie has turned away potential clients because of a gut feeling about them:

you know sometimes you just have gut feeling, or you just don't like the look of them, like I think a lot of people have a perception about it, that when a car pulls up, you get in, and that's it, well I don't, I just say '*no I don't do that*' [sell sex] '*well what do you do?*' '*Nothing*' I'd start making up excuses, or I'd just be '*I'm not going with you, I'm sorry*'

For escort Kate working off the Internet, the selection process takes place as soon as the client phones:

We don't give out any information and private numbers, they have to call from a mobile you can go out and buy a SIM card anytime, if they call from a private number we would only give them basic information, even when they make a booking we don't tell them the exact address, we tell them like a landmark like 10 seconds walk away from the flat, and when that are here, they can give us a call and I can tell them where to come, you know when they do come towards your door or what ever and you tell them the landmark are you able to see them from where you live.

Clients known as "timewasters" are a problem for escorts. Often these clients make bookings but then fail to show up for the booking. As Marie is not under pressure to see every clients that calls, she does not see clients if she becomes wary of during the initial conversation:

you can usually tell, like I say the majority of them are businessmen anyway, you do get your time wasters but you can usually tell them straight away and you can usually tell people are doing things on the phone when there talking to you, you just put the phone down, you get things like that (laughs), you do learn that and you do get the gist em and

you just say no, you just refuse anyway, but I don't need to work seven days a week but you know, that isn't for me, you know, once or twice a week is fine by me and I won't do any more than that.

For safety reasons, some escorts try to work from apartments where they can visually inspect the client from the door way or by looking out a window, prior to letting them into their workplaces. Kate is based in London, but tours in Dublin, so rents a short term let when she visits for work. However, she feels at greater risk in her rented apartment in Dublin, as it does not have a window she can see clients through:

I mean here in Dublin we're in a different apartment and out of this one we cannot see them, the flat in London I can see them, so I can see them, I mean I have the choice not to let them in anyway, do you know what I mean? Yes even if I make a booking I can still turn around and say '*sorry.*'

This means they can also check if the client is alone or it is not the Gardaí / thieves/ journalists posing as clients. A few years ago a gang was going around Dublin specifically targeting escorts working alone, and turning up at the door pretending to be a client and then several men would burst through when the escort opened the door, beat the escort up and steal all her earnings. Several warnings were posted on escort's websites and escorts were always wary of being robbed or attacked when working alone. Also some of these robbers pretended to be policemen to gain entrance and again would beat up the escort and steal her money.

Kate, who has been in the business for many years, expects a certain ritual to take place when a new client is booking her, and if he deviates from what is seen as expected client behaviour, she becomes wary:

if someone comes across as a bit more difficult than normal, and then probably you would be a bit more wary of them, or they ask weird questions you will be amazed the questions they ask you know, do you know what I mean like, very silly questions like, '*are you really a blonde like?*' do you know what I mean like? I mean very silly questions like. Normally genuine clients book you in the first few minutes, if they try to talk to you and ask too many questions, I say '*sorry I don't have a booking.*'

Whilst any client has the potential to become violent, escorts are in a better position to screen clients, in that they are initially separated from their client by the physical landscape and can carry out quick assessments, prior to opening the door. Likewise if a potential client texted called or emailed, if they said the “wrong” thing then the escort would be wary. Clients are screened before an encounter and might even make to the escorts place of work and still be rejected.

I asked Laura what would make her feel uncomfortable:

em if they come across as being very quiet I don't like quiet guys, I'm chatty anyway and I don't mean they have to come across all chatty doesn't have to be shy or anything just quiet and mumbling I just don't like that.

Clients can be rejected due to their ethnicity or nationality, as Jane says:

I try and not do black fellas, I don't do black fellas, I've done Lithuanian, I've done Romanian fellas, its just me, right, black fellas, I went with a black fella before and his penis was huge, and he was trying to really hurt me with it, like it wouldn't go in, it was that big, I know you're laughing now but he wouldn't stop and I was trying to get him off me, so ever since then I stopped going with black men and they wont pay you either.

Susie also refuses to enter into a commercial relationship with “foreigners”:

foreigners, I wouldn't go with foreigners, they have a complete different look at women and then especially a woman out doing that, and most of the girls that have got a hiding or whatever have been by the foreigners, you know black guys, Pakis, Italians and then you'd see the fellas, I think they're Muslims, but I don't know what race or religion they are, but they have those caps on, and they be driving around, small little caps, like Jewish maybe, yeah them and then some of them would have those other thing, like turbans, turbans yeah, like there'd be a lot of people I'd say *'no look, ask that girl over there, I'm waiting for someone'* or something like that.

Not only are the women worried about potentially violent clients, but they also must be wary of undercover police and journalists. Aija is worried about being caught by

undercover police or journalists posing as clients. What makes her wary, is if they ask too many questions or seem overly interested in things she considers irrelevant:

Sometimes, like sometimes some people, they say like ask for the price and say *'I want to meet you, I'm very horny'* but sometimes if they ask me *'oh do you work for somebody?'* Or *'oh what kind of car do you drive?'* I think to have sex you don't need to know what type of car I drive. Sometimes when they ask me strange questions and they just come over and they give me money and they say *'what can I get for this?'* And I say *'massage,' 'that's all?'* and I say *'yes, a massage, just a massage'*. Because sometimes it is very suspicious, like they have different strange questions and or sometimes when they don't want sex, they just talk; they may be some reporter from the newspapers or the police.

Many workers reported getting better at client assessment with practice, Susie feels in the beginning it was down to luck that she was not murdered or attacked. After being in the business for many years she is now more discerning, and has learned to trust her own judgment in client assessment:

but it's kind of like you get a sixth sense, you know like I remember my first time it was a young guy and he just wanted a handjob, so it was really, really easy, you know I didn't get thrown in the deep end or anything, but I was just lucky, now I really make sure who I go off with.

Rejecting Clients

You do something that maybe you don't want to do, but you look for the money wise.

Rosa, independent escort

Yes sometimes it's disgusting, but its money, that's all. Sometimes people when they come to me they just say *'am I sexy?'* and they are just like bald hair maybe a disgusting taste smelling mouth or something, and you have to say to him *'ok sexy!'* you just have to do things that they want and maybe if you meet regular people you have to find out things what they like and if you do this, they come back again and again and again. It's money.

Aija, independent escort

Some sex workers find it difficult to out rightly reject clients, firstly because of the loss of income but secondly they feel guilty about rejecting the clients. One strategy they use to manage the encounter, without loss of income or face, is to accept a client they might otherwise reject, such as an ugly or dirty client. They use several strategies to do this. Liana does this by concentrating on the money:

you know, it's like the cartoons, you know, it's like Tom and Jerry, you know when they have the dollar signs in their eyes, well you know if someone is ugly or an idiot or a bit more difficult or... I just say to myself *'oh, just think of the money...'*

Another strategy is to concentrate on an attractive attribute in the client or to “find something nice in a client.” Usually this is a client they do not like for reasons such as they are ugly, smelly, unkempt or otherwise disagreeable. Rarely would a sex worker go with a client that she felt posed a threat or caused her to fear for her life. In order to make money, sex workers often agree to provide services to customers they would rather refuse. Kate describes how she manages clients she finds unattractive:

well at the end of the day there is something nice about everybody and you then have to concentrate on that thing, I haven't seen anyone who was ugly, ugly, ugly and you know people who can afford me they know how to take care of themselves, do you know what I mean like, they're not exactly the homeless people off the street.

However, ultimately some clients are rejected. At first Susie found it hard to reject clients:

yeah, now at first that's very hard, you know to say no like, but at the end of the day, I just kinda talking to myself, this is a hard game you know, toughen up and then just at the end of the day if I didn't like the look of someone I just said *'no, I'm to going with you, fuck off!'*

Laura finds it extremely difficult to reject a client, especially if she has seen them once before and for whatever reason decides she would rather not see them again. Like Kate she tries to find “something nice” about the clients, but this does not

always work. If she sees clients she feels uncomfortable with she makes up an excuse, as she discusses:

I see a mixture of guys. I mean a real mixture. From young to old and I always see good in somebody, and attractive in somebody. It's a funny thing to say, but I really do. If I didn't like somebody I wouldn't leave them, professionally do you know what I mean I just wouldn't? Like I would have sex with them that time, but I would never see them again, and I mean I have met guys through the business and they come in start the meeting and all the rest, and if I felt anyway uncomfortable with them I would make up an excuse, like *'my friend is having an asthma attack in the next room,'* I'd say something like *'I'm really sorry but you are going to have to leave.'*

Not only are clients accepted or rejected, but sex workers routinely decide which services they are willing to provide to certain clients. A client that might otherwise be rejected might be provided with a "limited service." Aija suggests that many sex workers come up with a variety of "excuses" as to why they might not perform certain sexual activities on clients, partly not to hurt their feelings and partly as part of their business strategy. Several clients complain on escort websites message boards and on the review sections, that some sex workers not are providing services that they advertise. However as Aija suggests, usually they have a reason for this:

guys complain about girls offering their services [clients complaining on message boards and review sections], but they doesn't do it, because if girls don't kiss, it means you have smelly breath, girls don't give you oral without condom, it may mean that its not as clean as we want it, if girls don't want sex, they say *'its too big'* you know sometimes people they come to me and I ask them *'would you like to take a shower'*, they just *'oh no, no I just had one an hour ago.'* We make excuses, not the real reasons, but we have reasons.

Aija has a rather unorthodox way of treating clients she finds unattractive by injecting some humour into the interaction:

sometimes they is like *'oh please I'm going to pay you a hundred euro, so please piss on me'* and I'm thinking, *'Jesus he's so ugly I not only gonna piss on him, and I'm gonna shit on him too, for free.'*

One of the most frequent complaints the women reported were clients who were dirty and smelly. For both escorts and street-based women, this was one of their main complaints. The message boards contain frequent discussions between clients and sex workers on smelly clients. Mandy, who has been homeless and a heroin user for most of her adult life describes some of her clients:

yeah most of them are alright but you can get a few of them that are like dirty scumbags you know, some of the guys up there are animals and scruffy bastards as well. The bleedin' smell of them and all. Sometimes it's horrible going off with a client and they'd be dirty filthy fuckers and you've to go off and do your business with them and they're manky. They don't even wash themselves, you're thinking you filthy fuckers like, they could at least wash themselves before being with a girl like. Like when I was on the streets [homeless] I'd make sure I'd go have a shower, even if I had to go to the swimming pool like I'd go swimming and go into the changing rooms and have a shower and that, I wouldn't care like you know, often I've gone into Heuston Station and had a body wash in the toilet and wash me hair under the sink I wouldn't give a fuck like you know, like you know, sometimes I'd take me underwear off and have to wash them in the sink and all. In Heuston Station, I don't care like as long as I'm clean like, I wouldn't care.

For escorts this was relatively easy situation to remedy due to their indoor locations, as most seem to offer their clients showers before they engage in any sexual activity. Part of this indicates how sex worker manage and control encounters with clients, and are creative in their solutions to maintain the relationship and not lose the client. Aija finds it difficult to have sex with clients who are dirty and smelly and routinely rejects clients who are dirty:

Actually do you know what I find? I find Irish guys dirty, like I meet different nationalities, even black people are cleaner than Irish guys, I'm not talking about guys who are older maybe forty five with a wife, they are always clean, but maybe twenty-five, twenty six twenty, seven, they even smell, it's disgusting. You know sometimes when you get in a taxi you can feel the smell. And that disgusts me; you know it really disgusts me. And you know sometimes I meet clients and this, is the first time and I feel like he is dirty or smelly or something I never, ever meet him again.

Like other escorts mentioned, Aija manages the encounter by making showering for clients, part of the sexual script. However, sometimes she finds it difficult to suggest that someone might need to wash themselves for fear of hurting their feelings, which might end up in a bad review and effect potential clients reading the review. So a business decision Aija made was to incorporate a “showering routine” into client’s sexual script, rather than reject clients (and any potential clients that might read a negative review) because she felt they were dirty. She describes how she incorporates a shower into part of her service. Here she talks about how she manages this initial phase of the encounter:

I usually say ‘*any shower required?*’ And if he says no ‘*I’m ok*’ and then I start to undress him and I say ‘*maybe its better you take shower, or just leave*’ but you know sometimes when you’re planning like, what I put on the message boards like what to do with those guys, some of the girls say ‘*oh why don’t you tell them straight away?*’ But it’s not very easy to tell them because you know some people take it very personally, you know, no I wouldn’t I would never ever say that ‘*you are smelly*’, I would say ‘*oh maybe you’d better take shower*’ or ‘*I would prefer if you would take shower*’ and then they take it personally they start to say some rude things or something, but then they can write bad reviews’ they can put up bad comments about you and everything, because they can register as new user on the message board, and you will never know who they are. So I try to say to them ‘*oh I like guys who are fresh*’ so then they take a shower.

How you experience and practice selling sex largely depends on your subject position within the industry, and the power or control you have over the entire interaction. This extends to not only where and how you sell sex, as I discussed in previous chapters, but to whom you sell sex. This includes the pool of clients available to you, as well as your ability to attract clients from this pool and ultimately how you select and reject clients. The better position you occupy in the market the more control you have, and means you have a better choice of client, you are also in a better position to negotiate with clients, as well as the power and the means to reject clients. Obviously there are situations where you may be least able to negotiate and accept clients, or provide services you would normally not. For instance if you are homeless and living in a hostel and are trying to make enough money to score enough drugs to stop you being sick, or you were out working to feed children that

were home alone, and at the same time avoid the Gardaí and protestors and get back to your hostel before curfew, your choices are far more limited. At the lower end of the market where you are least able to negotiate, then your choices are much more limited, especially if you really need money to put food on the table or are desperate for a fix. This has an obvious effect of the amount of risk you may be exposed to, including the type of clients you sell services to, the types of services / sexual acts you sell, and the amount of risk involved in selling these acts, such as suspending condom use. Also the weather is a factor in not wanting to stay out too long, especially in the depths of winter when the wind the cold and the rain became unbearable. Also if it was a slow night, and with not many clients about, women might accept clients that would usually reject. This may be as a result of increased Garda presence in the area, or towards then end of the month before clients get paid, or during Christmas when many clients are with their families. I talk about this in more detail in the chapter on risk. Similarly with escorts, if they are finding it hard to attract clients they might drop their prices or offer “special offers,” or see clients they might in other circumstances reject. For instance Marie, who comes to Ireland average once a month, has an idea of how much money ideally she would like to take home with her, so has a figure in her head of how many clients she needs to see to make this amount of money, so often the choice of clients as well as services offered comes secondary to the chance of making money. I talk about this later in this chapter when I discuss how women attract clients.

The client assessment allows women to categorize clients. Women seem to distinguish between different types of clients, from clients they would rather avoid and would only take on if they really needed the money or there was no one else available, to clients they liked, or clients they just tolerated. Testimonies from the women I met suggest that this includes the majority of their encounters and their regular clients. Reasons as to why women prefer a certain type of clients are tied up with issues of risk, maximizing their income including clients ability to pay, safety, feeling comfortable, connecting with clients in terms of common interests and personality. This was especially true with regular clients as women wanted to prolong ongoing relationships with regular clients as part of their economic strategy and their emotional wellbeing. Being involved employing several strategies

including flirting (sometimes through phone or text), suspension of condom use, reduced prices, and making them feel important.

Types of Clients

Most of the women reported preferring “regular” clients. Whilst there was some disagreement on what exactly constitutes a regular client; usually it meant a client who preferentially chose the same sex workers to meet frequently over an extended period of time. Some sex workers report seeing the same regular clients for months or even years. For others they might see a client regularly for months and then they disappear. Whilst there did not seem to be a consensus on what constituted a regular client, many women felt having a few regulars meant more stability and greater security. Several women offer suggestions as to the definition of a regular client. Liz says:

Maybe twice a week and he is coming all the time, so he’s a regular. So if you come to me maybe once a month and that’s it, maybe I remember him, maybe I won’t, but he won’t be a regular.

For Susie a street-based sex worker, a regular client was one that requested her as opposed to anyone else out working, as she explains:

a regular basically is, he’d just come up and he’d ask for you, like you might be out one night, and I might not be, and they come up to you and say ‘*is Susie here?*’ and you’d say ‘*no*’ and they’d drive off, that’s your regular, your regular doesn’t want to with anybody but you. And if you’re not out for three weeks, then he might go with someone else, but it is usually that they’ve been looking for you, you’re out and you know there’ve been looking for you because you could be off on a job, and you’d say to me ‘*such and such a bloke was after been looking for you*’ and they come around say three times and then after that you know they’re looking for you.

For Aija who works from the Internet one of her regular clients makes bookings in advance:

maybe a couple of weeks because you know there are some guys, I have a guy who was booking me for maybe each Sunday, I think it was three o

clock, I can't remember anymore I'm not meeting him anymore, he was booking me each Sunday at three o'clock and I knew that he was going to do this all the time so he was a regular. I have some guys who are coming maybe three times a week.

There are different norms and routine practices when it comes to regular clients. Sex workers seem to invest time and effort to maintain these relationships. It might mean suspending condom usage, offering reduced prices, or going to a regular client's house - something they would not do with a new client. For example when Liana sees a client first she would always use condoms, but over time she would usually suspend condom use for oral and sometimes vaginal sex with a regular client, if it meant they client would remain a regular client. The women preferred regular clients for several reasons including feeling safer, feeling more comfortable with someone you know and knowing how the interaction is likely to pan out. Over time as they got to become more intimate with regular clients, they came to trust them more. Sally constantly worries about being murdered or raped and is relieved to have several regular clients:

The fear is the worst, the fear of being raped or attacked, every time you get into a car, every time, every time I get into a car I think, is this me last one? Will I see me kids again? It's great when you get a regular coz you know he's alright.

None of the women I met were attacked by regular clients. Similarly one of Jane's regular clients Harry, who she has been seeing for the past six months contacts her one every ten days or so:

He rings me, picks me up and brings me off, probably to his house or sometimes to a B&B, that way it's much safer for me, I know him, and he knows me and that's good enough for us.

Jane also highlights what many of the women with regular client felt, the issue of safety was hugely important, but so the familiarity of knowing someone sexually and even emotionally, made the commercial transaction seem easier. To quote Aija, being with a regular client "is almost like normal." Together with the additional stability the regular income a regular client meant, were the key reasons for

preferring regular clients. For many it was a client they saw more than once and started to see frequently or men they saw often and built up a more intimate relationship with. Many women felt that regular clients were “safer” and less likely to attack them or try and rob them. Sex workers worry constantly about being attacked or murdered and being with a regular client allowed them to relax a little, as Louise says, “You get to know what to expect from them.” Also many reported feeling more comfortable having sex with someone they are more familiar with and know what they like sexually. For many women being able to develop a relationship with clients is important and many highlight being able to share similar interests or interesting conversations with clients makes their job more enjoyable. Aija who is quite mature for her age prefers older clients:

not all like I never like young guys maybe twenty or something I never like them, because they are immature. I like older guys because they are thinking about things and they are more clever more intelligent and they know more about things. I’m not talking just about sex, like about everything, life. Maybe because I’m mature myself, I’m twenty-one now!

Liana, who is in her late twenties, also has a preference for older men, as she enjoys her conversations with them, and finds the interaction more pleasant if they have common interests:

I don’t respect someone young, I respect someone older, say 35 or 36, and its fine because they have their own problems, I don’t like those young guys who don’t know themselves and what they want.

Many sex workers reported feelings of increased intimacy and trust as well as security with regular clients, which some felt mirrored their non-commercial relationships. This often meant a blurring of boundaries between their work and their private lives, which may mean a change in practice, such as suspending condom use in commercial relationships. The evidence suggests that most sex workers use condoms for work and suspend condom use in their private relationships, thus the blurring of boundaries between private and public made such decisions more difficult (Barnard, 1993; Day *et al*, 1993; McKeganey *et al*, 1992). Also as they became more familiar with regular clients, the need to negotiate prices and services

expected or provided were unnecessary, though this was not usually explicitly stated, it just happened slowly. For Liz a regular client meant more of an emotional investment:

yeah you get more personal, you know some of them are lovely people actually most of them are lovely people and very gentle too, very nice, I have to say. Actually I now have a lovely one from Laois, he comes up from Laois, he just texts me, like the last time he drove up, I went back with him, so he drove up an hour and a half, he picked me up, we drove down an hour and a half, did the business, then he drove me back up another hour and a half and then he drove home. It's a lot of time, maybe I should have got more money off him but I felt sorry for him, like all that driving and only ten minutes in his house.

The women seemed to build relationships with regular clients with some seeing the same regulars for years. They may have a few regulars on the go at the same time. Trust issues, also the regular income made planning easier. Laura has several regular clients:

I see a lot of regulars, a lot I mean a lot, which I love. I mean they are really nice and we all get on really well, and then every now and then I see a new one who becomes a regular.

For Jane a regular client was someone who would:

Treat me like a friend a friend we'd talk away, he'd tell me about his life and I'd tell him about my life.

Sanders suggests that men become regular clients for the same reasons they are attracted to long-term conventional relationships. However this does not appear to be true for men who engage with the sex industry regularly, but do not see the same worker regularly. They seem to adopt different sexual scripts. The role of communication courtship rituals, sexual familiarity, the desire for mutual satisfaction and the development of friendship and emotional connections were important for regular clients.

Regular clients for some workers meant a bit more stability in their lives. For instance Louise liked the security of knowing that one of her regular clients would provide her with a regular income, and so she could plan her life better:

Yeah I have Jim on a Sunday night, yeah a regular for the last year, and I know that he'll ring Sunday or Monday yeah he's nice, and you're guaranteed that for your shopping or whatever.

Having several regular clients means Sylvia does not have to spend the night working on the street, which she hates, and she can work from her phone:

Well a punter is a guy you'd get one night, but when they become regular they are a client like, I have seven clients, which is great they can call me and it means I don't have to go out every night [solicit].

Similarly Louise has a several regular clients on the go and some top up the amount of money she asks for. One of her regular clients Tom meets her during the week to give her extra money:

they'd bring me off, like most of them bring you to B&Bs, and high hotels and because I only ask for 80, they throw you another hundred or something, coz they think that's cheap for some reason, like I have a regular right and of a Thursday night he rings me, I meet him and we go off and he brings me off to a hotel, the Four Seasons and I do the business with him and he gives me 200 euro and he gives me €20 for a taxi back, right, and then Sunday evening he rings me and I meet him and he gives me a hundred euro just to get me by until the next time I see him.

Many booked B&B and stayed over night with regulars or on some cases went back to their houses. For women who were homeless, regular clients booking them for an entire night meant they would have somewhere to stay. For Lorraine, a regular client means a warm bed for the night. I originally met Lorraine in the women's prison, but since leaving prison has been homeless, staying in hostels on the northside of the city, depending in where the night-bus would drop her off. If the bus was full, she would sleep rough in an abandoned building near the Army Barracks. In the morning, she gets kicked out of the hostel and spends the day hanging out on the

boardwalk drinking vodka and then heads up to Benburb Street to work. She had two regulars, but since being in prison for 8 months lost contact with them and has now a client she has been seeing on and off for the last month:

It's the fucking cold, some night are fine but some nights hail rain or snow I'm out there I'm standing out in the fucking snow, I have no choice, it can get pretty cold out there you know...I get colds a lot, I've had pneumonia a few times from standing out in the cold, and like me having HIV me immune system is shot to pieces...

Regular clients often seem to get involved in non-work aspects of sex workers lives, such as offering financial advice or writing fake references, and providing other documentation sex workers are unable to obtain due to their occupation. One of Aija's regular clients even helped her with her mortgage application by providing fake job references for her. Aija had already a substantial deposit of €48,000 but unable to admit her source of income to the bank, needed documentation to back up her application.

Even though Marie is relatively new to Ireland, she is starting to build up a portfolio of regular clients:

Marie well there's a lot of new ones, but I also have a lot of regulars, you know what I mean, I mean I know a lot of people here now and I've got, I ask for reviews when people leave, I ask them to write reviews and I get a lot of bookings from those really. They'll say I read you're reviews, they're very impressive and I say well of you're impressed you leave one. And I understand why they don't, because they've got wives, and families.

Laura has several regular clients, but quite a close relationship with one in particular Pat, a 60-year-old widower, who lives alone:

Well I've got a few that would sit and chat, we both know they are coming to me for a reason, but sometime they like a coffee and a chat afterwards, I think they like to be able to talk to somebody about things, actually I have the most wonderful gentleman, he only lives up the road, and if I'm ever away I'll bring him back a little bottle or something.

For Laura having a regular client makes her feel more comfortable and she enjoys the relationship, but whilst it may mirror a non-commercial relationship, she cannot escape the commercial element, as she describes:

However Laura says it still does not make it normal, like it feels kinda normal, but we both know what we're there for.

Maintaining Boundaries / Blurred Boundaries

On the whole sex workers seem to keep their working and private lives separate and they implement several strategies as they try to avoid any leakage or contamination from the separate spheres of their lives (I mention this more in the risk chapter). Strategies include adopting a “working” name, such as Susie becomes “Lucy” when she goes out working, using different brand of condoms for commercial relationships such as Aija who uses a different brand of condoms with her boyfriend and her clients, using condoms only for commercial relationships and in their private lives, wearing particular clothing just for work, such as Jane who has clothes she keeps for work only, not kissing or offering GFE, like Martina who avoids regular clients as she does “not want to get too involved with their lives.” Other strategies include working from a separate apartment such as Laura, Liana and Aija, working away from home such as travelling to Dublin from the UK like Rosa, or from down the country to work in Dublin like Mandy, who has never sold sex in her hometown of Limerick. However despite the obvious physical connection with clients, some sex workers report feeling an emotional connection with some clients. However when they become emotionally connected with clients and as boundaries become more blurred this can lead to feelings of confusion and anxiety, both for clients and sex workers themselves. Laura explains:

sometimes you like the guy and you fancy him, and you might even love him, and maybe you'd like more that a customer type relationship with him, but it's not easy to say that, to him like, like how does he know the difference between me as a person and me as the seller of a service. It can be confusing, like some guys think they are only buying the sex and the rest, like the friendship the emotional and physical bonds you form are genuine, and mostly they are not, they are fabricated, but sometimes you do genuinely like the guy and want a relationship with him and

what you have with him is genuine on your part, but you don't know for certain if he thinks this is all part of the service. I've fallen in love with clients, have my heart broken by clients, but I'm sure the same is true for clients, they don't know where me as a private person ends and me as a seller of a service starts.

Some women end up having personal relationships with regular clients and other end up terminating relationships with regulars, when clients fall in love with them and feelings are not reciprocated. One of Aija regular clients fell in love with her and started to stalk her when she rebuffed his advances. Initially he began cyber-stalking her through the escort website she advertises on, and eventually started following her. This made Aija terrified, as she felt she had no where to turn when he was waiting outside her apartment when she came home one evening:

He was fucking stalker, he was stalker, I told him to fuck off, but he was there again. I got Gerry to sort him out, like I couldn't call the police and say hello I'm being stalking by one of my clients, could I?

This highlights an issue faced by many women selling sex: the difficulty of reporting crimes to the Gardaí, for fear of arrest and fear of disclosure of their job. As Aija operates outside the law, as an "outlaw" she is solely responsible for her own security. Like many other workers Aija found an alternative source of protection, her taxi driver Gerry.

Sex workers themselves also sometimes have difficulty in separating the two. Many became involved in personal relationships with their regular clients, such as Rosa who married one of her clients when in Spain:

And you have been with a couple, you have a relationship with a couple of your clients and do you think that sometimes it is just good to separate the two, like, you know people you would like a relationship with and you know people who are your clients.

Or Mandy says:

and then some of them like there's a few of us there with regular punters one or two regular punters, you'd be seeing for a while and you'd probably end up going out with one of them you know, they'd be that good to them like.

Again Louise is currently in relationship with a former client, for which she is now pregnant. She met her now boyfriend three years ago on Baggott Street, soon he became a regular client and then he asked her out on a date and they became girlfriend and boyfriend. She says that the transition for her boyfriend from client to boyfriend was difficult and describes her sense of alienation:

well the fella I'm with now, when we started off and I was with him a while, like he had stopped paying me a long time and he said the difference in you, its just, he said '*you were like a robot before,*' that is what you're like, you're getting paid, d'you know what I mean, to be a robot.

Similarly Liana has several times had personal relationships with clients:

I tell you, on the 3 times I have dated someone that I met on the business they all was single guys anyway that's because I should not met married guy and go off with because they only come for the service, yeah... whenever we become friends and I care about their complaints or whatever that I never fancy none as a passion that's happening because they insist let me take you out for dinner and they start to be so good for me, treat me as a lover, you know, yeah or as girlfriend, if they are unhappy in a relationship, its not because I looking for, they insist. It gets to the point where we start going out and for a few months we are in a relationship, you know...

Managing an Encounter

Rosa sees her relationships with clients as more than just sexual, but something that needs to be "managed" and talks about ongoing relationships with regular clients, who she sees as "friends" as they text and email back and forth. And many of their discussions are not always sexual, but every day stuff:

I really don't know, but I think they are quite polite, most of the people I have met are, they become client-friend, and not just a client, yeah, its

like they text me, they email me and I email back, and it like they phone me when he coming back, you know because the service I give is a lot different, people, some people in the sex industry they do it just for the money, again I talk about myself, I do it because I'm single, eh, because of course I need sex, and because I like the money, yeah? I put it all together, yeah, that's why I do it actually, yeah.

Sex workers employ a range of strategies to manage an encounter, which usually involves more than just the sale of sex. Again, Rosa who used to work as a travel agent likens the role of sex work to that of a sales agent in terms of “acting”:

a sales agent can be a prostitute because they need to be nice to get the commission and that's prostitution for me. It's the same.

But at the end of the day as Laura suggests most sex workers know that the relationships they have with clients, however real or genuine they may appear, are based on a commercial relationship rather than anything else:

you get on you really like them, and you discuss your whole lives with them, you can connect with them on so many levels but you know at the back of it all its not like a normal relationship, at the end of the day they are paying you, it's a relationship based on a commercial encounter, they are paying you to be you.

Whilst some women did not see sex work as a highly skilled occupation, others spoke of a skill-set that needed to be acquired, and one that improved over time with practice and experience. As well as having a wide repertoire of sexual skills, other skills that were seen as vital included being able to assess and categorize clients, being able to manage clients, and being able to attract the right types of clients.

Attracting Clients

Part of client management is attracting the types of clients you want to engage with. Many sex workers speak of emotional, mental as well as physical connections with their clients, especially regular ones. However, it must be remembered that sex workers also actively sell a range of emotions or perform emotional labour to attract clients. Like in other service industries, sex workers routinely cater for both the emotional and material / physical needs of their customers, as an integral part of the

exchange (Kelly, 2008). For Marie this means selling more than sex, but also the appearance of authenticity by selling her “feelings” and her “attention:”

you've got to think about the guy, obviously if he's paying for a service you've got to give him your attention, and you've got to give him feelings and everything else, it would be very unfair, if you were to think, my God what am I going to do to the house next, or whatever you know, whatever people think about.

This is known as GFE (Girl Friend Experience) within the industry. It is explicitly advertised as a commodity that can be bought, and is sold as part of what Sanders (2005) terms a “manufactured identity.” Many women refer to this aspect of their jobs as “acting,” and as I discuss in the next chapter, this is both a risk reducing strategy, in terms of their mental health and also an income generating strategy. Many sex workers are aware of what clients want and advertise their services accordingly, such as offering GFE as Marie suggests:

kissing is usually the girlfriend experience, a guy likes to be kissed, just lie next to him, be cuddling, comfort that's girlfriend experience, and a lot of guys like that, so that's what I sell.

Another strategy is to accentuate certain positive characteristics of their personality such as Marie advertising her “Englishness” because she knows that what her clients expect when they book an appointment with her:

A lot of Irish guys like English girls because we're fun and they can have a chat and a laugh, so on my website, I emphasize my Englishness, that's what I sell, my bubbly personality, you know.

Likewise, Aija is very attentive to giving clients what they want. Some girls she says are clock-watchers (this is one of the main complaints clients have, the feeling that they are being rushed, even though they might have only paid for a specific amount of time). She goes out of her way to be friendly and is critical of other escorts who are rude and abrasive to clients. Aija sells her “friendliness”:

You know there are some girls and they are horrible, some clients have complained to me that they say *'come in take a shower, take of your*

clothes, fuck me from behind' and then turf them out, clients don't like those escorts when they want girl friend experience.

The testimonies of sex workers I met reveal they are acutely aware that it is more than the sexual act they are selling. They are selling a package all of which can be requested in advance. Bernstein (2007) refers to this as "bounded authenticity," which she describes as the increasingly consumerist preference for a neatly bounded commodity over the messy diffuseness of non-market exchange, reflective of the growth of the service sector, market economy and a feature of late capitalism.

Sex workers know their market and strategize to attract and maintain relationships with clients, especially those that pay well and they feel comfortable with. In many respects this echoes management gurus advice, in that customer loyalty in mainstream service industries is all about "building relationships." This is more pronounced in the escort sector of the market as suggested by individual profile pages. Being successful in the sex industry means understanding the market they are operating in and becoming aware of the individual needs and desires that make up that market. Rosa listens to her clients as a form of market research and then provides services her clients want and most crucially are services they are willing to pay for:

Yeah actually it not just about the sex, its a lot more involved, that's the way I work, I hear what people have to say and give them what they want...

Sex workers actively attract clients, whether it is through what they wear or how they portray themselves online. They know their market and they strategize to attract the clients they want. They also know where they are in the food chain, or the sexual service hierarchy, such as Susie believing she is "too good-looking" for Benburb Street, or Rosa who knows due to her age she has to diversify from the mainstream sex industry and offer alternative services. Many of those working online attract more clients through positive reviews by other clients and many strive to give a good service and get positive reviews:

I think a lot of the Irish guys like the English girls, you know they say they like the way you talk and things, you know you can relate to them, where foreign girls they can't you know. So they're not getting the service that they want, you know, it's very cold and they don't know whether they've been pimped or anything like that, so English girls are very, very popular over here, you know, which is good.

Rosa is also aware of difference between her English and Irish clients and purposely emphasizes this aspect when designing her website:

Like for Irish guys they like the nurse, not the schoolgirl like English guys, the nurse is about caring. That's great, because they come here and you know straight away what they are looking for, and they don't look for affair, they look just for to feel a comfort moment now.

The advent of the online sex industry means women can promote themselves as never before and all the women I met have their own profile page on the escort website. As with other escorts their websites and reviews play a crucial role in attracting new clients. Many also have links to their other enterprises, such as Kate's porn business:

It's all about playing games. I try to cater for individual desires, give them what they want...

Part of this is the appearance of authenticity, genuineness or intimacy. Sex workers are not only selling sex but are selling a range of emotional attributes such as "Englishness", "friendliness", they are selling good personalities, providing comfort, listening, intimacy, and counselling. However, at the same time, some seem to have similar relationships with their clients and especially some regular ones, the relationship can be reciprocal, but they also attempt to sell authenticity and genuineness with varying degrees of success, as Rosa explains:

it's not just sex but that can cuddle and stroke their heads and give a nice massage and make them relax and they want to feel you want them as a man as a friend as a partner, you know, it's not just the sexual, I think they need a cuddling and a deep nice kiss, that sometimes they lose in their relationship.

Niche Markets and “Weird” Requests

Some women I met care for niche sectors of the sexual services market, such as Kate who only does domination, or Rosa, as she is now in her fifties has to diversify to attract clients. Kate has built a very successful business out of capturing the BDSM sector of the market. As well as sell sex both in London and Dublin, she also runs her own porn website, which members must pay a premium to be a member. Kate specializes in PSE (Porn Star Experience) and Domination. Even within this specialized sector of the market, client’s requests and services offered are multiple, as Kate suggests when describing some of her recent encounters with Dublin clients:

some people only want a blowjob, yesterday I had a guy who wanted my strap-on up his arse, you get all sorts of people you know, this guy he asked me if I would slap his arse with my bag, I mean he wanted to have sex, so we had sex as well, and I had another guy who booked me for four hours and he wanted me to smoke and blow smoke on his dick and give him a blowjob while I was doing it, so you get all sorts.

Similarly for Rosa, has also began to sell sex in a niche sector of the market and believes she sells more than sex, knows the market and knows that there is a premium on youth and beauty in the sex industry. Now in her fifties Rosa no longer meets the cultural ideas of beauty even though she has undergone several cosmetic surgical procedures in order to maintain her appearance and attract the clients she wants. To remain in the business, which she wants, Rosa knows has had to diversify her business and offer a different type of service. For Rosa this meant re-branding herself as something more than an escort, as she says of her new approach to her business “I provide a unique service, not just an escort”:

Yeah actually my website called ‘*sensual therapy*’ because it not just about the properly sex, its about, its a lot more involved, that’s the way I’m working, is hear what people have to say and I do have a lot of guys complain about their sexual life.

Sex work has allowed Rosa to educate her children in fee-paying schools in the UK and now both attend top universities. Most of her clients are now older men, but this suits her and she has marketed herself as a “sensual therapeutic” and has had to up skill to maintain competitiveness and has trained in deep tissue massage to enhance

her career prospects and maintain her client base. Rosa finds that by listening closer to her clients she can tailor her service towards their needs:

It all depends, some guys want a massage and ask can you do it properly like a therapeutic massage, you know, some guys even say like you know *'I've got terrible back ache from driving all day, can you help out?'* you know. It all depends, some guys they are kinks; they want something else like uniforms.

Many of the women I spoke to sell, what they refer to as “ordinary” sex, but also sell products to clients that they describe as kinky or involve dressing up. Some men come to sex workers with unusual requests, which are often met with derision and a topic of laughter amongst sex workers, when discussing clients’ proclivities amongst themselves. As Louise and Liz are good friends and Liz said when discussed odd requests with Louise “well afterwards we often get together and have a giggle about the requests.” Whilst many sex workers find some of the requests weird or even amusing, they still offer them as part of their commercial repertoire:

that’s weird when you think about it, but when you’re into this, you’re laughing, you’re pissing in yourself laughing. Sometimes they ask me if they can finish in my shoes, sometimes they ask me to spit on them, I just laugh.

Perhaps as some of the research amongst clients suggests, some of these services are not available in their private relationships. Aija told me about one of the most unusual requests she had from a new client:

Oh that’s so disgusting, one day this guy he came to me and he gave me two dishes, not like a plate but with a cover you know the dishes like you bring home Chinese food? A lunchbox! And he said to me, he gave me €300 and said *'I'm going to come back tomorrow at seven o'clock, I need your shit in that.'* He paid me for that €300 and he just came to me just collected it and bring away, and I said hey listen *'what are you going to do with my shit, like are you going to eat this, like put it on your stomach or on your bread?'* He said that *'it's like domination'* I don’t know what he means but he called himself *'The Toilet Slave Dave!'* That’s a nice name isn’t it? It’s not very hard to make your shit for someone else for €300.

Susie also had an experience with a client she found weird, but was willing to accommodate:

get the weirdoes that would pull up in their bras, really serious freaks like I'll never forget you know and he says I'll give you two hundred quid and I was waiting for some mad thing to come out and he says *'I just want you to play with my breasts'* and I said *'what'* and he had a bra on, silky one a g string and a pair of stockings! And I'm thinking *'this is easy'*

Laura has also had an encounter she found unusual:

oh plenty of weird stuff! They're all freaky, no but, they're harmless in a way, everybody has fantasies. Like a guy came into me today and all he wanted to do was to try on my knickers and he ended up sitting in two pairs of knickers and a pink dress. Yeah I had a pink dress and that's all he wanted, and that was it. I didn't really have to touch him or anything, which is great. That was a strange request!

Conclusion

Clients of sex workers are not a homogeneous group and are as varied as sex workers themselves. Sex workers routinely classify clients into categories, both as a safety and risk management strategy, but also as a business and money generating exercise. It is important that client's are "safe," but also that they have the ability or willingness to pay. Some clients are outright rejected, and sex workers adopt strategies to "manage" other clients, by offering limited services to them, by finding something nice about them or by making excuses for not want to see them again. When it comes to attracting clients most women, particularly those at the escort sector of the industry, know their local market; their clients and they work at giving them what they want. Increasingly this means specializing to cater for niche markets. For escorts within the virtual space of the internet, they are able reconstitute themselves with a specific identity, which allows them to direct their services towards their specific clients, thus facilitating the type of sex they are willing to sell. The next chapter will include a discussion of violence and risk, which unfortunately

is something all sex workers encounter and have to be wary of in their daily work lives.

Chapter 5: “A Dangerous Game” - Sex Work and Risk

Four and a half years ago, I was tied to a tree and raped in the local park, I've cigarette burns all over me chest, and all over me body, and me legs. And afterwards they pissed all over me, they tied me to a tree and burned me with cigarettes and raped me.

Mandy was brutally attacked as she was walking home to her homeless hostel after spending the night working on Benburb Street. She was approached by two men in a car, looking for directions. This story is particularly horrific and is best told in her own words, I had asked her where she had worked before she ended up in prison and she recounted this story vividly, she puts it thus:

it was a couple of black fellas, like they weren't me clients, I was working that night, I was on me way home, I was walking, I was only after getting dropped out, I was only after getting out of a car and when I was walking up the road. Two of them stopped and asked me was I doing business? And I said no, that I was going home, and then they asked me directions to the North Circular Road and I was talking to the fella that was asking, 'coz one of them was sitting in the front and one of them was sitting in the back, and the one that was sitting in the back, like he had the door opened, he was opening the door and he was asking me, and I went over, and I was kneeling down like, like you know on me hunkers and was like showing them what way to go, and, and, the other fella in the front got out and he was pulling his zip down, and, so I thought he was going over to the wall for a piss, and he came at the back of me and he gave me such a boot into me back and me whole body just went flying into the car and he just got me legs and thrown them in and I got a smack on me face and the back of me head and I was just knocked out. And when I woke up I was in the park, they knocked me unconscious like, and when I woke up and, then a taxi driver found me up there...

I asked her what happened:

yeah the taxi driver found me, because I was screaming and he was going to the toilet over the other side and hearing me screaming, he came over and he took his tracksuit bottoms off and top and gave it to me and all like, and brought me to a police station, like I had nothing on me, me whole body was covered in blood and all I came in here [to the Women's prison] a few days actually, three days after it happened to me, three nights after it happened to me because he brought me to the police station and the police brought me to the hospital, so they had me for three days

and when I got out of the hospital I had nowhere to go so, I was living on the street, and I would've gone back on the street so I handed meself in and I was locked up for a few more weeks then I just stayed in and tried to get me head together, but, em, when I came in here like me whole face like, and the scars now like, big scar there and I had lumps gone out of me shoulders and that they're fading now like, but they're there years like, but I don't think them scars will ever go they just fade, and that shit happens when you do things like that, but it's a dangerous game, like you don't know who you are getting into the car with...

At that stage in her story, Mandy leaned forward and pulled down her top and showed me the scars left on her shoulders, arms, and chest from the cigarettes burns, and the scars on her back from where she was tied to the tree and raped repeatedly by both men. There were at least twenty classic cigarette circle marks on her shoulders and several scars from jagged pieces of bark from the tree digging into her back, as she fought for her life. She said her legs and body bore the same scars. The men were eventually arrested but Mandy was homeless, and her drug use chaotic, and she was too traumatized to testify in court and just wanted the whole thing to go away:

I got one of them now and the Guards got one of them, but I never turned up in the court or anything for it, I wouldn't go and see the copper or anything, the place I was in at the time I moved out of there, and I was staying place to place, so he didn't know where to find me and couldn't get in touch with me, I haven't been in touch with him since. I just wanted to try and forget about it. It's hard to forget about sometimes but you just have to. Well it was four and a half years ago so it was. For a while I couldn't talk to anyone about it but now I can talk about it...

The attack made going back out to work very frightening for Mandy. Unfortunately it was not the first time she was attacked. Mandy, who has been working as a street-based sex worker for eight years, had been attacked several times before when working from Benburb Street:

well it wasn't me first time being attacked, I've been attacked a few times you know, but that was me first time anything like that ever happened to me, like grabbed, brought to a park, and getting tied to a tree, the fuckin' most serious thing that happened to me, and I thought I was dead that time. I would have been killed stone dead, only for the taxi man after doing what they done to me like. I know it's like how black people treat you anyway, like I'm not racist or anything, I was never racist, but ever since that happened you me I just can't really stand black

people anymore, you can get some young fella and some auld fellas that are very nice they wouldn't hurt a fly at all, and you get some of them up there [Benburb Street] that you think are alright and like you're talking to them for a few minutes, and they think they're great, and fuck it I wouldn't let them. They ask you to go back to the house with them and it'd be the sorriest thing you ever done, they sound real nice, then there's some of them are just scumbags, they're real nice until they get you into the car and bring you up the mountains, or wherever they'd bring you, and beat the hell out of you.

Many of the sex workers I met through my research, especially those based on the streets of the city, recounted similar stories of brutal rapes, assaults and robberies. Selling sexual services is a dangerous job, and research suggests that violence against sex workers is endemic (O'Neil, 1997; Brookes-Gordon, 2006). Sex work can be a site of fear violence, stigma, criminalization, disease, reduced civil liberties and human rights, and even death (O'Neil, 1997). Sex workers face multiple occupational health risks including drug use, disease, violence, discrimination, exploitation and criminalization, depending on the social location of the sex worker and the social context of where the work takes place (Rekart, 2005). Female sex workers have the highest murder rate of any set of women ever studied (Brewer *et al*, 2006) and sex worker murders have one of the lowest detection rates. Moreover, death by homicide is more common for sex workers, than women in any other occupation (Sanders *et al*, 2009). A study in the US indicated that women actively engaged in prostitution were almost 18 times more likely to be murdered, than women of similar age, and race, during the study interval (Potterat *et al*, 2004). It is estimated that in England and Wales between sixty to ninety sex workers have been murdered over the last ten years, with over a third of these cases remaining unsolved⁵⁷ (Canter *et al*, 2009). There are no figures available for Ireland.

Chapter Outline

This chapter is about two issues - the everyday risks women face when working, and their subsequent attempts at managing these risks. Sex workers confront a multitude

⁵⁷ It is suggested that this number may be underestimated as only those who are murdered whilst in the process of a commercial sexual exchange, are deemed to be "prostitutes" at the time of their murder (Canter *et al*, 2009)

of risks in their daily lives, and whilst it is impossible to enumerate all these risks in detail, I will instead focus on the most critical ones voiced by my respondents. Implicitly throughout this thesis, I have highlighted the enormity of the risks sex workers confront, but in this chapter, I will attempt to engage with what risk actually means to sex workers themselves. Firstly I will briefly discuss some of the literature on risk, followed by an overview of the social and environmental factors implicated in risk taking, as well as the everyday violence faced by sex workers. Secondly I will outline several of their risk management strategies in relation to client management, avoiding arrest, management of violence, as well as how they attempt to manage their emotional and sexual health against a backdrop of illegality and stigma.

Some Theoretical Approaches to Risk

The literature abounds with models for understanding risk and risk taking behaviour (Plumridge, 2001).⁵⁸ Currently a huge amount of expert knowledge has developed around the concept of “risk”, including risk analysis, risk assessment, risk communication and risk management. These are all now major areas of research and practice used to measure and control risk, particularly in areas such as medicine, the law, public health, finance business and industry. Modern conceptions of risk have less to do with scientific calculations, and risk now tends to mean “danger”, and high risk, “a lot of danger” (Douglas, 1992:24).

Lupton (1999) argues that the scientific literature often portrays lay people as responding unscientifically to risk, and using inferior ways of dealing with risk, such as relying on their intuition. The cognitive science approach, which is popular within the social sciences, mainly uses psychological models of human behaviour to indicate how people respond cognitively and behaviourally to risk. Understandings of risk are regarded as neutral, and different “ways of seeing” are not incorporated into many of these approaches. Other cognitive science researchers have sought to identify patterns in how lay people assess risk, some taking a psychometric perspective, by looking to measure and identify cognitive strategies or heuristics,

⁵⁸ For further discussion please see Douglas (1984); Beck (1992); Giddens (1990; 1991); Farmer (1994; 1999), amongst others.

used in lay person's assessments of risk. Some have created taxonomies of how risks are categorized and dealt with cognitively, believing that lay people consistently both overestimate, and underestimate risks, and experience difficulty when assessing risk using probability. In general, people seem more concerned about risks closer to them; risks that are rare but highly memorable feature more prominently than those that happen more often, and are less memorable. Psychometric risk analyses are based on a theory of rational behaviour and the notion of the "ideal rational investigator" and the "rational risk perceiving agent." "Risk avoidance" is seen as rational, whereas "risk seeking" is seen as irrational. The Health Belief Model, which is frequently used in health promotion and health education, is an example of this model (Lupton, 1999).

Douglas (1992) believes that cognitive science uses a very narrow view of rational action, and that anything outside this is seen as "irrational". So instead of a sociological, cultural, and ethical theory of human judgment, there is an unintended emphasis on perceptual pathology. Similarly, Lupton criticizes the cognitive science approach in that meanings and behaviours associated with risk are reduced to the individual level, and do not take into the "symbolic meanings created by the social world, that humans give to things and events". Perception is limited to the functional aspect of the brain, omitting how "cultural conceptual categories mediate judgement" (Lupton, 1999:23). Social constructionist approaches on the other hand, argue that a risk is not fully known outside a system of beliefs and moral positions; all knowledge about risk is connected and cannot be separated from its socio-cultural contexts. Risks are not static, but are constantly constructed and negotiated, as part of a network of social interaction and formation of meaning; constructions and understandings of risk are culturally and historically mediated. Experts' judgements of risk, or what is seen as "risky", are equally seen as being socially constructed and generated from a particular worldview.

In short, certain societies see certain behaviours and activities as more risky than others.⁵⁹ This awareness, says Lupton (1999) determines much of our life choices,

⁵⁹ According to Lupton (1999) six major types of risks predominate in western societies, namely, environmental, medical, lifestyle, interpersonal, economic and criminal risks.

such as how we live our every day lives, where we live, where we work etc. Risk selection and risk management are central to our individual and cultural identity. Interpretations of risk taking behaviours that may seem irrational to an outsider can only be understood with their own cultural context (Roche *et al*, 2005). High-risk sexual behaviour is often constructed as an individual choice, rather than being socially produced, as well as socially and culturally specific. Perceptions of risk, argues Rhodes (1997:216), are “socially organized in part by social norms and context, they are also socially calculated.” Behaviour is enabled by specific social circumstances - activities that some consider risky, may be seen as safe with another social context (Hansen *et al*, 2002). This is true of sex workers as it is for any other group in society, and like any other group in society, sex workers simultaneously occupy multiple subject positions. They are also mothers, sisters, students, nurses, entrepreneurs, amongst many other identities, who also face risks depending on their subject position at any given moment in time. For instance as a mother Susie may be worried about her child home alone, whilst she goes out working, as a drug user she is worried that she might not make enough to score enough drugs to stop her being sick, as a sex workers she may be worried that the client she has just got into a car with will murder, rob or rape her. Her risk of catching HIV from unprotected sex with a regular client may be very high in probability terms, yet she may not perceive of it as a risk, it may not be something she spends much time worrying about. It has to compete against an array of other risks, such as being raped, or murdered, or that her children are home alone, and risk for her, is not getting home as fast as she can.

Social and Environment Factors

Cusick (2006) suggests that how sex work is organized, determines whether there is harm, which makes sex workers more vulnerable, or allows them to benefit from sex work. As with other aspects of prostitution, and following Chapkis (1997) it is the social location of the sex worker within the industry that largely determines the working conditions of that sex worker. Therefore, as the market is highly segregated; different sectors of the market face different types of risks and operate within

different “riskscapes” or “risk environments.”⁶⁰ It is apparent that some sex work environments are more dangerous than others (Brooks-Gordon, 2006), and indoor sex work appears to be safer than outdoor sex work (Church *et al*, 2001; Kinnell, 2006).

The risks sex workers face must be situated within their risk environment, or the social world the sex worker operates in. Participants in my study articulated that the main risks they considered in relation to their work were violence (from clients, random strangers and partners) and fear of arrest. Secondary risks related to health in relation to drug use, sexual health worries, mental health and emotional well-being. Many attributed issues with their emotional well-being to the stigma associated with sex work, the stress of concealing their occupation from family and friends, as well as the constant worry for their safety. In many cases, the threat of disease was often low on their priority list, especially street-based workers, who spent more time worrying about being murdered, raped or arrested. It is not only the violence itself that is very difficult to cope with, but the constant threat of violence, the constant fear of being murdered, raped, robbed or arrested causes a huge amount of distress for sex workers. Over and over again, women told me that each time they get into a car or accept a new client, they fear for their lives, thinking that this might be their last client. Louise describes how she lives in constant fear that each night she works will be her last:

the worst is the fear, yeah the fear of being raped or attacked, it's constant like. You know, every time you get into a car, every time. Like when I got raped, it wasn't in a car, I was on foot, yeah, so every time I get into a car I think, is this me last one? Will I see my kids again? Now normally that's gone out of your head within a couple of seconds, by the person, 'coz you know they're alright.

⁶⁰ The “Risk Environment” comprises factors exogenic to the individual, and takes into account the type and level of environmental influence. Research into HIV preventions enumerates four types of environmental influence, including physical, economic, social and policy. It includes the micro-risk environment which focuses on personal choices as well as local community norms and practice and the macro-risk environment is concerned with structural factors such as the law, the military or economic conditions (Rhodes & Simic, 2005: 220).

Whilst almost all the encounters the women had with clients were non-violent in nature, many sex workers are on constant high alert for clients to turn violent, as Susie explains:

sometimes you'd get an in-between man, you think you'll never get away from him, when you're giving oral you're wondering am I going to get a smack of something you know. Or else they just treat you like you're dirt, you know *'you're getting paid, you'll do it'* you get that as well, nine times out of ten they're nice though.

Indeed, many of my respondents expect a certain amount of violence in their work, as they see it as an intrinsic part of the life associated with selling sexual services, and thus something that has to be “managed.” Indeed many of their stories suggested an acceptance and normalization of violence as part of “the game” and the life that entails. Martina a street-based sex worker articulates well the risks and dangers inherent in her everyday experience of sex work, she says:

It's a dangerous game, do you know what I mean? It is very, very dangerous. You don't know who you're dealing with, you don't know this, that, and the other, do you know what I mean? You could be murdered, you could be, and all that. It frightens me a lot, you know. I still take the risk though; do you know what I mean?

As Martina states, each time she gets into a car, she wonders if she will be raped or murdered. As well as the obvious horrific end to her life this might involve, it is also caught up with issues of stigma and shame. Many sex workers worry about the effect this might have on those they leave behind, their families and friends and especially their children, should they be murdered and their occupation revealed. Indeed this fear is not unfounded, reports of sex worker murders often make headline news, especially when they are murdered whilst at work, and even more so if they are murdered by a serial killer⁶¹. Both Honor Bright's and Belinda Pereira's deaths made headline news across the country, headlines that were not sympathetic to them - victims of symbolic violence, even in death. Testimonies from sex workers I

⁶¹ High profile sex worker serial killers include Jack the Ripper, Peter Sutcliffe dubbed the “Yorkshire Ripper” and more recently Steve Wright dubbed the “Suffolk strangler” in the UK, Robert Pickton in Canada, or Gary Ridgway dubbed the “The Green River Killer” in the US, made headline news across the world. Not only were the lives of the murder victims open for public dissection, but also those of their loved ones.

interviewed also suggested that they often blame themselves for being attacked. For instance if they think they deviated from their usual behaviour, and went with a client they would normally refuse, or because they became complacent and did not conduct a thorough safety check of their client or the immediate environment, or they were too greedy for money, or were too rushed for fear of arrest, or the cold on the street. Many felt that they were to blame, or in some way deserve the violence meted out to them, for not being careful, but also for working in the industry itself.

Hierarchies of Risk

A hierarchy of risks frame the lives of these women. Sanders (2004:557) suggests that using a “continuum of risk” to understand how sex workers perceive occupational hazards in prostitution allows further understanding into the nature of risk in prostitution, as well as an insight into sex workers routines and organizational features of the sex industry. Epele (2002:35) suggests that within sex work, risk of HIV has to compete against a whole host of other risks, or “immediate risk” as described by Rhodes (1997), such as drug dependence, threat of rape or murder, which often take precedence, pushing disease into secondary place. There is a critical moment when it becomes relevant / significant such as Louise describes the excerpt above, but otherwise relegated to further down the hierarchy. Within the social world of sex work, taking part in risky sexual activity can be seen as rational, for instance sex workers are well informed of the risks of unprotected sex, but might see risky sex as a reasonable gamble within this context.

The vast majority of women I interviewed, who were both drug using and street-based, had been the victim of some sort of an attack (or multiple attacks) at some point in their careers. Those working at the street-based sector of the market were not only at risk of much more violence, but more intense levels of violence. Street-based sex workers face different risks than those working indoors as escorts. Martina’s reality, as a drug-using street-based sex worker is a world away from that faced by Marie, Rosa or Aija working at the higher end of the sexual services market. The risks you face and how you deal with them are again very much dependent on your

subject position, in relation to how much power or control you have over your working environment and working conditions.

As I mentioned in a previous chapter sex workers make strategic decisions about where they work, and have developed strategies to attract clients, as well as criteria for selection and rejection of clients and also how they categorize clients or potential clients. As many women enter the sex industry due to economic need, the need to feed their child and pay bills takes precedence over other risks. In this context, risk of HIV is low down on their priority list. Similarly, those addicted to drugs, and need a fix to ward off being sick, HIV or even risk of death is low down their priority lists. In the next section I will outline risk as articulated by my informants.

Risk of Violence

Violence is endemic in street level prostitution, and yet is often ignored both by the wider public and academics alike (Church *et al*, 2001). Sex workers are subjected to physical, sexual and verbal abuse (Canter *et al*, 2009; Boyton, 2001). Street-based sex workers are particularly at risk, however according to existing literature, few sex workers leave the streets because of violence (Dalla, 2002). In most cases they put up with it or expect it as part of their job. Whilst some studies suggest that sex workers are most at risk from their clients (Kinnell, 2001; Farley & Barkan, 1998), Day & Ward (2001) however caution against assuming that sex workers are only at risk from their clients, but may also be at risk of different kinds of violence from the State, their families, strangers and their clients. Whilst street-based sex workers bear the brunt of the violence leveled at sex workers, indoor workers can also be at risk, particularly if they work alone. The violence experienced by sex workers is compounded by the laws that govern sex work, in that sex workers are reluctant to report attacks to the police, for fear of not being believed, having to disclose the nature of their work to officers, and for any other reason they may be wanted by the police, such as outstanding warrants. A study in Glasgow, indicated only 34% of sex workers who experienced violence by clients reported to police (Church *et al*, 2001). Similarly, a study in Dublin revealed that 69% of those interviewed would not report violence to police (O'Connor, 1994).

Testimonies from my informants reveal a litany of physical, sexual and verbal abuse and violence perpetrated by clients, those posing as clients, other girls, their partners and passers by. Sex workers reported being raped, robbed, scratched, hit, stabbed, tortured, kidnapped, kicked, punched, bitten, burnt with cigarettes, pissed on, had piss thrown on them, had missiles (stones, rocks, rubbish) thrown at them and set fire to. Some faced attempted murder and near death experiences, including attempted smothering or strangulation, one woman was thrown into the freezing canal in the depths of winter, others had bones broken, lacerations, been knocked unconscious, their teeth knocked out, their hair pulled out and were restrained against their will. As the literature suggests women working on the street reported a more continuous relationship with violence, whereas the women I spoke to working as escorts, especially those working with another girl, reports of violence was sporadic and a rare event.

Here are some of the incidents reported to me, these are sample instances, and there are many more stories.

A client raped Lorraine when she went back to his house in Rathmines. Her attack was so vicious she required suturing to her vagina and spent two days in hospital. She describes her attack:

he raped me for seven and a half hours, he tried to smother me with a cream coat, but I wriggled my way out of it, and he went out to get a big knife and his friend, and he was hovering, and he started saying something, and they were talking all foreign, so he ran at his friend with the knife and I ran out the door in me nip, me nude, and I ran out in the middle of the road in front of a car, two cars stopped and there was a woman working in Temple Street Hospital, a doctor and she took a check blanket out of her car and she put it around me said that I wasn't leaving until the police came, and I told them what they looked like, and where they lived, and the police came and charged him, but all that happened is that he went back to his own country and he's never allowed in Ireland again. He didn't get any prison sentence or anything.

Jane is very safety conscious and had a bad experience with a new client a few years ago, and feels much safer going with regular clients. Indeed, as I mentioned in a

previous chapter, the vast majority of participants in my research reported significantly less violence from regular clients:

there's only one time I ever got afraid, I got into a car, it was lashing rain now and I was working on Benburb street, there was nothing happening and this car pulled in and even before I got in the car I got a sense, but because I was so cold and wet and I was strung out and I needed the money, so I get in the car and we drive up to the Phoenix Park and I never go to the Phoenix Park, 'coz I could smell whiskey off him and I got a bad vibe off him and I didn't want to answer, and I didn't want to get him into a bad humour and as soon as he pulled in, the first thing was he got his fist and lashed it back into me face, so I'd high heels on, so I put me boot through his window, his windscreen, so he kinda jumped out to look at his windscreen and I jumped out and I had big heels on and I ran, but didn't the two heels come off and I went rolling down a hill, so he came skidding down the hill after me and he was choking me and with that lights came on, and still to this day, I swear someone was looking down on me, do you know what lights they were? A police car, so the policeman got me to and I gave him an awful life now, they wanted me to charge him and all, but I didn't want to be involved in going through all that, you know, so they made him, so they searched his car, they took all his money out of his car, took every penny off him and gave it to me, they done him, because I was after smashing, his window, I'd shattered his windows, I was doing that to try and get out of the car, they were saying to me, if you're not going to do him, we have to do him on something, they done him on drink driving, they done him on everything, the smashed window, so the Guard dropped me down where the back of where I live, 'coz me heels were gone and he told me to stay out of the Phoenix Park.

Liz was physically assaulted and robbed a by client when she was working on Baggott Street:

so it was a hundred and 20 euro he was going me for oral, but I had to give him change, I had a good few hundreds, so he seen me money and then I did the business and then he grabbed me by the hair and did a few knees into me and robbed me bag, I was just standing there. But he didn't rape me but I had nine hundred, eight hundred euro, money from the night before that I didn't leave at home. But I was glad I wasn't raped you know, or worse.

Louise who was working with Liz that night, still feels guilty about the attack, as the client had approached her first, but she refused him as she "got a bad feeling about him." Louise had gone off with another client before Liz came back from her

previous client, so could not warn her about him. Many sex workers rely on their “gut” or “sixth sense” when it comes to assessing clients. Also they rely on other sex workers working in the area, to pass on information about “dodgy” clients.

Sally was almost smothered when she went back to a client’s house. Again many sex workers blame themselves for attacks, such as Sally who was angry with herself for going back to a client’s house, something she never does normally, but that night she really needed the money:

I went back to his house which is something that I never would have done, I never went back to peoples houses, it was just into the car he put he got me, I was naked I was in bed and were after having sex and I was getting up to get dressed and he grabbed me back down and sat on me they way he sat on me, me like that and me arms were like that [gesturing that she was effectively pinned down] and his genitals were right up into me neck and I couldn’t move, I got a fright and I started screaming and he put a pillow over me head and I couldn’t breathe and I was thinking Jesus he’s going to suffocate me to death and me kids and its going to be wrote up [in the newspapers] ‘*prostitute suffocated to death*’ and I was wriggling and the more I wriggled the more he pushed it down tighter. But even that experience didn’t stop me from, he was banging his knees like that behind me ears and me ears and all were black and blue the next day. I was in bits but that still didn’t stop me.

Liana was working from her apartment in Ranelagh when she was attacked by two men posing as clients, who robbed her and beat her up:

what the guy did, he come to the door of the apartment and when I opened it, he jammed it, dragged me in the apartment, took all the money, my watch, my rings and stuff and stuff like that, and took all my money and gave me some black eyes, and they left, like there was another one waiting when he got in there, I think he pepper sprayed me with pepper or something, so the other ones came in then, so I didn’t get a good sight of what they looked like.

Like many sex workers I met throughout my five years ethnographic research, Liana refused to report the incident to the Gardaí, as she was afraid of being arrested for selling sex. And like many foreign nationals working as sex workers in Dublin, she was worried she would be deported home to her own country, in this case Latvia, if her occupation was discovered.

Sex workers (like other women) are also at risk of violence within their own homes by their partners. Susie was attacked by her long-term partner Alan. After three years together and as their relationship began to disintegrate; he became more and more violent, with his alcohol fuelled rages lasting for hours. On one occasion, he knocked both her front teeth out and left her face badly bruised:

they were knocked out when I was about twenty, twenty-one, by me fella, me lovely fella, you know what I mean? One of these beautiful fellas that I was mad about you know what I mean?

Some sex workers reported violence perpetrated by fellow sex workers. Sometimes sex workers turn violent towards each other, especially when there is increased competition for clients or arguments over working patches. Although Martina works alone, she is familiar with some of the other girls working the same patch. She says that:

they're alright they are, some of them are nice, some of the girls like, if you're on their patch, or you're only new, there'd be killings over it, you know what I mean like, say if I was there and another girl came down and she was only a new comer, like I'd go mad because she's taking my patch and the punters have never seen this girl before and she only fresh started, you know what I mean, they'd go for her quicker than they'd go for me, you know what I mean because they know me so well like, she's only a fresh girl like, this is her first time working so they'd go for her, because she's never done it before you know what I mean?

Some nights are much quieter than others and if there are fewer clients around, sex workers get more desperate, especially if they need a fix or they need money for food. Lorraine was punched in the face one night, by another girl, when a client chose her over the other girl:

this guy I was with before went up to a girl and she was a travelling girl and he didn't want her and she was a pregnant girl and he didn't want to go with her and he asked me and I went with him and she turned around and gave me a box.

The girl told Lorraine to "fuck off and leave" so Lorraine went home and didn't work the footpath again.

Street-based sex workers are also at risk of verbal and physical abuse from passers by (Boyton, 2004). Martina was attacked when she refused to hand over her mobile phone when a group of passing teenagers ganged-up on her. They eventually got her phone and left her with bruises to her back and abdomen and cuts and grazes all over her hands and face. What upsets her most and why she was so reluctant to hand over the phone, was that she had photos of her two children in it, taken the last time she saw them on a supervised visit:

a few girls, and took my mobile and I got a hiding two weeks ago two or three weeks ago, because I wouldn't hand over my mobile, yeah it's what my babies were after getting it for me, I've two girls in foster care, and I wouldn't hand over my mobile, yeah they nearly killed me, battered me, yeah.

Similarly Susie was verbally abused by young men in a car, who circled around her several times when she was on Baggott Street. She describes her ordeal:

Yeah they were shouting at me, '*you fucking whore*,' '*you dirty bitch*' and they were laughing and all that, fuck I was terrified of them, they drove off then, but I was scared in case they'd come back like and do something worse to me, I can't even think about it.

Sex workers are at risk of high levels of physical violence as they go about their daily working lives. Many have come to accept that violence is an intrinsic part of their job working in the sex industry, and therefore something they must actively "manage" if they want to stay alive.

Managing Violence

Due to the illegalities of sex work, sex workers are seen as deviant and are therefore given less protection by the State, so sex workers must find alternative ways of protecting themselves from physical violence (Williamson & Folaron, 2001) and from arrest and harassment. Sex workers have adopted several strategies to manage the risk of violence in their everyday working lives. These include assessing potential clients, categorizing and discriminating between clients, managing the encounter itself, maintaining good relationships with regular clients, working with

other girls, exchanging information about “dodgy” clients, police presence etc with other girls, attempting to control their drug use, trusting their intuition, carrying a weapon, and working in a familiar environment / staying on familiar patches. Women conduct self-protection strategies on many levels, from trusting their gut to screening potential clients. Their main risk-reducing strategies include assessing clients, managing the encounter and working with other girls and for street-based women avoiding arrest. However, their attempts at risk management are severely curtailed by several factors, in particular the current legislation around prostitution in Ireland.

Factors affecting Risk Management Strategies

The legislation around sex work has a huge impact on how the sexual service market operates and on how individual sex workers experience selling sexual services. Many women feel that the current legal position has a detrimental effect on their health and well-being. Many of the risks associated with sex work can be attributed to the laws that govern the sale of sexual services, the social stigma attached to prostitution, and societal ambivalence to the welfare of sex workers. This often means that sex workers do not enjoy similar civil and human rights as the rest of the population.

However, their attempts to control their working environment and reduce risk are often compromised by a number of factors, predominantly aspects of the legislation that allows the Gardaí to constantly ask them to “move on” or arrest them for loitering or soliciting. Many women suggest that the laws governing prostitution is the single most relevant factor in relation to risk in sex work. For street-based women, the law results in two significant effects - an increased presence of police in their working area, and a consequential reduction in the number of available clients. This means that sex workers are placed at higher risk and more vulnerable for several reasons. Susie describes how the reduction in clients has meant women are forced to sell “riskier” sex:

or they're refusing to use condoms and a lot of the girls are going to because it's getting harder no, there isn't as many, there's a lot of police out on the street now and it's getting... There's not as many clients out

on the street as what there would have been and the ones that are out on the street are refusing to use condoms.

Firstly, because there is a smaller pool of potential clients, women have fewer options when it comes to choosing clients. This means that they may select clients they would normally reject, but have to take on, rather than lose the potential income. It also means that they are choosing more risky clients (clients who are not put off by the increased police presence), or more demanding clients, as Susie describes above, which makes the women more frightened and worried. Secondly, as they are under more pressure to pick clients quickly, and get off the street and into the clients car as fast as possible, to avoid arrest, they are not able to put their usual client assessment and selection process into practice, and may therefore make rash judgements. Thirdly, because there are fewer clients available, there is increased competition between sex workers in a particular location, so they may have to drop their prices to secure bookings, or offer services they normally would not, such as unprotected sex. Again, as there are fewer clients and prices have lowered, it means they have to stay out working for longer and at the same time see more clients, to get the amount of money they need. Also because of hassle from the police (and protestors), they are being pushed off their well-known patches, and into darker and potentially more dangerous locations, such as further down the quays and towards the Phoenix Park. This mean as well as being off their well-known patch, they are less likely to be near other girls, so are more isolated and alone and do not have the security of someone “watching their backs” - another of their risk reducing strategies. As well as this, because it is darker they find it more difficult to see the clients, or see inside their cars, so cannot conduct a thorough assessment of the client or the environment.

For escorts the current legislation also causes them anxiety and places them at higher risk. Many escorts report feeling safer when working in pairs. However, this risk reducing strategy also puts them at increased risk of arrest, should their apartment be raided by the police, as they can be charged with running a brothel under the current legislation. Also they are more likely to arouse suspicion and be reported by neighbours, for operating a brothel, if more than one girl is working in an apartment, due to the increased volume of clients visiting. One of the risks women encounter at

this end of the market is in relation to money, or more precisely where to hide it from the gaze of the State. Whilst street-based sex workers fear being robbed or having their money stolen and many have secret hiding places in and around their patches – the vast sums of money earned by escort’s causes them huge concern both in relation to their personal safety and in relation to their tax affairs. Marie worries about being broken into and robbed, she also worries about paying tax and being caught for tax evasion. Likewise, Aija is afraid to send too much money home by Western Union, or to keep it in her Irish bank account, in case the Revenue investigates her. Instead, she hides it in her apartment and then brings it back home, where she lodges it into her own account in Riga. She makes frequent flights home to Riga and carries the money on her person, but limits her money moves to €10,000. Though has on occasion, when she was busy at work and unable to make frequent visits home has had up to €40,000 on her person, hidden in a book with the pages cut out.

Assessing Potential Clients

Many women strongly believe that being able to properly assess potential clients is key to their safety. This is their primary means of self-protection and if this cannot be done, for whatever reason, then many other of their risk reducing strategies are made redundant. Most prefer to have a pool of regular clients, from which they can draw from, but for reasons I mentioned previously this is not always possible and they must seek new clients. One of the most important factors involved in assessing clients includes trusting their intuition. This is often the visceral reaction described by many women as a “gut” reaction, “a feeling,” a sense of danger or risk, when approached by a potential client, either on the street for street-based workers or via phone or email for escorts. Women in the industry describe over and over again how someone didn’t “feel” right, and many recount tales of attack when they did not “trust their gut” or assess clients thoroughly.

Also as the practice of sex work must be learned through experience, how to negotiate and select clients is something that sex workers learn over time. The length of time a woman has spent in prostitution also impacts on risk management. As

women move from “novice” to “expert” sex workers, they learn to trust their instincts. They build up a store of tacit knowledge in client assessment and selection, from years of experience with clients. Martina describes her experiences:

Martina I don't know how to describe it, well like at first when I was doing it, at first like I was asking them so many questions like have you got this and that you haven't got anything have you? and that was grand I'd say no, no, but take a thick penknife with me, now I haven't used it, but I will if anything did ever happen.

Managing the Encounter

Many women I spoke with attempt to control the interaction with clients or as Whittaker & Hart (1996) refer to it as “handling customers,” as a way of staying safe. Assuming the sex worker is happy with her client selection then “managing the encounter” usually means negotiating prices before any service takes place. This usually involves the sex worker informing the client how much each service will be, or for escorts, how much each hour costs, rather than an actual negotiation between the clients and escort, as many sex workers working in a particular place price fix. Money is then usually exchanged before any activity takes place. Sex workers also attempt to manage the immediate environment, such as where they sell sex and also the houses they go, to or the cars they get into. Susie always checks the back of a car or van before getting into to, both to look for someone else who may be hidden in the back, or for concealed weapons:

some of them may ask you to come home with them, and you don't you know what I mean, and like say if a van pulled up like say a black van or something, or say a white van and they'd pull up and they say are asking you “are you getting in?” you'd ask them first to open the back door like you know, to make sure there's no one hiding in it, so they don't mug you or take you, or rape you, or the only thing you have to watch as well like, I've seen a girl getting dragged in and then she got bet. I don't know what she had done, there must have been a reason for it.

Part of managing the encounter is deciding where to sell sex. Some street-based women prefer to work on Benburb Street as they are nearer home (often hostels) and are more familiar with the physical landscape. However due to protestors and an

increased police presence, many former Benburb Street workers have now moved over to Baggott Street. This has caused some conflict with women who have worked on their patches in Baggott Street for years, as they now have to compete with an influx of new workers who may not be familiar with established norms of working that side of the Liffey. So as well as a higher number of sex workers on the street, often there is conflict over prices and services these new women are willing to provide.

For escorts managing the encounter may mean deciding not do outcalls, and only seeing clients in their own homes, or their apartments they rent for work such as Marie and Aija. Laura only does incalls and sees clients, mostly regulars, in an apartment she rents several miles from where she lives:

I don't like outcalls. I don't know. You see I would never go to somebody's house. Because I would feel I would be scared, you don't know what they might do to you. Yeah I mean you just don't know in people's houses if they got cameras hidden or things like that, you just don't know what to expect.

For some sex workers appearing confident and in control is a way of reducing risk. For Kate managing the encounter is acting as if you are "in charge" and appearing confident:

It is the way you come across when they come in, you can control you say to the guy to '*go have a shower,*' he goes and has a shower and they you say for him to '*lie down on the bed*' I mean all the services are listed on the site, they know what they will get, most guys they don't want anything extreme anyway, you know some of guys are nervous and so you would actually have to lead them, so you ask if they'd like to do this or that, so you are actually feeding them the words, do you know what I mean?

Martina says something similar:

em...I suppose if you were to sit down the only way I can explain it to you is sit down and watch a horror film and you'd know its scary...and the first time you watch it you're scared out of your mind, and the next time you watch it you're fine, because you know...you know what to

expect, but then the third time you watch it, it might still scare you, but then the fourth time you watch it, you know exactly what to expect, although inside you're still frightened, you don't show it.

Liz suggests the same approach, such as appearing in control and attempting to direct the encounter:

Oh yeah, the thought of it, yeah I can't wait til this is over, but I try not to let them know I'm afraid.

Working with Other Girls

One of the many ways women try to make their working lives safer is to work with another girl, sometimes a close friend, or otherwise other girls working in the area. Some street-based sex workers sometimes offer drugs to non-sex workers to "watch their backs." Louise and Liz have been friends for many years and usually work together and look out for each other, as Liz describes:

we'd always phone like, if she goes in a car I'd phone or if I go she'd phone me, sometimes I'd be half way through, Jesus she's fucking ringing he's just about to come, yeah. Or you'd shout, she'd be getting in a car, and I'd shout '*I have it Lou*' or something like that, '*I have the reg,*' '*I have your reg and me friend knows*' and I'd jump in the car and I'd say '*she's mad, don't mind her,*' letting him know she knows, d'you know what I mean?

Many of the workers would know each other from years of working in the same place, so would look out for each other. Even knowing that someone might hear you scream is enough to make Lorraine feel safer:

I'd be wary of them [clients] alright, but I'd always be somewhere that I'd know that there would be people and if I let a scream someone would come, you know the way, and the girls would know what lane I'd be in.

Sylvia doesn't go down with her friends, just girls she only associates with due to sex work:

no its just girls I've met through the street I wouldn't class them as friends you know...I don't mean that in a bad way as friends but you know what I mean.

Sylvia trades drugs for someone to "watch her back." As I mentioned in previous chapter, this is often a precursor to entry to prostitution:

a couple of times there's been a couple of girls and I'd say to them '*wait at the bus stop and I'll fix you up*' and what I'd do was, I'd drive around once with the client, and if I nodded me head once, that meant that I was only up a park or a laneway or whatever and I'd be fifteen to twenty minutes and if I done that to them (nods twice), I was only going to a hotel or a B&B whatever, and it would be half an hour to an hour and if I was gone any longer than that, make sure you bleedin ring the police kind of thing.

However, the majority of women I met worked along, whilst they may have been standing in close proximity with other women they were not working together. Many are aware of risk reducing strategies, such as working in pairs, or noting down car registrations. Even girls alone pretend they are waving to another girl, or pretend to text the car registration number to a friend when they get into a clients car. Martina who prefers to work alone and tries not to engage with other workers often waves and shouts a quick good bye to a "friend":

I just say like '*eh, see you soon Mary*' or something like that, you know they think there's someone watching you then, it's just something small but it makes me feel a bit safer like.

Escorts often prefer to work with other girls. Marie when she initially came to Ireland to work was accompanied by her husband, but due to his work commitments, this did not always suit. So Marie got in contact with a Spanish escort, Angelina she used to work with in a brothel in Manchester, so now they usually travel and work together from the same apartment. Either working with other girls or in close proximity with other girls means that sex workers can exchange information. They may be able to warn about dodgy clients, to warn if police are in the area, or in the case of escorts to warn of robberies as well as dodgy clients. Marie regularly posts in a forum on the website where she advertises, and others girls often exchange

information about dodgy clients, police raids, as well clients to avoid for other reasons like time wasters etc. Marie outlines her strategy:

like its really good, she's got his phone numbers and what the girls will tell you, you know you get on the forum, you know this guy is a potential robber or, this guys a timewaster and they put numbers on the site and then I will take the numbers down and put them in my phone, and then I know if anybody rings, you know, I just wont entertain them.

One of the most serious considerations is the laws that govern prostitution and have a detrimental effect on the choices the women make in terms of how and where they sell sexual services. Sex workers cannot conduct assessment of clients when they feel under pressure, from protestors, from the Gardaí, when they are in a dark location and away from their familiar patches. Unlike the majority of the population, many sex workers do not feel the police are there to protect them, and in order to risk arrest, will put their lives in danger by taking on riskier clients, working off their familiar patches and working alone. The story of Eileen in the next section highlights some of the difficulties women encounter, when trying to work safely, and at the same time avoid the Gardaí.

Avoiding the Cops

I was walking back to my car after outreach at about 3am in the morning when I bumped into Eileen heading up towards Kings Inn. I had known Eileen for several years through the drug clinic and then through outreach. Eileen was mostly homeless and when she did manage to get a bed in a homeless hostel, she ended up fighting with the other women and was kicked out. Eileen was one of the most chaotic drug users I met during my research and she had spent several months in hospital on 3 separate occasions due to her drug use. When I met her I was always surprised she was still alive. Every time I met Eileen she was off her head on any sort of drug she could lay her hands on, and usually carrying a bottle of vodka in a paper bag. This night however she seemed a bit more lucid, but looked a fright. She also seemed so desperately thin and unwell I was really concerned for her health.

When she got up close, I saw that her left eye was so swollen and bruised it was completely closed over; her lips were covered in fresh scars and sutures. Her cheeks were grazed and her knuckles cut and minus some skin, were raw and weeping. Clearly she was recently assaulted. Shocked by what I saw, I asked her where she was going so late into the night. She started to cry as her story spilled out: she had been walking around all night with no place to sleep, and was terrified that the men who beat her up last week were out looking for her. She was working near Benburb Street, off her usual patch as the Gardaí were patrolling the area, and had been attacked by two men who tried to drag her into a van. She screamed and fought to break away, and though she was rescued by two passers by, she was badly beaten, ending up in A&E with two broken ribs, a broken tooth, lacerations to her face and arms, and bruises all over her body. Eileen refused to report her attack to the Gardaí, as she had several outstanding bench warrants and is afraid of arrest. Eileen is not unusual in not reporting her vicious assault to the Gardaí. Many sex workers recounted a litany of assaults but yet in the majority of cases, they did not report the incidents to the police.

Field Notes 2009.

In this section I talk about how women manage the fear of arrest, fear of discovery and the stigma associated with sex work. Women are also much more reluctant to report crimes to the police, even when not related to their work. There were countless nights I worked on outreach when we met with women with broken teeth, badly beaten up faces, black eyes, women who claimed they had just been raped, robbed or attacked, but would not under any circumstances report this to the police, nor would they go to the hospital. Even though indoor work is much safer, many women in this sector of the market also would not go to the police, for fear of having to disclose their occupation.

The laws governing prostitution and how it is enforced through policing and the judicial system largely has a negative impact on the lives of sex workers, particularly those who are street-based, and are more likely to come into contact with the State in relation to their work. Criminalizing prostitution only serves to make sex work more dangerous for the women working in the industry, and at the same time more

attractive to organized crime. There is no evidence that criminalization of sex work has reduced the numbers of sex workers, but instead it has pushed sex work underground and increased stigma associated with it (Daniel, 2010). This in turn means that sex workers have less control over their working environment and working conditions (Daniel, 2010).

From my own research, it is apparent, that the law at it stands, makes sex work more violent and dangerous. It also paints sex workers as criminals and therefore not deserving of social justice. Prostitution is understood as a deviant activity, and sex workers deserve the violence meted out to them, for violating cultural ideals of “good” women and for taking part in a “risky” activity. Because of the stigma and shame associated with sex work, many sex workers themselves feel unworthy of social protection, as they exist on the margins of society. Fear of arrest, for soliciting, for running a brothel, for laundering money makes the work these women do even more dangerous, as they must deal with the emotional aspects of keeping their identities hidden, but also deal with being one of societies outcasts.

It is perhaps ironic, but as several women see it, to stay safe they must avoid the police. However, not all sex workers relayed bad experiences with the police. Some women, especially those working from Baggott Street reported reasonably good relations with the local police. Jane had a reasonably good relationship with the Gardaí, and whilst she frequently gets cautioned if working on Benburb Street, she feels that the guards around Baggott Street look out for the girls more:

they could come round saying, *‘listen girl you have to move,’* ‘round here now, the guards around the other side are more kind of looking out for the girls, d’you know that kind of way, like they’d ask you is there any dirty men driving around or d’you know...

Sally has had mixed experience with the police, and as many other workers feel that the Gardaí on Benburb Street are more aggressive and less concerned about their welfare:

the police *‘guys are yous ok, are there any weirdo’s around tonight?’* and then you get pricks coming up to you, *‘if I see you here in ten minutes*

you'll be arrested' and that would only be one or two fellas, there's was actually one copper that actually used to follow the girls in the cars, you had to get out of the cars in time because if he caught you in a car and you're after getting the money off his fella without doing the job, he'd pull you out of their car abs then he'd want the job done, now I never got the pleasure but a lot of girls did.

The increased surveillance by the police also impacts on the choices clients make. To avoid the Gardaí many women report having to quickly carry out assessment of clients. Many women say these clients are afraid to hang around the red light district when there is a police car in the vicinity, resulting on fewer potential clients and there is a suggestion that the clients that remain are often not the ones the women would normally choose. The reduction in clients means that there is great competition between the women, so basic economics comes into play, often prices have to be dropped. This in turn means that each woman has to see more clients to make the amount of money she needs, or partake in activities associated with higher risk, such as sex without a condom, which has a higher premium attached to it. The women then engage in more risk taking behaviour in order to make enough money for the night, this can go from taking on clients they normally would reject to having sex without condoms if more money was offered, to going places they would normally avoid. Also, women are moving out of their comfort zone to areas that are darker and more dangerous like out towards Islandbridge and the Phoenix Park.

Managing Emotions

Reflecting much of society's attitudes towards sex work, many sex workers feel degraded by their work and often try to separate their "public" and "private" lives. Managing emotions for many sex workers often means keeping secrets, learning how to cope with stigma and boundary maintenance. Dalla (2002) suggests that there is a psychological progression from initial entry into prostitution to acceptance of the label of "prostitute". Though most come to accept their label, it is almost certainly not the case that they feel they are "prostitutes" around the clock: many women maintain multiple identities. Indeed, why should this be different from other lines of work? Hochschild's work on emotional labour (2003) and the commercialization of

human feeling suggests that as well as the physical and mental aspects attached to particular forms of labour, for certain jobs, and she gives the examples of air stewards, emotional labour is part of the service itself, and indeed an integral part of the job. Hochschild defines emotional labour as “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display” which “is sold for a wage and thereby has an exchange value.” Many experienced workers, argues Hochschild (2003:188) develop a healthy estrangement, a clear separation from self to role. They clearly define for themselves “when they are acting and when they are not.” Chapkis (1997) suggests that this can also be usefully applied to sex work and suggests that the “ability to summon and contain emotions within the commercial transaction may be experienced as a useful tool in boundary maintenance...” Many of my informants describe a number of strategies for dealing with the emotional aspect of their work, including compartmentalizing their work from non-work, through acting, “becoming someone else” and “switching off.” Martina describes how she copes with the emotional aspect of selling sex, by compartmentalizing her work from other aspects of her life and “switching off”:

and then emotionally you switch off, and then mentally you switch off, because as soon as you emotionally switch off, you mentally switch off because you're not thinking, and if you're not thinking you're not feeling and you're not feeling you're not thinking so you're blank. So you just think of other things, or you don't think of anything at all, you just think of the money, I just think will you ever hurry up and come, you know that way...

For Susie, this meant distancing herself from the act, which she describes as, “becoming someone else”:

it was an unbelievable amount of money, for such, now I don't know what way other girls took it but I distanced meself for the act, d'you know what I mean? And I just, it wasn't me and I think that why the whole, it was like an alter ego, when I was doing this I was Lucy, I had her hair and this that and the other, it was really Susie wouldn't do that, d'you know what I mean? So it was like an alter ego kind of thing. So I was giving away nothing, to me it was somebody else was letting them go it, d'you know what I mean? It was a different person, it may sound weird but it was the way I dealt with it, I was letting them use Lucy's body and I was getting an enormous amount of money.

Some sex workers changed their names as part of their emotional management strategy. As Aija describes:

We change names all the time, some guys they say '*can you play a Maria?*' '*Ok, I'm a Maria,*' you know... that what I think it's all about... it's a play... it's an act, and they change names too, because they want to be someone else at the end of the day. Because know one give their true name, its all fakes and they know our names are fake. It's much more about acting, acting to keep people happy, you know the soaps on the TV? There are people crying, falling in love, people got a fantasy to see if everything's there, and you have to let yourself into what they want for you, what they want.... ok I will play that game, it's a game, a game. That's the game we play, and in the same way, you can be very dominant in one half an hour and then be very submissive the next half hour, or you can be just your self, or your can be a therapeutic or you can be a pharmacist or you can be a consultant or what ever. That's all about playing really...it's like a game...it's like a game...

Several of the women I met described the emotional aspect, such as boundary maintenance, of their work as being like an actress. As Rosa explains

it's a lot about being an actress... yeah... its not that I don't have feelings, not that I don't have emotions... but sometimes when I talk to the customer you can put yourself inside their problem, if they got one of course... But I'm a different person, it's not because I'm different, but I can switch off and don't take the customer into my personal life. What happens when the door is closed and what happens here, and when I walk away, I even don't remember the name what he's given me. If I see him again, and I will say, '*hi, how are you?*' But I tell you it's very rare that I can remember what name, because they change names anyway, you know, I remember their face, I saw the guy once or whatever, but I don't remember what they were talking about, I don't remember what was their problem, then when I close the door they start to talk again and I know, but that not interfere with my personal life, no not at all.

However, Rosa suggests that managing emotions was something you learned, as did many describe as they moved from “novice” to “expert” sex workers, gaining more control over their work and being able to compartmentalize selling sex. Some use alcohol to deal with the stress, others use drugs. Rosa describes how she learned how to deal with the emotional aspects of selling sex:

On my first work it was hard, I could not work, I take a lot of drink and I get drunk. I spend all my night getting drunk because I could not wonder how I could do that. It's just about learning really, like you learn to cook, you know, like its just being an actor, just you get a play to do and you need to get to the interpretation of what they want, their women, you are the nurse, you act like a nurse, you are their what ever they want, you just put yourself and that's why we change names, you know?

Stigma and Keeping Secrets

For many sex workers managing emotions means dealing with the stigma associated with sex work. Goffman suggests that stigma refers to “an attribute that is deeply discrediting” and a “blemish of individual character” (1963:4). According to Goffman, the stigmatized person is seen “as not quite human” (1962:5). For many sex workers the issue of stigma is particularly associated with visibility, the public face of sex work i.e. the street-based worker. Part of the emotional management of being a sex worker is keeping secrets. For many sex workers keeping their occupation secret from friends and family takes a huge emotional toll. Many find this very emotionally draining, as it required a serious amount of organization to keep ones working life secret. Many women I met have not told one single person the truth about their income generating activities and must lead double lives, constantly keeping secrets and inventing reasons and excuses for their behaviour. Having to constantly lie about how they earn their money, where they go when they are out working, as well as the difficulty of remembering past lies, causes many women a huge amount of stress. For Laura it was the stigma attached to prostitution made the worry of her family and friends discovering her secret:

yeah I don't personally see anything wrong with what I'm doing, but you know the stigma attached to it, like the girls are dirty and things like that, that it is so wrong, but I don't personally care what other people think.

For Sally the stigma of being homeless and a drug user was compounded by the fact she sold sex:

the thoughts of telling someone that I stood on Benburb street or fuckin Baggott street I'd deny it down to the ground...I'd deny it down to the ground I would I'd deny it down to the ground, sure even in the clinic I wouldn't even give them me name or me proper date of birth, it was only when I came here that I gave me proper name and date of birth, so I could get me medication. Going to a clinic where they are helping you and I still lie because of the shame, they give you condoms and you say '*oh Jesus have you got a bag like?*' I'm thirty-seven like, I'm not a child. It is... I am ashamed and I don't like to say it, because then you feel it.

Sometimes Laura regrets every becoming involved in the industry:

I think of it just as a job, but it does take over your whole life, I mean it really does I mean, looking back I really wish I had never started it, I don't regret it, but just for several reasons you know. I worry that my parents will ever find out and things like that, and I do worry about the newspapers I'd rather get caught by the guards than the newspapers, because I have made so many good friends over here, that I would hate for them to find out, and I would leave in a day, do you know what I mean? I really would leave in a day rather than hurt anybody that I knew.

The women make plans to keep this private and working lives as separate as possible, and adopt several strategies to do this, including separate working environments, change of names, different clothes, different condoms, brands, suspension of condom use in their private lives, separation and categorization of clients, professionalization of their careers through websites as well as differentiating themselves as different or more professional than other sex workers, as I described in chapter 3. For escorts this is easier, in that they can rent a separate apartment for work and home such as Laura or Aija, or Marie and Rosa who can travel hundreds of miles from home to work. Managing emotions was less talked about by escorts who seemed to have a more "professional" relationship with clients, often seeing their interactions in business terms and were able to employ a wider range of emotion management techniques. Perhaps this has something to do with professionalisation associated with the escort sector of the market, and also perhaps drug taking, as drug using sex workers also face the stigma of drug taking, being homeless, and been seen as a failure by family and friends. Also escorts have more social and material capital at their disposal and were find it easier to manage their various identities in both their private and working lives. Many of the women I met draw clear distinctions between

their work and other parts of their lives. Some went to great lengths to separate the two such as Aija, who used two brands of condoms, one with her boyfriend and one with her clients, and rented two apartments, one for clients and one as her home.

Managing Sexual Health

Stigma can also impact on how sex workers manage their sexual health, as an interaction with Liz and Louise illustrates.

I was in the drug clinic one afternoon when Louise and Liz came in. After exchanging the usual pleasantries we fell into a conversation about doctors, nurses and the stigma associated with prostitution. I had known both of them for over a year at this stage, from being participant's in my research and as regular attendees at the clinic. Whilst Louise and Liz attend their methadone clinic on a weekly basis and routinely got their bloods and urines done, neither have ever had a smear or STI test. Louise admitted to being particularly worried, as two of her aunts died of cervical cancer and she heard that there's a link between cervical cancers and some STI's, but she is not sure. Neither Louise nor Liz use condoms in their personal relationships, and both have admitted, on occasion, to not using condoms at work with clients. Although well into her forties, Louise is pregnant with her second child, and is due to marry the child's father, a former client, when the baby is born. Neither Liz nor Louise has ever disclosed to any of their health professionals, details of their work. Both, if asked, say they are unemployed. We changed the topic of conversation when a couple of other service users came into the clinic, and instead began talking about Louise's new boots. Several weeks later, I met both of them together again one evening in Louise's flat, where the same topic of conversation came up and they began discussing disclosing to health care professionals if you were a sex worker or not. Liz when talking about disclosing her occupation to the GP said "there's no way I would" she said, "even if he asked me, he's a mouth on him I wouldn't trust him, you know you can't tell anyone, they could use it against you and say "oh she's on the game and strung out on coke and not looking after her young fella." Even though she wanted an STI test Louise felt she could not explain why she needed one to her GP, as she was pregnant and in a relationship with her boyfriend for the last few

years, “yeah no way” added Liz “I wouldn’t either, they’d use it against you, they would, they’d take your kids and say you were a bad mother.”

Field Notes, 2008

This story clearly has implications for sexual health of sex workers and highlights how the stigma associated with prostitution can have a negative effect on the health and wellbeing of sex workers. It means that sex workers are reluctant to disclose the nature of their work to health care professionals for fear of being judged negatively and discriminated against, which may mean they are not accessing appropriate health care for their specific needs as sex workers. It also negatively impacts on the relationship they have with their health care provider, in that they cannot have an open and frank discussion about their ongoing health care needs. Many women I spoke to, especially street-based women, fear their children would be taken into care if it were discovered they sold sex.

Sex Work and Condoms

Since the advent of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, condom use has become a central concern for sex workers, public health practitioners and is a major topic of research amongst academics. Even though sex workers in the western world, have a high partner turnover prevalence of HIV is low (Ward *et al*, 1993). As well as their harm reduction qualities, condom use is synonymous with (reducing risk in) prostitution, and often equated with “professional” behaviour, serving to reinforce the emotional distance between sex workers and their clients (Wolffers *et al*, 1999). It is also suggested that sex workers primarily use condoms as a means of separating work from play, rather than as a contraceptive or barrier against disease (Margo St James, 0000). Condoms have become so synonymous with sex work that non-use indicates different types of relationships (Day *et al*, 1993; Hansen *et al*, 2002). This symbolic quality of condom use is supported by many studies that indicate that sex workers do not use condoms in their private relationships (Barnard, 1993; Day *et al*, 1993; McKeganey *et al*, 1992). Indeed, some research suggests that sex workers may be at risk from suspension of condom use in their private relationships (Warr & Pyett,

1999), especially if their partner is engaging in unprotected sex with other women (Day & Ward, 1990).

However, despite enough general evidence to say that sex workers throughout much of the western world use condoms for the vast majority for their commercial sexual endeavours (McKeganey *et al*, 1992), some studies suggest there are a small group of women who do not consistently use condoms (Day & Ward, 1990; Plant, 1990; Barnard *et al*, 1993). There is also evidence that inconsistent use of condoms is predominantly associated with street prostitution (De Graaf & Van Zessen, 1996). Yet little is known about sex workers' explanations for not using condoms (Cusick, 1998).

Most of my respondents used condoms for the majority of their sexual encounters. However, almost every woman I met during the course of my research could recall at least one occasion, when they did not use condoms in their commercial relationships. In some cases there was a sense of embarrassment in admitting to not always using condoms, partly as most are aware of how HIV and other STI's are transmitted, but also because amongst most sex workers condom use is seen as "professional" behaviour. Not using condoms is associated with lack of professionalism and is associated with chaotic drug-using street-based workers, whom most other sex workers see as the lowest down the food-chain. The women suggested several reasons as to why on occasion, condom use might be suspended. These included, if there were no condoms available, if they were offered more money (it is well known across all sectors of the market that sex without a condom attracts a higher premium), if competition was fierce, or if they needed to score drugs. For Susie, suspending condom use with a client meant more money:

they could be offering you AIDS for 400 quid, and you don't know it, you're just thinking money, money, money...

Similarly, Lorraine admitted to frequently having sex without condoms for extra money, at the time she was desperate for the money for drugs, and other risks were relegated as secondary, as she explains:

Yeah normally they'd offer you an extra tenner or something...I'd risk it...it's was only afterwards that I thought about it, you know, you just think of the money to get more drugs...

However, as Day *et al.*, (1988) suggest, condom use often indicates the type of relationship the sex worker has with her client, and from my own research it is apparent that different types of clients are subjected to different rules of engagement. Condom use amongst sex workers and their clients is tied up with issues of intimacy, trust, and power, especially with regular clients. As I discussed previously, many women actively seek to deepen bonds with regular clients, as part of their economic strategy and their emotional wellbeing. For many workers suspending condom use is infinitely better, and seen as less risky, than losing a good regular client. With regular clients as the lines between the commercial and non-commercial encounter became more blurred, or as a way of feigning intimacy, women may suspend condom use, to indicate trust and increased intimacy in the relationship.

Some sex workers frequently admitted to having sex with out condoms. Indeed most escorts I met, did not use condoms for oral sex, advertising oral sex without a condom, in their "sexual favourites" as OWO (Oral With Out) and CIM (Come In Mouth). Offering OWO and CIM seems to be an established norm amongst the escort population. As many escorts were adamant that they always used protection, this seemed to me to be a contradiction. However, on closer discussion with escorts it is apparent that they did not equate "oral sex with out a condom" as equivalent to "sex without a condom" and thus their belief that they always used protection held true. "Using protection" for Maria or Aija meant using condoms for vaginal or anal sex. Oral sex minus a condom is categorized differently and seen as safe practice, which still allowed them to operate within a cordon sanitaire and maintain their professionalism.

Condoms as other authors have suggested, are synonymous with sex work and provide an emotional as well as physical barrier between the sex worker and her client. As well as protect against STI's and pregnancy, they also reinforce the emotional distance (or closeness) between the sex worker and her client, between work, and non-work. It is impossible to understand sex workers rational for non-condom use with out situating their choices within the context of their lives. Within the social world of sexual services, using condoms for vaginal and anal sex has been normalized and is seen as routine or even professional behaviour. Not using condoms appears to be the exception for vaginal and anal sex, and most sex workers do not use condoms in their personal sexual relationships (like many other couples). But yet many of my respondents could provide rationale for when they did not use a condom, or a type of client they chose not use condoms with, or indeed a sexual act, such as oral sex, that they did not use condoms for.

Conclusion

The social location of the sex worker largely determines how sex is sold and the likely risks a sex worker will face in her everyday life. As articulated by my respondents, risk of HIV has to compete with a whole set of other risks including risk of arrest, murder, rape, and assault. Risk of HIV also has to compete with the risk of losing a well paying regular client. Therefore sex workers routinely weigh up the risks they face and have developed strategies for minimizing the impacts of these multiple risks. Strategies include assessing clients, managing the client's encounter, cultivating relationships with regular clients and by relying on informal networks of co-workers and acquaintances. Manage risks by cultivating relationships with long-term clients, working for familiar patches, learning to manage the encounter with the clients, and managing emotions. Not always did these strategies work, but in many ways it allows sex workers to feel more in control of their interactions with clients.

Conclusion

The fragments of stories, experiences and life worlds gathered in this thesis illuminate how sex work as a form of labour exists in Ireland, particularly the city of Dublin at peak of the Celtic Tiger. I opened this thesis with the story of two murders, although occurring many years apart; I retold them to signify issues of silence and stigma with the women I worked with. Between the silent butchered body as empty signifier and the happy hooker as heroic liberal agent are multiple lives of women who work in sex. Like other industries, the sex industry has relatively privileged and exploitative positions for its workers, and like other service industries, it has been revolutionized by processes of globalization, technological innovation, and easing of the movement of capital. In Ireland old and new forms coexist - traditional street-based work goes on in concert with high-priced liaisons negotiated through email and SMS. This thesis serves as a sort of map of this market near the end of the Celtic Tiger boom years, when, much of Ireland genuinely believed that History had ended and a bourgeois utopia of continuous commodity consumption was the status quo. During this period, the market for sex served several purposes - a source of anxiety (of diseases, of lost innocent, of new "Irish" faces, and of a new harshness to interpersonal interactions) and a source of grudging hope that an older puritanical church morality had been finally overcome, that mature societies managed such things, so perhaps this new Ireland could too. History has, of course, returned with a vengeance, and the market for sex remains, with new narratives clustering around it.

This thesis looks at how sex work, as a form of work, functions in a neoliberal economy, driven by a competitive market and anchored in both virtual and real worlds. I examined questions of agency, risk, victimhood, materialism and by looking at how women articulate their experiences in the practice of selling sex. Key to this thesis is an experiential insight into the world of sex work. I have retold stories of the women I met illuminating their emotions, sensibilities and sentiments around this often controversial subject. Interconnected to this is a discussion of silent bodies and the moral panic around prostitution and sex work, which in its modern moment has focused on the evil of trafficking. By allowing sex workers to articulate their everyday experiences of selling sex, in many ways the "work" part of their

experiences becomes the central narrative, whilst the morality tale around the sale of sex diminishes.

In chapter one, I discussed how the consequences of Victorian ideologies regarding sexuality and prostitution still resonate in many of our social and legal practices today. Many of the current discourses surrounding prostitution are simultaneously concerned with the “visibility” of street-based sex work and the “invisibility” of “trafficked women”. Indeed, central to contemporary mediatized images of sex work has been the recurring image of the “trafficked victim”, who must be afforded societal protection. Simplistic narratives of “trafficked victims” proliferated by the media and some NGOs obscures the complex worlds lived by many of those who engage in sex work, but also do not allow any alternative discourses to circulate. Rarely are the voices of the women themselves included in these discourses, especially those who feel alienated from and cannot identify with such descriptions. In my introduction, I spoke about Aija one of my key informants, who as a young woman came to Ireland seeking opportunity and a new life. Forced to pay off huge debts accrued to those who facilitated her migration, she sold sex. After several months she moved to Dublin setting up her own business as an independent escort as well as successfully expanding her business enterprises further within the sex industry. Aija is the antithesis of what a victim should be; yet her story and the stories of other migrants who came to Ireland during the economic boom are not credited within the trafficking literature. In many ways, her narrative encompasses the diverse identities that many women who work in the sex industry simultaneously occupy - victim, whore, entrepreneur, survivor, amongst others.

From the heady days of Monto at the beginning of the 20th century, to the dizzy heights of the Celtic Tiger that signified the beginning in the 21st century, the face of prostitution has changed considerably in Irish society. Indeed, the dawn of the Celtic Tiger was a time of huge social and economic change, as Ireland enthusiastically embraced the global capitalist system, moving from a principally agrarian and traditional manufacturing based economy, to one increasingly based in technology saturated globally traded services sectors. Rapid economic change was also accompanied by a transformation of the social and political geography. Key events

during the years of the Celtic Tiger symbolize seismic shifts in the general public, and in tandem with globalisation and increased immigration, signified a move towards a more culturally diverse and liberal society. As I highlight throughout this chapter, the nature of sex work in Dublin changed rapidly over the course of the Celtic Tiger with many women altering the way they work. Several moved away from street-based work, and with the explosion in Internet and mobile phone technology, were implicated in the expansion of the indoor sex markets.

Central to this chapter was a discussion of what Rubin (1999) terms “sexual hierarchies” and how these are produced and used to discriminate against and denigrate those lower down the hierarchy, often resulting in material and legal deprivations, as well as human rights abuses, very often enacted through criminal law. Such is the case with workers in the Irish legislation regarding sex work. As the application and enforcement of prostitution laws and government policy play a pivotal role in determining how the sex industry operates, many workers feel that the current legal situation makes their lives more stressful and dangerous. Many sex workers yearn for the respectability and normality associated with work in the formal economy and spoke of the difficulties of working in such a stigmatizing and sometimes oppressive environment.

Overall, this chapter has spoken to the complexity of sex work as an industry, lifestyle choice and object of surveillance, and has illuminated aspects of the life-world of women working as sex workers. By giving voice to these women in this thesis I hope to have opened a space where issues of silence and stigma and the categories constructed by various parties, such as NGO’s, the Gardaí, the State through legislation, and the media are interrogated and challenged. Voices such as Aija or Liana, in their attempts to make a better life for themselves in Ireland, or Jane, Liz, Susie and Louise trying to negotiate life on the streets.

In Chapter two I highlighted the many varied routes into sex work. Following Kelly (2008) I also indicated how the social location of the sex worker on entry to sex work largely determines how sex work is experienced and practiced. Whilst those working in the sex industry may experience different circumstances and patterns of entry,

these circumstances may also be interlinked with their ability to control their working lives and affect a degree of choice over remaining in sex work. Some women such as Susie, or Louise, reported feeling that they had little choice in becoming involved in sex work due to their drug addiction and poverty. Indeed in some cases, such women saw their only alternative means of income generation was stealing, if they were to fund their drug habits and support their families. Others become involved to pay off debts or to fund their education, such as Laura who left her position as a hotel manager in Birmingham to work in the Irish sex industry, or Marie who followed her lifelong dream of being a nurse and used sex work to fund this transition in her life. Similarly those willing to travel to Ireland seeking adventure and opportunity, ended up working as sex workers, especially so in the years of the Celtic Tiger when Ireland offered huge opportunities to migrants, including those selling sex. Indeed some women like Liana and Rosa came to Ireland specifically to sell sex in the Irish market. Many of the women I spoke to across all sectors of the market, indicated that sex work was preferable over other options available to them. As well as affording a high degree of autonomy, women reported that working in the sex industry afforded them a high standard of living, where unlike other occupations available to them, it is possible to accrue substantial amounts of money in a relatively short space of time. This can be hugely attractive to pay off debts, supplement other incomes, pay tuition fees, or to help out friends or family. Other sex workers found the flexibility associated with sex work fitted well into their lives, especially when it came to other commitments, such as childcare. Not having to undergo further training up-skilling was also cited as a positive associated with working in the industry, as some women worked intermittently in the industry and felt able to leave for months or years and then return without significant problems. For women coming to Ireland from abroad, the Irish market was seen as relatively easy to penetrate. Initial set up was seen as cheap and fast, and many skills required to work in the industry were easily transferrable from other geographical and cultural settings. Also for women attracted to the escort sector, the already existing client base was seen as a huge advantage as well as the likelihood of little State intervention in their enterprises.

In this chapter I also highlighted the importance of networks in connection with entry into prostitution. Many sex workers, such as Mandy, Martina or Liz became involved through already existing networks of friends, family and acquaintances. Many street based women became involved through their drug use or through “watching a friends back” down on the streets at night. This was also apparent in the escort sector of the market, as in the case of Liana who became involved through her connection with Aija. Indeed Aija recognizing a business opportunity with her insider knowledge of the industry and the Irish immigration system, began offering relocation advice and web page design services to those wishing to work in Ireland from Eastern Europe.

In this chapter I argued that women’s accounts of their entry into prostitution as well as highlight a diversity of experiences and ways of being, also bring to light underlying historical, social, economic and political structural processes. Therefore any analysis of sex work must be situated within this broader framework of unequal power relations, gender, social class, inequalities, poverty, and the realities of social and sexual marginalization.

In chapter three, I outlined the sexual service market in Dublin, exploring how ones position within the industry determines how, where, and to whom you sell sexual services. It also explored how the sexual services markets are stratified between the various sectors such as street based work and indoor work and looked at how the women themselves describe the various sectors of the market and those working in it. Many different actors make up the sex industry and are instrumental in how the sale of sex manifests itself in any given sector of the market. This chapter, also charted how the sex industry changed in Dublin since the heady days of Monto in the early part of the 20th century, to the current day, signified by an explosion in sexual choice from street-based sex workers, to high powered independent escorts catering for an increasingly specialized and diverse market. Whilst the way women sell sex has changed, so has the profile of women selling sex in Dublin. I also suggested that mobility is key to the expansion of the independent escort sector of the market and during the Celtic Tiger sex workers, like many other types of workers, were on the move like never before. Older forms of prostitution were being replaced by

technological mediated interactions and the emergence of autonomous, entrepreneurial and mobile sex workers, especially in the escort sector of the market.

Several important factors were implicated in the changing face of the global sexual services market including globalisation, immigration and technological advancement. Indeed, far from looking like an “exotic” enterprise, the sex industry, particularly in the escort sector of the market, is reminiscent of many other branches of the service industry in the formal economy, in dealing with the effects of globalisation by finding novel and innovate means of accessing and marketing to potential clients, as part of their economic strategy.

In this chapter I also highlighted how the Dublin sexual services market is highly stratified. My research suggests that each sector is highly segregated and well differentiated, and there is little scope for social mobility between the various sectors. The social location that any one sex worker occupies within the industry is predicated upon several factors including social class, cultural capital, education, connections and networks, opportunity / life chances and to some degree, physical appearance. As sex work exists as part of society, issues such as gender and social class that impact on the broader society, also impact on ones position when gaining access to and maintaining your position within the sex industry, including the ability to attract, interact with, and sustain relationships with clients. Narratives from independent escorts such as Marie, Laura and Aija suggest they are more autonomous and have more control over their means of production, than those operating at the lower end of the hierarchy such as Jane and Louise.

In chapter four, I concentrated on the many and varied relationships women have with their clients. I felt it necessary to include a discussion of sex workers interactions with clients as it not only highlights the variety of possible relationships, but also indicates the complexity of these relationships and how women manage these relationships. Public perceptions of clients are often built on stereotypes of perverted weirdoes or sex addicts. However as my research indicated many women describe their clients as “average”, “ordinary” or “normal”. Indeed most women

report having good relationships with the majority of their clients. Whilst suggestions as to why men purchased sex should encompass the broader social and cultural conditions, including the increasing commodification of sex and the normalization of the commercial sex industry, my research suggested that the main reasons men sought the services of sex workers, included availability of services that were not available in private relationships, or not having a private relationship, such as Laura who has a regular client Pat, a 60 year old widower. Indeed many women felt sorry for clients who were not able to get the sexual fantasies fulfilled in their private relationship, or for clients who were lonely or sexually inexperienced.

As I discussed in other chapters your position within the industry determined how, where you practice selling sex, but also extends to whom you sell sex to and how much control you have over the sexual encounter. This includes the pool of clients available to you, as well as your ability to attract clients from this pool and ultimately how you select and reject clients. The better position you occupy in the market means you have a better choice of client; you are also in a better position to negotiate with clients, as well as have the power and means to reject clients. At the lower end of the market where you are least able to negotiate, your choices are more limited, than those working at the higher end of the market. This in turn has an effect of the amount of risk you may be exposed to, including the type of clients you sell services to, the types of services / sexual acts you sell, and the amount of risk you may be exposed to.

My research also highlighted that women do not accept every client seeking to purchase services but instead choose which clients to engage with, by placing them on a scale of desirability or hierarchy of acceptability. Clients are then either accepted or rejected depending on individual sex workers selection criteria. I showed how this selection process was primarily used as a risk reduction strategy, but also as an income generating strategy. The client assessment allows women to categorize clients. Women seem to distinguish between different types of clients, from clients they would rather avoid and would only take on if they really needed the money or there was no one else available, to clients they liked or clients they just tolerated. Reasons as to why women prefer a certain type of clients are tied up with issues of

risk, maximizing their income including clients ability to pay, safety, feeling comfortable, connecting with clients in terms of common interests and personality. This was especially true with regular clients as women wanted to prolong ongoing relationships with regular clients as part of their economic strategy and their emotional wellbeing.

Assessment of clients also allows sex workers to place clients into categories including ordinary or average, regular, weird, or dodgy. Certain categories are deemed as “safe” and therefore acceptable; others are seen as “not safe” or “potentially risky” and might cause the clients to be rejected, or offered limited services, depending on other factors at play at the time. It is important that client’s are “safe”, but also that they have the ability or willingness to pay. Some clients are outright rejected, and sex workers adopt strategies to “manage” other clients, by offering limited services to them, by finding something nice about them or by making excuses for not want to see them again.

Most women in my study expressed a preference for regular clients. Having regular clients was tied up with issues of trust, security and stability. Many women felt safer with regular clients and also felt more comfortable knowing how the interaction was likely to pan out, in terms of money involved, the type of sex that was being bought, how long the interaction would last for, as well as where and how often it would likely take place. My research also indicated that in order to maximize their income and prolong relationships with regular clients, there were different routines and practices deployed. Some offered discounts to regular clients whilst others suspended condom use. Some sex workers highlighted forming deeper bonds with regular clients and forming private relationships with them, such as Louise who has been in a long-term relationship with a former client.

In this chapter I also indicated how many sex workers reported relying on their “gut” or “sixth sense” as their primary tool in client selection. Liz for instance spoke of the importance of using her intuition as part of her client assessment, and has turned clients away if she felt threatened or worried. Women reported a whole host of reasons as to why clients might be rejected including nationality, ethnicity, if they

were too drunk, or smelly. As sex workers expect certain rituals to occur during the initial phase of an interaction with a potential client, any client that deviated from expected behaviour, might necessitate involve a more thorough inspection or rejection, depending on the situation. Others were rejected for asking too many questions, for being too quiet, or aroused suspicion of being undercover journalists or police. However many women reporting being reluctant to reject all unattractive clients due to the loss of potential income, so instead they employed several strategies to manage these particular clients. These strategies included offering limited services, concentrating on something nice about the client or thinking of the money. Aija for example instead of having to reject smelly clients, talked about how she managed the situation by incorporating a showering routine into the clients' sexual script.

This chapter also indicated how sex workers as part of their client management strategy routinely attract clients as part of their business strategy. This is particularly true of women working at the higher end of the market, and many women were acutely aware of their potential markets, as well as how to attract these clients. Escorts such as Rosa and Marie spoke of being able to reconstitute themselves with a specific identity, which allowed them to direct their services towards their targeted clients, thus facilitating the type of sex they want to sell. Sex workers are also acutely aware that they are not just selling sexual acts, but through their performances of emotional labour are able provide a holistic and “authentic” service. For example Marie spoke of accentuating her Englishness or offering GFE as part of her repertoire and spoke of her attempts at “building relationships” with clients. As the sexual service market has expanded all tastes and desires can be catered for in a multitude of settings, with the possibilities of buying increasingly specialist services reflecting the diversity in sexualities, sexual expression and identities from both buyers and sellers of sexual services.

In Chapter five I dealt with the issue of risk, the every day risks faced by sex workers and their subsequent attempts at managing these risks. Sex workers, particularly those based on the street, face multiple risks in relation to their work. Participants in my study articulated that the main risks they encountered were violence, fear of

arrest, risks related to health and drug use, sexual health worries, mental health and emotional well-being.

The social location of the sex worker largely determines how sex is sold and the likely risks a sex worker will face in her everyday life. As articulated by my respondents, risk of HIV has to compete with a whole set of other risks including risk of arrest, murder, rape, and assault. Sex workers routinely weigh up the risks they face and have developed strategies for minimizing the impacts of these multiple risks. Strategies include assessing clients, managing the clients encounter, cultivating relationships with regular clients and relying on informal networks of co-workers and acquaintances.

When it comes to managing violence, my research indicated a number of risk management strategies employed by sex workers to minimize their exposure to risk. These include assessing potential clients, categorizing and discriminating between clients, managing the encounter itself, maintaining good relationships with regular clients, working with other girls, exchanging information about “dodgy” clients, police presence etc with other girls, attempting to control their drug use, trusting their intuition, carrying a weapon, and working in a familiar environment.

Reflecting much of society’s attitudes towards sex work, many sex workers feel degraded by their work and often try to separate their “public” and “private” lives. Managing emotions for many sex workers often means keeping secrets, learning how to cope with stigma and boundary maintenance. Many of my informants describe a number of strategies for dealing with the emotional aspect of their work, including compartmentalizing their work from non-work, through acting, “becoming someone else” and “switching off.” Martina for instance described how she copes with the emotional aspect of selling sex, by compartmentalizing her work from other aspects of her life and “switching off”.

Many women suggest that the laws governing prostitution is the single most relevant factor in relation to risk in their workplace. The legislation around sex work has a

huge impact on how any sexual service market operates and on how individual sex workers experience selling sexual services. Many of the risks associated with sex work can be attributed to the laws that govern the sale of sexual services, the social stigma attached to prostitution, and societal ambivalence to the welfare of sex workers. This often means that sex workers do not enjoy similar civil and human rights as the rest of the population. Many women have voiced their concerns with how the current legal position has a detrimental effect on their health and wellbeing, their safety at work and their ability to live “normal” lives.

Since leaving the field

It has been over a year since I finished my fieldwork and started writing up. Whilst the media interest in trafficking has waned since the death of the Celtic Tiger, issues of “exploitation” in sex work have not. There are alarming indications that Ireland is moving towards the “Swedish Model⁶²” and members of the government made a recent trip to Sweden to consider its effects. I strongly believe that any law that pushes sex work underground and sex workers further into the shadows, will have a detrimental effect on the lives of those selling sexual services in Ireland.

The recession has had a serious impact on the sexual services industry as it has with other service industries. As well as clients having less disposable income, I have heard reports that clients are becoming fewer and so prices in certain sectors have dropped. Some of my former respondents have again resorted to stealing and even begging to make ends meet. The last time I met Aija she was pregnant with twins. She is still selling sex, but plans to give up when she gets married next year, though she figures that she can always dip in and out of it so to speak, should she ever need or want to. Susie is living with her Mum and her daughter in Ballymun and has

⁶² The “Swedish Model” enacted in Sweden in 1999 in effect criminalizes the purchaser of sexual services rather than the seller, the first country in the world to do so. Evidence from Swedish sex workers shows that the law has put them at greater physical risk from dangerous clients there is more violence (Whitaker, 2011). It is supported by an alliance of radical feminists and religious based organizations; whose campaign is funnelled through “Turn off the Red Light”. See www.turnofftheredlight.ie. It is vehemently opposed by Irish sex worker rights groups Sex Workers Alliance Ireland (SWAI) and Turn off the Blue Light (TOBL), who argue for a rights based approach to sex work and decriminalization.

finished her CE scheme and is looking for work. She is still off drugs (apart from the 'odd joint') and sells sex occasionally. She is quite despondent due to not being able to find work and is unsure about her future. Jane is currently living in a low threshold homeless hostel, her third one since leaving prison. She is on methadone maintenance of 115mls a day and attends a city centre clinic, which she hates. With nothing to do all day, most days she just "hangs around," goes to see her key worker, goes to drop-in in the local community drug project. She's trying to get into Gateway, "a place where you can take your methadone and get on a course or something," but with recent cutbacks in drugs services she is not too hopeful. She has recently started begging to supplement her income and has resorted to stealing on occasion. She still works on Benburb Street but has noticed the drop in client's numbers over the past few months. She has also had to drop her prices to attract clients, so she must work longer to earn enough to get by.

I was very sad to hear that Mandy overdosed six months after I left the field. After leaving prison, she found herself homeless and her drug use increased to the point where it spiraled out of control. She was found dead lying on a urine soaked mattress with a tourniquet still wrapped around her arm. Sylvia is still working on Benburb Street, though is a bit more settled since securing a privately rented house in Finglas. Her children are now all in local schools and most of the money she makes goes into their education. Her drug use had stabilized, though she still uses. Marie has since qualified as a nurse and is working in a GUM clinic in the north of England. She still comes over to Dublin several times a year and sells sex, but has cut down since getting her permanent job as a staff nurse. Kate is still making porn and still, sells sex, she's determined to do both "until I drop" as she says herself. She has also got more involved in sex workers rights and works part-time as a volunteer in a peer led sex workers support centre in London. Rosa is still traveling between Chicago, Dublin and Edinburgh. Her two children have both completed university and are both working, one training as a solicitor and the other an accountant. I am to sure what happened to Jane, I lost contact with her and I believe she may have moved back to the UK. Louise seems to have disappeared and none of the social services she engaged with have heard from her in a very long time. Martina is still living in her flat and still trying to get her children out of the care system. Her drug use as she

describes is “still a bit fucked up I suppose.” She sees her children on supervised visits and does not know how to escape from her situation. Liana moved back to Riga and was able to invest in a new apartment with her earnings in Ireland.

Discussion

I believe my thesis has in some way illuminated the lives and experiences of sex workers in Dublin during the Celtic Tiger, which to date have largely been obscured by the focus on sexual exploitation in public discourses and policy. The voices interleaved throughout this thesis highlight that sex work can both be a site of violence, discrimination, exploitation and stigma and but can also be a site of personal liberation and financial independence. We need to deconstruct binary dichotomies that pit sex work as a “violence against women” against those that see sex work as a site of sexual liberation. Most of all, this thesis underlines how women view selling sex as a form of *work*. My overriding emphasis throughout this study has been on examining, describing, and analyzing sex work as both a lived experience and object of work.

Our analytical frameworks have increased dramatically in the anthropology of work for understanding issues such as globalization, mobility, but unfortunately this is less so in the understanding of the market for sex. We need to move away from discourses that see sex work only as a site of women’s oppression and subordination towards a rights based approach that empowers sex workers. This would involve opening a dialogue between legislators, feminists, sex workers, clients, and any one else involved in the industry. Seeing sex work solely as a product of patriarchy and as a violence against women not only silences the many male and transgender sex workers through out the world, but also silences sex workers who do not fit these victimizing discourses. We are at a standstill when opposing sides of the argument refuse to acknowledge alternative viewpoints. Meanwhile sex workers around the world are being murdered, attacked, and discriminated against. Any such discussions must foreground the health and safety of those working in the industry. This I believe was an implicit theme running through the analysis and women’s narratives contained herein.

This approach forms the core of this thesis, sex work also, I firmly argue, needs to be constructed as a form of labour and as White argues must come from the labour process and “not the reformers moralisms.” Focusing only on the sensationalist media representations tend to obscure the complexity of these women’s lives and overwhelm all others parts of the analysis. We also need to similarly deal with the complexity of modern market for sex, which is one of the main areas of globalization, which are often mired in the exotic quality of prostitution or discourses on trafficking.

The laws governing prostitution and how it is enforced through policing and the judicial system, largely has a negative impact on the lives of sex workers, particularly street-based women. Criminalizing prostitution not only serves to make sex work more dangerous for the women working in the industry, but makes the sex industry an attractive option for those involved in organized crime, which like other illegal activities such as illegal drug market is highly lucrative. There is no evidence that criminalization of sex work has reduced the numbers of sex workers, but instead it has pushed sex work underground and increased stigma associated with it, meaning that sex workers have less control over their working environment and working conditions. Over and over again women throughout my time in the field spoke of how their lives were more dangerous and infinitely more difficult by existing legislation governing prostitution.

Recommendations of research

At the conclusion of this study on sex work, I feel it apposite to highlight a broad number of recommendations for both policy consideration as well as future research. Working in the ethically sensitive area of sex work has at times proven demanding, emotionally and intellectually, but has also engendered a strong conviction in both scholarly and practical terms on how the world of sex work should receive better recognition. I agree with Chapkis (1997) in her call for decriminalization of consensual activity between adults, which would include those who sell sex for a living. The State should not have the power to criminalize sexual behaviour amongst

consenting adults and instead should focus on acknowledging and respecting sexual diversity. Pushing sex work further underground only serves to make sex workers lives more dangerous, making sex workers more marginalized and socially excluded. As my study has revealed, sex workers are without legal or medical recourse. Decriminalizing sex work in all its forms would allow for the work that sex workers do be governed by existing legislation and go some way to improving the health and safety and human rights of those working in the industry. No one should be forced to work under exploitative work conditions, be it in the sex industry or any other industry. Yet when sex workers try and assert their basic human rights or secure basic employment rights, they are seen as incapable of speaking for themselves, or for being able to make decisions. But as sex worker and activist Alexander (1987) argues, “none of this will change, until prostitutes speak out in all of their varied voices.” Therefore I strongly argue that any change in the legislation governing the sale of sex must include the voices of sex workers.

Most of the sex workers I met throughout my research do not want to leave the industry, but want it to be a safer place to work. If sex work were decriminalized then rights of sex workers, like other workers would be protected with existing legislation. This would empower sex workers to join unions, and fight for their basic human rights, as well as better working conditions. It would also allow sex workers to plan for their future in that they could pay tax, pay PRSI and set up pension funds. They would not have to hide their incomes from the State and could live what many wish for, that is a normal life.

Decriminalizing prostitution I believe would also mean a reduction in the stigma associated with sex work. Reducing the stigma associated with prostitution is key to better working conditions for sex workers, as Brewis and Linstead (2002) argue “it is necessary to define prostitution as work before issues of prostitutes rights and appropriate working conditions can be discussed without the opprobrium or moral censure.” Reducing stigma would mean better health outcomes for those working in the industry. When it comes to the health of sex workers, Wolffers and van Beelan (2003) argue that it is the conditions of sex work rather than the nature of sex work that needs to be addressed. The wrongs associated with sex work are often attributed

to the nature of sex work instead of the stigma and working conditions of some sex workers, such as violence as well as a lack of legal and police protection. Similarly, Kinnell (2003) argues that like the rest of the population, sex workers can only be expected to look after their own health needs, when free from discrimination and violence, are free from poverty, free from worry of arrest, of losing their children and when they believe they are valuable members of society. As sex worker and activists Cari Mitchell argues “it is the criminalization itself which ensures that women are vulnerable to violence” (Brewis and Linstead, 2002).

In the absence of any social or legal protection for women engaging in sex work, there needs to be clear pathways for sex workers to report crimes against them both in their working and everyday lives. Also their anonymity should be protected should they request it. Also as sex workers are insiders in the industry, they are best placed to be able to report victimization or exploitation of others in the industry, which would reduce violence against sex workers. However, they need to be able to do this without fear of re-victimization or arrest.

Categories such as “trafficked” “victims of trafficking,” “commercial sexual exploitation” and “prostitution” need to be separated out and interrogated both in legislation and within policy. Conflating issues of trafficking and prostitution only serves to misinform and reproduce victimizing discourses.

From a personal perspective, my field site has made me more aware of marginalized and silenced groups in society. It has also highlighted the complexity of their lives and there needs to be a multi faceted approach if the lives of sex workers or any such hidden and stigmatized population in society are to be made better. And most importantly any intervention needs to include the voices who are most affected, i.e. the sex workers themselves

Future directions

This fieldwork contained in this study might have pushed this ethnographer to reflect on the issue of sex work in any number of directions. However, the overriding

emphasis placed on the issue of recognition around sex work struck me as a formative part of how sex workers see their world. The narratives, stories, and voices herein provide a clear and often shocking lens onto the vagaries and problematics of life as a sex worker. At the end of this project, I see the need for future research to be carried out in a number of different directions in the broader industry of sex work, but most particularly in the Irish context.

Further research needs to be carried out with sex workers, including peer led research. To date there has been very little ethnographic research amongst sex workers in Ireland, especially in brothel work as well as amongst those selling at the higher end of the market, escorts. Future possible research directions include, connection between migration studies and sex work, especially on people who travel to Ireland to sell sex, and clients of sex workers, ethnography of a brothel, an interesting project would include tracking sex workers as they move from location to location. Also since the recession there is some suggestion that the sex industry has shrunk, this would need to be followed up with ethnographic research.

To conclude, researching and writing this thesis has been rewarding, personally and professionally. The fieldwork was at times demanding, emotionally and intellectually. The issue of sex work remains a highly controversial often-conflictual field to work in. This thesis illuminates these difficulties through the fragments of my fieldwork reflections, the voices of the women and my analysis thereof. Sex work is an industry fraught with tension, violence and opportunity, and I hope to have highlighted the depth of these sentiments throughout my study. Working and volunteering on Dublin's streets often proved difficult, but over the course of my ethnographic journey I met many different kinds of sex workers, many of whom left a long lasting imprint on my personal and scholarly imaginary. Finally then, the business of sex work ignites heated passions for those who work on the ground, those in the media, scholars and policy makers, this thesis hopes to have contributed and given voice most importantly to sex workers whose needs and stories have been most overlooked.

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Appendix A. List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

Benburb Street:	Red light district north of the Liffey
Benzos:	Benzodiazepines
Bridewell:	Bridewell Garda Station situated on the north side of the Liffey close to Benburb Street
BDSM:	Bondage Domination Sadism Masochism
Canal:	The red light distract south of the Liffey,
CIM:	Come In Mouth (during oral sex, allowing client to come in mouth), escorts only
Coombe Hospital:	Maternity Hospital
Coke:	Cocaine
Cuain Dara:	Residential Detox Unit
Dóchas:	The Women’s Prison in Dublin.
Gardaí / The Guards:	Irish police force Gardaí plural
Garda:	Irish police force. Garda singular.
Gear:	heroin
GFE:	Girl Friend Experience, term used by escorts only
Going Up / down:	going to Red Light District to solicit
Hard sports:	defecating on someone (usually escort on client)
Harcourt Street:	Harcourt Street Garda Station, south of the Liffey, near Red Light district
HIV:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HIV / AIDS:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.
NGO:	Non- governmental Organization.
OWO:	Oral With Out (oral sex without a condom), term used by escorts only
PFE:	Porn Star Experience, term used by escorts only
Punter:	Man who buys sex, also called a client, john,
Punting:	act of buying sex, usually in the context of a frequent buyer
Regular:	client a sex worker sees regularly and forms a relationship with
Services:	Usually used in the social support context, often by those working in community projects such as outreach workers, community drug workers etc “Services” refers to drugs services, housing and other social services.
S&M:	Sado Masochism
Sin bins:	plastic unit used for safe disposal of used needle and syringes
Swinging:	
	Town: meaning Dublin (usually city centre)
STI:	Sexually Transmitted Infection.
Water sports:	urinating on someone (usually escort on client)
WHO:	World Health Organization.
Working:	“working girls”, the act of being engaged in prostitution predominantly used amongst street based sex workers
Working girl(s):	women engaged in prostitution, not a derogatory term

Works: or “the works” paraphernalia needed to inject drugs, usually includes, needles syringes, tin foil, spoon, citric acid,