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# **Sex, Lies and Olympic Games: Case Study of the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics**

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# Agenda

- Rationale
- Literature context
- Vancouver case study
- Research methods and methodological challenges
- Event geographies of safety through a feminist lens
- Emerging issues
- Questions

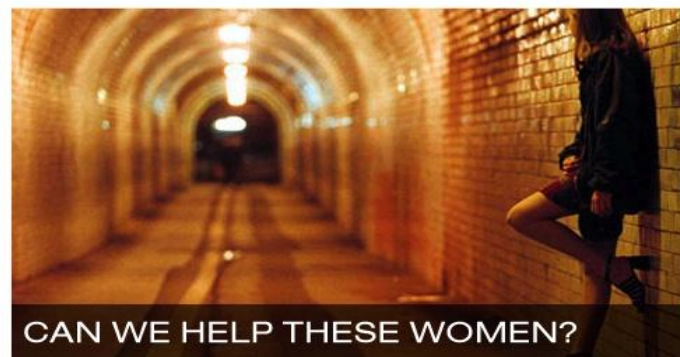
*Many thanks to School of Business, Enterprise and Management at Queen Margaret University, International Centre for the Study of Planned Events, and Carnegie Trust for making this research possible through generous funding and support.*

# Rationale: Commercialised Sex & Global Events

- Developed literature on sex tourism  
(Hall & Ryan 2001; Opperman 1999; Ryan & Kinder 1996)
- Urban geography  
(Hubbard 2008; Bell and Valentine 1995; Pitcher *et al* 2006)
- Developing interest in global events and commercial sex
  - Global events and demand  
(Future Group 2007; Henning, Craggs, Laczko, & Larsson 2007)
  - Located within human trafficking context  
(Hughes 2004; Kempadoo 2005; Jeffrey 2002)
- Substantive research gap in the area

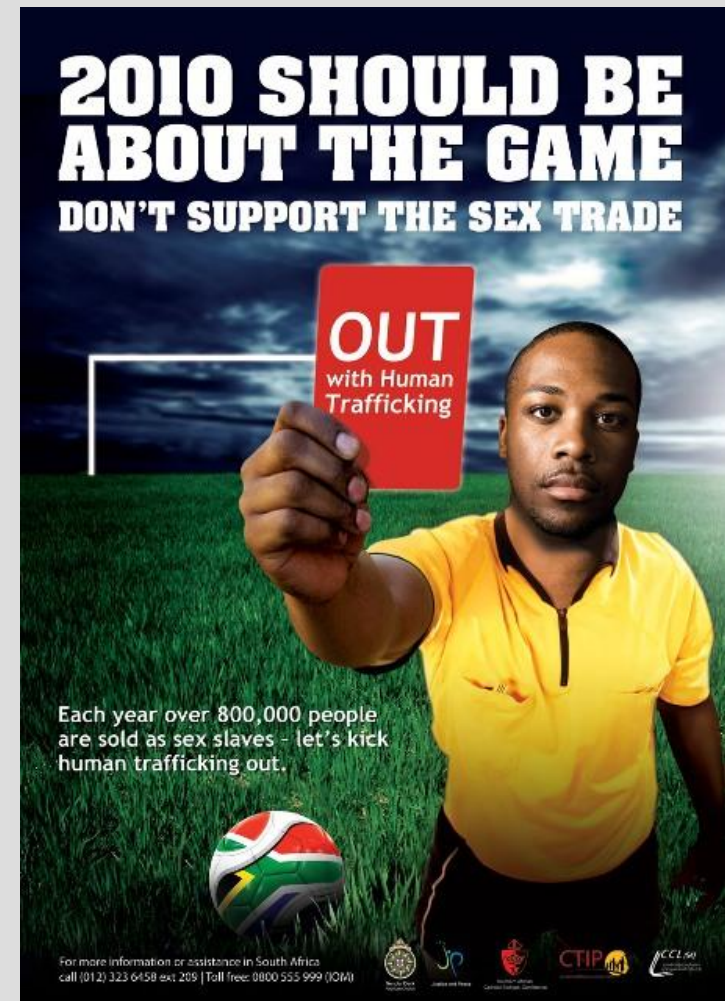
# Interdisciplinary Literature: Gender & Sexualities Studies

- “Sex work”
  - Legalisation:  
Control for safety  
(Agustin 2007;  
Doezma 2000;  
Kempadoo 2003)
- “Prostitution”
  - Abolitionist:  
Criminalise &  
eradicate demand  
(Jeffreys 2002;  
Davidson  
O'Connell 2006)



# Interdisciplinary Literature: Human Rights Approaches

- Human Rights & Sporting Events
  - Improvements  
(Black & Bezanson 2004)
  - Housing displacement for Olympic development  
(COHRE 2007; Olds 1998)
  - World Cup  
(Tavella 2007; Ohmann 2006)



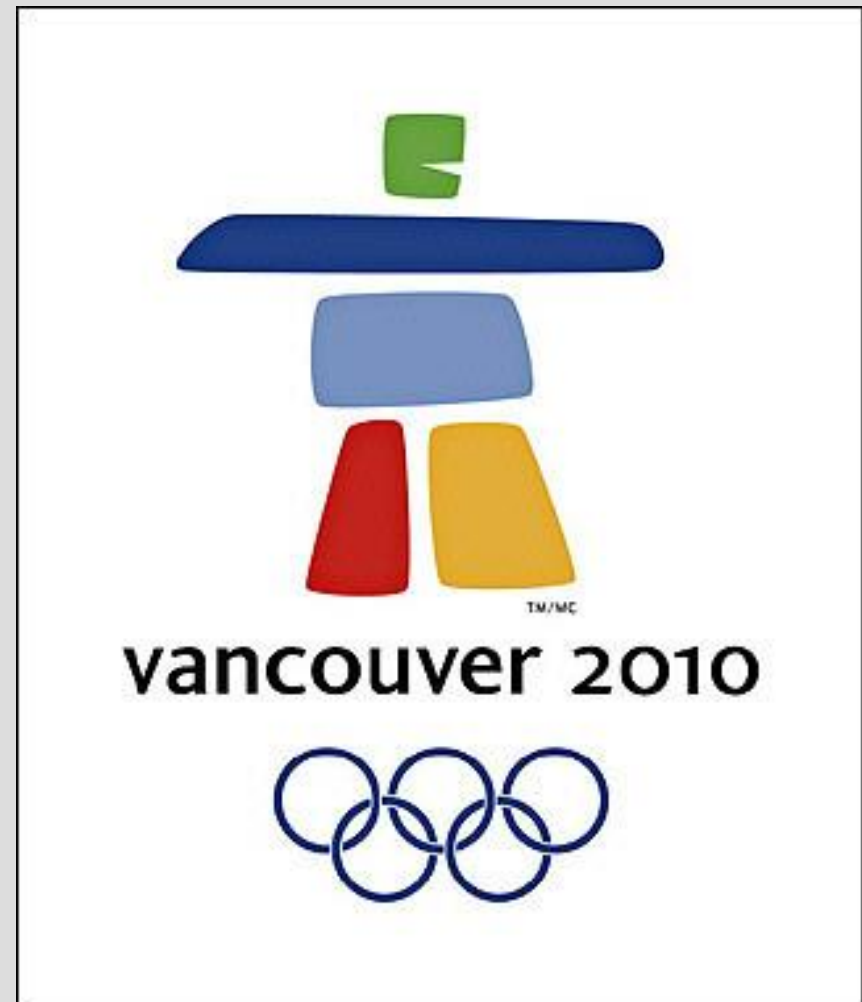
# Research Plan

- Case study of 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games
- Impacts on and issues related to vulnerable populations before Games
- Specific attention to landscape, policies, and responses



# Why Vancouver?

- Timing (new research)
- Brothel in Olympic Village news
- Future Group Report (2007)
- Dual city reputation (DTES)
- Developed nation....





# Research Approach: Qualitative

- In-depth, semi-structured interviews with experts in the subject of enquiry (22)
- Private, public and third sector stakeholders
  - Police (VPD, RCMP)
  - Government (OCTIP, City)
  - National chapters of international agencies (GAATW)
  - Academics (UBC, SFU)
  - Frontline support agencies
  - Ethnic minority support agencies
  - Legal NGO's
  - Former sex workers/current activists
- Vice Squad; Border Security Agency

# Methodological Challenges

- Conducting research in a sensitive subject
- Research design and ethical issues
  - Informed consent, no harm to participants, sensitivity of material and protection of participants  
(Saunders 2006; Shavers 2005; Lee & Renzetti 1993; Sieber 1993)
- ‘Emotional labour’ and the researcher  
(Melrose 2002)

# Vancouver Landscape

- Prostitution laws : legal to have sex and get paid
  - Illegal to solicit or communicate commercial sex
  - Brothels and public sex is illegal
  - Pimping is illegal
  - Massage parlours are licensed
  - 'John Schools' : VPD deal with provider
- 10-15% street prostitution : most focus
- Type of sex work 'segregated' by ethnicity
- Missing women – 75% First Nations
  - 'Highway of Tears' : 520/3,000
- Nationally well regarded frontline support agencies

# Event Geographies & Commercialised Sex

- Increase in demand for sexual services before Games (construction)
- Overlap of street sex spaces and Olympics spaces (centralising the marginal)
- Displacement/eradication issues = safety issues
- Image/Cost implications ('sanitisation' of city)
- Politicisation of space / Politicisation of bodies
- Media attention brings issues to forefront

# Geographies of Safety

A8 | NEWS | THE PROVINCE



## THE PICKTON TRIAL

CANADA'S BIGGEST SERIAL MURDER CASE

DUNSMUIR, JANUARY 21, 2007



A prostitute sits on a bench in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. JASON OWEN — PHOTOFEST

## Where the women went missing, little has changed

**DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE:** Degradation, debauchery may even be worse today

BY DAVID CAMROD  
PHOTOGRAPHY

### Support for prostitutes

On any night, dozens of sordid-looking prostitutes are strolling the Downtown Eastside.

"It's no different than it was a decade ago, and maybe worse," said Suzanne D'Amico, spokeswoman for Prostitutes Anonymous Counseling and Education. The girls are working the same streets — curving 2 1/2 blocks bounded by Main, Campbell, Powell and Vander streets — where many of Robert Pickton's alleged victims lived and worked.

D'Amico, who has been a prostitute in Vancouver since 1982, said conditions for women and demand for prostitutes has not changed in the past 18 years.

"When I first came here, I stayed at a hotel on Main Street with about 30 other girls. It was terrible," D'Amico said. "There were habits that had, women overdosed and eventually all women that would come in wearing a garbage bag and bleeding. The sad thing is that it's still going on."

Last year, Vancouver police blew the whistle on a Downtown Eastside hotel where, they alleged, prostitutes were tortured over drug debts.

D'Amico said she was second in the 700-block of East Hastings Street and spotted sex workers getting into cars within 10 minutes.

"There's still a lot of demand," she said.

D'Amico points out, however, that there are more services available to Downtown Eastside prostitutes than there were five years ago.

These include a mobile van that offers support and a hot-date shelter where prostitutes can identify men who have abused them or stolen from them.

D'Amico also works with Vancouver police to provide sensitivity training. In 2004, Iain McKay, former commander of the Downtown Eastside, said the number of survival sex workers — women who turn to prostitution to survive — on the streets is roughly the same as it was a decade ago.

He said women are still being abused and assaulted in the Downtown Eastside ways that would horrify the average

citizen.

"No one faces more violence down there than women," McKay said. "It's more than anyone could imagine. They are still being beaten and raped by johns and there's still lots of infighting among the girls for territory."

The Downtown Eastside attracts people looking for sex workers and among them, there are pimps," he said.

"It's still a women at 2 a.m. standing on a corner and getting into a car with someone they don't know."

McKay co-ordinated a safety training program for prostitutes last year that so far has 300 graduates. He said the Living in Community program is also raising awareness of issues surrounding victims who turn to prostitution to survive.

The \$200,000, two-year program is working with all groups affected by the sex trade to improve the health and safety of prostitutes.

**Women's Information and Safe House (WISH)**  
Formed in 1997, five years after opening a women's-only shelter in the Downtown Eastside.

**Prostitutes Anonymous Counseling and Education (PACE)**  
Formed March 1994.

**Prostitutes Empowerment Education Resource Society (PEERS)**  
Opened August 2002. It offers programs to help prostitutes find new work.

Continuous news updates from the courthouse at [www.theprovince.com](http://www.theprovince.com)

# Issues Emerging

- Very divisive two-camp approach to issues pertaining to commercial sex, which have repercussions on approaches to support, agency influence and policies
- Olympic Games are catalyst for debate. Aggravate current situation and bring issues close to surface above the surface through increased media attention and forums for debate, especially concerning resource allocation

# Other factors

- Lack of co-operation between support and activist groups
  - Victim / Entrepreneur
- Financial cuts to services
- Resource focus
- Police (mis)trust
- City as theme park? (Sorkin 1995; Zukin 1991)
  - Further marginalisation
  - Underground activities
  - Dual/Unequal City  
(Hamnett 2003; Mollenkopf & Castells 1992)

# Summary/Conclusions

- Olympics shine media spotlight on city/region/country
- Brings debates regarding approaches to commercialised sex to surface and highlights divisions
- Mapping commercialised sex and Olympics spaces – shift of focus for city
- Potential to contribute meaningful discourse and legislation with regard to commercialised sex in the city



# Questions?

