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A STUDY ON THE RECOVERY PROCESS FOR WOMEN WHO HAVE EXITED THE SEX INDUSTRY

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A STUDY ON THE RECOVERY PROCESS FOR WOMEN
WHO HAVE EXITED THE SEX INDUSTRY

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Sonia Guilfoos
June 2014

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Approved by:

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ABSTRACT

There are different reasons why women enter the sex industry; many of them were sexually abused as children and have been psychologically deceived, which is indicative of their vulnerable state and complex needs. Today, many studies show that the amount of women involved in sex work continues to rise. As a result more strip clubs have surfaced in the United States, and more and more females continue to obtain employment from these adult establishments. The purpose of this study is to get more information about the recovery process for women who have exited the sex industry. The methods used for this study were qualitative in-depth interviews with ex sex workers. Six participants were recruited through a snowball method, and after interviews were recorded, they were transcribed and analyzed using Grounded Theory Approach.

The findings indicated that sexual abuse, and drug and alcohol abuse had been experienced at very high rates by women in the sex industry. The findings also revealed that the participants in study displayed a great amount of resiliency, as five out of six participants had obtained higher education degrees at the bachelor's and master's level after exiting the sex industry. In addition, the study found that there was a serious lack of social services being offered to this population of women, which if offered services, women transitioning out of the sex industry could have benefited from mental health services, housing, and career planning. In the area of policy

recommendations, social work school students and faculty are encouraged to advocate for classes on sexuality to prepare students to deal effectively with sexual abuse and sex workers, considering we are in a time where more women earn a living by working in the sex industry. It is also recommended that social workers develop ways to reach out to this disenfranchised population.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I give my deepest thanks to Dr. Janet Chang for all of her support and guidance throughout this process. Her feedback enhanced my knowledge of research, and contributed to the overall content of this study. Furthermore, I am immensely grateful to all the women who participated in this study. Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to so generously share your stories with me. The resilience you display is extraordinary. It is hoped that through your contribution, insight, and honesty, this research will promote a better understanding of the recovery process for women who exit the sex industry.

DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to all the women still enslaved by the sex industry. My hope is that each one of you will come to the realization that you were created for a special purpose, that you have worth, and that you are deeply loved. I will keep shedding light on this topic for you. To my husband Corey Guilfoos, your love carries me through, and your support and encouragement have sustained me through the toughest times. We make a great team and I share all my victories with you. To my mom and dad, thank you for being you, I love you. The things you taught me are irreplaceable, and mom, your belief in me has never gone unnoticed. To my sister, I love you and I admire the tolerance and quiet spirit within you. To my brothers, thank you for being Godly role models, and prayer warriors- I hope I make all of you proud. To my best friend Oreo, thank you for your friendship and loyalty, I am one lucky girl. To my four beautiful daughters, thank you for your understanding and for being such good girls by allowing mom to work quietly. Your hugs and kisses always lifted the stress and put a smile on my face- everything I do is for all of you. To all other family and friends who always believed in me and were cheering for me on the sidelines, I saw you and I heard you, and I am thankful for your support. Lastly, but most important, this research project is dedicated to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, your unfailing love for me and guidance have motivated me to be the best person I can be. Thank you for all

the life lessons and the wisdom to deal accordingly. My whole life is in your hands.

The Sovereign LORD is my strength! He makes me as surefooted as a deer,
able to tread upon the heights.

Habakkuk 3:19

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will cover the problem statement and the purpose of this study. The problem statement will address some important facts and history about the sex industry. In addition, it will talk about the effects it has had on women and society in general. The purpose of this study is also clearly outlined in this chapter and focuses on the healing and recovery process that women go through once they have exited the sex industry. Finally, this chapter also discusses the significance of this project for social work.

Problem Statement

Whether a woman enters the sex industry by choice or by force, fraud, or coercion, as in the case of trafficking, overwhelming research indicates there are various issues impacting women in the sex industry. Studies indicate that more women are employed by the sex industry now than any other time in history. As a result there are more strip clubs in the United States than any other nation in the world. According to Harmony Dust (2009), Founder of Treasures, non-profit organization,

Between 66 and 90% of women in the sex industry were sexually abused as children. In comparison to the general population, women in the sex industry experience higher rates of substance abuse issues, rape, violent assaults, sexually transmitted diseases, domestic violence

and depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder with rates comparable to war veterans (p. 3).

Unfortunately, within this population, 12 and 14 years of age is the mean in which they begin sex work. Thousands of children have been found walking the streets prostituting themselves because they have been psychologically manipulated into selling their bodies in order to make money for their “traffickers.” The cycle of abuse is usually detrimental to their well-being. This problem has become enormous, and the demand is so high that it is now the second largest global organized crime today, generating an amount of approximately \$12 billion per year (Walker-Rodriguez & Hill, 2011). Part of the manipulation includes presenting a glamorous, easy money making opportunity for some of our most vulnerable youth (Farley, 2006).

One non-profit organization based in Los Angeles, California gathered data from more than 30 journal articles featuring research on women in the sex industry and discovered important statistics. The following statistics represent how women in the sex industry responded when asked what they needed: 87% stated they would leave prostitution, 78% stated they needed a home or a safe place, 73% stated they needed job training, 58% stated they needed health care, 50% stated they needed peer support, 42% needed legal assistance, 67% stated they needed alcohol and drug treatment, 28% needed child care, 49% stated they needed self-defense training, and 48% stated they needed individual counseling (Treasures Training Manual, 2009). Obviously,

this group faces many challenges in reaching their fullest potential, so the response in treating them must be holistic and unique to each woman's needs.

Many social workers and graduate students have recently taken interest in reaching out to this population of sexually exploited women. Agencies that currently provide care and services for women in the sex industry have concerns about the multi-faceted needs of this population. Agencies are striving to find ways to effectively reach out to this group of women and provide them with proper treatment. Additionally, churches in every state are showing concern for this group of women that has remained largely unreached; many churches are seeing the great need for healing and recovery to take place in the lives of these women.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the healing and recovery process for women who have exited the sex industry. This process will be explored by collecting data directly from the perspective of women who are no longer in the sex industry. The focus of this study is to find the top factors that have contributed to a woman's success in exiting the sex industry and in their recovery. The goal is to determine which factors have had the greatest impact on women being able to exit the sex industry, as well as to see what other factors play a significant role in a woman's journey towards healing and recovery.

As addressed in the problem statement, it is clear that this group of women face a myriad of issues that impact their physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Therefore, factors that have contributed to a woman's recovery from the sex industry, or services that have successfully addressed the issues women face need to be further explored in order for agencies to continue to provide effective services to this population.

This study will be done through the collection of data from interviews conducted by the primary investigator, with women who are no longer in the sex industry. The qualitative questionnaire will contain 8 to 10 questions and responses will be measured in a way similar to data extraction. Since ex sex workers are hard to find, and many are hesitant about disclosing their past, this study will attempt to collect a rich, non-random sample through snowballing. The goal is to collect primary data from original sources, which will include at least 10 women with diverse backgrounds who have exited the sex industry. This study aims to contribute to and expand on previous research by finding services that will be most helpful for agencies to provide to women who are contemplating leaving the sex industry or have already done so.

Significance of the Project for Social Work

It is important to further understand the problems women in the sex industry face, and the services that can help this group of women attain successful recoveries. This study is needed because it will provide the social work profession and other parties information about what has been proven to

work for women in recovery from the sex industry. The sex industry, by definition includes any commercial enterprise offering or producing adult entertainment; also a euphemism for prostitution or pornography. The stigma of being labeled a prostitute prevents many women from reaching out for help due to fear of being judged. Many of these women are also at risk of having their children removed, and losing their support system. Once their support system begins to fall apart, it becomes almost impossible for these women to return to a normal way of living. There are those women who reach a point in where they can no longer hide their status; these women are even more vulnerable than those who hide it because this usually means they are experiencing more health problems and/or homelessness. Social workers need to show concern, compassion, and empathy when working with these individuals, as these women have entrusted them with sensitive information (Weiner, 1996).

The results of this study will help in desensitizing the stigma associated with having been a sex worker, and instead will focus on strengths and successes for this population. The findings of this study might change social work practice in agencies and churches already providing services to women in the industry by providing more insight into the recovery process and offering direction for either tailoring services for these women, or creating new ones. The phase of the generalist intervention process that will be informed by this study will deal specifically with assessment. This study aims to assess

women's recovery and exit from the sex industry by exploring and finding the top factors that contributed to their success in exiting the sex industry.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter covers literature that was reviewed and analyzed, and addresses five different sections pertaining to this study. First, it discusses various factors that precede a woman's entry into prostitution, addressing areas such as sexual and physical abuse, instability, poverty, lack of education, becoming pregnant at a young age, and drugs and alcohol. Second, it addresses theories used in guiding the conceptualization of this study such as a biopsychosocial model, medical model from a trauma perspective as well as a recovery model, and understanding this issue from a cultural and gender perspective. Third, this chapter briefly discusses existing services and services that may be helpful in treating women exiting the sex industry. Fourth, the responsibility of social workers towards the population of women involved in prostitution is addressed covering essential factors such as justice, sensitivity, and dedication to oppressed populations. Finally, women's reasons for leaving the sex industry are explored.

Factors Preceding Women's Entry into Prostitution

Studies have shown that child sexual abuse can significantly change how an individual views the world, causing psychological ramifications and deficiency in how they view themselves (Finkelhor & Browne, 1988). Various

researchers have come up with the concept that when a female is sexually abused as a child, she develops an unhealthy manner of viewing herself and her body, which then results in a factor leading her into future work in the sex industry. Researchers suggest that girls who experience sexual abuse trauma, learn to separate themselves from their physical experiences, and can later do the same thing while engaging in sexual activities (Potter, Martin, & Romans, 1999). Female adult prostitutes have reported sexual and physical abuse as young girls, however, sexual abuse as a child is more prevalent, while physical abuse increases as women stay longer periods of time in the sex industry. In either case their physical space is violated, and to make matters worse, the abusers are usually people they are related to (Kramer & Berg, 2003).

Additional factors include instability, poverty, lack of education, and becoming pregnant at a young age. One study identified a lack of education, higher rates of teen pregnancy, and girls leaving their homes at a very young age, as factors leading up to sex industry involvement (Potter, Martin, & Romans, 1999). Another study suggested that early entry into prostitution can be widely attributed to poverty and other social disadvantages (Kramer & Berg, 2003).

Finally, drugs and alcohol is a topic that can be argued since some research suggests that alcohol and drug abuse is a result of working in the sex industry, while others believe that the drugs and alcohol are preceding factors. For over a century these two views have existed regarding drug and alcohol

abuse amongst sex workers; that some women use drugs to deal with the stressful environment, while others sell their bodies to support their drug habits (Kandall, 1996). However, one study suggests a one-sided perspective on behalf of drug treatment research, viewing sex work essentially as a way to support addiction (Sallmann, 2010). Still other literature takes the stance that women do not start doing drugs until after they have joined the sex industry, as a way to numb themselves emotionally from feelings of humiliation (Farley & Kelly, 2000; Young et al., 2000).

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

Many agencies have not paid proper attention to the way in which culture impacts the recovery process for women in the sex industry. Women are already dealing with an array of issues, that providing a culturally competent space for women to heal would significantly improve the recovery process for women. Human service delivery programs should be cognizant of treating sexually exploited women individually and systematically (Valandra, 2007). A gender perspective has also provided guidance in the conceptualization of this study. As mentioned earlier, poverty and race factors play a significant role in leading women into finding ways to survive, even if it means prostituting themselves (Kramer & Berg, 2003). Additionally, when a woman is involved in sex work, she is no longer viewed as a woman, rather she is viewed as an object (Farley, 2006).

From a trauma perspective, addiction in prostitutes stems from having to alleviate the distress caused by the environment (Teusch, 1997). For example, it has been reported that many sexually exploited women experience Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Nearly seventy percent of women who have been in the sex industry meet criteria for PTSD, a prevalence comparable to women victims of domestic violence (Farley, 2006). Additionally, a medical model continues to be prevalent in treatment centers of addiction (Copeland, 1998). Under this type of medical model, the only way to stay healthy is to completely abstain from substance use (Brown, 2002). One study suggests that if the addiction is treated then the prostitution will no longer be an issue. Providers are cautioned to avoid determining whether drug abuse or sex work is the real issue, but rather to look at the woman as a whole and provide her with treatment tailored to meet her needs (Sallmann, 2010).

A final theory to be used in the guidance of this study is bio-psychosocial. Bearing in mind design limitations, one study found that sexually exploited girls face a multitude of social and environmental challenges which included high stress levels as young girls in their homes, running away, teen pregnancy, dropping out of school, and having less opportunities in the work force (Potter, Martin, & Romans, 1999). Additionally, a Brief Symptom Inventory found that prostitutes who came from poverty and were using drugs had more emotional burden than other poor drug users not involved in the sex industry. However, it is unknown if the actual emotional

stresses these women face are a result of the prostitution, or if these stresses contribute to women embracing this lifestyle because they do not feel worthy of a better way of living (Sallmann, 2010).

Existing and Needed Services

One study reported that girls in the sex industry presented conflicting views about the system trying to protect them, yet not offering proper therapeutic care for them to start the healing process (Wiley, 2009). Other areas of concern regarding services deal with the enormous obstacles in obtaining funding and developing programs that provide sexually exploited girls with housing and financial assistance in order to improve their security (Sallmann, 2010).

In another study, a common theme presented as being helpful in the prevention of entry into prostitution was having security (Wiley, 2009). Other writers suggest that providing wrap around services where intense case management is provided, would be a stepping stone in assisting sexually exploited females achieve successful results (Morisky et al., 2010).

Responsibility of Social Work towards the Sex Industry

The stigma carried by a woman labeled a prostitute usually makes it impossible for her to reach out for help due to fear of being judged. Prostitutes are more vulnerable to losing support from various existing parties because the lives they live present many challenges for them to live a regular life again.

Women who have no choice but to identify themselves as sex workers are even more delicate, because they present with additional problems such as declining health and/or having no place to live. Therefore, social workers need to show compassion and empathy when they are entrusted with such private and sensitive information. By using a strengths-based approach, social workers will genuinely seek to know this population and continue to build on their strengths, which may lead to the prevention of further sexual exploitation (Weiner, 1996). It is also important to consider the impact that sex workers have on substance abuse and the recovery process; the fact that this concept is not often studied is an indication that researchers have yet to tap into more areas of study. Further attention needs to be given to this area (Sallmann, 2010).

Prostitutes are intimidated by asking for public help, and often feel that they may either be arrested or judged. These views will prevent many women from asking for help. Thus, social workers should focus on establishing rapport in order to provide effective services. As with other social services, the clients themselves are a useful resource in developing outreach and services. They provide word-of-mouth advertising that leads to referrals for other prostitutes. Women in leadership positions may encourage others to seek help or entitlements. Former prostitutes who have been successful in detoxification programs or in leaving the sex industry can be employed as peer counselors and outreach workers (Weiner, 1996). Survivor-led groups have proven to be

the most successful in promoting healthy recoveries for sexually exploited women (Valandra, 2007). An important task for social workers is to assess whether women actually had a choice in the first place in regards to their involvement in the sex industry. This framework will allow professionals to understand more clearly the oppression and injustices these women have faced (Farley, 2006).

Women's Reasons for Leaving the Sex Industry

One study showed that having a strong family support system played a major role in women's decisions to leave the sex industry. In addition, women who suddenly found a connection to a higher power became strengthened and empowered to leave the lifestyle. Their desire to have a better life, and their inability to remain in an environment which degraded them and exploited them also contributed to their exiting the sex industry. Of most help to this population was receiving support from women who came from similar backgrounds, but had successfully made the transition out (Valandra, 2007).

Summary

This chapter covered various literatures and focused on five different sections pertaining to this study. First, it discussed various factors that precede a woman's entry into prostitution, addressing areas such as sexual and physical abuse, instability, poverty, lack of education, becoming pregnant at a young age, and drugs and alcohol. Second, it addressed theories used in

guiding the conceptualization of this study such as a bio-psychosocial model, medical model from a trauma perspective as well as a recovery model, and understanding this issue from a cultural and gender perspective. Third, this chapter briefly discussed existing services and services that may be helpful in treating women exiting the sex industry. Fourth, the responsibility of social workers towards the population of women involved in prostitution was addressed, covering essential factors such as justice, sensitivity, and dedication to oppressed populations. Finally, women's reasons for leaving the sex industry were explored. It is important to note that the specific recovery needs of women survivors of prostitution have received little attention from research, therefore this study will be significant in furthering research that aims to assess women's recovery and exit from the sex industry by exploring and finding the top factors that contributed to their success in exiting the sex industry.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

This chapter will address the methods that were used in conducting this study. The study design section will talk about the purpose of this study, the chosen research method, as well as implications and limitations of the study. The section about sampling will address the size of the sample used as well as the criteria for participants. The section about data collection and instruments will talk about the interview questionnaire that was used for conducting semistructured interviews with participants. The procedures section will describe specifically the logistics of how the data was gathered, and how participants were solicited. Under the protection of human subjects section, the confidentiality of participants will be addressed. Finally, a brief description of how the data was analyzed will be described.

Study Design

The purpose of this study was to explore the healing and recovery process for women who have exited the sex industry. This process was explored by collecting data directly from the perspective of women who are no longer in the sex industry and have begun their journey in recovery. The research method used was in the form of a qualitative study of six participants who were personally interviewed either through a face-to-face interview in a

location of their choice, or by phone. Taking into consideration the subject matter and the challenges of finding women to participate in this study, participants were recruited by a snowball method. It is important to further understand the problems women in the sex industry face, and the services that can help this group of women attain successful recoveries. This study is needed because it will provide the social work profession and other vested parties information about what has been proven to work for women in their healing and recovery thus far. The findings of this study might change social work practice in agencies and churches already providing services to women in the industry by providing more insight into the recovery process and offering direction for either tailoring services for these women, or creating new ones. The limitations of this study were the lack of diversity and the size of the sample. However, the study provides more insight into the healing and recovery process of various women who have exited the sex industry, and now exhibit success and resilience.

Sampling

This study collected a rich, nonrandom sample where participants were recruited by a snowball method. The criteria for participants included women over the age of 18 who were no longer in the sex industry, had attained some level of recovery from its longterm effects, and had been restored to a better condition. The goal was to collect primary data from at least 10 women. Justification for this sample size is that many ex sex workers are not as open

about their past as others and may feel reluctant to share any information through a research study; therefore many may be difficult to reach. Additionally, time and resources needed for this type of qualitative study make it appropriate to have a small sample. Although the goal of 10 participants was not reached, a sample of 6 women provided significant information.

Data Collection and Instruments

A predetermined interview questionnaire, (Appendix A) consisting of nine open-ended questions was developed to explore the totality of the experiences and perceptions of women in recovery from the sex industry. A semi-structured format was used to allow for variability in each participant's responses throughout the interviews. Interviewees were informed they could pass answering a question if they felt uncomfortable. A tape recorder was used to record the participants' responses, which later were transcribed. For two of the interviews done by phone, those were also recorded on a phone machine, and later transcribed. Independent variables were measured accordingly and included support systems, alcohol/drug use, poverty, physical and sexual abuse, domestic violence, recovery barriers, and client self-determination. The dependent variable for this study was dependent on the exploration of the recovery process for women who have exited the sex industry. Finally, each participant was given a list of resources for counseling, and a list of agencies serving women in recovery.

Procedures

Data was gathered from information provided by the participants during their personal interviews. The principal investigator of this study conducted interviews; they were tape recorded, and then transcribed. Two interviews were done over the phone, and the remainder four were done face-to-face at a location chosen by the participant. Participants were solicited by a snowball method, which included word of mouth, the use of social media such as Facebook, networking with individuals who have a vested interest in this population, and providing flyers to organizations that provide services to ex sex workers. The flyers stated the need for women to participate in a study about recovery from the sex industry, and included contact information for anyone who was interested. Flyers were distributed and displayed on social media starting in May 2012 and the collection of data took place during the summer of 2012.

Protection of Human Subjects

Participants were audiotaped during individual interviews at their preferred location. Interviews were also done by phone. Recorded interviews were transcribed later. Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identification. Audiotaped interviews were kept safe in a locked filing cabinet, along with copies of informed consents. Other pertaining information was stored in a password protected computer, and shredded later. The interviews lasted from 30-60 minutes. There were no foreseeable risks for participating in

this study, and there were no personal benefits, but organizations may be able to improve their services from findings. As a form of debriefing, a resource list was given to participants at the end of their interview (Appendix C).

Data Analysis

The qualitative methodology called Grounded Theory approach to data analysis was used to code the data into themes and subthemes (Gilgun, 2001). The Grounded Theory approach guided this investigator to start with as few preconceived ideas and assumptions as possible and focus solely on data that emerged from the process. Each interview was analyzed separately and coded by the investigator of this study. Merging the interviews into categories with related themes and subthemes was the goal. The results will be shared with participating parties and/or agencies to receive feedback that may confirm the themes, subthemes, and descriptions of experiences that were shared.

Summary

To provide appropriate services, social workers need to understand the life circumstances of this vulnerable and disenfranchised population. This chapter has addressed the study design, and the sampling size. Additionally, this chapter addressed how data was collected and how the instruments were used. The importance of confidentiality and the protection of human subjects was also addressed, as well as the procedures and logistics of conducting this research study. The ultimate goal is that the findings will provide more insight

into the total experiences of women, from their perspective, about their recovery and healing process after leaving the sex industry.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This section presents the data that was gathered through the interview guides. Demographics will be presented as well as major themes that arose from the qualitative data analysis including top factors for exiting the sex industry, physical and sexual abuse, substance abuse, coping skills, social services, challenges, and the importance of mentor roles. Participant quotes are provided as supporting examples for each main theme.

Presentation of the Findings

Demographics

The sample for this study was comprised of six women who at one point in their life had worked in the sex industry. The women were recruited through a snowball method. The participants were asked to provide demographic information, including age, race, educational, and amount of time spent working in the sex industry.

At the time of the interview, women ranged from ages 27-36. It is significant to note also, that at the time of the interview, participants had been out of the sex industry from 2 years to 11 years on an average of 6.1 years. Ethnicity was reported with the majority of individuals identifying as Latinas, as well as one Caucasian, and two Biracial with one identifying as Creole, Mexican and Korean, and the other identifying as White and Latina.

Participants were asked specifically what type of sex work they did and they responded as follows: (5) strippers/exotic dancers, and (1) street prostitute.

The participants were asked their age of entry into the sex industry and ages ranged from 18-22. Participants were also asked their age of exiting the sex industry, and those ages ranged from 20-33. The amount of time participants worked in the sex industry ranged from three months to twelve years. It is significant to note that all participants had some form of higher education. In regards to educational background, one participant obtained a Master of Social Work degree, three participants obtained Bachelor degrees in psychology, human services, and food and nutrition, with one currently in graduate school, one had an Associate degree in behavioral science, and one had some college and had completed vocational school for medical billing.

Top Reasons For Leaving the Sex Industry

During the interview, participants were asked how and why they left the sex industry, as well as what the most important factors were that contributed to their decision to finally leave. Participants gave a total of fifteen different answers. Out of the fifteen different responses there were three responses that were given by at least half of the participants. It is interesting to note that one of the top reasons was the fact that the women were encouraged in one way or another, by their boyfriends at the time, to leave the sex trade; three out of six reported this was the case. One participant stated, "...the relationship I was in, I felt that I was with someone for many years and I

believe things could have worked out better if I would not have been in the industry. You know when I would hang out with him and his friends I always found myself in these dead ends because we had nothing in common, they all had regular jobs, and here I am, a stripper” (003, personal interview, July 2012). Another women reported, “I met a guy who really wanted to help me. He encouraged me to get back to school and said I could stay with him until I finished, and he also encouraged me to stop dancing” (004, personal interview, September 2012).

A second major reason for these women leaving the sex industry had a lot to do with the disrespect they faced daily. Three out of six women reported this as being one of the top factors in their decision to finally leave. One participant stated, “Yeah, so basically I stopped dancing for the disrespect I was getting, for sure” (005, personal interview, September 2012). The women shared how degrading the job was, as far as having to take their clothes off, yet how they were able to swallow their pride and go through the process for the money. Another participant reported,

With age came respecting my body a lot more, because things started changing. Before it was just a regular air dance but then it became competitive...you know, the girls started doing more with the customers and there were certain things I could not do, I mean believe it or not I had some morals, I know that sounds funny, but I did. Coming home I

began to feel dirty, and water wasn't going to wash it off no matter how hard I scrubbed. (003, personal interview, July 2012)

A third major factor women stated as their reason for exiting the sex industry was the environment. Three out of six women reported they were sick and tired of the environment, which was a very toxic one. One participant stated, "I just got sick of it, the men and the environment, I couldn't deal anymore" (004, personal interview, September 2012). Most of the women during their interviews spoke negatively about the environment in one way or another. Another participant was quoted as saying,

Because everything else came with the industry, the environment, everything you get involved with, things I would not have done before. I mean before I got into the industry I didn't drink, I didn't do any type of drugs, then being in this environment there was a lot, almost always drinking, drugs, partying, I was not being around my kid very much because I was always tired, it took me longer to recover. (003, personal interview, July 2012)

Sexual and Physical Abuse

The participants were asked during their interview if they had experienced any type of physical abuse or sexual abuse, and if they had received counseling for this. Five out of six reported they had experienced sexual abuse. However, one individual responded "no" when asked this question, but did report sexual harassment from management at the strip club

where she worked as a stripper. It is interesting to note that only one participant reported physical abuse. Only two of the participants had received counseling to address the physical and sex abuse. One participant said,

I became pregnant at 16, and my boyfriend at that time would hit me, but he would only do it when he was drunk, which was often, only at that age I was very naïve. And then when I was younger, maybe about ten years old, my older brother would make me sit on his lap and then he would make me walk back and forth in only my panties. There was never really any molestation, but he definitely exploited me sexually. I think this was one of the reasons why I didn't have a problem using my body to gain attention, somehow when I was little and my brother treating me the way he did, well, somehow that changed something in me. Another time I remember sitting outside on the sidewalk, a bunch of neighborhood kids were playing and he had the neighbor who was his friend sit by me and touch me in my private parts in a sexual way. It was really strange and uncomfortable. (006, personal interview, September 2012)

Another participant stated,

Well, the only physical abuse was that my mom spanked me, but it wasn't bad. And when I was little I was molested, I had an uncle, and I don't know I was probably about 35 years old. But I did get some

counseling and it definitely helped me in working through some of my issues. (004, personal interview, September 2012)

One participant reported,

I was raped, I got counseling for other things but not for that. One thing I can say maybe as I'm thinking about it right now is that the counselor that I go to is like a family therapist and I know it's confidential obviously, I understand that...it's still embarrassing to talk about that issue that happened in my life. And also, we as society portray the idea that 'you deserve that' because you were out there and you were selling yourself or you were out there and you were sleeping with guys, and so you kinda got what was coming you know, so I think that I've always been raised that you know there's consequences for your actions, and because I always saw that prostituting was my action and so I saw that happening to me as a consequence of my action. So one would be that I deserved it, and the second would be that it's embarrassing to talk about it especially to someone who knows my whole family. (002, personal interview, June 2012)

Drug/Alcohol Abuse and Treatment

Five out of the six participants stated they had a substance abuse issue during their time in the sex industry. Out of the participants who had a substance abuse problem and had identified themselves as strippers or exotic dancers, all of them talked about how the substance abuse began after

entering the sex industry. It is interesting to note that the participant who identified as a prostitute during her time in the sex trade stated getting into prostitution in order to afford her drug use. Out of the five participants who reported substance abuse problems, only one reported getting treatment. One participant said,

Well, the drugs and the prostitution, they went together, and the reason why I would do that sell myself is because I was on drugs. So because I was a drug addict, I would hook up with guys because I knew that they had drugs. And so I knew that if I slept with a guy, I was going to sleep with a guy and he was going to give me like twenty dollars for drugs. I just knew that if I slept with men I was going to get something in return as a reward for sleeping with them, even though there wasn't always a set agreement. So that's what I would do....In 2005 I decided I needed to give my life back to the Lord, I decided that I would go into a program and when I went into the program, because those two were partners, when I quit the drugs then I was able to quit the other. (002, personal interview, June 2012)

Another participant reported,

These drugs were more experimental for me but while dancing I noticed I started doing ecstasy more and more. So it was often but I could push it away when I didn't want to do it. But the drinking I couldn't control, the alcohol, it was a big problem. When I was in the business it got worse,

and once I left the business it slowed down a lot. You know while in the business there would be men who wanted to talk to me, and they were so disgusting so I would drink and get drunk and then I was able to talk to whoever. One day after I had quit the business I came to the realization that I did have a problem and I just stopped. I didn't drink for a whole year. I think I had a lot of will power. And I got educated on alcoholism so I could manage myself. (005, personal interview, September 2012)

Another participant stated, "I tried drugs but I never really got hooked on anything except for Adderall, but I just weaned myself off, I did it on my own" (004, personal interview, September 2012). Another participant said,

The industry for me went hand in hand with the drugs. I was tired and wanted to quit using crystal meth but I couldn't see myself not using and still having to strip. Besides the fact that my body already needed the drugs or I would start having withdrawals, in a big way the drugs and alcohol would numb me enough to allow me to do what I did. My drug addiction got real bad for over a year. I didn't seek treatment because I had no idea how to. I remember my boyfriend mentioning to me about going into a rehab program to get help, but I thought he was crazy. I thought there was no way I could do that because then everyone would find out I had a major problem, and also I could not leave my daughter behind. Looking back now, I am sure my family

would have helped me but my pride often got in the way. I managed to get off drugs because I became pregnant, and I just couldn't possibly put my baby through that. God really delivered me from the drugs. At first it was hard but slowly it got better. During this time I got heavily into reading my Bible, and this was huge in my getting off the drugs. It gave me hope. (006, personal interview, September 2012)

Another participant stated,

It was both alcohol and drugs, one to stay up, one to help me sleep. I think the first year was more like for fun, after a little bit I became hooked. I remember a lot of times I flushed stuff down the toilet and then the next day when I felt better I regretted it. I sought help through my friends but then one day I realized I couldn't keep going to people and I had to do it myself, so I started shutting down, hanging less and less with the people who had it but no rehab or anything like that because it was embarrassing, rehab was not something I wanted to put myself through. It was really hard because I was still stripping and a lot of girls did drugs, but I started to see how crazy they looked and the temptation became less and less. And I would also meditate and say things like, "okay, today I'm not going to do anything", and "isolate as much as you can" and, "if this girl comes up to you say this and walk away." (003, personal interview, July 2012)

Coping Skills

Participants were asked about the coping skills they developed, which have assisted them in staying out of the sex industry. Six different responses were given, with the top coping skill being faith in God. Participants gave from one to three different answers. Four participants responded it was faith in God, one participant responded it was staying busy, two participants responded it was having goals and a plan, one responded it was education, one responded it was experience, and one participant responded it was self-pride. One participant stated about her reliance on God,

A coping skill that I have now would be to really rely on the Lord for all my needs, but also for all my emotional needs as well. If I'm feeling down or sometimes I get those thoughts in my head when I think of what I did in the past...and I also deal with the consequences of thinking I may have a disease or AIDS or something like that. At the time it was a joke and I didn't think about that because I was so blinded but now that I'm a little different and mature, and I look back, and so my coping skill with that is that I begin to pray and I ask the Lord to remove those thoughts from me and I ask him to fill my mind with pure thoughts, with thoughts that are lovely and I begin to meditate on the things that I have done for God instead of the things and the consequences and the regrets that I have of the past. (002, personal interview, June 2012)

Another participant said,

As far as coping skills, I think my pride once I decided, and you know I started studying the Bible. At times it got hard and I was tempted to go back when money was low, but I would remind myself that no matter how bad it got, I was not going to go back. I think because of my pride and making a promise to myself. For sure, God, and then also being educated and using my experience. (005, personal interview, September 2012)

One participant reported,

The coping skills definitely have to do with God. That's what I attribute my success to, my faith in him and in his word. So many of the promises I read in His word have come true for me. His word has been very healing and has showed me my value and worth as a person, as a woman, as his daughter, and as a mom. So yes, definitely my faith. (006, personal interview, September 2012)

Another participant said,

I attribute my resiliency to my beliefs. In regards to coping skills, I think in the back of my head I always felt like this is wrong, and I think well I grew up Catholic so I always grew up with a lot of guilt with certain things that I did. So I always would think twice. Not just that, but when I went to Guam to work as a stripper I was a college student so I had taken the summer off to go work in Guam, but I still had goals and I had

a plan, I had college when I came back and my biggest thing was to graduate from college. (001, personal interview, June 2012)

One participant stated, “I stay busy! I go to work and not even give myself a chance to think. I come home, clean the house, I go to the gym...so I stay busy, and that has worked for me” (003, personal interview, July, 2012).

Social Services

During the interview, participants were asked if they received any form of social services while attempting to leave the sex industry. Five out of the six participants reported that they did not receive any form of help from social service agencies during their transition out of the sex industry. Only one participant reported going to a social services agency for help, but even then her motives for going were wrong. It is important to note that the majority of participants, though they did not receive help from social services agencies, at one point during their attempts to leave the sex industry, did think about seeking this type of help. One participant reported,

You know here I go again with the yellow book. Freaking yellow book. I remember looking at one of those hotlines because I remember I had had it, and I even thought of putting myself in one of those women’s homes, kind of like a shelter, like where you seclude yourself from everyone and everything. And I wanted to tell my mom and I just wanted to do it, but then I started thinking about my son. Who is going to watch him and pay for this and that, so I started thinking about my

responsibilities and other stuff and that kept me from entering the home. (003, personal interview, July 2012)

One participant stated, “None that I can remember. I always felt that I would be rejected due to the way I was making a living. I felt that I really had no right to any services or help” (006, personal interview, September 2012).

Another participant reported,

One thing I tried to do is that I tried to go to a program called Matrix in Rancho Cucamonga that is a substance abuse program, but what it was, it was a study being done through UCLA, and what you would do is that you would go there and you would attend their services once a week and they would give you like ten dollar gift cards for you to participate in their study. The thing was that when I found out it wasn't money I didn't want anything to do with it because I wanted cash you know. (002, personal interview, June 2012)

The participants discussed what additional support could have been useful for social service agencies to provide to women who are in transition out of the sex industry, and some common themes among participants were affordable housing, career planning, and healthcare. Regarding services one participant stated,

I just remember that after I graduated high school I wanted to leave Pomona. I never thought about going to college, I just wanted to leave Pomona. You know nobody ever really encouraged me to go to college

and my family had never been to college so you know...So I think that would have helped, some type of career or college planning. (005, personal interview, September 2012)

Another participant stated, “No, none, but I think some type of career planning would have been helpful. Also probably like a grant for like lowincome housing and definitely some type of healthcare” (004, personal interview, September 2012).

Money

When participants were asked what the most difficult thing was about leaving the sex industry, the majority reported that no longer making the money they were accustomed to making was very hard. It was also a common theme with participants that the main reason why they entered the sex industry was because they needed money. One individual stated, “The money, yeah, I mean I tried to work at the bank for a while, and the nutrition store, but gosh, it just never came close” (004, personal interview, September 2012). Another participant stated,

The money, yes the money. But you know the year that I started planning to leave I began to change my whole lifestyle. I gave up my house, and changed the way I spent money. I had to pretend that this outlet really didn't exist. So I started thinking that if I was going to get a job that paid me ten dollars an hour then I was going to have to adjust

to only what that could afford. And though it was very difficult, that is how I did it. (003, personal interview, July 2012)

Role Model/Mentor

Five out of the six participants stated having some type of role model or mentor that made a significant impact in their decision to leave the sex industry. It is interesting to note that the majority reported that role model as being someone who had previously been in the sex industry and/or was getting a higher education. One participant said,

I have a good friend and a cousin. They were never involved in that lifestyle but always knew that they were a stable person that I could run to. I knew that my friend loved me no matter what and I wouldn't talk to her for months but I always knew she was that secure person that if I ever needed to run back to I could and she was a believer, a strong person in Christ. Now my cousin she was not a believer, but I also knew that she was that stable figure and that she loved me in spite of everything I was going through and she also had a Bachelor degree so I looked up to her. (002, personal interview, June 2012)

Another participant reported,

It started with my friend Mary. I used to dance with her at the same club and during that time she went back to school and she eventually became an LVN. I remember that she made awesome money, she used to make more money than me, but I remember thinking that if she could

give up all that stuff (the money from stripping), then I could do it too.

(003, personal interview, July 2012)

One participant stated,

I think my friend who was also in the sex industry was getting her nursing degree and she actually encouraged me because I saw her studying on her breaks and she was so determined and she would also encourage me to keep with school, so I was really encouraged by that. My friend eventually left and went on to work on a Master's degree, and I saw she was making really good money so I thought it was a really good thing, and that there was a possibility that I could do it too. (004, personal interview, September 2012)

Another participant stated,

I didn't look up to anyone while I was dancing, I don't remember seeing very many girls aspiring to do greater and more productive things with their lives at the time. I can recall only two girls who would talk about school but they were still not people that I looked up to. So I guess I could say that role model for me was my best friend. She was a regular girl who never judged me. She was always there for me and she had graduated from college with a degree in psychology, and she would often try to get me into different jobs doing her type of work. She always saw something special in me, and I am glad she stayed my friend

through it all. I'm very thankful for that friendship so I guess she was a great role model for me. (006, personal interview, September 2012)

Summary

This chapter presented the major findings from the qualitative interviews. Themes from the main categories were presented and are as follows: top reasons for leaving the sex industry, sexual and physical abuse, drug/alcohol abuse and treatment, coping skills, social services, money, and the significance of role models and mentors.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

In this chapter, an overview of the significance of the themes discovered from this study are discussed as well the major findings of the study along with recommendations for social work practice, policy, and further recommended research regarding the recovery process for women who exit the sex industry. In addition, this chapter includes a discussion of the limitations of research that may have affected the significance of the findings, the strengths, and closes with recommendations for social work educators.

Demographics

The demographic data of the participants was comprised of six women who at one point in their lives had worked in the sex industry. The data was obtained through a snowball sample. The sample was very small and somewhat skewed due its size and the majority of participants being Latinas. The investigator knew two participants who would contribute to this research, as a result, those two were able to refer other participants or friends who they had kept in touch with that had made it out of the sex industry successfully. It is important to note that this is not a proper representation of the women currently in the industry, but rather of women who have successfully transitioned out of the sex industry. Participants had been out of the sex

industry for at least two years at the time the interviews took place. Length of employment in the sex industry did not correspond to any of the major themes.

There were commonalities among participants in the area of education. All participants had received some form of higher education which included Bachelor's degrees and Master's degrees after leaving the industry. Some participants had been out of the sex industry for as long as eleven years, which may contribute to the level of education the participants had attained. This played a significant role in the way in which questions were answered, as participants were able to give sophisticated answers. Other commonalities among participants were their experiences with sexual abuse, drug abuse, and time of entry and exit from the sex industry. One final commonality is that majority of participants had been exotic dancers or strippers, only one identified herself as a street prostitute.

Discussion of Themes

Top Reasons for Leaving the Sex Industry

Regarding the main reasons participants decided to get out of the sex industry, three major themes emerged. The study found that the women were encouraged in one way or another, by their boyfriends at the time, to leave the sex trade. Of six interviews, three reported having been encouraged and helped by their boyfriends in transitioning out, either through moral support as well as financial. This study is consistent with a study that was conducted by Edlund (2002), which found that prostitution may decrease with male income

because then males are more capable of attaining female partners and taking care of them financially. The study also found that women left the sex industry due to the disrespect they faced daily, and the environment. Out of the six interviews, three participants reported these as main factors in their decisions to leave. This study is consistent with another study's theme of hitting rock bottom, conducted by Valandra (2007), which found that women became tired of the lifestyle after being exposed to the realities of the industry, leaving them desiring something more meaningful, less violent, and more respectable.

Sexual Abuse

Another common theme that arose amongst the participants was in the area of sexual abuse. Out of the six interviews, five participants reported they had experienced some form of sexual abuse. One participant noted that although she had not actually been molested, she had been touched inappropriately, and this distorted her entire way of thinking about herself and her body. It is important to note that although one participant reported no sexual abuse as a child, she did report sexual harassment by management in the strip club where she worked. This study correlates with many literature about women in the sex industry. It is well known that the trauma of being sexually abused as a child changes the way in which a woman views herself, essentially serving as a precursor for sex work in the future. High rates of child sexual abuse have been reported by prostituted women who also suffer from

low self-esteem and a distorted view about their bodies and their worth (Finkelhor & Browne 1988).

Additionally, Anne Bissell from Pink Cross Foundation states, “The sex industry brands the psyche of the person with its stigma. Prostitution is a form of sexual violence, a severe form of sexual abuse. Many of the same aftereffects of sexual abuse survivors apply to sex industry survivors” (2013, p. 1).

Drug/Alcohol Abuse

When discussing drug and alcohol abuse, five out of the six participants stated they had a substance abuse problem during their time involved in the sex industry. It is important to note that out of these five, four of them had identified themselves as strippers, and did not develop this substance abuse problem until once they became involved with the sex industry. There have been various studies which have attempted to explain whether the prostitution comes first or the drug problem. The findings in this study correlate with a study conducted by Brawn and Roe-Sepowitz (2008), which found that there are two main views about drug and alcohol use and its relation to prostitution. One view is that women got into prostitution to support their drug habit, and the other is that women began to use drugs and alcohol as a way to cope with the stresses of the job. The latter portion of the aforementioned is consistent with the findings in this study.

Coping Skills

Participants were asked about coping skills they developed, which assisted them in staying out of the industry. Participants gave from one to three different answers, with the top two coping skills being having faith in God, and the second one, having goals. The participants came from different religious backgrounds, but the majority spoke highly about the significance of spirituality and the healing and strength they were able to receive from it. This study is consistent with another study that was conducted by Valandra (2007), which found that spirituality served as a source of support for women in the sex industry, and was a very significant factor in their decision to leave, as well as the process of recovery and healing. In the same study, it states, "After seven years of sobriety, another woman described her relapse and getting into a car with an undercover cop as "God intervening" to help her back into recovery from addiction. (Valandra, 2007, p. 201)

Participants also talked about the importance of having goals as a way of coping with their new lifestyle away from the sex industry. Participants talked about goals serving to get them motivated and into action towards getting out of the sex industry. This is consistent with one article, which stated, "Setting your goals gives you clarity on what you ultimately want. It makes you crystallize and articulate the desires floating in your mind. It ensures that you are channeling your time, energy and efforts into things that really matter to you. It makes you live more consciously" (Chua, 2009, p. 1).

Social Services

When it came to the topic of participants receiving social services to help them in their time of transitioning out of the sex industry, five out of the six participants did not receive any form of help from social service agencies. This finding is consistent with other studies and poses serious questions for social workers to consider as to why there is not enough effort into reaching out to this disenfranchised group of women. Participants described feeling undeserving of services, while others expressed barriers to mental health services, and feeling shameful about their drug and alcohol problem. This study correlates with a study conducted by Clawson, Salomon, and Grace (2008) which found that shame was one of the biggest barriers that kept these women from seeking services. In addition, the study also found that it was challenging for women to access services that would be sensitive to their complex and specific needs.

In addition, participants of this study shared feelings of embarrassment and shame which prevented them from reaching out for services. This is also consistent with another study conducted by Sallmann (2010), which found that women failed to disclose their involvement with prostitution for fear of being judged.

Participants discussed additional support that could have been useful for them in their time of transitioning out of the sex industry. Some common

themes amongst participants included, affordable housing, career planning, and healthcare.

Money

When it came to the topic of money, participants reported that lack of money and education was the main reason why they entered the sex industry. This study is consistent with another study conducted by Edlund (2002), which found that work in the sex industry is well paid and requires low skills. In addition the study found that even working the worst conditions, the pay is multiples more than full-time earnings in jobs with similar skill requirements. In addition, majority of the participants in this study reported that no longer making the money they were accustomed to making was very hard in their transitioning phase.

Role Model/Mentor

Regarding a role model or mentor that impacted the participants' decision to leave the sex industry, five out of the six participants reported having some type of role model. It is interesting to note that the majority of participants stated their role model/mentor as someone who had previously been in the sex industry. Many of the participants were inspired by the motivation they saw in their role models getting higher education as a means to get out of the industry. A common theme was discussion about participants relating to women with similar experiences. This study is consistent with another study conducted by Valandra (2007), which found that ex sex workers

related better to service providers who had similar backgrounds and who provided genuine empathy because they had walked that lifestyle before.

Limitations

The limitations of qualitative research can surface in the data analysis process. All efforts are made to understand and present the data in a neutral manner. However, there is some potential for bias when selecting specific quotations to support each theme. Additionally, being that most of the participants identified as strippers, the study is not an accurate representation of all the women in the sex industry, as the sex industry is comprised of escorts, street prostitutes, porn stars, and brothel workers. Another limitation of this study is the size of the sample. The sample size was small as it was done in a snowball method, and many ex sex workers find it difficult to talk about their past involvement in the sex industry. Also, the student researcher, in the process of data analysis, was not able to capture the current mental health status of the participants which would have contributed more knowledge in the area of recovery. One final limitation was that participants had all remained out of the sex industry and not relapsed or returned to sex work. Although this is a major strength for the participants, for the purpose of this study, it would have been helpful to have interviewed women who had relapsed and returned to the industry in order to better understand the recovery process of women who exit the sex industry.

A major strength about this study is that nearly all the participants in this study, after leaving the sex industry, had received some form of higher education. This study was successful in capturing the resiliency of participants, which is a crucial part of the recovery process. Agencies providing recovery services to women who have left the sex industry would benefit from reading these findings, as they capture a spirit of healing and successful transition out of the industry into successful members of society. The participants stated that some form of higher education was their way out. Most participants expressed satisfaction in participating in this study because their desire was to give back to this population and help in any way they could.

Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research

Social Work Practice

This area of research is one in which social work practitioners need to pay closer attention to. The faith based communities have been on board with reaching out to this population of women. However, the social work field is still lacking in the ability to properly screen and help women who exit the sex industry effectively deal with the myriad of issues they are faced with. Social work practitioners have the potential to impact today's culture of sexualization through the empowerment of women, and by educating and bringing awareness to the needs of ex sex workers. Because prostitutes are not easily served through normal agency service delivery. They are unlikely to approach

agencies for help because of their lifestyles and fear of arrest. Thus, social workers and agencies need to develop outreach programs that can gain trust. As with other social services, the clients themselves are a useful resource in developing outreach and services. They provide word-of-mouth advertising that leads to referrals for other prostitutes. Women in leadership positions may encourage others to seek help or services. Former prostitutes who have been successful in detoxification programs or in leaving the sex industry can be employed as peer counselors and outreach workers (Weiner, 1996). Social work practitioners must remember that the critical question with respect to sex, race, and class-based discrimination in prostitution is not “did she consent?” but “has she been offered the real choice to exist *without* prostituting?” (Farley, 2006, p. 110). This should be taken as a challenge for social workers to work together in developing and providing real choices for women to be able to exist without prostituting.

Social Work Policy

In regards to policy, it is recommended that social workers advocate for laws that would require mandatory therapeutic support services for young girls and women who have been arrested or screened as sex workers. These types of policies will increase recovery from the sex industry and make healing more available to this population. Another recommendation in regards to policy is for social work practitioners on the macro level, to advocate for low income housing laws specifically for this population in order to provide them with the

stability they need. As research shows in another study, women reported that having stability would have probably helped or prevented their entry into the sex industry (Wiley, 2009).

The label placed on these women, and the stigma surrounding it prevent many women from seeking services, which then makes it extremely difficult for women to transition into living a normal life. Social workers need to show understanding and genuineness when providing services to sexually exploited women, as it is difficult for them to share such private details about their lives. Social workers need to work from a strengths- based approach to empower these women, and assist them in reaching their fullest potential (Weiner, 1996). Therefore, it is also recommended that schools of social work professors and students need to begin to advocate for proper training in the area of sexuality which would include desensitizing students and social workers to issues faced by victims of sexual abuse, issues impacting sex workers, and more information on sexual problems amongst couples, young and old. . With elective classes which include alcohol and drugs, and gerontology, it is imperative that classes also be offered on sexuality. This would assist in social work practitioners providing effective treatment to sexually abused children, and sex workers as well.

Future Research and Recommendations

Future research should be conducted on survivors of the sex industry to expand the knowledge base, especially regarding treatment services for them.

Qualitative studies are beneficial, especially in capturing the total experience of women recovering from the sex industry. Future research could explore mental health status of women who have recovered from the sex industry, and the topic of resilience in relation to this population. Research on resiliency within this population will be imperative in developing what is needed for women to be successful in sex industry recovery. Further research on the sex industry recovery process for women who have been successful without any form of higher education will also be beneficial and add to the knowledge base.

Conclusions

This study examined the recovery process of women who have exited the sex industry. The results of this study revealed that most women who got involved in sex work were sexually abused as children. The results of this study also indicated that services provided by survivors were highly effective. In addition, this study found spirituality to be an important factor in the recovery process which supported the recovery model. In this study, the relationship between drug and alcohol abuse, and the involvement in the sex industry went hand in hand. Although the sample size was small, this study nicely captured resiliency amongst participants, and the findings provided information about services that will be valuable to this population. This area of research is extremely valuable and relevant to social work practice and policy and provides many opportunities for further study and research.

APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

Semi Structured Interview Questionnaire

How long were you involved in the industry, and what type of work did you do?

When and why did you decide to get out?

In your opinion what do you consider were the most important factors that contributed to you exiting the sex industry?

Many women who have been a part of this industry have had histories of sexual and physical abuse; if you encountered any of these, have you ever sought counseling? Please expand on your answer (where, how long, was it helpful)

Some women working in the industry experience substance abuse either with drugs and/or alcohol. If you experienced this problem, did you ever seek treatment of any sort? Why or why not?

What type of coping mechanisms have you developed that have assisted you in not returning to the sex industry? What do you attribute your success and resiliency in recovery to?

Do you recall any type of social services that you received or attempted to receive that either helped or could have helped you in transitioning out of the industry?

What was the most difficult thing about leaving the industry?

Did you have a mentor or role model who made an impact in your decision to leave?

Developed by Sonia Guilfoos

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to investigate the healing and recovery process that women go through after leaving the sex industry. This study is being conducted by Sonia Guilfoos under the supervision of Professor Janet C. Chang, Ph.D., California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the School of Social Work Sub-Council of the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to explore the healing and recovery process for women who have exited the sex industry. This process will be explored by collecting data directly from the perspective of women who are no longer in the sex industry and have begun their journey towards recovery. It is important to further understand the problems women in the sex industry face, and the services that can help this group of women attain successful recoveries.

DESCRIPTION: The criteria for participants are women over the age of 18 who are no longer in the sex industry and have attained some level of recovery. The goal is to collect primary data from at least 10 women. During their personal interview, the principal investigator of this study will conduct interviews consisting of nine open-ended questions. Interviews will be tape recorded, and then transcribed at a later time. They may be done over the phone, or face-to-face at a location chosen by the participant.

PARTICIPATION: Participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty, and participants may stop the interview at any time without penalty.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Participants will be audiotaped during individual interviews at their preferred location or by phone. Recorded interviews will be transcribed later. Pseudonyms will be used to protect participants' identification. Audiotaped interviews and informed consents will be kept safe in a locked filing cabinet, and other pertaining information will be stored in a password protected computer, and later shredded.

DURATION: Interviews can last from 30 to 60 minutes.

RISKS: There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this study.

BENEFITS: There are no personal benefits but organizations may be able to improve their services from findings.

VIDEO/AUDIO/PHOTOGRAPH: I agree that this research can be audio recorded.

Initials_____

CONTACT: For answers to pertinent questions about the research and research subjects' rights, and the subject, please contact Professor Janet C. Chang, Ph.D., M.S.W. at (909) 5375184 or via email at jchang@csusb.edu

RESULTS: Results can be obtained at the California State University, San Bernardino John M. Pfau Library after September 12, 2014.

I have been informed of the process of this interview and agree. Circle Yes or No

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

The interview you just completed is to study the healing and recovery process of women who have exited the sex industry. Thank you for completing this interview. Your participation is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions about this process, please contact Sonia Guilfoos via email at HYPERLINK "mailto:Guilfoos@coyote.csusb.edu" Guilfoos@coyote.csusb.edu. If you would like to obtain a copy of the results, you can contact the California State University, San Bernardino John M. Pfau Library after September 12, 2013.

Attached you will find a list of resources for your convenience.

Resources

Support Group

Treasures www.iamatreasure.com 323-937-9525

Residential Programs

Mercy Ministries – Worldwide 615-831-6987
Mary Magdeline Project – Van Nuys, CA 818-988-4970
Dream Center – LA, CA 213-273-7000
Nationwide Children of the Night – Van Nuys, CA 1-800-551-1300
Walter Hoving Home – CA, NY, LV 626-405-0950
Sheep Fold (DV) – CA 714-237-1444

Counseling

Focus on the Family 1-800-232-4673
Cloud and Townsend 1-800-676-4673
Meier Clinics 1-888-7 CLINIC

Financial Counseling/Assistance

Money Management International 1-866-889-9347
Medical 1-800-735-2922
WIC 1-888-942-9675

Sexual Abuse Recovery

Project Sister 909-623-1619
Open Hearts Ministry 269-383-3597
Celebrate Recovery 1800-723-3532

Addictions

Alcoholics Anonymous 212-870-3400
Narcotics Anonymous 818-773-9999
Celebrate Recovery 1-800-723-3532

Abortion Recovery

AbortionRecovery.org
Post Abortion Counseling: When You Are Ready Ministries 626-241-5997

National Trafficking Hotline

888-373-7888

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