



University
of Victoria

SOMEONE'S MOTHER, SISTER OR DAUGHTER:
Street Sex Workers, Their Families and Transitioning Out of Street Sex
Work



In Recognition

This report is dedicated to all sex workers. It is also dedicated to not only the women who have disappeared or been found murdered since we started our research, but to the memory of all sex workers in Canada who have tragically and unnecessarily lost their lives. This is also dedicated to the countless sex workers, family members of sex workers, and community members who work tirelessly to strengthen their communities and support one another in prosperity, health, and safety. We hope our report respectfully and honourably represents your stories and that it will bring some comfort to your families and friends.

All my relations.



February 14th Women's Memorial March in Squamish Territory

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- Dream Catchers (Klinic Community Health Centre) – Winnipeg, MB
- Edmonton Métis Child and Family Services
- Sage House – Winnipeg, MB
- SHIFT (AIDS) – Calgary, AB
- Street Workers Advocacy Project (SWAP) – Regina, SK
- Transition, Education & Resources for Females (TERF) – Winnipeg, MB

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Introduction

The “Someone’s Mother, Sister or Daughter” Project began as a conversation between four people in the School of Social Work at the University of Victoria. Each of the four had a personal connection to street sex work; either with direct experience in street sex work or having a loved one involved in sex work. They received funding in 2009 from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) for a project they called “‘Someone’s Mother, Sister or Daughter’: Street Sex Workers, Their Families and Transitioning out of Street Sex Work.” Please see page 60 for a glossary of terms used in this report.

The research team found that there was very little research about the impact of family relationships on the experiences of women involved in street sex work and almost nothing written about the family roles played by women who engaged in street sex work. What was written, both in the research literature and in the media, often held families responsible for their children entering sex work and portrayed sex workers as having few family relationships. To address these gaps and stereotypes, the Someone’s Mother, Sister or Daughter Project developed a two-pronged approach to disrupting the common narratives about street sex workers. The project conducted an analysis of print media coverage and then interviewed women (including trans women) involved in street sex work and family members of women involved in street sex work. We are honoured that so many workers and family members shared their stories with us. The wealth of knowledge we have been given contributes to a more in-depth and complex understanding of the relationships women who engage in street sex work have with their families and the impact of these relationships on their experiences of receiving services and/or transitioning out of street sex work. These stories also provided important insights into the ways in which people’s lives are shaped by their struggles against systemic injustices such as violence, colonial racism, poverty and sexism.

To share the research findings, we returned to cities where we conducted interviews in (Calgary, Edmonton, Regina and Winnipeg) to hear feedback from the community. We held events in Calgary, Edmonton, and Winnipeg and the insights shared by the women and family members at these events have shaped this report and will guide our work going forward. This report broadly summarizes our major findings over the last three years of research. The purpose of this report is to present our interpretation of what participants in our research said. In these stories we saw some common themes or patterns and some clear distinctions in these patterns. The perspectives of research team members significantly shaped the analysis of the interviews. In accordance with Indigenous epistemology, we valued our experiential knowledge for the insights and intuitions it allowed us to bring to our analysis (Kovach, 2005) while at the same time maintaining awareness that all knowledge is influenced by the availability of the discourses through which we understand it.

In this report we present on five significant topics that were developed through careful reading, reflection and analysis of the interviews:

Street sex work is qualitatively different from other forms of sex work and usually involves a combination of sex work for money and the exchange of sex for food, drugs or a place to stay. Street sex work is the smallest sector of the sex industry in Canada, accounting for less than 20% of the overall industry in Canada (Lowman et al.), street sex workers are disproportionately targeted by policing efforts and disproportionately covered by media (Benoit and Millar; Janzen et al.), where negative portrayals dominate.

- Leadership
- Mothering
- Families and transitioning out of sex work
- Ethical and effective service
- The media.

These topics were chosen because they were among the most important issues that participants shared, a fact we ascertained by the frequency with which they were brought up as well as the depth of the stories and insights shared. It is important to note that while these areas are presented as distinct topics, they are inextricably intertwined. As the stories shared with us demonstrate, each woman we spoke to who worked in street sex work and each person with a family member who works on the street has a complex analysis of how various structures and systems have shaped their lives. Much of what holds these unique experiences together is a shared context of living under and struggling against colonial racism and patriarchal violence. At the same time, we heard many stories of resistance: resistance to violence, to the stigma attached to street sex work, and to blame laid on individual women and/or families.

This report can be downloaded at:

<http://www.uvic.ca/hsd/socialwork/research/home/projects/index.php>

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Key Messages

Leadership

- Sex workers and their families engage in everyday acts of leadership through caring for those around them, and working tirelessly to enact social change in the lives of sex workers, their children, their families, and their communities.
- Stories about sex work too often focus on negatives: participants felt they needed success stories told by sex workers in their own words. It is validating to hear these stories from others who have been there.
- Leadership meant confronting discrimination against sex workers and asserting their own truths about sex work.
- Sex workers remember those who have passed in their communities through creative memorials and further work to demand justice for families whose loved ones have passed.
- Sex workers strive to make life better for the next generation by breaking cycles of abuse, honouring the skills and strengths of family members, and teaching empowering and self-sustaining ways of being to their children.
- When sex workers care for themselves by asserting their right to justice they are also strengthening the spirits of others for whom justice was never served.
- Sharing stories through participation in this study, and making recommendations for change, demonstrates leadership and advocacy for past, current and future sex workers.

Mothering

- Mothering among the people we spoke with was not a role reserved for those who physically bear children. For the women we spoke with, mothering was extended to a wide range of people, including those to whom one may not be biologically related.
- The majority of those we spoke with were mothers.
- Mothers in sex work managed these social roles in various ways; there is no one-way to be a mother for street sex workers.
- Taking up a mothering role in a street sex work community is important not only to the people in that “street family”, but also to the biological families who cannot or will not support their family members entrenched in sex work.
- Grandmothers and extended family sometimes play a central role in keeping families together by caring for the children of sex workers through both formal and informal custody agreements.

- Although many sex workers are mothers there is very little research aimed at understanding and supporting them as mothers, and there are few programs or resources for sex working mothers.
- Many mothers and family members experienced family disruptions and trauma caused by child welfare's involvement with their families.
- Mothers in sex work faced discrimination and stigma from child welfare workers, health care providers, other parents, teachers, and the public at large.
- Mothers in sex work were aware of the stigma they faced and sometimes perceived this judgment as unjust and misunderstood. Some mothers challenged this stigma both in public and within their own families.
- Mothers that we spoke with redefined motherhood through challenging colonialism in their day-to-day acts of raising their children
- The mothering practices of sex workers and mothers of sex workers defied idealized conceptions of mothering and challenged the perceived incompatibility between motherhood and sex work.

Family

- Participants defined family very broadly, in order to include all sorts of families: biological families, foster families, adoptive families, chosen families, and street families.
- A large proportion of participants not only had family members involved in street sex work but had themselves worked on the street. This was particularly true for Indigenous families, who existed at the intersection of poverty, lack of opportunity and systemic colonial violence.
- Participants came from a range of socio-economic classes, ethnic backgrounds, and family circumstances yet the vast majority reported that their families of origin were at some point impacted by poverty.
- Some women felt forced to live what they considered to be a double life, with a divider between their sex work and other aspects of their lives or identities. This was particularly true for mothers.
- Some participants had experienced various forms of abuse within their families and foster families, including in a few cases being 'turned out' (forced into street sex work) by family members. For these women, protecting their children as well as other children from experiencing violence and abuse was particularly important.
- Many families exist in a grey zone of unspoken tolerance towards their sex worker relatives, somewhere between acceptance and expulsion.

- Many participants identified family relationships as essential to transitioning out of street sex work.
- A sustained practice of “just being there” for sex working family members generated long-term nets of safety and trust.

Services

- The most commonly identified gaps in services and supports were:
 - Housing: Many participants identified the lack of transitional housing, and the high cost of rental housing, as significant barriers to living safely and/or transitioning.
 - Culturally appropriate services: Many Indigenous participants wanted services that reflected and supported their culture. Some participants identified engagement with culture as a significant piece of their healing.
 - Child welfare: Participants wanted sex worker services to offer support and advocacy, as most interactions with child welfare authorities were negative and stigmatizing.
 - Kinship care arrangements (grandmothers or other extended family caring for children) worked well, and participants wanted more support for these arrangements, rather than foster care.
- Participants favoured programs and resources run (or mostly run) by sex workers for sex workers.
 - Unconditional support, and an ethic of acceptance, is essential in services. This acceptance often draws on shared experiences.
 - Service provision must be based on the understanding that transitioning out of sex work is a process that might include many exits and re-entries.
- Participants described feeling most connected to services that “felt like family.” The desire to experience this kind of relationship within services and agencies was expressed more than any other.
- Outreach services were identified as particularly important and useful for learning about available programs and resources, connecting to support workers, and receiving harm reduction (e.g. safer sex) supplies.
- Resources and co-ordination are required for sex worker communities to come together to plan and carry out goals, objectives, and programming.
- Specificity and unique service options are essential: each person’s situation calls for specific, contextual, and responsive solutions. Such approaches take time to think through and articulate and must involve all participants as equals.

Media

- Participants criticized the media's overly simplistic and inaccurate portrayals of the lives of sex workers. Media reports have been hurtful and damaging to friends and family members of sex workers, in particular the coverage pertaining to murdered and disappeared women.
- Sex workers and family members had a range of experiences with the media: some utilized the media to challenge the stigma of sex work while others were marginalized in the media through unauthorized and demeaning usage of their image.
- Some participants implicated the media in the silences surrounding widespread and systemic violence against street sex workers. The sentiment expressed was "too little, too late".
- Participants were aware of highly raced, classed and gendered ideas about sex work that are widely circulated in print media. These ways of talking about street sex work encourage readers to see street sex workers as 'Other' – in other words, as significantly different from them and people they know.
- Media characterizations can lead readers to blame sex workers for their situations, including the violence routinely enacted against them.

Methodology

The project research team noticed that while street sex work was receiving increasing attention in the media, little had changed in terms of the dehumanizing portrayal of women involved in street sex work. We began our research by analyzing the social construction of street sex workers and their family relationships in newspaper articles pertaining to sex work in Canada. We selected publications from western Canadian cities known to have significant numbers of adult women engaged in street sex work. Findings from this media analysis informed the second stage of data collection: a total of 99 interviews with women involved in street sex work and the family members of street sex workers. In these interviews, we examined the impact of family relationships on women's processes of transitioning out of street sex work as well as the effects of media reporting on women who work on the street and those who have family members involved in street sex work. Because it is grounded in the words of those with whom we spoke, the analysis and findings from this research are the direct results of the diverse, complex and often challenging stories shared with us. We analysed interview transcripts using a methodology called grounded theory. In grounded theory, preconceived ideas about how or why things happen are put aside and instead, key concepts and even questions come out of the data (in this case interviews) itself.

Initial Research Questions:

- What are the recent media discourses about street sex workers and the families of street sex workers?
- How do recent media discourses impact family relationships and the process of transitioning out of street sex work?
- What are the social processes involved in relationships between adult female street sex workers and their birth, biological, foster and/or adoptive families and how do these family relationships impact the process of transitioning out of street sex work?
- What factors enhance or impede relationships between street sex workers and their families and positively or negatively impact the process of transitioning out of street sex work?

Steps in the Research Process:

- 1) Collect newspaper articles;
- 2) Analyze newspaper articles and use these findings to further develop interview questions;
- 3) Recruit for research participants and conduct interviews (which ranged from 45 min – 3hrs in length);
- 4) Analyze interviews using grounded theory;
- 5) Develop findings from analyzed interviews;

- 6) Share and test findings in preliminary dissemination event in Victoria, B.C.;
- 7) Return to communities where we conducted interviews and share findings in form of oral report, written report, discussion, and screening of the film *Finding Dawn*;
- 8) Implement feedback from community dissemination events into report and go to the next research site (we went to Winnipeg followed by Edmonton and ended in Calgary);
- 9) Distribute final report and produce further publications.

We presented our research process and emerging findings throughout steps 2-9 in the form of academic journal articles, book chapters and presentations at both academic conferences and community presentations. We have presented this research in Canada, the US, New Zealand, Australia and England.

Methodological Limitations:

Our research was focused only on the street level sex industry. Participants were invited to self-select for interviews based on the criteria of being a current or former street sex worker (former defined as having transitioned wholly or partially out of the sex industry within the last 5 years). Outside of these criteria, we made no attempt to get a representative sample. Our research sample was a convenience/snowball sample. We interviewed from a particular geographic area (urban centres across western Canada), and our findings might not extrapolate to other geographic locations. Narrative interviewing, in which the participant is simply invited to tell their story, means that there may be wide variability in terms of topics that were actual covered or not covered. Because some of the material in the interviews was distressing for the participants to relate, there were times when participants were not asked for further details of their stories, so as to respect their comfort and safety. The conversational style of many of the interviews, in which there is a relationship between the interviewer and the participant, and the interviewer shares information as well the participant, contributed to variability in the information obtained in the interviews. Because the topics discussed in the interviews are often times shrouded in internalized stigma, shame and trauma, there was a level of self-disclosure on the part of the interviewees. As a result of this reciprocal sharing, there is some variability in the information obtained in the interviews.

For more detailed information on our methodology please see appendices 'B' and 'C'.

Street Sex Work and Colonization

The street level sex industry is structured by the legacy of colonial sexual violence. Indigenous women are highly overrepresented in street-based sex work (Benoit et al., 2009; Shannon et al., 2008). While maintaining the utmost respect for sex workers personal lived experiences and the ways in which these diverge from the story we are telling, we believe it is still important to foreground some of the connections between the sex industry and the historical and ongoing colonization of Indigenous land and societies and the violent sexualization of Indigenous women. In some Canadian cities over 70% street sex workers are Indigenous women (Farley et al., 2005; PACE, 2000). In a Vancouver based study, Providing Alternatives, Counselling & Education Society (PACE) found that of 183 Vancouver women involved in various forms of sex work, 30 % identified as Indigenous although Indigenous people make up less than two percent of Vancouver's population. Additionally, Farley et al. found that 52% of the sex workers they interviewed in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside were Indigenous. One participant we spoke with explains the interconnections between colonization in her family and the sex industry through her own life:

I've learned that there were sixteen people in my natural family. Sixteen aunts and uncles, about four of those sisters. My aunts all found their way to the city and were involved in prostitution. And the next generation, both my cousin and I were involved in prostitution and I think it's important to point out that none of us were raised together. This wasn't a single environmental thing that made all these women want to go and be and prostitute themselves.

Through the stories shared with us it is clear that the Indigenous women we interviewed were much more likely to have family members that are in sex work than white women or women of colour. Previous research has shown that Indigenous sex workers are more likely to be negotiating personal histories of violence and trauma, extreme intergenerational poverty, and to have drug problems, as well as to experience increased morbidity and mortality, in comparison to non- Indigenous sex workers living and working in the same area (Benoit et al., 2009; Shannon et al., 2008). In the face of violence, Indigenous women who experience violence or have other health needs tend to access fewer health supports less often (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2010). These discrepancies were noted and experienced by the people we interviewed: both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants witnessed differences in the way Indigenous women are treated on the street, by police, and by customers. As one woman from Winnipeg explains: "Aboriginal women are still being triggered, you know, still being, like blamed on. Like 'oh she didn't work', or 'she deserved it', know what I mean?"

Indigenous women and communities do not all experience the sex industry as uniformly negative. Indigenous people's relationships to their sexuality are distinct and rooted in individual ways of being. In the story below, the connections between colonialism, the denigration of families, and the overrepresentation of Indigenous women in the sex industry are tied together:

So right now I have a fifteen-year-old cousin who lives in [Youth Detention Centre] who's experiencing a lot of the same things as me. She wasn't fortunate to be adopted, she's been through numerous foster homes . . . I've been asked to be

a part of her life to try to find the natural family . . . so she had some connection to family. And so I've been doing my best to do that. . . . What...what...what could've somebody said to me at fifteen? (Edmonton Participant)

Faced with this challenge, this cousin fights intergenerational colonialism by building connections with her family. She is beginning the brave work of finding the tools to support her family through their shared experiences.

Leadership

Key Messages

- Sex workers and their families engage in everyday acts of leadership through caring for those around them and working tirelessly to enact social change in the lives of sex workers, their children, their families, and their communities.
- Stories about sex work too often focus on negatives: participants felt they needed success stories told by sex workers in their own words. It is validating to hear these stories from others who have been there.
- Leadership meant confronting discrimination against sex workers and asserting their own truths about sex work.
- Sex workers remember those who have passed in their communities through creative memorials and further work to demand justice for families whose loved ones have passed.
- Sex workers strive to make life better for the next generation by breaking cycles of abuse, honouring the skills and strengths of family members, and teaching empowering and self-sustaining ways of being to their children.
- When sex workers care for themselves by asserting their right to justice they are also strengthening the spirits of others for whom justice was never served.
- Sharing stories through participation in this study, and making recommendations for change, demonstrates leadership and advocacy for past, current and future sex workers.

Both media stories and widespread ideas about the lives of sex workers paint a story of chaos, trauma, and helplessness. The media tend to have little interest in stories of resistance and the practices of social change that sex workers and their families engage in everyday. Throughout the interviews, many people expressed a need to hear stories of the positive community work that sex workers engage in. These are the stories that the public and the media either don't know or don't share: stories of the many ways sex workers and their families engage in leadership through caring for those around them and working tirelessly to make life better for sex workers, their children, their families and their communities.

By leadership we mean the often unacknowledged, informal and formal ways that sex workers and their families strive toward bettering their lives, their children and family's lives, the lives of sex workers, and society as a whole. We believe it is time to focus on the many ways that sex workers and their

"I have a hell of a lot to give back. You know, and I think there's nothing better than me helping another girl. Than someone who's never been there. There's nothing as validating as hearing it from another girl. You know?"

- Edmonton Participant

families fight to create community, survive, and create opportunities for the future. The stories we heard showed us three areas where sex workers are leaders: leading within the family; working for the greater good; and confronting systemic issues. Using the idea of leadership in this way recognizes that everyone, even those living in dire situations possesses a full and complex life, knowledge, and sense of identity and self (Dean, 2009).

Storying as Leadership

Sharing one's experience and supporting others to find a voice with which to author, share, and heal is an important social role that was taken up by many people we spoke with. One woman we spoke with in Winnipeg shared the power of stories in her life and in the lives of others:

And what I get out of it is just like having my story. If I could tell my story everyday for a year and if it helps just one... one woman to get off the street then I've I've been... my work has been done. Like it just... just... I guess for me it just, it keeps me grounded and it gives me a chance to kind of give back to the community. (Winnipeg Participant)

As the woman quoted above explains, carrying and sharing one's story is a significant responsibility, one that carries the potential to "give back" to an entire community.

Through stories, people sought to honour the lives of those who have gone missing and been murdered and to re-gain ownership and authority for the families over the representation of these stories in the media. As one woman from Edmonton shares, in relation to the media:

They should be contacting the families first and have the families decided what do you want to say, or whatever, you know in that. You know, like. Go make your money elsewhere on somebody else's ahh... you know, not... not on these girls that have had such hard times you know?

Many people spoke of the desire to use their experiences of struggle to make the world a better place for sex workers. These leadership acts took many forms including:

- Using knowledge and experience of struggle to empower others;
- Demanding humanity, rights, and safety for sex workers;
- Remembering and honouring women and their families who have gone missing and have passed.

I decided that I wanted to help women like myself to have that voice and so for five years after cleaning up I started working for [name of agency], I started working for other agencies and helping them out and really supporting the women ... knowing the struggles myself about housing, education, all of that stuff. I really pushed and I... I ahh... [laugh] Would always go, even after work, after hours and if I knew there was a girl out there struggling and if she had an appointment I would be there.

-Edmonton Participant

Memorializing the lost

The media often represents the lives and deaths of sex workers in a way that diminishes the importance of the person who has passed (for more details see Jiwani and Young, 2006). This occurs when the media uses language that blames sex workers for the violence many experience and when people who die are seen as less-than; not as people who lived lives that mattered with families and communities that care about them. Faced with these representations, many people spoke to us of their ongoing work of remembering those that have passed. These acts of remembering point to the internal strength and organization of sex worker communities and to the individuality and value of every person in that community:

It's like we just have that understanding and so we kind of tend to come together so whether we crying or we talk about the good times we remember that person in question. We remember you know who and what we lost. We value that person to the point where we all do our own things to try to remember them. You know we have different, one of my friends who was murdered, another one of my friends painted her with spray paint, painted her name on the back of a bridge. It's still there. So again that memory is always there. (Winnipeg Participant)

Demanding justice for the families

Just as many of the people we spoke with worked hard to maintain the public memory of people that have been murdered, gone missing, or passed in other ways, some also spoke of the need to call for a public reckoning for the families of these women. The people we spoke with were very aware of how violence against sex workers is seen as less important than violence against other people. People knew this uncomfortable fact and worked to challenge it and to bring justice to the families who are mourning the loss of their loved ones. One woman we spoke with in Calgary saw the trial of serial killer Robert Pickton, who preyed upon sex workers from Vancouver, as fundamentally unjust because he wasn't charged for the deaths of many of his victims, leaving their families without a way to grieve:

What about the other families, they should get some sort of justice out of this, and honestly yes he should have to go to court for it. There should be another trial for those families, so they can say 'at least I've done...' go into a courtroom and say their piece of mind to that man. And get what's bugging them deep inside off their chests finally, because all it's gonna to do is eat at them for the rest of their lives because they never got to say what he took away from them. He took so much away from so many families and there... k, like look at how many of those girls had children. He just hurt a lot more people. And the media just makes it... to me, they're laughing about it.

Leading within the family

This project, from the outset, looked deeply into the relationships between sex workers and their families. From the research team's personal experience in sex work and having family members in sex work, it was apparent that many sex workers face challenges building and maintaining positive family relationships, and also, that having

family members in sex work can be alienating and worrisome. Because of these challenges, we wanted to look at how sex workers and the families of sex workers understand “family” in relation to the sex industry, and the barriers people encountered to having the kinds of family relationships they desire. We found that while there is no single common experience with family across all the stories we heard, people defined their families in unconventional ways. Family is not only about the people to whom one was directly related or only about the children that mothers gave birth to; family includes the people that truly understand because they have shared experiences and complex empathy. Many stories were shared about people finding strength in their families, building family in the agencies that supported them and on the street, and leading within the family.

What was shared across the interviews was the desire for belonging, hope, and a sense of self that can come with family, however family is defined. Key findings reveal:

- Sex workers’ roles as leaders within their families was evident in their commitment to keep their families together, and for some people, keeping their families together meant doing sex work in order to provide.
- Leading within the family also showed in the ways people seek to change the future and the present for their families by protecting them and breaking damaging cycles.

Family extended beyond those at home to the wider community. Leading within this broader family often meant confronting discrimination against sex workers and asserting their own truths about sex work. One woman in Calgary expressed:

A lot of the women I know are out there are there to provide for their children because they cannot get Welfare, and they cannot do all this other stuff. Do you know what I mean? So. It really kind of pisses me off that the media takes and like makes everybody’s views of us, like we’re the ones damaging the community and whatever else, and its not like that we are our own community trying to survive in your community. You know, it’s just... it’s so frustrating for me. . . . I wish that the media would look at it and portray it the way that we look at it. It’s a job.

Keeping the family together

We heard many stories of people working hard to keep their families together by engaging in creative and strategic actions and by putting their family’s needs first. Many raised children within an inclusive definition of family and took care of siblings as a child, raising nieces and nephews, grandmothers raising grandchildren, and mothering the whole community. The struggle to keep the family together is often an economic one: it is hard to support everyone’s basic needs when living in poverty and facing discrimination (Kline, 1993; Fineman, 1995; Collins, 2001). Many people shared that they started working in sex work because they needed to provide for their families. For some of these women, sex work was the only option when it came to putting food on the table. Doing sex work can be an act of sacrificing one’s own desires to support family.

“People don’t realize we take care of each other, of our own out there.”

-Edmonton Participant

One woman in Edmonton shares her story of supporting her family and reflects on the unequal standard of living and social treatment between workers and customers:

We stand on the corner, we risk our lives but it's not them. It's not the johns. It's us, we're standing on the corner we're making them look bad. But yet they have a nice fifty thousand dollar vehicle but yet we're standing out there with our fuckin' John Deer coats and Value Village shoes but yet they drive around and don't get trouble. We get busted for standing out there and fuckin' trying to feed our kids or feed the neighbours or take care of our girlfriend who's sick or... somebody has a cold, one ... people don't realize we take care of each other, of our own out there. They forget, they forget, they forget. That human [side] is completely gone.

For some mothers whose daughters are in sex work, keeping the family together meant taking primary care of grandchildren so that children were not apprehended by child welfare. They maintained connections to their daughters through persistent effort, and sacrificed financially in order to provide stable support for their children and grandchildren. Marie Ashe puts the work of caring for children in perspective, as she writes “while caring for children is never easy, being poor makes it harder; experiencing racism makes it harder; experiencing homophobia makes it harder; and experiencing the fear of violence within one’s own household makes it harder still” (1995, p. 149). The grandmothers and the mothers in our project experienced all of the challenges that Ashe identifies, and yet, these grandmothers and mothers continue to lead their families in face of adversity. They carry on day-by-day fueled by the hope of strengthening the family for present and future generations. One grandmother from Edmonton shares her story:

Like I said I'm one hundred percent behind her in supporting her because I have these two kids because I adopted the oldest one instead of them going into care so I become. . . Because both these kids went into care, that one went into care and then my other grandkids were in care, so I became a foster parent. First I went to the Kinship and then I went into foster care. It's very very hard, you know like you know, you gotta follow through a lot of... you know, a lot of things that you have to go through and a lot of courses and a lot of ... you know, the criminal record check and you know, everything like that. So I made it and I've adopted him now and I'm in the process of adopting this one. . . . That lifestyle has to be stopped for this generation... this generation that I'm keeping now so they can have a chance in their life.

Breaking cycles

Like the grandmother’s story above, another way in which people lead within their families is to strive to make life better for the next generation by breaking cycles of abuse, honouring the skills and strengths of family members, and teaching empowering and self-sustaining ways of being. For some of the Indigenous people who shared their stories, breaking cycles within the family meant re-connecting with teachings, traditions, and community and using these teachings to change the negative ideas about Indigenous peoples learned through life in a racist country. People spoke to how they used these teachings to support others. One woman we interviewed in Regina shares:

I'm going to tell you, this is a little thing that relates how I'm trying to save the ones that don't know the rocky road we're on. There was a lady in my home, she was... she was of my nation, my Aboriginal ancestry too and ahh she said 'Oh my husband's going to be home in twenty minutes, I have to go and pick him up. And I said 'Oh let's get your supper, so I made a quick supper of hot dogs for the babies. I said 'Here's the plates.' I handed them to her and she put them on the table. You just help, you just... you pitch in and you help. Get on the path and do the same thing.

Leadership in this story is a simple, everyday act of building people up and teaching them through actions and example. These women, both of whom were involved in sex work, are building community outside of their home Nation through growing children with mutual effort.

Many who spoke with us worked to show their families how, through shared strengths, they could overcome intergenerational struggles together. People worked hard to show their families that their experiences of struggle and hardship generate their own meanings and teachings. One woman we spoke to Edmonton explained it this way:

When I had my daughter I was like, there's no way that she's there, I'm going to let them do that to my daughter. Because I'm here to stop the cycle. So yes it's unfortunate that I had to be exposed to those things and this is how my life turned out and but I mean down the road I hope that I can be a voice for somebody or something and maybe make a change and say "No we don't have to.... Even if our family is like that, it doesn't mean that we have to do it like that". You know, we can be something more and even if we've gone down that rough road that... that doesn't matter, we can still be somebody's else and be there for our children.

Confronting systemic issues

Throughout the stories we heard there were many experiences of extreme violence, exclusion, and oppression. Both family members and sex workers were acutely aware of how sex work is stigmatized and how sex workers are at times treated unjustly by police and medical staff, by strangers on the street, and by clients. In forming their own stories, participants identified how larger social forces affected their lives, such as the stigmatization of sex workers, racism and colonialism, poverty and the limitations of welfare, and male violence.

In seeing how one's own life and the lives of others are affected by larger social forces, many people we spoke to fought against systemic injustice, one woman we spoke to in Calgary says this all very clearly:

I was always on the bottom my whole life but was it. Yeah. Who put me there? Society didn't help. The media didn't help. Even when I had, I had all three of my kids at home.

Speaking back against these injustices is another way that the sex workers and family members we spoke with were leaders. When we refer to an issue being systemic what we mean is that the institutions in society (such as courts and child welfare) are founded on and perpetuate inequality based on ideas of who matters and who doesn't.

These inequalities are experienced as violence, poverty, racism, and the inability to access higher education, property ownership, or even the right to raise your kids without child welfare involvement (Emberley, 2001; Smith, 2005; Native Women's Association of Canada, 2010). All of these experiences are a part of the systemic inequality sex workers experience. One woman in Calgary spoke to how sex workers deserve to be treated as rights-bearing citizens and have their experiences of violence recognized as such:

'Cause you know what when you get raped what are you going to do, call it rape? You were out there. And they'd say how would you know the difference between what he's doing to you and rape? Well, because there's a difference.

To say that sexual assault against sex workers is significant and needs to be treated as assault contributes to humanizing sex workers in the eyes of the law and society. Standing up to the law, media, and societal apathy towards sex workers in simple everyday acts as well as publicly is in its very nature, resistance. When sex workers care for themselves by asserting their right to justice they are also strengthening the spirits of others for whom justice was never served.

That's usually how those girls have to get help cause the police aren't listening so they have to go to the media to let people know. These people are missing. We need to dig out the families of where they came from. Because otherwise nobody will know. So many people have disappeared and nobody even knows.

We all know because we're all street family but nobody else knows. There's people out there that are dying or have died and nobody even acknowledges it. You know like even some, just recently in the last 3 weeks a friend of mine I've known probably over ten years he died at the Calgary drop-in centre of pneumonia. You know what they were just going to let that go but because we all stuck together there was a memorial and things like that. Otherwise these people are living and dying alone.

Well when I was arrested I raised such a stink... (laugh) because I was so mad that I was getting a record and the john wasn't ... and that there was no services for me, like I ... at that time I had had a baby... another child that was at home because it was just a newborn and I was working and I had gotten arrested and I said... I told them that, you know I said 'tell me about the, you know, all the different organizations' but no one sticks all these organization together. I said 'By the time I've gone to Child Welfare, I've gone to...' you know, 'Social Services, I've dealt with you guys and everything its...and that's gone by and I'm out on the street working for baby. And not one of you guys give a rats ass 'cause I'm just a name and Mr. John was coming back to his family with no record and I'm still looking at going to jail.' (Edmonton)

- Winnipeg event participant

Mothering

Key Messages

- Mothering among the people we spoke with was not a role reserved for those who physically bear children. For the women we spoke with, mothering was extended to a wide range of people, including those to whom one may not be biologically related.
- The majority of those we spoke with were mothers.
- Mothers in sex work managed these social roles in various ways; there is no one-way to be a mother for street sex workers.
- Taking up a mothering role in a street sex work community is important not only to the people in that “street family”, but also to the biological families who cannot or will not support their family members entrenched in sex work.
- Grandmothers and extended family sometimes play a central role in keeping families together by caring for the children of sex workers through both formal and informal custody agreements.
- Although many sex workers are mothers, there is very little research aimed at understanding and supporting them as mothers, and there are few programs or resources for sex working mothers.
- Many mothers and family members experienced family disruptions and trauma caused by child welfare’s involvement with their families.
- Mothers in sex work faced discrimination and stigma from child welfare workers, health care providers, other parents, teachers, and the public at large.
- Mothers in sex work were aware of the stigma they faced and sometimes perceived this judgment as unjust and misunderstood. Some mothers challenged this stigma both in public and within their own families.
- Mothers that we spoke with redefined motherhood through challenging colonialism in their day-to-day acts of raising their children
- The mothering practices of sex workers and mothers of sex workers defied idealized conceptions of mothering and challenged the perceived incompatibility between motherhood and sex work.

The majority of those we spoke with were mothers: some were mothers working in sex work; some were mothers whose daughters were in sex work; others were aunties and grandmas raising their family’s children, and still others were non-biological mothers who filled a mothering role on and off the street. Our research thus confirmed what the limited existing literature says: most street sex workers are mothers. For example, in a study conducted in a Midwestern

U.S. city in 2000, Rochelle Dalla found that 88% of current and former street sex workers were mothers. Comparably, in a Chicago study, Christine Sloss found that 91% of the street sex workers in her research had children. Finally, a study of 1,963 street sex workers in New York City found that 69% had children (Weiner, 1996 as cited in Sloss et al., 2004). Although many sex workers are mothers, there is very little research, writing, or programming aimed at understanding their motherhood experiences and supporting them as mothers. We interpreted the lack of attention to motherhood and sex work as evidence of how dominant ideas about motherhood construct sex work and motherhood as separate social roles.

It was hard, it's hard to get out of when get categorized. People don't look at me like oh she's a mom. Or a sister. You know. They don't see that. They're not looking at me. They're looking at me but they don't see me."

- Calgary Participant

Mothering among the women we spoke with was a relational way of being characterized through one's actions and not a predetermined role reserved for those who physically bear children. This way of looking at mothering is influenced by the definition provided by the National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health (3): "Mothering, as a relationship and practice, is a social and cultural act that occurs between multiple configurations of people of many generations – individually and communally . . . Mothering, understood in this way as a complex web of relational practices, was and is fundamental to life."

One woman we spoke with in Calgary expressed how mothering is a commitment to the whole community, to all those who are in relation to one another:

A lot of the women I know are out there, are there to provide for their children because they cannot get welfare, and they cannot do all this other stuff. Do you know what I mean? So it really kind of pisses me off that the media takes and like makes everybody's views of us, like we're the ones damaging the community and whatever else, and its not like that, we are our own community trying to survive in your community.

Sex worker mothers and mothers whose daughters were in sex work are very aware of the dominant ideals of mothering that are widely circulated in Western culture: that mothers should always put their children first; that mothers should be self-sacrificing; and that "good" mothers fulfill White, middle class ideals. People we spoke to described these ideals and their impact on their lives through descriptions of their own mothering and their perceptions of other women's mothering. The stories of mothers in sex work are stories of challenge and struggle: trying to mother effectively while under the surveillance of child welfare authorities; trying to mother effectively while negotiating poverty, racism, and violence; and trying to mother effectively while doing work that is seen as illegal and is sometimes dangerous.

We define the dominant ideals of motherhood as the commonsense ideas, images, and practices that construct what “good” motherhood is. These ideals of motherhood are “commonsense” because they are expected and exalted by the courts, the media, and dominant society, in such a way that they hardly appear to be ideals at all: to many they seem like natural requirements of motherhood (Hall, 1981; Kline, 1993; Hugill, 2010). It is seen as “natural” for mothers to be wholly self-sacrificing, to embody purity, and to live happily within, and strive towards, the nuclear family form (Kline, 1993). What mothers can do and look like, and who can be a “good mother” is seen as given by Nature. These ideals of motherhood are the “constellation” of ideas and practices about mothering upon which women’s lives are judged and which shape the choices women make (Kline, 1993: 310).

I had four children, they all went into care and I just continued to stay out on the streets. Like I... I stopped for a while because I thought this... you know, my... my family was a priority; I need to take care of my kids. But then it was always a constant battle with my husband and fighting and ... and I had phoned Children Services because I really needed support and they came in the home, they saw how abusive he was and they said it was not a safe place for my kids and took them, and that was my excuse to go back out there again.

- Edmonton participant

These ideals of motherhood are not natural, but are a product of a society that values certain forms of mothering at the expense of others, and in Canada, this has meant that dominant ideals of motherhood systematically dismantle Indigenous mothering practices (Kline, 1993; Bedard Mzinegiizhigo-Kwe, 2006). The courts impose these values when they remove children from their family homes and put them into institutions and the foster and child welfare systems. Many mothers and family members we spoke to highlighted family disruptions and trauma caused by child welfare’s involvement with their families. A mother whose daughter was apprehended critiques the child welfare system and describes her struggles to overcome intergenerational abuse:

Participant: Children Services... it’s a different kind of abuse in that system. You know? As a result of me and my history, you know, and in my children being abused in the system, I have a nineteen year old that’s out there smoking that in crack and you know, working, and pregnant and... you ... what do I do? She’s not going to listen to me. So there’s a pattern right.

Interviewer: What do you think she needs?

P: Well, I don’t know what she needs. All I know is she... [laugh] she needs to be off the street. You know? Like her needs could be different from mine. The biggest thing I know she needs love. . . . There’s days that I feel powerless right? But if I’m not right with me how can I be right with her? Biggest thing she needs love, she needs someone there who’s going to be able to talk with her and I can’t chase her now. But it does affect the family hugely. (Edmonton Participant)

These systems are given the privilege and responsibility of raising children and all too often they fail in this task, tearing apart families and leaving children vulnerable

to abuse. Many of the mothers, grandmothers, and aunties that we spoke with believed that meeting the requirements of the dominant ideals of motherhood was neither desirable nor possible. Furthermore, even when mothers worked hard to achieve the ideals imposed upon them, their mothering acts were not recognized because child welfare workers assumed that being a sex worker and being a mother were roles that could not co-exist. When we returned to Winnipeg to share these findings, participants stated that they would like it if child welfare workers would listen to them. Participants in the event claimed that they try to explain their lives to workers, to tell workers what would actually work for them, but workers seem to think they know best, and seem uninterested in listening. Some women pointed out that even when both mothers and children were doing well, past or present involvement in sex work erased the positives. One woman shared this story:

They apprehended my son then. And when they a... when I went through that again, it just triggered everything all over again. . . . 'cause we'd had six years of, you know, no one at the school knew I even had a drug problem, let alone I was a little hooker. Like no one knew anything, they thought that we had the perfect home and yet, you know, Child Welfare and their... you know . . . whatever they do over there decided it was better that he was with a, you know, foster family then with me, even though they don't... the interviewer said they'd never seen such a well spoken, well mannered, well groomed, articulate young man at six years old. And my argument to them was 'Well then, you know, he didn't get to be that way in raised in crack pipes and needles. And seeing as I'm a single parent, it's probably due to the fact that I was a pretty damn good mom. You know?' (Edmonton Participant)

As this woman's story exemplifies, many of the mothers we spoke with were acutely aware of being stigmatized and perceived as unable to provide for their children. Most were living in a real paradox: they worked in sex work in order to provide for their children – but because they worked in sex work, they were very vulnerable to their children being apprehended by child welfare authorities. One woman in Calgary shares:

They are there for their children. They're not there for themselves, you know, like their kids are the ones that are, you know, getting the clothes, getting the food, getting... you know.

Being denied the identity of Mother

Mothers who work in sex work experience discrimination and stigma in particular ways, including being denied the right to mother or the right to identify as a mother, as one woman from Calgary describes:

One of the nurses actually said 'Leave, you're not needed here. She's better without you here.' And some of the nurses were really cruel, really cruel. I get it now and I understand and I'm trying to make a difference that way too. There was two nurses who were really kind to me thankfully. So I see how women give up and walk away and abandon their babies. I see... I see why, 'cause its too hard to chin up and admit to your wrongs and say 'I'm still worth something. I'm still her mother.' [crying] You know? So I slept in the hallway of the hospital for eleven

days and, and tried to feed her every time I could and ahh... just really fought hard for that eleven days and then they took her to foster care. And I didn't see her for a little while. [crying] Yeah we fought really hard, I ... I stayed and slept on the floor in the hallway so I can make all her feedings.

The denial of this woman's right to the identity of mother speaks to how some social locations are seen as more fit for motherhood than others, leading to the present moment where, in Marlee Kline's words, "motherhood is better conceptualized as a privilege than a right" (1993: 313). Mothers in our project, like the story above, describe similar experiences of discrimination and unfair treatment. Child welfare workers in particular had difficulty seeing sex workers as entitled to motherhood and often did not recognize or value women's mothering acts. As we heard from women when we returned to Winnipeg to present our findings and gather feedback, apprehension at birth is common, leaving women with no opportunity to parent. Women work hard to establish themselves as good mothers: set themselves up in lots of programs; work hard at being good parents; "jump through [child welfare] hoops" – all to no avail. What is more, child welfare timelines are experienced as unrealistic and harsh. One participant commented, "child welfare is residential school cloaked in another cloth". Related to this was the comment that residential school interfered with parenting and connections to teachings that it is women – mothers – who will bring the "backbone" back to communities.

"If my children lived through my addiction, why can't they live through my recovery?"

- Winnipeg event participant

Many mothers expressed confusion about the child welfare system, their rights within this system, and the reasoning behind child apprehensions. This was reiterated in a group discussion in Winnipeg where it was raised that child welfare's motto of "we keep families together" is contrary to the experiences of current and former sex workers. One woman stated "they are pulling our families apart". When it is learned that a mother is a sex worker, very few child welfare workers try to preserve their families – one worker took her client by the hand to a sex worker support program and made sure she got attached to the program – but most workers are not like this. Faced with exclusion from the idealized view of "good mothering" and subjected to coercion to conform to these ideals in order to keep their children, the mothers we spoke with engaged in many resistant, creative, and strategic mothering actions.

Decolonizing through Motherhood

Indigenous communities practice traditions of mothering that are rooted in egalitarian and communal worldviews, and mothering continues to be an empowering role for many Indigenous women (Lavell & Lavell-Harvard, 2006). Mothers that we spoke with redefined motherhood through challenging colonialism in their day-to-day acts of raising their children, as demonstrated by one woman from Calgary:

And I don't want them to be men like the kind of men I know so the only way I'm learning to break that cycle is to go and pray ... like in our culture, you know? Like take them to pow-wows and you know, and I'm trying to show them the pride I guess, you

know in their people rather than you know like look pitiful on them. . . . I don't know how I'm going do it you know, like, but I just try every day. (Calgary Participant)

This mother resists the constant onslaught of discrimination and negative images of Indigenous peoples. She teaches her children to have pride in themselves through love and day-to-day actions of decolonization.

Strengthening the family

Mothering had a significant impact on many women we interviewed. Women told us that becoming pregnant, having children, and being a mother significantly influenced decisions to transition out of sex work. Many saw mothering as giving their lives shape and purpose, leading us to conclude that maintaining and supporting connections between mothers and their children, whatever form these connections might take, can be of utmost importance. Most of those we interviewed (sex workers, family members of sex workers, and sex workers who had transitioned out and were working as service providers) emphasized the importance of keeping families together. One woman described how separation from her children contributed to her remaining in street sex work and drug use:

Participant: I think there needs to more connection with mothers and their children. But I think there needs to be like something where women are more united with their children rather than like apart, you know, because it makes it harder. Everybody has kids you know and then they take their children and then they have . . . there's no point in trying to better yourself you know and find a different life.

We believe that we bear a responsibility for this mother and her children, and all the many mothers, aunties, and grandmas who shared their stories. We bear a responsibility to think critically about our assumptions about motherhood and about sex work and to work hard to strengthen, rather than destroy, the family networks of mothers in sex work.

Mothering strategically

In recognizing that the dominant ideals of motherhood were inaccessible and undesirable, many of the women we spoke with engaged in strategic mothering acts that defied idealized conceptions of mothering and challenged the perceived incompatibility between motherhood and sex work. One of the women we spoke with clearly rejected the idea that sex work and motherhood are incompatible:

I don't think because I'm in a sexual way, it's not my. . . my compassion and my love for them hasn't changed, if anything it's probably grown stronger. (Calgary Participant)

In this woman's life, motherhood is about compassion and love and being a sex worker has strengthened, rather than deteriorated, her ability to be compassionate and loving. This idea was repeated at our dissemination event in Winnipeg where one mother stated she felt she was a better mother because of her experience, that being in sex work

means you have the “intent to protect your children at all costs because of what you experienced”. Another woman retained a strong identity as a mother while working:

In my eyes, as much as I was being a bad parent, 'cause when I was doing it, 'cause obviously if I wasn't they would have been gone. They were still fed, they were still clothed, they were still bathed. They still had the necessities, they just didn't have me, as a whole, you know? So, my love has going... has gotten stronger for them because I still have them and I'm able to hold onto them, there was never a time where we were separated or you know. That... tearing that bond. Like it's very strong. Like, my children love, like they... my son is a little momma's boy and so is my baby and even my oldest is still... like she wants a hug, she says 'I love you, I love you', like its, you know. My son, that's his new little phrase, like 'I love' he says it about 10 million times to me! ~laughing~ (Calgary Participant)

The words of this mother from Calgary offer insight into the many skills and values that working in sex work has when it comes to being a mother. For some of the mothers whose daughter's were in sex work, the approach to skills was different. For some mothers whose daughters worked as sex workers, supporting their daughters meant gaining new knowledge and understanding about their daughters' realities and reorienting their ideas about motherhood in order to build resilient connections with their children. Some mothers turned to their daughters for support in learning how to best support them. In this excerpt, a mother describes how she gained a new language and understanding of her daughter's life through patience, compassion, and persistently engaging with her daughter's day-to-day reality.

She was 16, she was staying with her boyfriend and they were doing a lot of things I didn't know, like different drugs, how bad it was until she got um... I didn't know how to help her, I was trying to help her and I didn't know what was going on. I guess I knew what was going on but I just didn't have the knowledge to talk to her about anything and I uh learned is when she talked to me about "you don't know how this is, you don't know how that is." Well I don't. Teach me; tell me things. "Well I don't feel comfortable talking to you." So I didn't know what to do so I had to ask about her friends and different people to try to get an understanding on (indiscernible) and then when I kind of related to her that's when we started talking and helping her to try to get off the drugs and alcohol – to get off the street – to get her home, uh to teach her how. I don't want to push her because I'm afraid that if I keep doing that she'll go back to the drugs and blaming everything on me. Which she's smart; she won't do that. You never know so I want to make sure I don't overstep my boundaries with her and lose her back to the streets and back to the drugs so I have to be very careful about that. (Regina Participant)

Mothering the whole community

While many of those we spoke to have inclusive families and extended family networks, others made their families within their street sex work community and worked hard to nurture, teach, and share equally with all the people in this family. Taking up a mothering role in a sex work community is important not only to the people in that “street family” but also to the biological families who cannot or will not support their family members entrenched in sex work. Caring and listening in non-

judgmental ways were central qualities in these street families, in part because many people had never experienced acceptance from their biological families. Mothering within a street community involves all of the techniques and challenges of other forms of mothering including keeping the family safe and standing as a leader. One woman we spoke with in Winnipeg fulfills a mothering role for many people, as she shares:

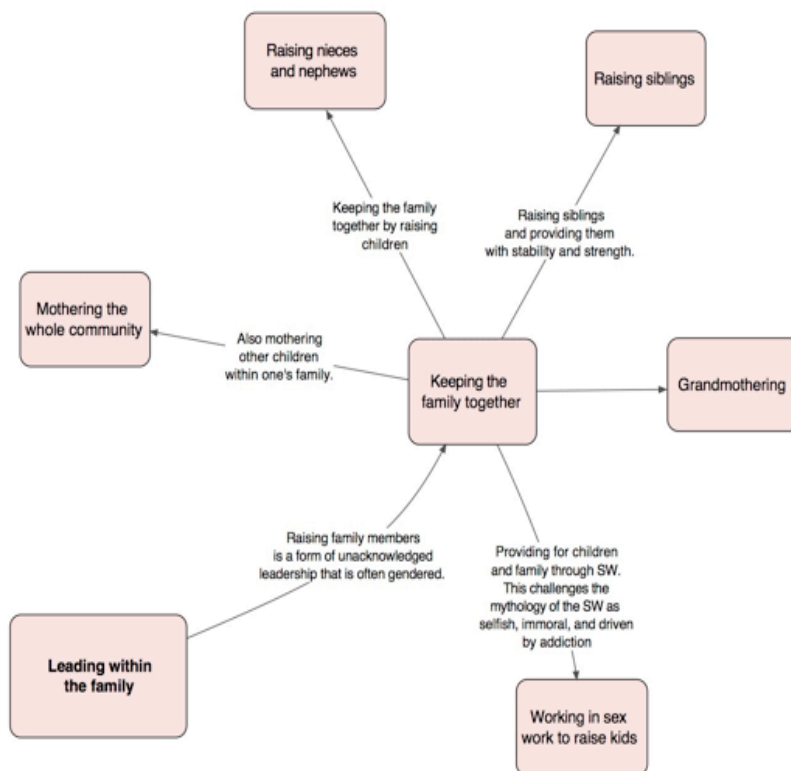
Participant: *I've seen a lot of things. I've defended a lot of girls. Even though we're mad at each other at some point if we're a leader we'll still help. And kind of keep an eye on who's getting into what car....*

Interviewer: *So it sounds like you've got quite a mothering role.*

P: *Oh yeah. I had those instincts already 'cause I was raising my siblings. Like they always called me momma, which is now I'm momma. I don't mind it at all. I'm more happier to be like this.*

Mapping Mothering Connections

The “mind map” on the next page was created during our analysis of the data. The text inside the red squares is a “code” which we used to connect and understand many different realities and experiences across different interviews. When we read a story that was connected with the code, for example, “mothering the whole community”, we would connect that code with that section of text. By doing this we were able to see all of the pieces of text that were related to that theme all at once. This mind map demonstrates some of the interconnections between the codes.



Family Relationships

Key Messages

- Participants defined family very broadly, in order to include all sorts of families: biological, foster, adoptive, chosen, and street families.
- A large proportion of participants not only had family members involved in street sex work but had also worked on the street at some point in their lives. This was particularly true for Indigenous families, who existed at the intersection of poverty, lack of opportunity and systemic colonial violence.
- Participants came from a range of socio-economic classes, ethnic backgrounds, and family circumstances yet the vast majority reported that their families of origin were at some point impacted by poverty.
- Some women felt forced to live what they considered to be a double life, with a divider between their sex work and other aspects of their lives or identities. This was particularly true for mothers.
- Some participants had experienced various forms of abuse within their families and foster families, including in a few cases being ‘turned out’ (forced into street sex work) by family members. For these women, protecting their children as well as other children from experiencing violence and abuse was particularly important.
- Many families exist in a grey zone of unspoken tolerance towards their sex worker relatives, somewhere between acceptance and expulsion.
- Many participants identified family relationships as essential to transitioning out of street sex work.
- A sustained practice of “just being there” for sex working family members generated long-term nets of safety and trust.

When we first conceived of this project, we defined family very broadly, in order to include all sorts of families: biological, foster, adoptive, chosen, and street families. We asked participants to describe whom they considered family and all of these categories of family were represented in interviews. Family was defined less by one’s actual relation to another than by a relationship *with* another. At the same time, participants

You know what they, I would consider them more my family then any family I'd ever had. And you know even being away from it if I went back it would be like family coming home for Christmas. They love you for who you are not what you are. They watch your back. They can feel you. Yeah. They can view you and even if you can't see them they can see you. We were family. If you needed something we would get it for you. You didn't have to ask cause we were all together and we already knew.

- Winnipeg Participant

explained that their family histories were fragmented by a number of forces including violence, a family member's drug use or increased street entrenchment, or interventions from systems including the police and child welfare. In the face of much instability and loss, family relationships were characterized by a shared sense of "being in it together" or being there for one another in whatever ways possible.

The women we spoke with came from a range of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds and family circumstances. The vast majority, however, reported that their families of origin were at some point impacted by poverty. Again, this should not be viewed as a finding that poverty contributes to involvement in sex work, but rather as an example of how structural inequities frequently come together to restrict the choices of women, particularly poor, Indigenous, and racialized women.

It is important to point out that poor families do not equate to "bad" families. Many of the ways family members demonstrated care had little to do with money and a great deal to do with suspending judgment and offering family members' compassion. The act of 'just being there' came in a variety of forms, not all of them immediately recognizable as care in the moment. 'Being there-ness' can be seen as a practice of developing a new sense of understanding about what help means and how it can be accepted.

Intergenerational working families

When the research project was originally developed, we imagined we would draw participants from two separate groups: women who had been or were currently involved in street sex work and those who had family members involved in street sex work. It became immediately clear that this distinction could not be made. A large proportion of participants not only had family members involved in street sex work, but had themselves worked on the street. Involvement in sex work was an intergenerational experience. This was particularly true for Indigenous families.

The media interprets intergenerational sex work involvement as either a self-perpetuating cycle of deficiencies in family functioning or as a predestined path that leads Indigenous women to the streets (Janzen et al., 2013; Strega et al., 2014). We believe that these classed and raced assumptions must be resisted. The mainstream media's construction of sex work as a self-sustaining 'Native problem' displaces historicized accounts of colonialism and genocidal practices such as residential schools with explanations based on imagined racial characteristics. For example an article appearing in *The Vancouver Sun* bore this lengthy title: "Danielle LaRue never had chance to succeed; A childhood full of pain and abuse led her to drug addiction, working the streets and an unsolved death – a fate that's been all too common among First Nations children in the city" (Bramham, March 1, 2008, C.1).

The newspaper article details the life of LaRue's father, Norman. We learn that Norman's life was little more than a chain of addiction-fueled violent episodes; the repercussions of which were that Danielle and her sister Kim ended up in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, where Danielle was ultimately tragically murdered. While the article briefly glosses over Norman's abuse in residential school and child welfare involvement in the family, the overall message to the reader is that Indigenous families are caught in a fatalistic cycle of violence, addiction and prostitution. Participants'

stories show that it is not family influences or structure that caused intergenerational sex work involvement but rather the isolation and segregation common to the intersections of Canada's colonial reserve system, rural poverty and patriarchal power relations. The impact of poverty and the role of society in alleviating poverty was explained by this family member:

Good thing I was working in the inner city too, there was... I've met five generations. Five generations I've seen on the street... It's up to society I guess.

For another woman, a combination of lack of money and opportunity, and the close proximity of the sex trade led her to the street:

And I needed money right? So I didn't know what else to do so my cousin was a working girl right, so I got curious and I went with her one day. And the money was nice... And then I started hanging around... I ran into a couple childhood friends who were working in the street too, like they were into dope. (Regina Participant)

The experiential women we spoke to who knew that their mothers, siblings or step-siblings, cousins, aunts or grandmothers had worked in sex work had a range of feelings about this knowledge. Responses ranged from heartbreak (particularly when the younger sibling or generation was working) to curiosity. One woman in Winnipeg had both responses at once:

Participant: For instance a lot of street... sex trade workers women have younger children. And you know, I've seen it, thank god it never happened to me but... where the mom's and daughters are actually go out and work together.... I think the main focus should be on like, families because a lot of daughters are going to be curious... I think for myself, if I had seen my mom, you know, being all glamorous and whatever, it'd probably give me some kind of uhm... how do you say it...

Interviewer: Incentive... or?

P: Not incentive.... Like wanting to know... I'd like... I can't... I know there's a word for it but I can't think of it right now.

I: Like curiosity?

P: That's it, it would make me curious.

P: Like 'Wow, look at her, she's so pretty. Look at those pretty clothes', and 'Maybe I should dress up and do this', you know".

Sometimes learning that other members of the family worked at one time provided a sort of shared understanding between women in the family. There was not necessarily comfort or simple acceptance in learning this, but there could be new and important ways to relate to shared experiences. One woman from Edmonton made the distinction in this way:

Interviewer: So you said your daughter got involved when she was about sixteen?

Participant: Yeah.

I: How did you find out?

P: She told us later on... I was wondering where she was getting money from 'cause she was like; she'd just take off from her foster mother. And tell her that she was getting money from us. 'Where's your money from?' And like, 'Oh my friend'. I said, 'Your friend just gives you money? You're probably working the streets eh?' She goes 'No I'm not'. She kept on denying it. 'Don't lie'. After that I was like, 'You know I worked the streets too'. And then she wasn't... like she wasn't scared to tell me now, 'Yeah Mom, I go out too'.

Another woman from Edmonton described a sense of relief in knowing that her grandmother was somehow involved in sex work at one time:

But it seemed like it didn't bother her, she started to actually... she lived that lifestyle when she was younger, she had a taste of that lifestyle. Yeah, prostitution and all that. She goes 'Don't feel that, you know, that you are hiding something from me because I know exactly what's going on.' I'm like 'What do you mean?' 'Ahh...' And she would spark up a cigarette. And she would tell me about the time down in Regina, one of the guys she was playing around with and I'd be like 'Oh my god, you were like that?' 'Oh you have no idea.' She wasn't a prostitute but she knew how to bring the guys in and get what she wanted I guess. [laugh] So it's pretty [Inaudible]. So it was kinda like... you know, kind of a relief that I didn't have to hide so much from her.

For this woman, knowing that her grandmother had “been there” at one point made it possible that her grandmother could empathize with her life circumstances in an unspoken way. The decision to share this aspect of her past was also a deliberate move on the part of her grandmother. By saying “I know exactly what’s going on”, her grandmother is showing she is not someone who can be deceived. The above interaction is one example of how families engage in a shared meaning making regarding a family member’s involvement in street sex work. In the next section, we discuss when and how families come to know a member of their family is working and how they respond to such knowing.

Coming from a Mennonite background, umm sex is very taboo in my family my mom has never talked to me about things like that, it was always thought of as wrong and dirty... I mean just even experiencing what I've experienced I think I've become very comfortable with my own sexuality and I try to be open and honest with my daughter when it comes to her sexuality... I haven't told her. She doesn't know, umm I imagine that one day I will tell her. She doesn't know about my drug addiction either; she knows that I've been absent a lot. She may know more than I think she knows... I know she doesn't know about my using and she definitely doesn't know about my prostitution and, and I may tell her one day.

- Calgary Participant

Telling and not telling

For many women disclosing involvement in sex work was not possible. As we highlighted in our discussion on mothering, coming forward as a sex worker could mean losing one's children to family members or to the child welfare system. Some of

the women we spoke to had been expelled from their families after the families became aware of their work. Some women felt forced to live what they considered to be a double life. Living this way was often both ethically and practically difficult, and for some women meant living in a constant state of paranoia. A woman in Calgary put it this way:

It was very interesting, especially being younger, it was, you know... I think it was as I got older that it became... I became a mother then and all of a sudden you were separating two lives it didn't feel right... and then that's when the depression came in and the anxiety and the stress.

A number of women conveyed the stress that came with keeping their lives separate and easing the suspicion of their families. As one woman in Regina shares:

I worked the streets in [name of town] and I'd come home with cash – I'd come home in the middle of the night, and he'd ask me: 'Where have you been?'. I'd be like, 'I went out for coffee' you know?

Another participant in Calgary negotiated a similar balance:

I was working. I think they really started to see that something was going on then at that point because one minute I'd be cooking supper and the next minute I'd be totally made up; fake fur, going out for money right? (Calgary Participant)

Despite the guilt that many of the women we spoke with carried about living double lives, the imperative to hide their involvement in sex work was not motivated by selfishness or dishonesty. Instead, non-disclosure was a way of protecting their families from the stigma attached to street sex work. When asked if she thought telling her son about her street life would impact their relationship, one woman responded with the following:

I don't know if he'd think any different. I may be... because you know, I keep my sixteen year old nephew... his mom was on the street for a really long time and he'd get teased, you know, because everybody knows everybody in a small community, and it really hurt him. (Calgary Participant)

Because the label “prostitute” and related terms like “sex worker” and “hooker” are so strongly associated with negative images, and because being assigned this label has to power to define one’s entire identity, some women hid their involvement in sex work to protect their identity as mothers, daughters or sisters. As one woman who had a very close relationship to her mother, shared:

I go upstairs everyday and say good morning to my mom and check in with her and uhm... a lot of boundaries have had to be put up in that relationship though I don't really talk a lot about what I did for survival. Just because I don't... there's... there's no need to hurt my mother that way 'cause that's all that that would do. She has an idea on what I was doing. (Calgary Participant)

Interestingly however, sometimes where mothers *did* tell their children about their experiences in sex work, it was *also* commonly a protective move. Some mothers who made a conscious decision to tell their children about their street work saw it as a powerful way to use first-hand experience to communicate about safer drug and alcohol use or safer sex. As a woman from Calgary put it:

But when she gets older, damn straight I'm telling her. 'Cause I think knowledge is power. 'Cause with alcohol- I know she doesn't ever want to drink [...] 'cause she thinks alcohol is what kept mommy away for a long time. Alcohol and drugs.

Like the woman above, in the excerpt below another Calgary mother sees a way to put her experience to a productive use in her parenting.

I mean just even experiencing what I've experienced I think I've become very comfortable with my own sexuality and I try to be open and honest with my daughter when it comes to her sexuality [...] I learned a lot through, through working, learned a lot about who I am and what I'm willing to put up with and, and you know what my boundaries are [...] um, so I just try to pass those things on to her. I'm sure one day I'll tell her.

In both of these examples, the mothers believed it best to wait until their children were old enough to understand the circumstances surrounding their involvement in street sex work. For these women, making the decision to disclose one's street work occurred on a developmental timeline that worked best for the family, while allowing them to maintain some control over their own life narrative. One woman explained this with absolute clarity:

When I first became incarcerated, umm, I was hearing stories about like, you know, people were telling my daughters like, that their mom was a prostitute and whatever. So I started writing my kids letters and at the time they were thirteen and fourteen. So I started writing them letters and I explained things in my life. And how I became involved in the sex... being a sex trade worker and that I wasn't proud of what I did but I'm also not going to hide it from people either. And I chose to be honest with my kids because I'd rather them hear it from me than somebody else. (Winnipeg Participant)

In at least three instances, the media thwarted this exercise of representational authority. For one woman who was filmed without permission as a teenager, the image continues to follow her like a shadow of her life on the street.

Participant: On the video, yeah and they're still playing it you know and it was like when I was sixteen, so yeah, that's [number] years ago.

Interviewer: Did they ever ask you for your permission?

P: No, no, no, no. Uhm... just... I... they were doing a scene on prostitution and I was a prostitute out there so I was fair game I guess [...] it still plays and I am just waiting for my daughter to actually see, you know? (Calgary Participant)

Making sense of sex work in the family

There are many reasons to never disclose one's experience in sex work to family members. For example, women told us about being cast out of their families after their families became aware of their experience in street sex work. Many families exist in a grey zone of unspoken tolerance towards their sex worker relatives, somewhere between acceptance and expulsion. This 'not-quite' acceptance was often demonstrated by tacit actions taken by family members. For example, after meeting an in-law at a

family funeral, this woman learned that her father had been excluding her from functions with the extended family:

I found out something too, I was invited to my brother's house for supper, barbecue and things like that. My dad never told me that. He always said 'oh no he just wants me and mom'. But my dad was the first to accept everything more or less eh. So that was weird. (Calgary Participant)

This tolerance "grey zone" was also conveyed by the ways in which family members made sense of and communicated sex work in relation to their family's reality. One woman's mother was in complete denial about her street work despite being made aware on numerous occasions.

Um she kind of just ignores it. She like I've had people phone her and ask her oh well does your daughter work in the sex trade? And my mom will go 'no, she doesn't. She just knows people who have so she knows a lot about it'. And she just kind of shrugs off the idea that I'm working. Like the last couple of nights I haven't even gone home. Like I finally phoned my brother today and I'm like okay I'm not coming home. (Winnipeg Participant)

For this woman, her mother's lack of acknowledgement is a denial of her lived reality. For her that which is unsaid and for her mother, that which is unsayable is a powerful gauge of acceptance. This balance between knowing and not knowing about a family member's involvement in sex work was a common tension in interviews. The excerpt below is representative of this dynamic.

And this is the thing the women, like I said the men kind of know. My dad I know my dad knew for sure. Some of the women know and some of them just don't really talk about it. It's not there, it's not proper. It's not proper. It's not even talked about right. Some people like to remain completely naive. (Winnipeg Participant)

Intentional ignorance can also be understood as a safety mechanism for family members who have difficulty responding to the knowledge that their loved one is working in an area marked by violence. In many cases developing an open pathway of communication about a family member's work required a long process of mutual boundary setting. However, those family members who were able to suspend judgment and overcome panic proved to be a solid and often life-saving form of support for women both on the street and during their transition out of street sex work.

I don't wanna have to hide stuff and lie to them. 'Cause I did for a while and then when I started trippin' over my own lies and messing up it was like, they looked at me funny and then they said they're not believing me. So then when I quit the bullshit and I told them everything, there's nothing for them not to believe. And they do take what I say serious, like when I'm having a hard time or when I phone my Aunty and I say 'You know, I'm having a hard time 'cause I got no smokes or I'm running out of food or whatever. I'm going to have to go... and I have to go on a mission to [stroll].' And she's like 'No, don't do that!' 'Come over and we'll talk.' And we'll talk right and she'll, she'll give me something out of her own freezer and she'll give me some of her cigarettes and she'll keep me going so I won't have to go to the street. (Edmonton Participant)

Just being there

The family members we spoke to conveyed care for their family members who were in sex work in a wide variety of ways. From giving 'tough love', to attempting to intervene and 'rescue' their relatives from the streets, family members tried everything with varying results. While these overt and sometimes reactionary responses to protect loved ones are understandable, a sustained practice of 'just being there' for working family members generated longer-term nets of safety and trust. Among the women who identified financial help as a key form of support offered by their family, many noted that this meant all the more because of the sacrifice it involved. For some, it was that those giving were hardly in the position to do so. For others, it was that they recognized their family was giving in spite of their pre-established boundaries:

I scammed them for I hate to think how much money... different stories and lies and stuff over the years but umm, you know, they still help me a touch financially. (Edmonton Participant)

Finally, some women recognized that they had a family member who put their own relationships with family in jeopardy by continuing to provide them with financial support. As one woman in Calgary experienced:

And so behind her husband's back, my mom sent me an airplane ticket and brang me home.

Another participant in Winnipeg shared something similar:

... at times my mom and dad would fight a lot over me you know, cause dad would want to kick me out and mom won't. So it, it, it was rough, so it's rough, really rough.

Beyond material support, "just being there" included offering a safe place when things got really bad. Keeping the door open to a family member on the street is a way some families offered help in moments of crisis. Suspending judgment in order to be there for family also prevented a number of children from being apprehended by child welfare. A number of women reported that being able to be honest with family about where they were at in their addiction and street work allowed family to step in to take over primary care for children when they could no longer do it. Being there for family when needed was life-saving in a few circumstances. One woman called her brother in the middle of the night during a bad date. As their mother recounted:

Finally I guess she told my son, her brother, that where she was at and then my son called 911... they got that guy and brought her home and she was just crying and all shaken up. She said 'I won't do it again, I won't do it again'. (Edmonton Participant)

It is worth noting here that many of the women who were disappeared from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside were first reported missing by family members who were expecting a phone call or visit. Knowing that a family member was there to expect and receive a phone call was a common example of how just being there was interpreted as care. One mother cultivated this act of being there by establishing a toll-free phone number so that her daughter could check in from anywhere at any time. Another woman knew that her mother expected her to call every few hours while she was out working. Although it is undoubtedly punishing in every sense to watch a loved

one continue to engage in dangerous work, families who struggled to keep communication open had a sense of mutual responsibility for one another. Women checked in to prevent their families from undue worry, just as families held working women accountable to their family relationships. The story from Winnipeg featured below captures that sense of mutual responsibility.

My mom used to see me, catch me working out there. She'd come and say– she'd come and give me a donut, a coffee– because I'm stubborn I would not listen to anybody. That I was, I was ashamed, yes, to see my mom driving around okay? Like, but you know what? You're used to it now and then I got used to it. 'Mom, what are you doing here? Go home... [and she said] 'Well my girl, you should go home too'. I will.

The seemingly small act of bringing coffee and donuts to her daughter is also a demonstration of compassion and care on this mother's part. A mutual concern is exchanged between mother and daughter in the desire for either party to come in off the streets. Responsibilities to and for family were the most commonly identified motivation for transitioning out of street sex work and/or addressing drug or alcohol addiction.

What Ethical and Effective Service Looks Like

Key Messages

- The most commonly identified gaps in services and supports were:
 - Housing: Many participants identified the lack of transitional housing, and the high cost of rental housing, as significant barriers to living safely and/or transitioning.
 - Culturally appropriate services: Many Indigenous participants wanted services that reflected and supported their culture. Some participants identified engagement with culture as a significant piece of their healing.
 - Child welfare: Participants wanted sex worker services to offer support and advocacy, as most interactions with child welfare authorities were negative and stigmatizing.
 - Kinship care arrangements (grandmothers or other extended family caring for children) worked well, and participants wanted more support for these arrangements, rather than foster care.
- Participants favoured programs and resources run (or mostly run) by sex workers for sex workers.
 - Unconditional support, and an ethic of acceptance, is essential in services. This acceptance often draws on shared experiences.
 - Service provision must be based on the understanding that transitioning out of sex work is a process that might include many exits and re-entries.
- Participants described feeling most connected to services that “felt like family.” The desire to experience this kind of relationship within services and agencies was expressed more than any other.
- Outreach services were identified as particularly important and useful for learning about available programs and resources, connecting to support workers, and receiving harm reduction (e.g. safer sex) supplies.
- Resources and co-ordination are required for sex worker communities to come together to plan and carry out goals, objectives, and programming.
- Specificity and unique service options are essential: each person’s situation calls for specific, contextual, and responsive solutions. Such approaches take time to think through and articulate and must involve all participants as equals.

In this section we consider what ethical and effective service looks like in the words of the women we interviewed. We've chosen to frame the relationship to service as "looks like" because we want to foreground how the people we spoke with expressed their experiences of services rather than the way these services may have been imagined and implemented by the service providers.

The participants in our project had vastly different experiences with social service providers, sex worker agencies, and other community projects. From the stories we heard, it is clear that these programs operate within the broader political and cultural arena and that some of the inequities within larger social life are reproduced in service provision. For example, some of the Indigenous women we spoke with shared experiences of intense racism and cultural regulation when attempting to access mainstream White agencies. One woman we spoke with in Calgary described her culture being banned from a treatment centre when she wasn't allowed to smudge, in response to this exclusion, she said to us:

Yeah, so I couldn't even... you know, respect my culture in this house that's supposed to help me.

Needing experiential workers

The need for experiential workers and for sex worker specific services has been well documented throughout Canada and internationally, as have the abilities of these agencies to provide effective services to sex workers. Agencies run by and for sex workers can disrupt the savior complex and engender authority over one's own life. The message from research and experience is both simple and profound: sex workers are the experts of their own lives and embody many different understandings of the world that are rich and centrally useful in supporting other sex workers. The value of lived experience is something we have built into the research project from its inception: all of the people in our project have experiences with sex work in our own lives and in the lives of our family and friends. Despite the overwhelmingly positive function of sex-worker run agencies, these organizations continue to be under-funded and tragically, even close their doors, as PEERS Vancouver did in February 2012.

They just don't know. That's like, being in recovery that's like trying to describe to somebody who's been sober their whole life, what it's like to be in recovery. They just don't get it. It's just not there. And that happens in recovery cause these counselors and stuff you can tell the difference of those who have an addiction and those who don't. They don't get it. The one that haven't, they're the ones that need to sit back and watch.

- Calgary Participant

Resources and co-ordination are required for sex worker communities to come together to plan and carry out goals, objectives, and the programming. Throughout our research, it was very evident that the priority should be for sex workers and others who have experience with 'street life', rather than outsiders, to identify the factors that contribute to their marginalization, and identify what services would be most useful. The need for experiential workers and agencies was both affirmed and detailed by the

people we interviewed, as one woman in Edmonton shares what would be most useful to see in service provision:

People who have maybe experienced or have some sort of knowledge in the street life. That would be able to support somebody unconditionally and even if they fall at times they're still going to support that and help them. I mean a lot of people gave up on me or called me down and that discourages me right and it just makes me want to go back out there. . . . Just understanding... I... its... that's the best thing that I could say because you know we all need somebody to talk to right, and be straight dead honest with it.

Unconditional support

The need for unconditional support is directly related to the need for experiential workers, because the centre of unconditional support is an ethic of acceptance and this acceptance often draws on shared experiences. There are other parts of unconditional support too, including treating every single person with complex empathy. Empathy is the capacity to recognize and respect the feelings that someone else is expressing. When the word complex is added to an understanding of empathy this means validating that each person's experience is irreducible and must be considered on its own terms.

Getting to a point of understanding where these relations of complex empathy can exist takes time and is a part of what we heard again and again in the research, that transitioning out of sex work is a *process*, as one woman in Edmonton shares:

But it's just that unconditional support. . . . I come back and I say 'Fuck, I couldn't... I couldn't... I went out, but I'm going to try again.' And somebody that's just going to be unconditionally there for you and say 'Okay, well you fell, that's okay. Now is the time... like, it's time to move on.' Right. 'Like that's okay, don't let that drag you down.' Because I think a lot of what my problem was and I think other girls too is that they're people give up on them right.

While transitioning out of sex work is a process, sometimes one that extends over years and involves many entries and exits, current funding structures that require agencies to produce short-term results do not allow for much more than Band-Aid solutions. So while actually working in a process-oriented way may not be feasible for many service workers, what might be more possible is working with the acceptance and respect for each individual story. In practice, this means that services for sex workers must be grounded in dignity and human rights, rather than a rhetoric of morality and repentance.

Feeling like family

The culmination of both of the already mentioned elements of ethical and respectful service provision is that agencies "feel like family" to the workers who use them. The desire to experience this kind of relationship within services and agencies was expressed more than any other. We acknowledge that the kind of intimacy and familiarity that is an essential part of relationships that "feel like family" could be seen as crossing the boundaries of ethical practice in many social service situations. Similar criticisms have been raised about practices in Indigenous communities, where many

social workers operate with very different ideas about boundaries and aim to build life-long relationships with the people they work with. In these settings, ethical practice means being open to the mutability of the boundary between the social worker and the people they work with and to build community and reciprocity in life-long unions.

We do not pretend to provide an answer on how to work out these complicated ethical questions. Each situation calls for specific, contextual, and responsive solutions that take time to think through and articulate and that involve all participants as equals. What we can share is one woman's testimony on what services that feel like family look like and what profound effects these agencies can have:

The reason why I keep coming back here to Métis Child and Family Services was because of the love that you feel. And I think that's the biggest thing that's missing. The relationships that people build with you and then you know they care and support you and you never give up right? Whereas somebody who doesn't know you and they call you once a week. Just to have low conversation 'How you doing?' Because that's their job. It's really hard to stay connected with them and you give up on that program. And you walk away because you think why bother? (Edmonton Participant)

Media

Key Messages

- Participants criticized the media's overly simplistic and inaccurate portrayals of the lives of sex workers. Media reports have been hurtful and damaging to friends and family members of sex workers, in particular the coverage pertaining to murdered and disappeared women.
- Sex workers and family members had a range of experiences with the media: some utilized the media to challenge the stigma of sex work while others were marginalized in the media through unauthorized and demeaning usage of their image.
- Some participants implicated the media in the silences surrounding widespread and systemic violence against street sex workers. The sentiment expressed was "too little, too late".
- Participants were aware of highly raced, classed and gendered ideas about sex work that are widely circulated in print media. These ways of talking about street sex work encourage readers to see street sex workers as 'Other' – in other words, as significantly different from them and people they know.
- Media characterizations can lead readers to blame sex workers themselves for their situations, including the violence routinely enacted against them.

We began the "Someone's Mother, Sister or Daughter" project by analyzing western Canadian print media coverage of street sex work and the families of street sex workers (see Janzen et al., 2013; Strega et al., 2014, for discussion of this analysis). We were especially interested to see whether the public statements made by many families, along with public vigils and other events organized by families and community members, had impacted media stereotypes of sex workers and their families. Consistent with research by other Canadian researchers (Jiwani & Young, 2006; Pratt, 2005; Lowman, 2000), we found that print media continue to circulate highly raced, classed and gendered ideas about sex work. These ways of talking about street sex work encourage readers to see street sex workers as 'Other' – i.e., as significantly different from them and people they know. While mainstream media sometimes acknowledged aspects of Canada's colonial history, such as land dispossession, the residential school system and the 'Sixties scoop', these and other significant structural factors (such as poverty) that contribute to street sex work involvement were very much in the background if they appeared at all. Media accounts pointed instead to individual psychological explanations, predominantly family dysfunction and substance misuse: leading readers to blame sex workers themselves for their situations, including the violence routinely enacted against them.

In our interviews we asked if and how the media's representation of sex work had impacted the lives and family relationships of our participants. The people we

spoke to have a complex analysis of the media's power to represent their lives and the lives of their friends and family members. Some participants had direct experience interacting with the media, with both exploitative and empowering results. Consequently, some participants saw access to the media as a tool that has the potential to change public perceptions about sex work. During the interviews, both experiential women and their family members criticized the media's overly simplistic and inaccurate portrayal of the lives of sex workers. They also repeatedly implicated the media in the silences surrounding widespread and systemic violence against street sex workers. Overall, some of those we interviewed believed that the media could play a significant role in implementing positive social change for street sex workers.

Recognizing the unrecognizable

When asked if the media reporting about sex workers was accurate, the people we spoke to responded with a resounding 'no'. Women and family members recognized that what appears in the media is a skewed and inaccurate portrait of their daily realities. Media portrayals of sex workers as deviant criminals who transgress the boundaries of acceptable femininity, or as victims of tragic and inescapable events were critiqued as far too simplistic. Participants identified that sex work was covered in the media in such a superficial and misconstrued way that it became more fiction than news.

Often when we asked participants if they had read or seen anything in the media about street sex work they answered that they had not. When asked in a different way, however, it

soon became clear that participants had seen a great deal in the media but did not or could not reconcile this as coverage of their day-to-day realities. This phenomenon took place in the below interview with a Calgary woman:

Participant: *Like it's degrading. I haven't really seen anything honestly.*

Interviewer: *What about like you know in BC we have a serial killer and a lot of women went missing. Did you see that?*

P: *Yeah that pig farmer. Yeah. In Edmonton it's a bad too. A lot of prostitutes in dumpsters and outside farmer's fields [...] You know what? A lot of it is kept quiet. You don't hear a lot.*

It bothered... it bothers me... when I was pregnant, I had a girlfriend who had a bad date, she was an older lady, she'd been around for a while. I was pregnant with my son when this happened, she had a bad date and her guy, she gotten away, she was bruised, he had pulled out some of her hair, she had gotten away pretty clean, right. And she reported the bad date. And nothing was ever done about it until the guy killed a 15 year old girl. And then all of the sudden they wanted to bring charges against him for her, to keep him in longer, right. And that really upset me greatly. Because it was like here... here she is, prostitute or not, she's calling for help. She's telling you that there's this guy that tried to kill her. And you're not doing anything 'cause she's a prostitute, not putting it... and of course when the 15-year-old girl dies from a normal family and she's front page paper. That bothers me.

- Calgary Participant

We believe that what at first appears as a contradiction (saying sex work is not represented and then qualifying this with a statement on how sex work is represented in a degrading way) is actually a complex process of describing the scene presented in the media from the context they are enmeshed in. We can describe this effect as like looking in a “distorted mirror” (Hugill, 2010), a process where an object or medium representing something (e.g., sex work or sex workers) misrepresents the image so completely that the story becomes unrecognizable, even to those being represented. In other words, people may not be able to answer the question, “What have you seen about sex work in the media?” because there is a wide discrepancy between the reality of sex work and how it is portrayed in the popular media. To put it yet another way, media discourses have shaped the public’s understanding of street sex work to the extent that those engaged in sex work cannot see themselves reflected in media accounts.

Another component of this ‘unrecognizability’ could be related to how media objectifies sex workers. The media constructs the figure of the street sex worker as a decontextualized and public body tethered to reality only through a lifetime of victimization. In this imagined state, she exists without ties to community, family or civil society, something we know from this study to be false. Constructed in this way, ‘the street sex worker’ is not rendered meaningful as a human, a person, or a citizen. Instead of a subject with agency, street sex workers occupying the pages of newspapers are objects. This objectification is partly achieved through headlines such as, “another sex worker slain” (Edmonton Journal, 2006, p. A.1). One Calgary woman reflected on how this process of objectification plays out differently across race and class to render racialized women’s lives void of human connections and of value.

Interviewer: *Like how the media portrays sex workers.*

Participant: *They don’t.*

I: *Okay. So tell me about that... why... what do you mean...*

P: *Well they don’t, they just sit there ‘Oh, a woman’s dead. They found a body wherever. She used to’... you know ‘do drugs and alcohol.’ What was it this one time I seen... in the paper, I can’t remember exactly what I di... it so infuriated me because one week a white lady had... had been found. And it was ‘Oh and her grieving mother.’ And later... you know a working woman was found the next month or somethin’. ‘Oh this lady was known to be a... a known drug user.’ What about her grieving mother? You know, it just... it sickened me. Its like what, so this woman just ‘cause she worked doesn’t have a mother, doesn’t have a daughter, it’s nobody’s sister. It’s just a nameless nobody? They got lost... and not... and you wonder why they stay out there?*

This woman’s outrage about the dehumanizing portrayal of sex workers is exacerbated by the racism that underpins the denial of “grievability” (being a person worthy of grief) (Butler, 2009) for lives lost on the street. Instead of someone thought of as worthy of mourning, sex workers are often portrayed by the media as inevitable targets of violence and ultimately death (Janzen et al., 2013; Strega et al., 2014). As the woman above points out, when women who work on the street are victimized, the media extracts them from the context in which they lived their lives. The sex worker written about in the headlines cannot be considered represented at all. Instead of news

about someone's life, it is news of no one's death. A Calgary participant reiterates this concept:

Interviewer: Yeah, so for your friend... like what do you think the media should've have done to make this story more representative of her life or give us a better idea?

Participant: Just represented her life period.

By refusing to acknowledge the media's coverage of sex work as such, the participants we spoke to were effectively rejecting the image in the distorted mirror. Repeatedly participants called for a more complex rendering of the shallow figure presented in the news. The empty image of a passive lifelong victim or drug addict devoid of humanity offers no space for active exercises of agency. Instead, participants argued that space must be made for them to use their own voices. We will return to this below under 'Claiming agency through writing.'

Implicating the media

Participants in our research recognized that the media does not only cover, but in some ways reproduces, violence directed against street sex workers by writing about them in such a dehumanizing way. Implicating the media in this violence requires us to take the influence of the media seriously and to recognize the material consequences of continually misrepresenting the lives of women involved in street sex work. Participants in the research sought to hold journalists, corporations, and the intended audiences responsible for perpetuating racist, sexist and classist stereotypes which result in deep structural inequities. To repeat the above woman's conclusion, "It's just a nameless nobody? They got lost... and not... and you wonder why they stay out there?" In order to hold the media and its readers accountable for perpetuating the structural injustices that reinforce violence against sex workers, participants had to make clear the linkages between what is written and its implications for the daily-lived experiences of sex workers. One woman in Edmonton makes these connections clear:

I think it's a more of a shame thing. Where it's... I'm not ashamed anymore. I think its really important that people see. Uhm... what women go through, what men and women go through and how hard and difficult it is to get out of it once you're in it. And everything else that follows in after it, you know, the ... the labels. [laugh] All of that, you know, like if it's frustrating when you pick up a paper and you see 'Hooker Dead.' 'Found Dead.' You know, well she's not just a hooker. You know, and I hate that title. And it's like why can't they say 'Young Girl Found Dead.' Or you know 'Mother', you know. Or what... they always have to use that term and it's ... its just so frustrating. Because society as a whole, you know they look at that as like... and I know in my own experience, garbage. You know? And...and that's so frustrating because they're so much more than that.

The headlines she recounts are evidence of the power of these labels to deny personhood and to extract a woman from her broader context of familial connections. This woman is calling for a new way of speaking the stories of the lives of women involved in sex work; an articulation that recognizes the humanity of all women.

After recognizing that the media carries a responsibility for furthering the divide between women involved in street sex work and 'the public', many participants continued that the media also had a responsibility to redress the injustices suffered by the surviving families of women who were disappeared or killed while working. A Calgary woman demonstrated this process of recognizing and demanding recognition:

Participant: Some girls have been brutally murdered- brutally murdered, sorry... that is not [their] time to go, and they make it sounds like it's a joke, like she deserved it because she was a heroin addict and she used to go on the street corner and did things for money. [...] She probably wasn't even using condoms, this and that... like, they make it sound so dirty.

Interviewer: So how should they be reporting about sex work?

P: With more respect.

P: Okay and the ones that have been found murdered they should show the families a little bit of justice.

Rather than simply hoping that the media will begin to write with more compassion and respect for dignity, some participants expressed the need to represent themselves in their own language, through their own voices. After rejecting the stories presented in the media, participants sought to break the distorted mirror altogether by writing back with authority.

Claiming agency through writing

Participants had the desire to write their own life stories and/or collect and write the experiences of other sex workers. This ambition is one of "humanizing" women involved in street sex work. Writing from experience is a conscious practice of over-writing the objectification process that has occurred in the media. As one woman in Edmonton eloquently phrased it:

I think they gotta uh... tell our story more. Let us tell our story. You know, they can't change what we tell them to fit the public's eye. You know? We have to be able to say our own words without them putting in their edits and this and that. You know? It's alright, 'cause then its not the truth. And I think the truth has to be told, you know? From the inside. And maybe people will start to listen and start to care more, because we are people. We hurt, we bleed, we feel. We have families, we have kids. And they gotta understand that.

Archiving and retelling stories in our own words asserts the value inherent in the lives led by women involved in sex work. Beyond that, it recognizes that these stories have something to contribute to society. In particular, women and families were interested in documenting the pain endured by themselves and those around them as a way to reclaim, reframe and redirect this suffering. Ensuring these stories are recorded and heard in a way that rings authentic was seen by participants as a way to use one's experience productively. In this way, writing or telling one's story is a way of honouring women, and this honouring is a political process.

Future Directions

In this report we have attempted to engage participant's stories together with our analysis as researchers. The topics covered in this report are just a few of the many critical areas that participants' stories revealed. A few ideas for future research that we identified in the participants' stories are:

- What are the positive, life-sustaining traits and practices of sex working mothers that keep the family going?
- What are older women's experiences of sex work?
- Why is there a gap between intergenerational sex work in Indigenous families versus non-Indigenous families and what are the ramifications of this gap in terms of service provision and the prevention of child exploitation?
- How is the dispossession of Indigenous land and resources tied to the overrepresentation of Indigenous women in low-paid work in urban areas?
- What is the role of culture in the everyday lives of sex workers and their families as well as in the process of transitioning out of sex work?
- How is the sex work economy is tied to the broader economy?

'We want the stories'

We have been honoured with participant's stories and we take our responsibility as witnesses with great care, respect, and sincere gratitude.

Participants who took part in the knowledge exchange events expressed a deep and urgent need to hear the stories of street sex workers. They wanted the whole story, the whole transcript, more books, more movies. Participants called for the following stories:

- A variety of stories because there is more than abuse to the "being on the street" story. We want to hear different stories.
- More stories about youth.
- More stories about *how* people transitioned out.
- Stories about the criminal justice system experience.
- The experiences of transgender people must be included.
- The 'family of choice' because we failed to include it in our list of families.
- Want to hear more about sexuality: how workers view their sexuality, how sexuality is a way of regaining power, how to have healthy relationships outside or after leaving sex work. Participants identified that they would like research on this topic. They also felt that women do not really understand what it means to be sexually exploited and believed that gaining this understanding is key to transitioning out of street sex work.

Appendix A

Glossary

Child Welfare: A system of government policies and services intended to protect children and support families.

Colonization/Colonial: Colonization is the process by which people not native to a territory invade and establish sovereignty, ownership and control over Indigenous peoples and land. Colonial attempts to subjugate Indigenous peoples include political, social, cultural, linguistic, and material (income and access to resources) efforts. Colonization is often a violent process that takes place over many decades and is an ongoing reality for some Indigenous peoples after hundreds of years. At the crux is the attempted dispossession of Indigenous peoples and their knowledge, ways of being, and ways of seeing the world, including their land and its animals and resources.

Context: All the various factors that influence how events take place and how they are perceived, for example, social and political factors, geographical location, race, class and gender of participants in an event.

Discourse: A particular way of talking or thinking about a subject – words, actions, rules, and beliefs that are often not identified as a particular way of talking and thinking, but as “common sense” or “just the way things are”. Particular discourses sustain particular ideas. For example, one discourse about sex work is that it is just work and another discourse about sex work is that it is always exploitation.

Dominant: Mainstream ways of knowing and being that are normalized as both the usual and the ideal, to the detriment of other ways. Dominant ways of knowing and being are all around us such that we often do not think of them as “dominant” but just as “the way things are”.

Ethical: A way of being or acting that is in line with one’s beliefs, values or morals.

Experiential: A word chosen by current/former sex workers to describe themselves and other people who have experience in sex work.

Family: Broadly defined to include various family formations including biological families, foster families, intimate partnerships (including LGBTTI2Q families), adoptive families or street families and/or any other relationships considered familial. People may have more than one family. In our research we found that people defined family less by one’s actual relation to another than by a relationship with another.

Gender: Socially constructed roles, behaviours, and ways of being attached to specific categories in a given society, most often broken down into two categories: men and women.

Indigenous: Our use of the term Indigenous is meant to include Inuit, First Nations, and Métis peoples of what is now known as North America.

Intergenerational: Existing across many generations within a family or community.

Leadership: Formal and informal ways of being that are supportive of others, that attempt to address systemic issues, and that strengthen the community.

Memorializing: To respectfully commemorate the memory of someone, thing, or event.

Method: Tools of information collection in research (i.e. face-to-face interview).

Methodology: The analytical framework (the lens) through which a research project is conceptualized, designed, enacted and evaluated.

Other/othering: Any talk, perception, or action by which an individual or group is classified as different from the norm, “not one of us”. When an individual or members of a group are thought of as “Other”, they are often seen as less human, and therefore less worthy of respect and dignity.

Patriarchy/patriarchal: A social system or society where power is held and enacted by men, creating a systemic bias against women.

Residential schools: Boarding schools for Indigenous children that were run by the Canadian government and churches. Children were often forcibly removed from their families; were subjected to assimilative practices depriving them of their languages and cultures; and many were victims of physical and sexual abuse.

Sex Work: The exchange of sexual services for compensation.

Sixties scoop: The government apprehension of unusually high numbers of Indigenous children in the 1960s who were fostered or adopted out into primarily White families.

Stigma/stigmatized: Disapproval directed at members of a group, on the basis of characteristics that are seen to distinguish them from the mainstream society.

Storying: The process of forming lived experience into a story.

Street sex work: Street sex work is qualitatively different from other forms of sex work and usually involves a combination of sex work for money and the exchange of sex for food, drugs or a place to stay. It is the smallest, though most visible sector of sex work, estimated to be 10-20% of the entire sex industry (Benoit & Millar, 2001; Dalla, 2002).

Structural: The idea that society is arranged around categories that impact people’s experiences and life chances. Race, class, and gender are major structural categories. Structural analysis looks at how problems are caused by these structures and categories rather than being about individual failings. For example, because women on average earn less than men and when employed, are more often employed in low-paying, part-time work, women’s poverty is a structural problem.

Systemic: Issues and inequalities that are embedded throughout the structures of our society such as racism, violence against women, and poverty.

Transwoman: Shorthand for "transsexual" or "transgender woman". It usually means a woman who was born biologically male and/or assigned a male gender that is not consistent with her sense of herself, and who lives and identifies as a woman. Some but not all transwomen have surgical or hormonal intervention to support them in their identification as women.

Women: People who identify as women.

Appendix B

Methodology

The project research team noticed that while street sex work was receiving increasing attention in the media, little had changed in terms of the dehumanizing portrayal of women involved in street sex work. We began our research by analyzing the social construction of street sex workers and their family relationships in newspaper articles pertaining to sex work in Canada. We selected publications from western Canadian cities known to have significant numbers of adult women engaged in street sex work. Data sources included one national English language newspaper (*The Globe and Mail*), major circulation regional monthly Indigenous print media (*Alberta Sweetgrass*, *Kahtou*, *Saskatchewan Sage*, *Windspeaker*) and six regional major circulation English language daily newspapers publications (*Calgary Herald*, *Edmonton Journal*, *Prince George Citizen*, *Regina Leader Post*, *Vancouver Sun*, *Winnipeg Free Press*)

Findings from this media analysis informed the second stage of data collection: a total of 99 interviews with women involved in street sex work and the family members of street sex workers. In these interviews, we examined the impact of family relationships on women's processes of transitioning out of street sex work as well as the effects of media reporting on women who work on the street and those who have family members involved in street sex work. In prior research about best research practices with sex workers, participants identified agencies that provide sex work specific services as ideal interview sites. Our research team was honoured to work with agencies serving sex workers in cities across western Canada during our interview process. The agencies we worked with played an important role by recruiting participants and serving as interview sites.

Those who participated in interviews shared rich stories of their lives with us. Because it is grounded in the words of those with whom we spoke, the analysis and findings from this research are direct results of the diverse, complex and often challenging stories shared with us. We analysed interview transcripts using a methodology called grounded theory. In grounded theory, preconceived ideas about how or why things happen are put aside and instead, key concepts and even questions come out of the data (in this case interviews) itself. After the first few interviews were conducted in Calgary, the research team coded (analysed) the interviews line-by-line. We then met as a group to discuss the key concepts and social processes that arose out of the first set of stories. From there we changed our questions and categories to allow for a better understanding of how these processes operate and under what conditions.

As we moved along with the coding, we kept written memos about the relationships between different ideas or processes and also emerging theories about the way common issues or patterns functioned in people's lives. Memos also linked our analysis with related literature that strengthened the theories that developed from the interviews. Memos often took the form of concept maps (Clarke, 2005) because they allowed us to visualize the strength of the relationships between codes and ultimately, between concepts. Examples of these maps can be found later in this report as part of our Findings section. Throughout the entire data analysis process we kept the words spoken by participants at the core.

The research team's return to the cities in which we conducted interviews marked the final stage in our analysis. We held knowledge exchange events in Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton where we disseminated our analysis and gained feedback and insights from current and former street sex workers and family members of current and former street sex workers, many of whom will be interview participants. The knowledge that is shared with us in these events was incorporated into this report.

Appendix C

Methodology - Discourse Analysis

To answer the question, “What are the recent media discourses about street sex workers and the families of street sex workers?” we collected data from major Western Canadian print media sources over a three year period (2006-2009) using a keyword search for items that include one or some of the terms ‘sex work’, ‘sex worker’ and ‘prostitute’. We chose publications from Western Canadian cities known to have significant numbers of adult women engaged in street sex work. Data sources included one national English language newspaper (*The Globe and Mail*), major circulation regional monthly Indigenous print media (*Kahtou*, *Windspeaker*, *Alberta Sweetgrass*, *Saskatchewan Sage*) and six regional major circulation English language daily newspapers (*Vancouver Sun*, *Prince George Citizen*, *Calgary Herald*, *Winnipeg Free Press*, *Edmonton Journal*, *Regina Leader Post*).

Newspapers were searched via either ProQuest’s online database, Canadian Newsstand or the CBCA Reference Database. We began with a keyword search (prostitut* or sex work* or hooker*) and then narrowed keyword searches using the operator function on the database. The Indigenous publications were hosted by a separate database (EBSCOhost) and were accessible as digital scans of the actual news page including pictures in portable document formats (PDFs). We used the same terms for the database search. When this returned a small number of articles we subsequently broadened our search terms in the effort to include more articles, including terms specific to the Western Canadian context such as “missing women”, “highway of tears” and “stolen sisters”. These terms did not return any additional results. In total, only 6 relevant articles were located within Indigenous publications. After screening to confirm the relevance of items we found a total of 402 articles. These articles were initially coded in terms of source (i.e. which newspaper); type (i.e. ‘hard’ news, feature, opinion/editorial); whether street sex workers or the families of street sex workers or both were mentioned; whether Indigenous status, race, ethnicity, class or income were mentioned; and finally on the primary subject (e.g. crime, violence, drug use, family relationships, family history). Throughout the analysis, explanatory notes were made regarding categorizing decisions. Only items with content (print, photo or illustration) related to street sex workers and the families of street sex workers were used in further analysis.

Appendix D

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Appendix E

Publications and Presentations from Research Data

BOOK CHAPTERS

- Charbonneau, S., Thomas, R., Janzen, C., Carrière, J., Brown, L., & Strega, S. (2014). Storying the untold. In Kim Anderson & Dawn Memee Lavell-Harvard (Eds.), *Indigenous Mothering, Family and Community: Internal Perspectives*. Demeter Press.
- Janzen, C. Governing with KARE: Proactive policing of street sex workers as 'high-risk' life. In D. Brock's, *Re-Making Normal: Governing the Social in Neoliberal Times*. Cambridge Scholars' (Forthcoming).

JOURNAL ARTICLES

- Strega, S., Janzen, C., Morgan, J., Brown, L., Thomas, R., & Carrière, J. (2014). Never innocent victims: Street sex workers in Canadian print media. *Violence Against Women* 20(2), 6-25.
- Janzen, C., Strega, S., Brown, L., Morgan, J. and Carrière, J. (2013). "Nothing short of a horror show": Triggering abjection of street sex workers in western Canadian newspapers. *Hypatia* 28(1), 142-162.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- Janzen, C. (2009, November 18). "Someone's mother sister or daughter": Media discourses about street sex workers and their families. Paper presented at *Tilts and Shifts – Applying a Discourse Analysis Lens. 2nd New Zealand Discourse Conference*, Auckland, NZ.
- Strega, S. (2010, April 9). "Someone's mother, sister or daughter": Media portrayals of street sex workers and their families. Paper presented at *Human and Social Development faculty research day*. University of Victoria.
- Morgan, J. (2010, June 1). Discourses of destiny. Paper presented at *Canadian Sociological Association*. Conference held at Congress, Concordia University, Montréal, Québec.
- Brown, L., Janzen, C., Morgan, J., Strega, S. and Thomas, R. (2010, June 2). "Someone's mother, sister or daughter: Street sex workers, their families and transitioning out of street sex work. Workshop delivered at *Canadian Association for Social Work Education*. Conference held at Congress, Concordia University, Montréal, Québec.
- Janzen, C., & Strega, S. (2010, September 10). Victims and vermin: The street sex worker as abject Other in Canadian newspapers. Paper presented at *Representations of Prostitution, Sex Work and Sex Trafficking between the 19th and 20th Centuries*. University of Exeter.
- Janzen, C. & Morgan, J. (2011, February 24). Practices of governance / practices of self: Project KARE, street sex work and being a 'high-risk' life. Paper presented at *Constructions of Risk Conference*. University of British Columbia.
- Janzen, C., Thomas, R. and Strega, S. (2011, May 23). "Someone's mother, sister or

daughter”: Power and resistance in the lives of street sex workers and their families. Paper presented at *Affilia Unsettling Feminism(s): Disrupting the Center, Dismantling Oppressions, Transforming Social Work*. University of Illinois at Chicago.

Thomas, R., Janzen, C. and Strega, S. (2011, May 23). Journeying together: Navigating subject and self in research with street sex workers and their families. Paper presented at *Affilia Unsettling Feminism(s): Disrupting the Center, Dismantling Oppressions, Transforming Social Work*. University of Illinois at Chicago.

INVITED PRESENTATIONS

Strega, S. (April, 2010). Someone’s mother, sister or daughter: Media portrayals of street sex workers and their families. *HSD Faculty Research Day*, University of Victoria

Strega, S. & Brown, L. (November, 2010). Someone’s mother, sister or daughter: Street sex workers, their families, and transitioning out of street sex work. School of Social Work and Social Planning, Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia. (Invited presentation)

Strega, S. & Brown, L. (November, 2010). Someone’s mother, sister or daughter: Street sex workers, their families, and transitioning out of street sex work. Faculty of Health, Social Work and Human Services, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia. (Invited presentation)

Strega, S. & Carrière, J. (March, 2011). Someone’s mother, sister or daughter. *Dear John: Preventing sexual exploitation Conference*. Winnipeg, Manitoba (Invited keynote address).

Strega, S. (March 15, 2012). Research as resistance: Ethical research with marginalized populations. Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia (Invited university presentation)

Strega, S. (March 28, 2012). “Nothing about us without us”: Meeting the ethical challenges of research at the margins. State Library of South Australia, Adelaide (Invited public presentation)

Janzen, C., Charbonneau, S., Thomas, R. and Strega, S. (2012, April 24). Indexing and Responding to Violence Amongst Street Sex Workers. Presented at *Fostering Sex Worker Friendly Community Services* (Community Forum).

Charbonneau, S. (2013, December 10). Mothering as Leadership Among Indigenous Street Sex Workers at *Sex Work and Violence* (Community Training Event).

DISSEMINATION EVENTS

October 25-26, 2012 in Winnipeg at Thunderbird House and William Norrie Centre

March 14, 2013 in Edmonton at Alberta Avenue Hall

January 27, 2014 in Calgary at SHIFT at AIDS Calgary

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