

BARRIERS TO EXITING AND FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE CYCLE OF
ENTER/EXIT/RE-ENTERING COMMERCIAL SEX WORK

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By Ling Dinse

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DEDICATION

To Dan, Erica, and Elaina. I love you to the moon and back.

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APPROVAL PAGE

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Barriers to exiting and factors contributing to the cycle of
enter/exit/re-entering commercial sex work

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Commercial sex work is a high-risk job and individuals who desire to leave the sex industry find the process of exiting complex and full of obstacles. This qualitative and explorative study identified the barriers to exiting and factors contributing to the cycle of enter/exit/re-entering commercial sex work. Unstructured face to face interviews were conducted to collect data from ten individuals who have been or are currently involved in the indoor legal commercial sex industry. This study found barriers in the individual, social, relational, and structural domains. The results validated the use of the polymorphous paradigm and the concept of reciprocal causation to comprehend the challenges of exit and factors that reinforce the cycle of enter/exit/re-entering the industry. The expanded knowledge from this study yielded insight for service providers to develop appropriate programs and services. The additional questions generated by this study established a framework for researchers to broaden the knowledge on the topic of exiting sex work.

Signature of Investigator Ling Dinse

Date 4/25/18

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION, SPECIFIC AIMS, AND RELEVANCE FOR SOCIAL WORK

Commercial sex work is defined as a transaction between two parties and involves compensation such as money or goods for sexual service (Preble, Praetorious, & Cimino, 2016). Commercial sex work is a broad term, and it can include "... men, women, and transgender people employed in everything from erotic dancing to domination, from phone sex to street prostitution" (Ditmore, Levy, & William, 2010, p.1). Categories of commercial sex work can include but are not limited to street prostitution, massage parlors, brothels, escort services, outcall services, strip clubs, and Internet pornography (Farley, et al., 2003).

Commercial sex work can be categorized as indirect or direct; indoor and outdoor. Indirect sex work generally has no or minimal contact of genitalia (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005). Exotic dancing, lap dancing, telephone sex, and adult Internet pornography are examples of indirect sex work. Direct sex work such as prostitution and escort services involves a physical exchange between buyers and sellers, and it is illegal in the United States except in selected counties in Nevada (Preble, et al., 2016; Prostitution, n.d.; Weitzer, 2012a). The regulations regarding sex work are governed by the state (Drexler, 1996). In the State of Pennsylvania, an individual can be arrested and charged with prostitution if found loitering in public places with the intent to engage in hired sexual activity (18 Pa. Cons. Stat. § 5902). The transport of individuals across the state lines for prostitution is considered a federal offense under The Mann Act (18 U.S.C. § 2421).

The Sex Workers Project (SWP, 2005) defined sex work that takes place inside a building as indoor sex work. Settings for indoor work can include massage parlors, strip clubs, hotels, and brothels (Farley, 2005; Weitzer, 2012a). Solicitation and sexual exchange that occurs on the

street such as at truck stops fall into the outdoor sex work category. Harcourt and Donovan's (2005) study found the majority of the indoor direct sex work was brothel prostitution or escort prostitution.

It is important to note that sex work that is forced or involves children is considered exploitation and a form of human trafficking (Munk, 2009). The United Nations 2014 global report on human trafficking found 53% of victims were in the sexual exploitation category and 40% of victims were in forced labor (UNODC, 2014). The United Nations (2004) defines human trafficking as:

the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. (p. 42)

Individuals engaged in the sex industry may or may not be a human trafficking victim. Mayhew and Mossman (2007) divided individuals who remain in the sex industry into the following four categories:

1. a preferred career: individuals in this category enjoy working in the sex industry
2. the best occupational option: sex workers in this group chose to be in the industry due to income generated and the flexible schedule of the industry

3. the result of limited choices: individuals in this group engaged in commercial sex work for survival due to homelessness or chemical dependency
4. the result of no choice: the individuals in this group are trafficked into the industry and are controlled by pimps.

Individuals in groups #1 & # 2 and possibly #3 do not meet the criteria of human trafficking whereas individuals in group #4 do meet the criteria as defined by the United Nations.

Ouspenski (2014) considered sex work "as an individual choice within the confines of the individuals' social, political, economic, and personal position" (p. 6). Based on United Nations and Ouspenski's definition, human trafficking victims would be excluded from being considered as sex workers.

Commercial sex work is generally viewed in two opposing paradigms: oppression vs. empowerment. According to Weitzer (2012b), advocates of the oppression paradigm consider individuals in sex work as victims of gender inequality and exploitation. On the other hand, the supporters of the empowerment paradigm consider sex work as a legitimate profession chosen by individuals freely. Huang's (2016) qualitative study interviewing both sex workers and service providers in Australia found that some of the participants considered sex work as empowering and a legitimate profession. Shaver (2005) observed a strong link between sex work and victimization and "prostitution is commonly treated as an identity category rather than a revenue-generating activity" (p. 297). The mismatch view between sex workers that hold the empowerment approach and service providers that have the rescuing approach can be perceived as demeaning, judgmental, and patronizing by individuals receiving services. Wahab (2002) expressed concern that sex workers have been traditionally viewed as "pathological deviants and

victims of feeble-mindedness" and this perception may impact the service providers' practices (p. 54).

An ethnographic study conducted among Chicago's sex workers also challenged the assumption that sex workers are victims in need of rescuing. Rosen and Venkatesh (2008) found individuals acknowledging sex work as not the ideal job when there are limited options. Pimped-controlled street sex workers in Williamson and Bakers' study (2009) described independent sex workers as "Renegades." The study found this free agent group's involvement in the industry was mainly motivated by the income generated from the sex work. However, Raymond (2013) described the decision to engage in the sex industry motivated by financial desperation as a "choiceless choice" (p. 19) and should not be labeled as a choice. Lloyd, the founder of the New York based Girls Educational and Mentoring Services (GEMS), made a persuasive argument against the use of the term "rescuing victims." Lloyd (2010) expressed that "...when applied to ongoing programming, it [rescuing victims] does not allow for the growth and ultimate empowerment of sexually exploited young women and girls" (p. 2). Androff (2016) concurred with Lloyd's observation stating that "Casting clients as needy at some level dehumanizes them as "less than" and "...this is especially so when their perceived or labeled neediness creates or reinforces stigma and discrimination" (Androff, 2016, p. 36).

Commercial sex workers are a diverse group of individuals and their reasons for exiting or remaining in the industry vary. It is essential to explore and understand the barriers facing exiting sex workers in a manner that preserves an individual's dignity when facilitating the development of effective strategies. Research has found these two common elements experienced by individuals engaged in commercial sex work: the high-risk nature of the industry and a cyclical pattern of enter/exit/re-entering the industry.

Commercial sex workers experience a higher risk of physical, sexual, and psychological violence and abuse (World Health Organization, 2016). The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (n. d.) reported individuals engaged in commercial sex work have a higher risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. According to Spice (2007), commercial sex workers are vulnerable to four types of health issues: sexually transmitted infections (STI), injuries resulting from violence experienced at work, mental health issues, and problems related to drug use. The societal stigma of sex work and the lack of access to health care increased barriers to both treatment and prevention of sexually transmitted disease among sex workers. A Canadian study with 450 sex workers found participants perceived health professionals to be "unprepared to accept the work they do" and chose not to disclose their employment to avoid negative responses from the health professionals (Shaver, et al., 2011, p. 59). Gorry and colleagues' (2010) study found U.K.'s street sex workers hesitant to seek supportive services fearing the negative responses from service providers.

A systematic review conducted by Deering and colleagues (2014) found consistent patterns of violence against commercial sex workers, globally. A study in Chicago found high percentages of sex workers were subject to physical violence such as slapping, punching, hair pulling, kicking, and being threatened with a weapon (Raphael & Shapiro, 2002). Du Mont and McGregor (2004) indicated 20% of sexual assault victims in an urban emergency room were sex workers. Farley and colleagues (2003) found that 78% (n = 130) of U.S. sex workers in their study were threatened with a weapon, 82% reported incidents of physical assault, and 73% were raped in prostitution. This same study also reported 68% (n = 854) of sex workers in nine countries met the diagnostic criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder. Dank and colleagues' (2014) study of sex workers in eight U.S. cities reinforced the high-risk nature of the industry:

"In interview after interview, sex workers described the violence they experienced or witnessed while conducting street-based sex work" (p. 242). Participants in Gorry and colleagues' (2010) study expressed that the risk and experience of abuse as a "professional hazard" (p. 495).

It is not surprising that sex workers have a desire to leave the industry given the high-risk nature of the profession. A study conducted among sex workers in nine countries found that 89% (n = 854) of respondents cited "leaving prostitution" as their number-one need when asked the question "What do you need?" (Farley, et al., 2003). The Sex Workers Project found 69% (n = 201) of New York City's indoor sex workers surveyed expressed a desire to leave the industry (SWP, 2005). However, Cimino (2012) observed a cyclical pattern of entering, exiting, and re-entering among street sex workers. Benoit and Miller (2001) concluded that a complete exit from the sex industry took about two years to complete. This same study found 70.6% (n = 201) of the respondents had attempted to exit the industry at least once, and more than 50% had tried exiting three or more times. A program study conducted by Dalla (Cimino, 2012) indicated that 13 out of 18 participants returned to sex work. Davis' (2000) study reported 73 out of the 291 participants completed the program, and the remaining 75% did not complete the program and re-entered sex work. Benoit and Miller's (2001) study reviewing various programs facilitating sex workers' exit reported similar outcomes.

The process of exiting the sex industry is full of obstacles, and the exiting process can be complex (Baker, Dallam, & Williamson, 2010). Bindel and colleagues (2012) identified the following nine elements as barriers to exiting the commercial sex industry in the U.K.: drug use, housing, physical and mental health, history of childhood violence, criminal records, financial constraints, coercion, lack of training, and age of entry. The UK Network of Sex Work Project (2008) also identified similar challenges with the additional factor of family relationships.

Månsson and Hedin (1999) addressed structural (e.g., work, education, housing, welfare benefits), situational (e.g., life-threatening situations, life changing events), relational (e.g., support networks), and individual factors (e.g., personalities, personal goals, coping strategies) in leaving the sex industry in Sweden. These various domains can pose challenges to the exiting process. Using Månsson and Hedin's (1999) model and adaptation from Baker and colleagues' (2010) research, Table 1.1 illustrates a list of barriers commonly encountered by exiting sex workers.

Table 1.1

Common Barriers Encountered by Exiting Sex Workers

Individual	Relational	Situational	Structural
substance abuse	social isolation	traumatic experiences	lack of knowledge of services
mental health issues	strained family relationships	injury from violence	employment
adverse childhood	lack of a supportive network	childbirth	housing/homelessness
shame/guilt	relationships within the sex industry		education
physical health issues	drug dealers		chronic poverty
	pimps		criminal record
			inadequate services
			discrimination/stigma

Note. Adapted from Baker, L., Dalla, R. and Williamson, C. (2010). Exiting prostitution: An integrated model. *Violence Against Women*, 16(5), 579-600.

Aims and Research Questions

There is a body of research providing explanations for entering the sex industry, but studies of sex workers leaving the industry are fragmented (McCarthy, Benoit, & Jansson, 2014; Roe-Sepowitz, Hickle, & Cimino, 2012; Sanders, 2007; Ślęzak 2015). Baker and colleagues

(2010) noted few studies focus on addressing the barriers and developing a framework for effective strategies despite the complexity of the exiting process. Preble, Praetorius, and Cimino's (2016) study concurred with this observation and noted a lack of empirical research on the development of successful exit strategies. In addition, the existing research on commercial sex workers' exit involved participants that were mostly outdoor sex workers conducted in countries outside of the United States. There are distinctive differences between indoor and outdoor sex workers (Gorry, Roen, & Reilly, 2010). As Shaver (2005) suggested, researchers must differentiate between the various categories of sex work when conducting research as sex workers are not a homogenous group. Exiting the industry will involve a drastic change in one's cultural environment and impact an individual's sense of self. It is vital that further research on the topic of exiting sex work be conducted in the United States.

The aim of this research will focus on understanding barriers faced by commercial sex workers in exiting the industry, specifically indoor workers in the United States. Further, factors that contribute to the enter-exit-reenter cycle will be explored. The following research questions are designed to provide a clearer understanding of the exiting process and strengthen service providers' ability to develop effective strategies to minimize the barriers to exit:

1. What are the barriers or challenges facing U.S. sex workers who have a desire to exit the industry?
2. What are the factors that contribute to the cycle of enter-exit-reentering the sex industry?

Statement of the Problem

Despite a strong desire to leave the commercial sex industry, many individuals found exiting the commercial sex industry a perplexing process. The lengthy and often repeated

exiting process can be demoralizing and increase a sense of hopelessness among commercial sex workers that have a desire to leave the industry. The existing studies explaining barriers to exiting the commercial sex industry are mostly conducted outside of the United States (Cusick, et al., 2011; Learmonth, et al., 2015; Mayhew & Mossman, 2007; Ouspenski, 2014; Sanders, 2007; Ślęzak, 2015; and Steffan, et al., 2015). It is unclear what are the barriers to exit, and the factors contributing to the cycle of enter-exit-reentering, especially in the United States.

Theoretical Framework

Polymorphous Paradigm. Sex work is a controversial topic, and there are generally two opposing views in exploring the subject of sex work: oppression vs. empowerment. According to Weitzer (2010b), the oppression paradigm stems from the radical feminist perspective and views commercial sex work as “inherently oppressive and exploitative” (p. 15). The oppression paradigm considered sex work an affront to women since sex work is traditionally a gendered occupation where the sex workers are predominately women and the consumers mostly men (Sagar, Jones, Symons, Tyrie, & Robers, 2016). In addition, research has found that childhood trauma is a common element in the sex workers’ family histories (Aponte, 2015; Cepeda, 2011; Dalla, 2000; Dodsworth, 2011; McCarthy, et al., 2014; Medrano, et al., 2003). Characteristics such as family instability (relational/individual barriers), parents with limited education (structural/individual barriers), poverty (structural/individual barriers), and childhood trauma (individual barriers) point towards the validity of the oppression paradigm.

Månsson and Hedin’s (1999) study reported 75% ($n = 23$) of exited workers had a history of a difficult childhood with 43% indicating sexual abuse. Raphael and Shapiro’s (2002) study reflected a similar trend of childhood trauma. The study found factors such as “loss of life, domestic violence, substance abuse, running away from home, and prostitution” as common

characteristics among the sex workers' childhood households (p. 15). Farley and colleagues (2003) found a pattern of "prolonged and repeated trauma" prior to entering the sex industry (p. 35). Both Benoit and Miller's (2001) and McCarthy and colleagues' (2014) studies identified a correlation between childhood vulnerability and entering the sex trade. These factors include the experience of childhood abuse, a lack of social support, and financial struggles (DeRiviere, 2006). It is possible that negative childhood experiences produced emotional and psychological stress that made individuals vulnerable to exploitation. However, it is important to note that research did not establish a causal relationship between childhood trauma and the involvement of sex work (Weitzer, 2010a).

The empowerment paradigm suggested that individuals with lower levels of educational attainment and limited employable skills chose the sex industry as an option for employment (McCarthy, et al., 2014). This conscious decision serves as a form of empowerment as the individual exercises the right of self-determination. The empowerment paradigm places emphasis on structural factors such as improving the working conditions of the sex industry (Krusi, et al., 2012). McCarthy, Benoit, and Jansson (2014) found a higher percentage of sex workers have a partner that is unemployed. This finding also points to the possibility of the empowerment paradigm as individuals make employment decisions based on life circumstances. One can argue that the lower level of educational attainment and the lack of employable skills are the effects of oppressive childhood experiences. McCarthy et al. pointed out an important aspect that childhood trauma and early life experiences do not depict the whole story. Neither the oppression nor empowerment paradigm can fully explain the reasons an individual remains or exits the commercial sex industry.

Weitzer (2012a) proposed the use of a polymorphous paradigm in addressing the complexity of entering and exiting the commercial sex industry. Polymorphism considers various factors that influence an individual's life course and takes into account factors from both the oppressive and empowerment paradigm. For example, an individual has a desire to leave the sex industry after a life-threatening encounter at work, but personal factors such as the lack of a high school diploma and a support network create barriers to finding employment outside of sex work, which provides a sustainable income and a flexible schedule for the family. Societal and structural factors such as poverty and lack of affordable housing are added macro pressures to remain in the sex industry. This example illustrated the usefulness of the polymorphous approach in answering the stated research question #1 of this study relating to the barriers to exiting the sex industry. Table 1.2 lists common push (negative) and pull (positive) factors for remaining in the sex industry (Steffan, et al., 2015). It is interesting to note that the push factors that pressured sex workers to stay in the industry are often the same challenges that prohibit an individual from exiting the industry. Understanding these pull and push factors with a polymorphous approach may also provide insight into addressing research question #2 regarding the factors that contribute to the enter-exit-reentering cycle (see *Figure 1.1*).

Social Cognitive Theory. Bandura's social cognitive theory involves the consideration of "reciprocal causation" between behaviors, environmental, personal/cognitive factors in understanding human behavior, as illustrated in *Figure 1.2* (Bandura, 1989, p. 2). The consideration of the interaction between these three influencers is consistent with the polymorphous paradigm. The concept of the reciprocal causation can aid in grasping the complexity of the exiting process. The social cognitive theory and the polymorphous paradigm are compatible with the person-in-environment lens of social work practice. The person-in-

environment lens examines behavior by observing human interaction with the environment (Rogers, 2016). The social cognitive theory's consideration of the interaction between personal and environmental factors impacting behaviors challenges the one-dimensional view of oppression or empowerment on engagement in the sex industry. The application of Bandura's concept of reciprocal causation can contribute to the understanding of research question #2 exploring factors that contribute to the cyclical pattern of entering, exiting, and re-entering among sex workers. According to Bandura (1989), one's cognitive biases can lead to false interpretations of self and the environment. When exploring factors leading to repeated exits, the stigma attached to sex work (cognitive bias) may lead to a false interpretation of the feasibility of exit (self) in anticipation of the negative responses from others (environment). As discussed above, an individual's process and reasoning for exiting the sex industry are complex, and there are many push and pull factors that influence behaviors. Adopting a multifaceted approach considering structural, situational, relational, and individual push and pull factors is critical in exploring the phenomena of exiting the industry.

Table 1.2

Push and Pull Factors of Remaining in the Commercial Sex Industry

PUSH	PULL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • financial stress/debts • housing (e.g. homelessness) • mental health • chemical dependency • social isolation/lack of support • identity confusion • lack of employable skills/education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • desired goal • flexible schedule • income potential • support network within the sex industry • a sense of power (Pheterson, 1993) • a sense of control (Cobbina & Oselin, 2011) • socialization ((Cobbina & Oselin, 2011)

Note. Adapted from Steffan, E., Kavemann, B., Netzelmann, T., and Helfferich, C. (2015). Support for leaving prostitution: Final report from the study of the federal model project. Abridged Version. Berlin, Germany: Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizen, Women and Youth (p. 29).

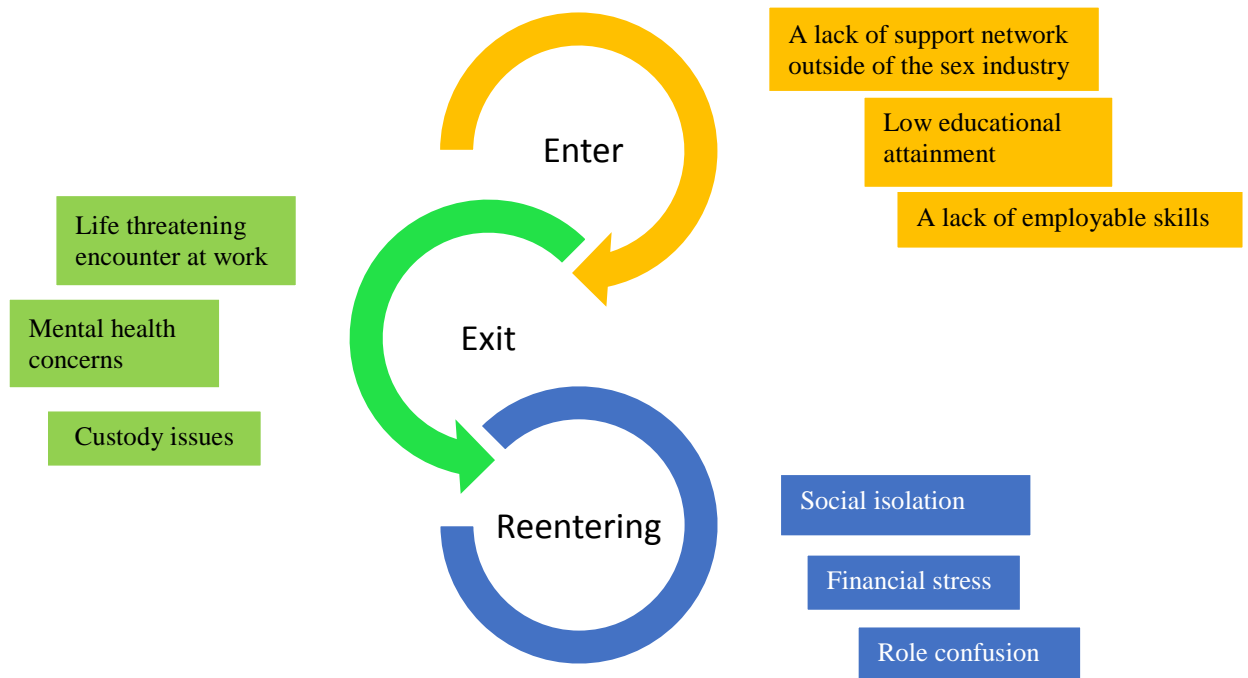


Figure 1.1. An Example of the Polymorphous Paradigm in Explaining the Cycle of Enter/exit/re-entering Commercial Sex Work.

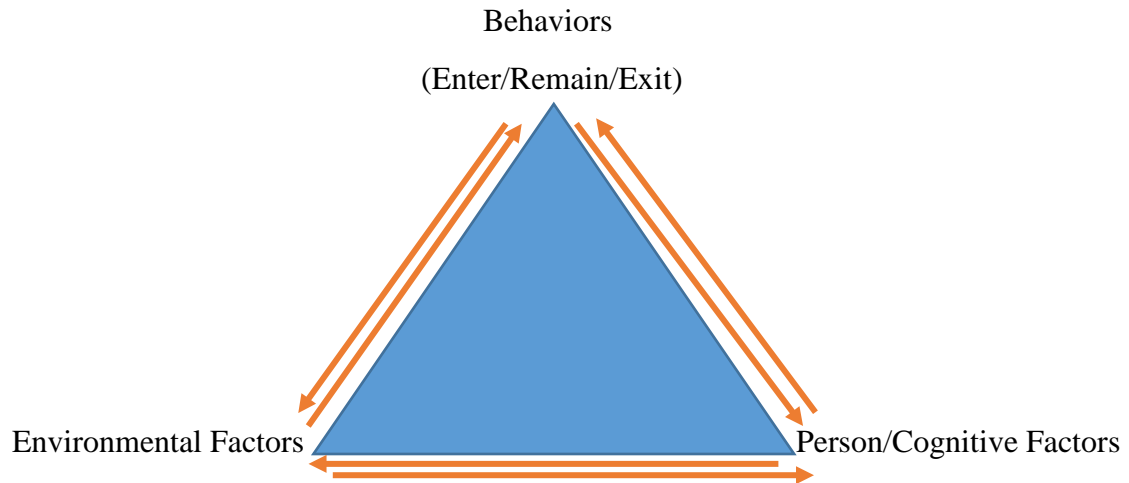


Figure 1.2: Bandura's Reciprocal Causation Model.

Relevance for Social Work

The social work profession's code of ethics affirms the importance of meeting human needs (service) with an emphasis on caring for the vulnerable and oppressed (justice). The value of human dignity and the worth of the person directs social work professionals to provide care that supports a client's growth and opportunity to change (Manning, 2003). Commercial sex workers are among the marginalized in our society. The social work profession has an obligation to provide support to individuals that have limited resources for pursuing growth. One of the results of the stigmatization experienced by commercial sex workers is a sense of alienation. This research seeks to provide a voice for sex workers and empower these individuals to reach their life goals. In addition, social work professionals adhering to the ethical value of competency must expand knowledge through research to improve current practices (Manning, 2003). Ouspenski (2014) stated that research on sex workers often did not generate practical results in programming or policy changes. This research endeavors to bridge the gap in current research on the barriers to exiting the commercial sex industry in the United States. This

expanded knowledge aims to enable service providers to develop essential strategies and enhance current practice in facilitating the exiting process.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

A search in academic peer-reviewed literature through EBSCO using the keywords “barriers” and the phrase “exiting sex industry” yielded ten articles. Options expanded to forty-six entries when the phrase is changed from “exiting sex industry” to “exiting prostitution” and combined with the key word “barriers.” A search for only the phrase “exiting prostitution” generated more promising results with one hundred and sixty-two entries. This research study utilized nineteen of the academic articles on the general subject of exiting the sex industry. Five out of the nineteen studies were conducted in the U.S. (Baker, et al., 2010; Cimino, 2012; Hinkle, 2017; Oselin, 2012; Oselin, 2014). The remaining studies used for this study’s literature review are from the following countries: Canada (Benoit & Millar, 2001; Ouspenski, 2014), United Kingdom (Bindel, et al., 2012; Cusick, et al., 2011; Cusick & Hickman, 2005; Sanders, 2007; UK Network of Sex Projects, 2007), Thailand (Manopaiboon, et al., 2009), South Africa (Learmonth, et al., 2015), Sweden (Månsson & Hedin, 1999), New Zealand (Mayhew & Mossman, 2007), Poland (Ślęzak, 2015), Germany (Steffan, et al., 2015), and the Netherlands (Vanwesenbeeck, 2013). Eight out of the nineteen studies did not distinguish between indoor or outdoor sex workers. Eight out of the nineteen studies involved outdoor sex workers specifically and two studies involved both groups of sex workers. Only one study targeted indoor sex workers on the subject of exiting the industry. Appendix A listed the country of origin and category of sex work for existing research.

Exiting the Commercial Sex Industry

A commercial sex worker's reasons for exiting the sex industry varies. Rationale for exiting can include factors such as financial constraint, homelessness, health issues, custody of children, incarceration, burnout, pursuing sobriety, and the risks of sex work (Benoit & Millar, 2001; Dalla, 2000; Dank, et al., 2014). Vanwesenbeeck (2005) found the effects of stigma such as victimization and negative social interactions contributed to a desire to exit the industry among female sex workers. Steffan and colleagues (2015) listed various push and pull factors that contributed to an individual's decision to exit (see Table 2.1). Push factors are negative elements in an individual's life that lead to the decision to exit the industry. Pull factors are positive elements that encourage the decision to exit. These factors are not mutually exclusive, and an individual may experience several push and pull factors at the same time. For example, a burned-out sex worker (push) became a new parent (pull) and was tired of the low wage of sex work (push) and wanted to start a new career (pull) to better provide for the child. These push and pull factors create a reciprocal causation effect that can influence an individual's decision to remain or exit the industry as illustrated in *Figure 2.1*.

Table 2.1

Push and Pull Factors of Exiting the Sex Industry

PUSH	PULL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traumatic events: trauma, violence • Mental health (e.g. depression) • Burn out and exhaustion • Poor working conditions • Low wage/debt • Effects from stigmatization (i.e. shame/guilt) • Confused roles/identities • Court mandated intervention (Dalla, 2000) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals reached • Desire to develop a new identity • Traumatic events → resolve to leave • Positive life events (e.g. birth of a child) • a new career path • supportive services → a positive outlook • spiritual healing (Dalla, 2000)

Note. Adapted from Steffan, E., Kavemann, B., Netzelmann, T., and Helfferich, C. (2015). Support for leaving prostitution: Final report from the study of the federal model project. Abridged Version. Berlin, Germany: Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizen, Women and Youth (p. 29).

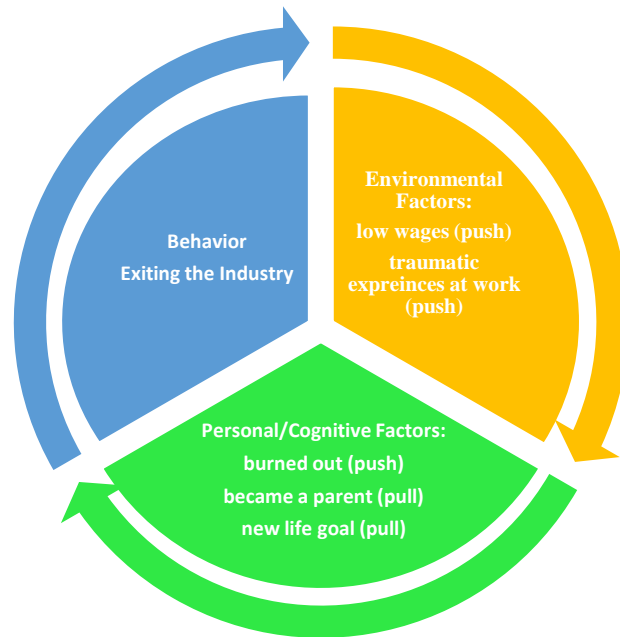


Figure 2.1: An example of push (negative) and pull (positive) factors creating a reciprocal causation effect that impact an individual’s decision to exit.

Current Models of Exiting the Sex Industry

A review of the literature identified the following six models in explaining commercial sex workers' exiting process.

1. The Cycle of Change Model (Prochaska and DiClemente, 1982)
2. Role Exit Model (Ebaugh, 1988)
3. Breakaway Model (Månsson and Hedin, 1999)
4. Phases of the Lifestyle Model (Williamson and Folaron, 2003)
5. Typology of Transitions Model (Sanders, 2007)
6. Integrative Model (Baker, Dalla, & Williamson, 2010)

The Cycle of Change Model. Prochaska and DiClemente's (1982) Model of Change initially was developed to support interventions for behavior change such as chemical addiction. This model has been adopted to understand and support sex work exits (UK Network of Sex Work Projects, 2008). The five stages in the model of change are 1. Precontemplation 2. Contemplation 3. Decision 4. Action, and 5. Maintenance. The Model of Change theory expects an individual to cycle through these stages, and relapse is viewed from the strengths perspective and is considered a learning experience instead of a failure. This model provided a helpful framework for service providers to understand an individual's readiness to change and support the design of individualized care that is based on the needs of a specific stage of change.

In the pre-contemplation stage, an individual does not view working in the sex industry as a concern. In the contemplation stage, there is an increased awareness of the risks involved in working in the sex industry. A life-changing encounter usually leads an individual to the decision stage and moves an individual to the action stage and reaching out for supportive services. A person reaches the maintenance stage when changes are integrated into the

individual's life. Relapse occurs when an individual returns to the sex industry. The Cycle of Exiting Model encourages service providers "rather than being preoccupied with exiting, offering both generic support services as well as exiting programmes" (UK NSWP, 2008, p. 4).

Role Exit Theory: Ebaugh (1998) found a pattern of emotions and reactions among ex-nuns and developed the role exit theory. The role exit theory emerged as Ebaugh conducted additional qualitative research interviewing over one hundred individuals in various spheres of role exiting. Ebaugh (1998) identified the following four stages of an individual's reactions to role exit:

1. First doubts: doubting the existing role
2. Seeking alternatives: exploring other potential role(s)
3. Turning points: circumstances that prompt the desire to change role
4. Creating the ex-role: adapting to the new role

The role exit theory explains the process of how an individual moves from disenchantment with the sex industry (first doubts) and begins to explore other options (seeking alternatives) in pursuit of a new role (creating the ex-role). This process may be triggered by life changing circumstances such as experiencing violence at work (turning points). The role exit theory provides clinical practice insight that is congruent with the person-in-environment perspective.

Drahota and Eitzen (1998) described three characteristics of a role exit: disengagement from the behaviors of the exiting role, disidentification from the exited role, and resocialization into the new role. Participants in Gorry, Roen, and Reilly's (2010) study expressed the gradual acceptance of the "sex worker role" as part of their identity (p. 495). According to Ebaugh (1988), individuals possess various roles and the roles that have the most impact on one's self-

identity are considered the central roles. The more significant a role is to an individual's sense of self, the more impact it will have on an individual's exiting process. Drahotka and Eitzen (1998) found the path to a successful exit includes an individual's ability to leave the former identity as a sex worker and adopt a new identity in the society. An individual that has a stronger identification with the sex worker role found exiting the industry more challenging.

A noteworthy aspect of the role exit theory in expanding the understanding of exiting sex work is the emphasis on the need to establish a new identity. The concept of role sets in the field of sociology describes behavioral expectations members of society have for each role (Merton, 1957). Individuals exiting from commercial sex work will need to leave the "sex worker" role and learn a new set of expectations and behaviors to establish a new role in society. Ebaugh (1988) described challenges in creating a new role as there is a "hangover identity" from the former role competing with the formation of the new role. The society may continue to interact with and respond to individuals in light of their former roles. As Ebaugh (1998) said, "The attitudes of non-exited involve ignorance, stereotype, curiosity, and a lack of sensitivity to the nuances of a previous role" (p. 6). The society's expectations of role behaviors based on the former role as a sex worker can heighten the tension of leaving the previous role and poses a significant hurdle in an individual's exiting journey. Even if the exited individuals want to leave "the life" behind, society's response may not permit the individual to do so.

The Breakaway Model. Månsson and Hedin (1999) conducted qualitative interviews with twenty-three exited sex workers in Sweden, with 74% of the participants engaged in the sex industry more than five years. The Breakaway Model is influenced by Ebaugh's Role Exit Model and Vanwesenbeeck's (1994) Matthew Effect stating the interplay of factors such as childhood experiences impact an individual's experiences in sex work. The Matthew Effect, a

term coined by Robert Merton, explored the accumulated effects of inequality (Rigney, 2010).

The five stages of the Breakaway Model mirrored Ebaugh's theory, expanded to include the entering process and life after exit out of the industry. The five breakaway stages are drifting in, ensnarement, pre-breakaway, breakaway, and after the breakaway.

Månsson and Hedin (1999) took into consideration structural factors such as housing and education, relational factors such as the support network, and individual factors such as personal motivation in explaining the exiting process and the post exit experience. In addition, a "turning point" event, either positive or negative, usually precipitates the breakaway. The research found that challenges of post-exit include: processing the experiences in sex work, dealing with external and internal shame, stress from role confusion, and forming intimate relationships. The authors concluded a fundamental factor in the success of a long-term exit from the sex industry is the individual's commitment to exit (Månsson and Hedin, 1999).

Phases of Lifestyle Model. Williamson and Folaron (2003) gathered data through qualitative in-depth interviews among twenty-one female exited street sex workers with a goal of developing a program for exited individuals. This study identified five lifestyle phases among street sex workers (*Figure 2.2*):

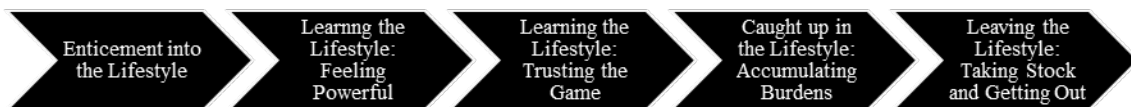


Figure 2.2: Phases of Lifestyle Model.

Although this model is linear in nature, the authors stressed that exiting is not a one-way or one-time process. This observation of a non-linear exit is consistent with other scholars' conclusions on the exiting process (UK NSWP, 2008; Sanders, 2007). The Phases of Lifestyle

Model recognized pull factors such as financial gain in entering the sex industry. The challenges of the sex industry began to surface in the Trusting the Game phase. Sex workers in this phase become increasingly isolated from the mainstream society and more connected with the street sex culture. An increased connection to the sex work business or the “game” created an increased vulnerability to drug use and exposure to customer violence (Williamson & Folaron, 2003). Encountering customer violence led to emotion-focused coping strategies such as mental health issues and drug use (accumulating burdens), instead of problem-focused strategies such as condom use. The study found the trauma of street sex work combined with institutional pressure from entities, such as child protective services, directed an individual’s decision to exit (taking stock and getting out).

Typology of Transitions Model. Sander’s (2007) qualitative study was conducted among fifteen sex workers in the United Kingdom. The Typology of Transitions Model explains four common pathways out of the industry: reactionary, gradual planning, natural progression, and yo-yoing. Individuals on the reactionary pathway of exit experienced the equivalent of a “turning point” from the Role Exit Model (Ebaugh, 1988). Individuals that are on the gradual planning path made a conscious decision to exit with careful planning that could span from several months to several years. The reasoning for individuals embarking on the natural progression journey typically involves burning out or aging out. The results from this study revealed individuals that are yo-yoing in and out of sex work is mostly due to financial constraints. Sanders (2007) concludes that structural factors play a more significant role than individual factors in a person’s exiting process. One such example is the punitive nature of the criminal justice system with fines that trapped individuals in the sex industry. One significant contribution of this study is pointing out the distinction between the experiences of outdoor street

workers and those of indoor workers that influence the pathways out of the industry (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2

Sander's Typology of Transitions Model

Type of Transition	Trigger for Street Worker	Trigger for Indoor Worker
Reactionary	Violence, ill health, significant life events (e.g., pregnancy/child removal, imprisonment)	New relationship, being divorced, violence
Gradual planning	Drug treatment program, rehousing, welfare support, therapeutic engagement	Timed transition alongside alternative career and financial planning
Natural progression	Desire for a new, safer lifestyle that is drug free; concerned about working conditions	Age, natural career length disillusionment with working conditions/lack of regulation
Yo-Yoing	Failed drug treatment and support package, drift in and out, criminal justice involvement	Unplanned exit, psychological strain, working "on and off"/"career break"

Note. Sanders, T. (2007). Becoming an ex-sex worker. *Feminist Criminology*, 2(1), p. 81.

Integrative Model. Baker, Dalla, and Williamson (2010) developed an Integrative Model of exit to bridge the gaps of existing theories for exiting the sex industry. This model incorporated many of the elements found in the existing theories (see Table 5). There are six stages in the Integrative Model: the first stage is immersion, and it is comparable to the Breakaway model's drifting in phase; learning the lifestyle in the Phases of the Lifestyle Model; and the Cycle of Change Model's precontemplation stage. At the immersion stage, an individual has no thought of leaving the industry.

The second stage comprises the visceral and conscious awareness of a desire to exit. Baker and colleagues (2010) described the visceral awareness as a "gut" feeling of exiting, and eventually, this awareness enters the conscious level. The awareness stage is found in the other

five exiting models: first doubts in Role Exit Model, the pre-breakaway phase in the Breakaway Model, disillusionment in the Phases of the Lifestyle Model, the reactionary stage in the Typology of Transitions, and pre-contemplation and contemplation stages in the Cycle of Exiting Model.

The third stage in the Integrative Model is deliberate planning, which is similar to seeking alternatives in Role Exit Model, taking stock in the Phases of Lifestyle Model, gradual planning in Typology of Transitions, and action in the Cycle of Exiting model. At this stage, an individual begins to appraise services and resources to organize exit from the industry. It is important to note that this stage may be initiated voluntarily or from external forces such as children's services or the criminal justice system (Baker, Dalla, & Williamson, 2010).

The fourth stage in this model is initial exit. In this stage, the individual is seeking services and utilizing resources. This stage coincides with the turning point and overlaps with the creating the ex-role in Role Exit model. The initial exit stage also mirrors the breakaway phase in the Breakaway Model, the natural progression in Typology of Transitions, and the decision stage for the Cycle of Exiting Model. The initial exit is a vulnerable stage as individuals step out of the sex industry into an unknown future. As Baker and colleagues (2010) pointed out: "...a women's internal desire and motivation to exit are severely tested" at this stage (p. 592). It is at this point that some individuals will reenter the industry (re-entry); and from the Cycle of Exiting model, reentry does not come as a surprise. The Typology of Transitions model also noted the pattern of yo-yoing in the exiting process with a possibility of reentering the industry. Baker and colleagues (2010) believe reentry increases the feeling of entrapment; in contrast to the Cycling of Exiting model where re-entering or relapse serves as an opportunity for growth. For individuals that pass the initial exit without re-entering, the last stage is the final exit. The final

exit phase has similar concerns as the creating the ex-role from the Role Exit Model and after the breakaway from the Breakaway Model. The Integrative Model recognizes the challenges of creating a new role and the hurdles in adjusting to a new life (Baker, Dalla, & Williamson, 2010).

Exiting Models' Contribution to Research and Practice

Table 2.3 is a summary and comparison of the six exiting models. These models contributed significantly to the understanding of exit from the sex industry. It is important to note that the six models all recognize that the exiting process is not a linear process with a natural progression. As Williamson and Folaron (2003) said, "The passage through prostitution is not a linear, one-way process" (p. 285). Many issues function as pull and push factors in the exiting journey as illustrated in Table 2.1. The Integrative Model, Typology of Transactions Model, and the Cycle of Exiting Model all recognize the possibility of re-entering the industry. The acceptance of re-entering in these models is consistent with the addiction recovery approach viewing relapse as another experience to motivate the recovery process (Narcotics Anonymous, 1986). The recognition that every step, including the "relapse" phase, can be a learning experience, can be empowering to both the service providers and the exiting individual. The expanded knowledge provided by scholars in these models is valuable in establishing an organized framework for providing appropriate services. Service providers can offer individualized and appropriate services for exiting individuals by becoming familiar with the unique challenges and milestones of each phase of the exiting process.

These six models have a general pattern of progressing that can be summarized from an individual's awareness of the need to exit, to planning the exit, and to exiting. *Figure 2.3* illustrates the three condensed steps that emerge from the commonality of the six exiting models. The reasons and explanations for reaching each stage vary from model to model, but a general

pattern remains. Understanding how one reaches the exiting stage is vital, but these models fall short of explaining the barriers that prevent the completion of exit.

Table 2.3

Comparisons of the Six Exiting Models

Theories		Comparisons of the Six Exiting Models					
1	Integrative Model		Immersion	Awareness	Deliberate Preparation	Initial Exit	Final Exit
						Reentry	
2	Role Exit Model			First Doubts	Seeking alternatives	Turning points	Creating the ex-role
3	Breakaway Model	Drifting in	Ensnarement	Pre-Breakaway		The Breakaway	After the Breakaway
4	Phases of the Lifestyle Model	Enticement	Learning the Life Style/Immersion	Disillusionment	Taking Stock	Getting Out	
5	Typology of Transitions			Reactionary	Gradual Planning	Natural Progression	Yo-Yoing
6	The Cycle of Exiting		Pre-Contemplation	Contemplation	Action	Decision	Maintenance
							Relapse

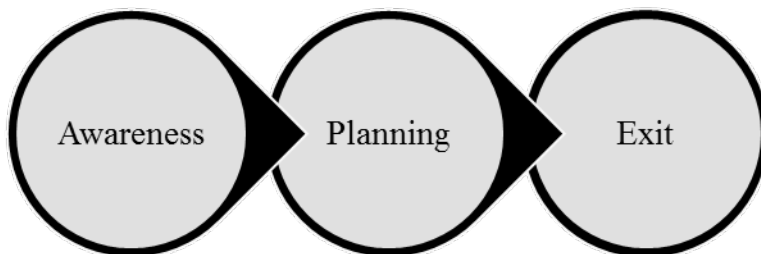


Figure 2.3: General Pattern of the Process in the Six Exiting Models.

Common Pathways to Exiting the Sex Industry

The complex interactions of the push and pull factors propel an individual towards diverse paths in leaving the sex industry. Preble and colleagues (2016) listed three common approaches in supporting exiting sex workers: harm reduction-only programs, diversion programs, and formal exiting programs. Harm reduction-only programs focus on addressing the presenting issues, and the other two approaches focus on the goal of leaving the sex industry permanently and facilitate reaching this long-term goal.

Harm reduction only programs. Sex work is high risk in nature and individuals in the industry are vulnerable to health risks such as sexually transmitted infections, harm caused by violence, and mental health issues (Benoit & Millar, 2001; Farley, et al., 2003). A harm reduction program's goal is to minimize these potential hazards that are commonly experienced by commercial sex workers (Wilson, Critellis, & Rittner, 2015). Accessible and affordable health and social services can significantly increase a sex worker's well-being (Rekart, 2005). A harm reduction program operates from a public health model and aims to provide supportive services with no expectation of exit or legal ramification (Preble, Praetorius, & Cimino, 2016). Rekart (2005) reported "User-friendly drop-in clinics, open-door counselling centers, camps, and shelters have been successful" (p. 2130). The St. James Infirmary in California is an example of a harm reduction program, offering a drop-in clinic that provides nonjudgmental medical and social services to sex workers (St. James Infirmary, n.d.).

Diversion programs. Diversion programs are court-mandated and are a common mode of exit from the sex industry. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, a pretrial diversion program's goal is "to divert certain offenders from traditional criminal justice processing into a program of supervision and services administered by the U.S. Probation Service" (USAM, n.d.,

Introduction). Shdaimah and Wiechelt (2012) explained that diversion programs are based on the problem-solving justice principle, aiming to address the root of the crime in partnership with the community. Wilson and colleagues (2015) described diversion programs as behavior modification focused on the goal of leading participants to adopt different life choices.

Individuals convicted of prostitution charges enrolled in a diversion program receive supportive services such as counseling and substance abuse treatment, with the aim of lowering the risk of recidivism. Research conducted by Roe-Sepowitz and colleagues (2011) found a significant relationship between the completion of a diversion program and decreased recidivism. Levin (2013) reported a 47% recidivism rate for Texas' prostitution diversion program participants compared to a 64% rate for non-participants. Below are five examples of existing diversion programs in the United States:

- i. Sacramento, California: Reducing Sexually Exploited & Trafficked (RESET) Court. According to the Sacramento County's District Attorney's Office (n.d.), RESET provides trauma sensitive programs that emphasize life skill training. Participants in the program have an opportunity to eliminate their criminal record and remove barriers to future employment.
- ii. St. Paul, Minnesota: the diversion program works with local community organizations such as New Life to provide assessment and case management. The goals of the program are to avoid criminal charges and provide support to exit the industry (Minnesota Human Trafficking Task Force, 2014).
- iii. Baltimore, Maryland: Specialized Prostitution Diversion program's (SPD) participants receive individualized care such as drug abuse treatment and mental health services, housing, and vocational training (Shdaimah & Bailey-Kloch, 2014). According

to Baltimore City's State Attorney (2011), the goal of SPD is to "break the cycle of recidivism" (2nd para.).

iv. Sarasota, Florida: The Sarasota Police Department initiated the "Turn Your Life Around" program (TYLA) in 2014 (DiPino, 2014). A non-profit organization, Selah Freedom, collaborates with law enforcement agencies to provide comprehensive residential services such as education, basic life skills training, and counseling for this diversion program.

v. Dallas, TX: The Dallas Police Department created the Prostitute Diversion Initiative (PDI) program. PDI offers an option out of the criminal justice system and provides "a comprehensive program that will enable a complete exit from a life in the sex trade industry" (Felini, Talari, Ryan, & Qualls-Hampton, 2012, p. 1).

Preble and colleagues' (2016) study concluded that best practice interventions for exit should be holistic, empowering, and include "individualized goal plans." A diversion program offering multifaceted services fits into the best practice model of exiting. However, Leon and Shdaimah's (2012) research on prostitution diversion programs identified three concerns of court mandated programs: "heightened scrutiny, the blurring of therapeutic and coercive mechanisms, and a focus on individual problems at the expense of systemic factors" (p. 257). A study conducted in Germany found one of the key elements of a successful exit is the individuals' readiness and willingness to act on the exit (Steffan, Kavemann, Netzelmann, & Helfferich, 2015). Individuals being pressured to exit by court mandate may not be a good fit for the diversion program's long-term exit goal.

Formal exiting programs. The main aim of a formal exiting program is to facilitate the sex workers' permanent exit out of the industry. Common elements found in formal exiting

programs include mentoring, behavior modification, psychological treatment, housing, and economic empowerment (Wilson, Critelli, & Rittner, 2015). Preble and colleagues (2016) also found similar components in formal exiting programs that support sex workers. Most of the programs address the reasons for entering the industry and consider the negative effects of working in the industry. Service providers in formal exiting programs focus on establishing a trusting relationship with participants and offer multifaceted services to address the complex needs of the exiting process. Girls Educational & Mentoring Services (GEMS) in New York is an example of a formal exiting program. The GEMS' program aims to offer services to girls and young women ages 12-24 that have experienced sexual exploitation, including services such as crisis care, case management, support groups, residential services, housing, work readiness, education opportunities, and leadership training (GEMS, n.d.; Lloyd, 2010).

There are several examples of formal exiting programs in the Central Pennsylvania area. A non-profit organization, She's Somebody's Daughter's Our Beautiful Exchange program offers services such as job training, GED support, and resources to meet needs for women transitioning out of the sex industry (Our Beautiful Exchange, n.d.). North Star initiative is a non-profit residential program in Central Pennsylvania offering services such as housing, medical care, counseling, educational support, and legal support for female sexual exploitation survivors (North Star Initiative, n.d.). Peace Promise—The Well, located in Mechanicsburg, PA offers services to meet the practical and mental health needs of individuals exiting the sex industry (Peace Promise, n.d.).

Common Barriers to Exiting

A review of literature on barriers to exiting the commercial sex industry validates the use of the polymorphous paradigm as it allows for the exploration of the various influencers in an individual's life (Weitzer, 2012). A wide range of barriers from childhood history to lack of affordable housing are cited (Bindel, et al., 2012). Cusick and colleagues' (2011) mixed methods study ($n = 92$) on UK sex workers concurred with the belief that the exiting process involves the interactions of numerous factors in an individual's life. An individual's process and reasoning for exiting the sex industry is complex. Adopting a multifaceted approach considering structural, situational, relational, and individual factors is critical in exploring the phenomenon of exiting the industry.

Individual Barriers

An individual can face many barriers in exiting the commercial sex industry on the micro level. Rogers (2016) explained that the micro level includes various aspects of an individual's life such as "biological, psychological, developmental, spiritual, emotional, recreational and financial..." (p. 26). Substance abuse, childhood trauma, and the negative effects from stigma can all pose additional challenges to the exiting process on the micro/individual level.

Substance Abuse. The most commonly identified barrier to exiting the sex industry is a history of substance abuse. Bindel and colleagues' (2012) study found 83% ($n = 114$) of sex workers in this study have a history of substance abuse. Other research has also identified a relationship between drug use and sex work (Benoit, et al., 2015b; Dalla, 2000, Ouspenski, 2014; Sallmann, 2010; Williamson & Folaron, 2003). A study on the Phoenix Prostitution Diversion Program found drug and alcohol addiction as one of the risk factors in prostitution rearrests (Roe-Sepowitz, Hickie, Loubert, & Egan, 2011). Cusick and Hickman's (2005) study among

UK sex workers ($n = 125$) found a stronger relationship between drug use and outdoor sex work with 92% of outdoor sex work identified as drug users, compared to 45% of indoor sex workers. A Belgium study ($n = 120$) found 90.8% of bar and club sex workers used at least one type of drug the month prior to the interview and 48.6% had used multiple substances in the last month (van Nunen, et al., 2014). A combined secondary data analysis and qualitative study found women ($n = 203$) engaged in sex work were more severely addicted to cocaine when compared to women that were not in the industry (Young, Boyd, & Hubbell, 2000). This same study also found sex workers were more likely to report using drugs as a coping mechanism. Cusick and Hickman's (2005) research also support Young and colleagues' finding of drug use as a coping mechanism to manage the negative aspects of sex work. Individuals that had an intermittent history of drug use prior to entering the sex industry had a pattern of increased usage once in the sex industry. Although Benoit and Miller (2001) found only 17% of the 201 participants identified drug and alcohol use as a key reason for engagement in sex work, substance abuse issues create a monumental challenge to exiting the industry. It is important to note that review of the literature did not identify a causal relationship between drug use and sex work, but the two factors can create a self-perpetuating cycle (Young, et al., 2000).

Adverse Childhood. Huang's (2015) review of literature found a higher percentage of women with addiction, poverty, and abusive family history engaged in the sex industry. Research has not established a causality between the two variables childhood abuse and sex work. However, the susceptibility model explains a possible link between childhood family instability and engagement in sex work. According to Cobbina and Oselin (2011), individuals are more vulnerable to entering sex work if traumatic experiences such as child abuse are combined with particular psychological characteristics such as low self-worth. As Farley and

colleagues (2003) stated, “Prolonged and repeated trauma usually precedes entry into prostitution” (p. 35).

McCray and colleagues (2011) conducted in-depth interviews with exited outdoor sex workers in the U.S. ($n = 10$) and found frequent recounts of childhood abuse and neglect among participants. Cobbina and Oselin’s (2011) qualitative study among U.S. street sex workers ($n = 40$) identified 60% of the participants that entered sex work as a teenager cited “fleeing abuse and reclaiming control” as the reason for entry (p. 316). Other participants in the same study identified childhood sexual abuse led to the practice of using sexuality as a way to control men and for financial gain. Dodsworth’s (2012) qualitative study of sex workers in the UK ($n = 24$) found the meaning an individual assigned to sex work influenced the decision to remain in or exit the industry. The study found three categories of responses: sex worker as the identity (“what I am”); sex work is viewed as a profession and not an identity of self (“what I do”); and sex worker cannot be a long-term role (“cannot be me”) (p. 534). Individuals in the first group viewed “sex worker” as their sole identity. These individuals internalized unresolved childhood trauma and experiences that resulted in the development of a low sense of self and a narrative of limited choice. The sense of powerlessness and a fatalistic view of no choice can create substantial barriers to exiting. Dodsworth’s study pointed to the impact an adverse childhood may have on both the entering and exiting process.

Shame from Stigma. Commercial sex workers have long been stigmatized and neglected in our society. As Oselin (2010) expressed, “Most Americans view prostitutes as criminals and deviants, which positions them in a low-status role and bestows unto them high levels of stigma for working in the trade” (p. 545). A qualitative study ($n = 49$) among Hong Kong sex workers described an experience of constant verbal insults and name calling when

interacting with the community (Wong, Holroyd, & Bingham, 2011). Bruckert's (2012) study among indoor sex workers in Canada found extensive negative experiences due to stigma. Participants in the study reported interpersonal, community, and structural stigma. Bowen and Bungay (2016) support the findings of Bruckert's study and found both former and current sex workers experienced stigma regularly ranging from public humiliation, limited employment opportunities, and interpersonal relationship tension. Sallmann (2010) found sex workers experience a pervasive pattern of negative labeling, violence, and discrimination.

Society's responses to sex workers tend to fall into two extremes: ultra-visible and invisible (Gorry, Roen, & Reilly, 2010). Members of society openly react to commercial sex workers with disdain and judgment (ultra-visible). On the other hand, sex workers find the benefits of societal policies and protection invisible. Bowen and Bungay (2016) found evidence of in-group stigma such as tension between indoor and outdoor sex workers. Lewis and colleagues' (2005) study concluded that the impact of stigma goes beyond work sphere as sex workers face "scrutiny, attack, and police harassment both during and after work" (p. 156).

The public's assumption that individuals engaged in sex work are either morally corrupted or helpless victims is damaging to the sex workers' well-being and increases the sense of powerlessness. Benoit and colleagues (2015b) reported a positive correlation between discrimination and depression among sex workers. The society's "public stigma" can turn into "self-stigma" and internalizing these negative experiences can have damaging effects on sex workers (Steffan, Kavemann, Natzelmann, & Helfferich, 2015; Lazarus, et al., 2012, Learmonth, et al., 2015). Wong and colleagues' (2011) study found evidence of the internalization of stigma among sex workers. The participants were emotionally upset by negative treatment, but did not object to the reasoning for the negative responses. This finding indicated an internalization of

the stigma among sex workers as there was a sense of “acceptance” of the stigma assigned by the society. The negative impact of internalized stigma can also include: “poor health, lowered self-esteem, stress and the loss of self-confidence, disempowerment and self-harming behaviors” (Bowen and Bungay, 2016, p. 195). Individuals internalizing negative experiences from sex work stigma can develop feelings of guilt, shame, hopelessness, and a poor sense of self-worth (UK NSWP, 2008). Bowen and Bungay’s (2016) study found participants internalizing the stigma and displaying “avoidance” and “deception” to resist the resulting stress. These coping mechanisms can prevent sex workers from receiving the needed legal protection, medical and social services. “Stigma... causes sex workers to deny themselves care and avoid those who could support them in order to reduce exposure that could lead to additional experiences of stigma” (Bowen & Bungay, 2012, p. 192). The internalized stigma can result in a sense of trapped social mobility and contribute to failure to exit (Learmonth, Hakal, & Keller, 2015).

According to Bandura (1989), one's cognitive biases can lead to false interpretations of self and the environment. The stigma attached to sex work (cognitive bias) may lead to a false interpretation of the feasibility of exit (self) in anticipation of the negative responses from others (environment). *Figure 2.4* demonstrates how society’s negative perception of sex work (environmental factor) impacts an individual’s sense of self and level of self-efficacy (personal/cognitive factor) by applying Bandura’s concept of reciprocal causation. The anticipation of failure and anxiety over a service provider’s response (behavior) could pose significant barriers to the exiting process. As Lupton (2011) said: “...those who have been devalued by society are unusually sensitive to the signals they receive from the dominant culture” (p. 147). Female escorts who participated in Koken’s (2012) study voiced a feeling of rejection by their friends, family, and lovers and experienced a sense of marginalization from

service providers due to their profession. Lazarus and colleagues' (2012) study among Canada's sex workers reported a statistically significant relationship between stigma and barriers to accessing health services. "Stigma filtered into interactions with professionals, whereby a negative judgment was frequently assumed, leaving women reluctant to seek support" (Gorry, et al., 2010, p. 498). Stigmatization serves as a barrier for sex workers seeking essential supportive services and creates additional challenges for individuals who have a desire to exit the industry (Steffan, Kavemann, Netzelmann, & Helfferich, 2015).

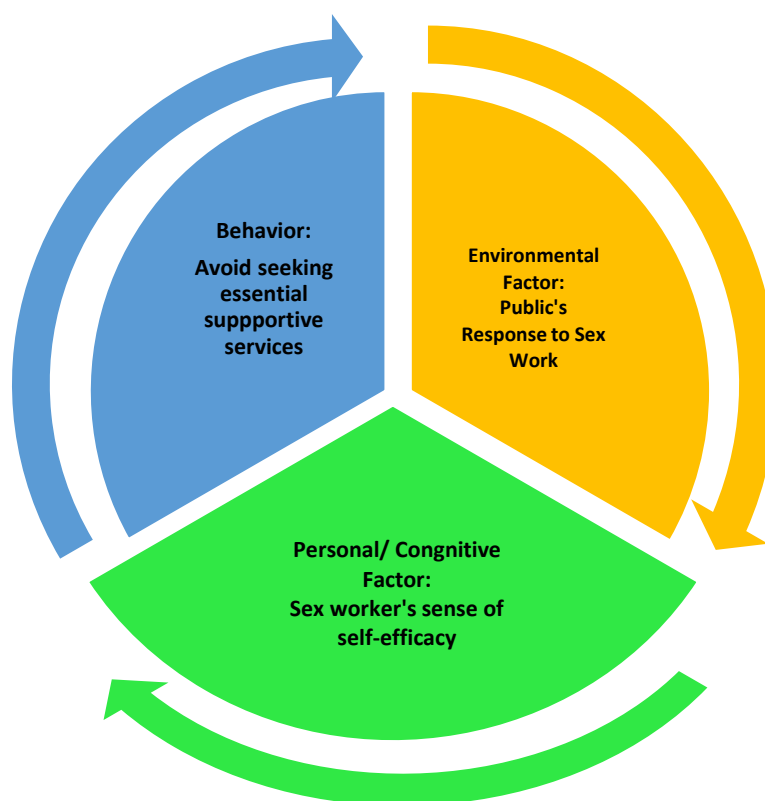


Figure 2.4: Reciprocal Causation: Society's perception of sex work impacts an individual's sense of self-efficacy and increases barriers to exiting.

Relational Barriers

Relationships with others such as friends, family, co-workers, and community can play a role in the exiting process. According to Ślęzak, (2015), the sex workers' social environment is

an important factor in the exiting experience. A strong supportive social network can provide the needed motivation for an individual to overcome the challenges in the exiting process. The following discussion explores research findings on sex workers' relationships in the immediate environment and how they may pose additional barriers to exiting the sex industry.

Relationships within the sex industry. As discussed above, individuals engaged in commercial sex work are highly stigmatized, and sex workers often rely on peers in the industry as a source of support to minimize social isolation. Research on supporting German sex workers' exit found "a sense of family" was a factor that kept sex workers in the industry or encouraged re-entering (Steffan, et al., 2015). In *the Survivor's Guide to Leaving*, White and Lloyd (2014) listed some of the struggles commonly experienced by exited individuals. One of the struggles is a sense of loneliness from missing friends from the industry. As Lakisha, a participant from the Girls Education and Mentoring Services (GEMS) program wrote: "It was hard to leave my pimp, in my mind, this was love, affection, and security. This was all I knew so I stayed..." (White & Lloyd, 2014, p. 96).

The commercial sex industry has a distinctive culture and language such as "wife-in-laws," "chose-up" or "turned out" (Williamson & Baker, 2009). Leaving the familiar environment of sex industry to move into a new and unfamiliar realm is much like an immigrant arriving in a new country. As stated by Bhugra and Becker (2005), "Cultural changes in identity can be stressful and result in problems with self-esteem and mental health" (p. 21). In studying the process of role exit, Ebaugh (1988) found the change of role impacts the significant relationships within the person's circles; these include relationships in the former and current roles. Oselin (2014) found some service providers expect exiting sex workers to practice role distancing (separation from the former role) as an indicator of commitment to exit. However, the

complete disengagement from relationships within former social circles may heighten a sense of isolation and drive an individual towards reentering.

Social Isolation. A supportive network is essential during the exiting process given the strain it has on one's identity. However, society may continue to interact with and respond to individuals in light of the stigma of their former roles (Ebaugh, 1998). "The attitudes of non-exited involve ignorance, stereotype, curiosity, and a lack of sensitivity to the nuances of a previous role" (Ebaugh, 1998, p. 6). The response from the "non-exs" can lead to an exited individual's avoidance of interactions in the mainstream society and result in social isolation. Rabinovitch and Strega (2004) found most of the Canadian sex workers in the study have considered exiting. However, the fear of isolation and frequent negative interactions with society due to stigma kept these individuals from taking steps toward the exiting process.

Manopaiboon and colleague's (2003) qualitative research conducted in Thailand ($n = 42$) found having a relationship with a steady partner is the best protection against re-entry into sex work. The lack of social support outside of the sex industry can increase an exited individual's vulnerability to re-entering or poses a significant hurdle in a person's exiting journey. Ślęzak's (2015) study in Poland found individuals that rely on other sex workers and regular clients to meet their social needs view exiting as "breaking the bond" and leaving the industry will increase a sense of social isolation (p. 146). The social ties within the sex industry become the incentive to remain in or re-enter the industry

Situational Barriers

Mansson and Hedin's (1999) qualitative study ($n = 23$) on women who exited prostitution in Sweden described an "eye-opening" event or repeated trauma as the precipitating factor leading to exit. These events can be positive such as the birth of a child or negative such as

repeated abuse by clients. However, research has indicated that these situational factors can function to hinder the exiting process as well. The discussion below will explore how traumatic experiences and parenthood may contribute to the challenges of exiting.

Traumatic experiences. Williamson and Baker's (2009) qualitative study of U.S. street sex workers ($n = 53$) found regular reports of abuse and violence, especially among pimp-controlled sex workers. To prevent sex workers from choosing a different pimp ("chose up"), pimps resorted to the use of physical and or sexual violence as a method of control. Independent street sex workers were not spared from violence even without the control of a pimp. "Renegades" reported incidents of sexual violence also. Wilson and Butler (2014) described violence experienced by women in sex work as "endemic" (p. 497). An explorative study conducted by Du Mont and McGregor (2004) indicated 20% of sexual assault victims in an urban emergency room were sex workers.

Research has found repeated trauma increases the potential for re-entry for exited workers (Learmonth, Hakal, & Keller, 2015). Repeated exposure to trauma can lead to the development of complex Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Daalder, Bogaerts, and Bijleveld's study (2013, $n = 123$) among indoor sex workers in the Netherlands found 30-40% of the participants had a history of childhood abuse and or neglect. This same study also found a statistical significance between childhood abuse and adult post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms. The psychological impact stemming from trauma can affect an individual's functioning and hinder exiting the sex industry.

Schupp (2015) explained symptoms of complex PTSD could include the following: alterations in the sense of self, alterations in perception of the perpetrator, and alterations in the meaning of life. These symptoms can lead to the development of shame, a sense of isolation, a

sense of helplessness, and an “unrealistic attribution of total power to the perpetrator” (p. 73).

Sex workers that experienced repeated violence may suffer from long-term effects that limit their ability to reach the goal of a successful exit.

Parenthood. According to Dodsworth (2014), sex workers that are also parents can face a double stigma from the society as a sex worker and as a parent working in the sex industry. The tension due to the society’s perception of role incompatibility can worsen by the fear of losing the custody of the children due to their involvement in the industry (Dalla, 2000). “Many sex workers in this situation live double lives in a double bind, in which they feel they have to work to support and keep their children in an occupation that may result in losing them” (Dodsworth, 2014, p. 101). Having children may serve as a motivator to exit, but it also becomes a reason for remaining in the industry or re-entering in order to provide financially for children. Dodsworth’s (2014) study found participants that did not have a supportive network and experienced a loss of children, developed a sense of hopelessness and become more engrained in the sex industry. Learmonth and colleagues’ (2015) study in South Africa is consistent with Dodsworth’s (2014). The desire to provide for the children became the barrier to exit: “Motherhood was not only seen as a reason for entering the sex trade, it was also a significant reason for remaining in, and returning to, the trade” (p. 356).

Structural Factors

Structural factors such as funding, availability of services, socioeconomic injustice, and legal policy can all have a significant impact on the exiting process. The discussion below covers macro issues such as chronic poverty, inadequate services, lack of housing, and rigid legal policies that were commonly listed in research as barriers to exiting.

Chronic Poverty. Research has identified financial desperation as one of the common characteristics among commercial sex workers (Aponte, 2015; Cepeda, 2011; Cobbina & Oselin, 2011; Dalla, 2000; Dank, et al., 2014; Dodsworth, 2012; Manopaiboon, et al., 2003; Medrano, Hatch, Zule, & Desmond, 2003; & SWP, 2005, Vanwesenbeeck, 2001). Oselin's (2010) research participants expressed that financial pressure and limited skills were the reasons for engaging in the industry. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (n.d.) reported similar socioeconomic backgrounds in addition to a history of incarceration, violence, and mental health issues among sex workers. These elements are common barriers encountered by exiting sex workers and reflect the socioeconomic vulnerability of these individuals.

According to an analysis conducted by the Urban Justice Center (Sex Workers Project, 2005), economic need was one of the key reasons for entering the sex industry. A study on supporting German sex workers' exit found income as a key factor in the decision to remain in the industry (Steffan, et al., 2015). Dank and colleagues' (2014) qualitative study indicated 42% ($n = 36$) of the participants expressed that income from sex work was used to pay for family expenses and basic needs. A survey among New Zealand sex workers indicated that 82.3% ($n = 743$) of participants cited "paying household expenses" as the reason for staying in the industry (Ministry of Justice, 2008). Qualitative research conducted in Thailand identifying barriers to exit pointed to financial pressure as the key barrier, and found a similar pattern of the use of income from sex work to provide for family needs (Manopaiboon, et al., 2003, $n = 42$). Williamson and Folaron (2003) found that poverty was the top reason for sex workers re-entering the industry. Participants in Benoit and Miller's (2001) study found that the lack of education and employment skills caused them to not generate enough income to meet basic needs after exit. Financial need became a key motivator for reentering sex work. As stated

pointedly by Vanwesenbeeck (2013): "...the number one motive for engaging in commercial or exchange sex is, without a doubt, earning money" (p. 12).

Negative Interactions with Service Agencies. Rabinovitch and Strega (2004) reported that sex workers came in contact with the following three social institutions most frequently: child welfare agencies, law enforcement agencies, and medical emergency rooms. The participants in their research described the interactions with these agencies as "punitive and hostile" (p. 151). Research found successful exit from the sex industry required the collaboration of service agencies to meet the complex needs of an individual exiting the sex industry (Ouspenski, 2014). Sex workers' mistrust towards service providers due to negative interactions can significantly hinder the exiting process.

Homelessness. Duff and colleagues (2011) found homeless outdoor sex workers were "68% more likely to service a high number of clients (10+) per week compared to their housed counterpart" (p. 3). This study demonstrated that the lack of basic needs such as housing may push sex workers into the mode of survival sex and lead to a deeper entrenchment in the sex industry. A study among 237 Canadian sex workers found a statistical significance between homelessness and experience of rape and physical violence (Shannon, et al., 2009). Homeless street sex workers' repeated exposure and experience of violence can increase a sense of hopelessness and decrease the motivation to exit the industry. As Herman (1997) stated: "The core experiences of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others" (p. 133). Social isolation and a sense of powerlessness are all barriers to exiting the sex industry as these barriers increased the vulnerability of individuals to substance abuse and mental health issues (Learmonth, Hakal, & Keller, 2015).

Criminal Record. It is illegal to engage in the commercial sex industry in the U.S. (U.S. Department of Justice, n.d.). In the year of 2010, there was a total of 62,670 arrests (male: 19,480; female: 43,190) for prostitution and commercialized vice (Snyder, 2012). Shdaimah and Wiechelt (2012) stated that the punitive nature of the U.S. legal system regarding sex work does not consider the various factors that impact their involvement in the industry. Sex workers face many socioeconomic challenges and criminalization may increase sex workers' vulnerability and create additional barriers to exiting. The lack of employable skills coupled with a criminal record can severely limit an individual's options for social mobility and financial security.

Summary

Commercial sex workers who have a desire to exit the sex industry face enormous barriers at individual, relational, situational, and structural levels. Current research on understanding the obstacles in exiting was mostly conducted outside of the United States among outdoor sex workers. The various theories on exiting did not explain the common phenomena of the cycle of enter-exit-re-entering. This study will focus on exploring factors that contribute to the barriers to exiting the sex industry, especially the cycle of enter-exit-re-entering, among indoor sex workers in the United States. The identifications of these barriers may offer insight to service providers to address the complex needs of the exiting process.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The design of this study utilized a qualitative ethnographic approach to collect data. The research aim was to explore barriers facing U.S. sex workers during the exiting process. These barriers were examined from the sex workers' perspective. Existing research that investigated the barriers in exiting was mostly conducted in countries outside of the United States, and the participants were mostly outdoor sex workers. Creswell (2013) described one of the characteristics of an ethnographic study is the exploration of a group with a shared culture. For this research, sex workers working or who have worked in an indoor setting in the United States was the shared culture of this study. Another distinctiveness of an ethnographic approach is the role of the researchers as learners and the participants as the experts (Creswell, 2013; Miller, Reid, & Fortune, 2012). The interview questions in this study sought to collect information from the sex workers' expert firsthand experience of the exiting process.

Sampling

The participants for this study included individuals who have attempted the exiting process or have exited the indoor sex industry in the United States. An organization in Central Pennsylvania serving exiting and exited individuals gave the researcher permission to recruit prospective subjects. Please refer to Appendix B for a letter of permission from the organization. This research study also received approval from the Millersville University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB approval letter is included in Appendix C. A \$10 gift card from a local convenience store (Sheetz) was given to participants as remuneration for the time and inconvenience of participation. The service providers explained the purpose of the research to potential participants at the agency. Initial participants were recruited from the agency using the

convenience sampling method. The snowball sampling method was used to recruit additional participants based on referrals from the initial group of participants until an optimal number of ten participants was reached. The smaller sample size limited the transferability of the findings. However, as Adler and Adler (Baker & Edwards, 2012) stated:

...a small number of cases, or subjects, may be extremely valuable and represent adequate numbers for a research project. This is especially true for studying hidden or hard to access populations such as deviants or elites. Here, a relatively few people, such as between six and a dozen, may offer us insights... (p. 8).

Flick (2007) also echoed Adler and Adler's point in considering the availability and accessibility of the prospective participants when determining the sample size. The stigma attached to sex workers is indicative of the society's view of the sex industry as a "deviant" profession. A sample size of ten participants did yield valuable insight regarding barriers in exiting the sex industry. In addition, the fear of stigmatization posed a challenge in acquiring participants for the research project. It was not feasible to include a larger sample size for this study.

Informed Consent

An informed consent (see Appendix D) was distributed to the participants, and the researcher was available to answer questions. There was a potential psychological risk for participants in relating potential traumatic experiences. Participants were assured that they could stop the study at any time. They could also choose not to answer any question that they did not want to answer. There was a list of no to low cost community resources available to the participants, if in the event that they were in need of emotional support as a result of the interviews (see Appendix E). There was also a possibility of jeopardizing the participants' income by placing them at risk of legal action since some of the participants may have been

engaged in illegal activities such as direct sex work involving a physical exchange. In order to protect participants from any legal ramifications, participants were presented with the consent form with no requirement for signature to keep their identities anonymous. The benefits of this study included a deeper understanding of the factors that hinder a successful exit and insight for service providers who address these barriers. All participants were assigned a pseudonym throughout the research process. Direct quotes were used in the report, but names and other identifiable information were kept anonymous.

Data Collection

A one-time 45-60 minute face to face individual interview was conducted on a mutually agreeable date after the participants had an opportunity to understand the nature of the study. The interviews were audio recorded in a private setting to maintain confidentiality and privacy. The recordings served to ensure accuracy during transcription and analysis. Audio recordings and hand-written notes were transcribed into a file on the computer of the primary researcher protected with a password code. Original recordings and hand-written notes were destroyed after transcription. In compliance with federal law, all computer data will be maintained a minimum of three years. Following transcription of the interviews, the audio recordings were deleted. Unstructured interviewing methods with broad general questions parallel to the research aims were used for this study (Appendix E). Lee (2011) found unstructured interviews with open-ended questions provide opportunities for qualitative researchers to explore beneath the surface and collect richer information. An unstructured interview positions a researcher as the learner and removes the “social distance” between the researcher and the interviewee (p. 135). Perhaps the most significant benefit of the open interview was the opportunity for the participants to share their stories and empower their role as the expert on their own life experiences.

Data Analysis

Transcription. The software programs Express Scribe Transcription Software (Version 6.06; NCH Software, n.d.) and the home version of Dragon Naturally Speaking speech recognition software (Nuance, 2014) were used to transcribe the data collected from the interviews. A Dragon Naturally Speaking user personal profile was set up to better recognize the researcher's pronunciation of words and improve accuracy in the transcription process. The recorded interviews were downloaded onto the Express Scribe Transcription program. A headset with a microphone was used to dictate the interviews using the Dragon Naturally Speaking program to transcribe the data onto a Word document.

Coding and Analysis. The data collected were organized into computer files and given labels (e.g., interview #1). Three columns separated the data into "interview excerpts," "codes," and "memos". Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007) explained that the process of deductive constant comparison is to establish codes before the data analysis process and review the data that align with the pre-established codes. Content analysis took the data analysis one step further by counting the codes and generating quantitative data on the frequency of each barrier (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), directed content analysis utilizes existing theory and research to develop key categories for coding. The pre-established codes for this research were based on the concept of reciprocal causation in the social cognitive theory and the barriers to exiting identified by existing research. A line-by-line analysis of the transcriptions was conducted to identify each type of barrier in the exiting process. Data were sorted and coded under the categories of barriers to exiting on the individual, social, situational, or structural level.

Trustworthiness and Rigor. The ethnographic study's weakness is the reliance on the researchers' perspective in collection and interpretation of the data (Miller, Reid, & Fortune, 2012). The predetermined codes can also increase researcher's vulnerability to bias by making data fit the preset categories and closing the door to new discoveries (Saldana, 2009). Memoing was also used to promote reflectivity during the data collection and interpretation phase (Birks, Chapman & Francis, 2008). Triangulation is the use of multiple sources to validate the data such as the use of an additional analyst (Engel & Schutt, 2017). An independent researcher with no interaction with the participants was used to cross check the coding to minimize bias in data interpretation and coding. Padgett (2017) recommended the use of peer debriefing and support (PDS) as one way to minimize bias and expand new perspectives. Service providers that are providing supportive services for exiting/exited commercial sex workers served as the PDS for this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter will present findings from the unstructured face-to-face interviews of individuals who have been or are currently involved in the indoor commercial sex industry. The focus of these interviews sought to collect an insider's perspective on the potential barriers to exiting the industry and to explore possible factors that could contribute to the cycle of enter/exit/re-entering identified by existing research. Direct quotations from the participants are used to validate the findings and to support the emerging themes identified in this research study. The names of the participants have all been changed to remove identifiable information and to protect the participants' confidentiality.

The ten face-to-face interviews were conducted in the fall of 2017 throughout Central Pennsylvania. The participants in this research were all females living in the State of Pennsylvania. The participants have either worked or are currently working in the legal indoor sex industry, specifically in an exotic dance club setting. It is important to note that all participants used the term "dancers" and "strippers" interchangeably throughout the interviews. Six (60%) of the participants have exited the sex industry and the remaining four participants (40%) are currently in the industry. The years of involvement in the industry range from 1 to 20 years. The mean number of years in the industry was 8.2 ($SD = 5.78$). For the six participants who have exited the industry, the time out of the industry ranged from 0.5 to 3 years, with the mean of 0.9 years ($SD = 0.97$) (see Table 4.1). Four out of the ten (40%) participants have experienced the cycle of enter/exit/re-entering.

Table 4.1

Length in and Out the Industry

	Length in Industry (in year) <i>n</i> = 10	Length of Exit (in year) <i>n</i> = 6
Minimum	1	0.5
Maximum	20	3
Mean	8.2	0.9
SD	5.78	0.97

Analysis of Result Findings

All of the participants were open to sharing their stories relating to their experiences as a dancer. Each participant has a unique story but there were clear themes that emerged in exploring the barriers to exiting the industry and potential barriers that contribute to a cycle of enter/exit/re-entering. The barriers most commonly encountered by exiting sex workers fall into the following four categories: individual, relational, situational, and structural (Baker, Dalla, & Williamson, 2010). This study utilized these four categories as a guide in analyzing the data and identifying the top barriers in each domain.

Individual Barriers

Figure 4.1 listed the individual barriers identified by existing research and how often the participants in this study identified with each barrier. The top three barriers to exiting identified by the research participants at the individual level were: shame from stigma, an adverse childhood, and substance abuse. Existing literature has identified substance abuse as one of the most common barriers to the exiting process (Benoit, et al., 2015b; Bindle, et al., 2012; Dalla, 2000, Ouspenski, 2014; Sallmann, 2010; Williamson & Folaron, 2003). In this study, however,

the substance abuse issue was ranked as the third barrier and was found among 50% ($n = 5$) of the participants. The factors “shame from stigma” and “adverse childhood” both were ranked higher than substance abuse. In this study, 80% ($n = 8$) of the participants expressed a sense of shame from stigma, and 60 % ($n = 6$) of the interviewees provided examples of traumatic childhood experiences in identifying barriers to exiting the sex industry.

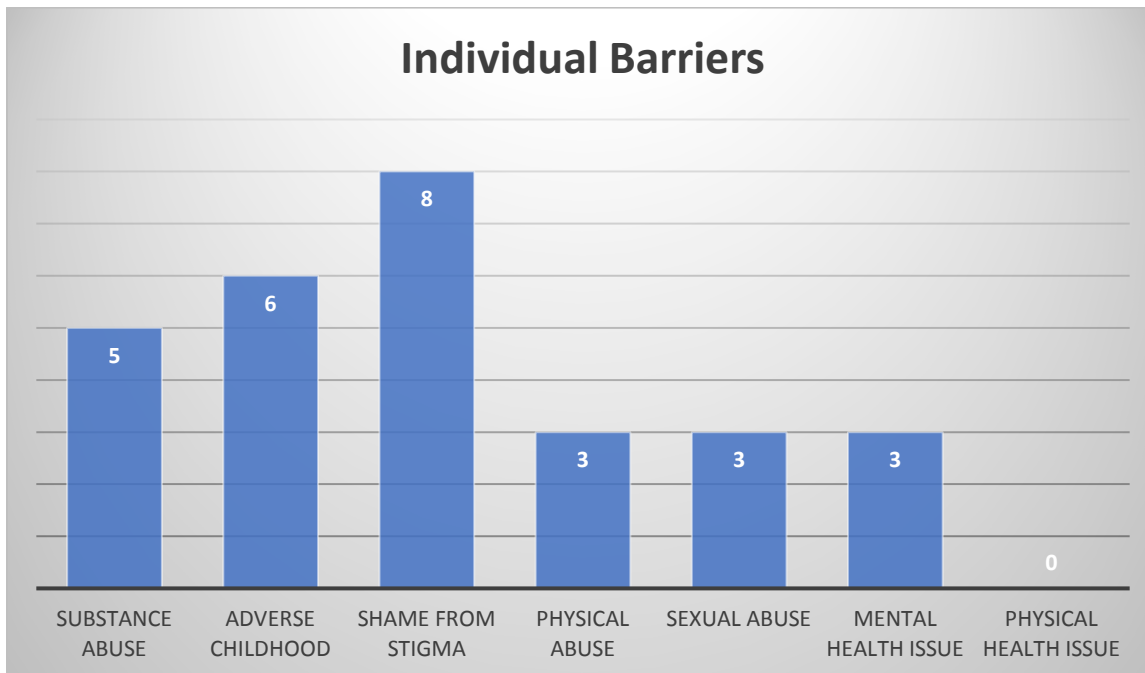


Figure 4.1. Individual barriers in exiting the commercial sex industry.

Shame from Stigma. This study found that participants were keenly aware of the stigma the society attached to individuals in the commercial sex industry. As Dee, who was in the industry for twenty years, said:

Oh my god! If they find out you were a dancer...very judgmental! They don't understand what it takes to do the job...but they are quick to call you a “whore,” they are quick to call you a “slut.”

Ellie, who exited the industry three years ago after working in the industry for ten years, shared a similar observation as Dee:

People judge you. People are so freaking quick to judge you. “Oh, you are a stripper, you are a whore and you f*** for money.

Data collected from this research provided evidence of commercial sex workers internalizing the society’s negative perception of the sex industry. The analysis of the data found 90% ($n = 9$) of the participants used adjectives such as “regular,” “clean,” “real,” or “legit” when describing jobs outside of the industry. These statements reflect the participants’ self-stigma regarding their employment in the sex industry. Table 4.2 provided a list of the statements made by 9 out of the 10 participants regarding their view of employment outside of the industry.

Table 4.2

Adjectives Used by Participants in Describing Jobs Outside of the Sex Industry

Participant’s Name	Statement on Jobs Outside of the Sex Industry
Ann	And I’m making <i>clean money</i> but it’s still not easy [referring to her current job after having exited the sex industry].
Pat	yeah like I wanted out of it but there's just I guess easy money. Short hours, easy money. Yeah, then when I got in trouble, I was like okay, back to a <i>regular job</i> again.
Chris	You just have to learn that you have to get yourself to a certain point and then budget yourself to be able to have a <i>real job</i> . Because you can’t do it forever.
Dee	A lack of education to get a <i>real job</i> [when asked about barriers to exiting the sex industry].
Jess	you can’t be like that in a <i>regular job</i> . And I think some girls they go and get a <i>regular job</i> and one weekend a customer irritates them and they get fired because they cussed the customer out.
Sam	Right now, I could not get out. If I would go to a <i>regular job</i> right now I wouldn't make it.
Val	It's like I can make that much in a few days like dancing that I would make in a few weeks working in a <i>normal job</i> .
Ellie	I mean I have a couple of <i>real jobs</i> here and there but I ended up quitting because you get behind cause it’s not enough.
Jean	because most of them that I've met or just most of them are stepping stones. some of them do have like <i>legit jobs</i> with their nursing or whatever and they do it a couple days a week for different reasons [described reasons for involvement in the industry].

Note. *Italics denotes emphasis added*

As proposed by Bandura's (1989) concept of reciprocal causation in the social cognitive theory, an individual's environment, cognitive perception, and behaviors can have a reciprocal effect on each other. The environmental factor of the society's harsh response towards individuals involved in the commercial sex industry can lead to the internalization of society's stigma and the development of self-stigma. (Wong, Holroyd, & Bingham, 2011). The negative cognitive perception from self-stigma can then result in social isolation and prevent the establishment of a support network; two critical factors in facilitating a successful exit. As Dee and Chris expressed during the interviews, the presence of a sense of shame from self-stigma shaped their interactions with society and increased their sense of marginalization.

Dee: I always assumed that there is something about me that people could read that I am a stripper. I felt like I always have to hide something or overcompensate in some way. So, it is hard to be social and interact with people because you always tried to hide that... I think I live a life truly and honestly scared of other people. Scared of them finding out, or scared of saying the wrong thing. I am scared.

Chris: I don't feel like I belong here [referring to churches]. And I feel like everyone is looking at me and I don't know why.

The lack of interaction with individuals working within the sex industry perpetuates society's misconceptions and reinforces stigma that impacts a sex worker's self-concept and behavior. Societal stigma also impacted some of the participants' personal relationships. Jean, Lynn, Chris, and Dee all described experiences of interpersonal tension:

Jean: My parents were pissed after I told them like a month after I was working...I did lose one friend. I told her like okay, I've been dancing for about six months at the time like that's what I was doing and she's like "Oh, okay." And then slowly just separated from me and unfriended me on social media and everything.

Lynn: I ended up going back to dancing at a smaller place, one that didn't advertise because I cannot have family or friends knowing I do it. My parents still don't know. I would not want to disappoint them, you know, because they would just be disappointed.

Chris: well, my mom was disappointed in me.

Dee: I know that is something I always wanted to keep quiet. My mom would never talk about it. Wouldn't tell anyone. It embarrasses her. I understand that...I have lost a lot of friends because if their boyfriends find out I am a stripper, they said: "I don't want you hanging out with her." A few friends have said: "I can't hang out with you. He doesn't really understand." Now they will choose their boyfriends so our friendship is cut off. Or they are afraid that I will hit on their boyfriends because they don't see the disconnection between real life and my job, they just think that you are who you are.

Interpersonal tension puts pressure on existing relationships with loved ones and can prevent the formation of future relationships resulting in social isolation and perpetuating the cycle of stigma. Social isolation can become a push factor for individuals to remain in or re-enter the industry as they rely on peers within the industry to meet social and emotional needs (Steffan, et al., 2015).

Stigma from being involved in the sex industry also resulted in limitations for employment as explained by Chris, Jess, and Dee in the job application process.

Chris: I just put that I am a housewife. I didn't know what else to put. It's hard to explain. That's the hardest part...trying to explain what I was good at.

Jess: I have been dancing for five to ten years and have no other work history. None. And when you are 29 years old and you have no work history except that to put on the application, you are not going to have an easy time getting a job because they are gonna want to know why.

Dee: What do I tell them for my job history? In a job interview, they are going to say: "What have you been doing with your life?" I am not going to tell them the truth because they are going to judge me if I am going to tell the truth. Or I am going to lie. I don't even know the depths of the lie I am going to tell and I know I am going to be caught in it. So, why even try, you know.

As Pat shared, challenges and frustration in the initial job application process can deter an individual with a desire to exit the sex industry when searching for alternative employment opportunities.

Pat: Yes, kind of something you wanna leave off the resume. That's what I did. I think I kind of put I did housekeeping or something but then till one job wanted to call. I was

like: what! The person passed away. I know that's awful but I'm like who you want to call for. Like just let it go. I didn't want that job anyway. I am like: "Forget it! You all are too nosy."

These findings affirm Weitzer's (2012a) use of a polymorphous paradigm in addressing the complexity of push and pull factors regarding entering and exiting the commercial sex industry as shown in Figure 2. The interaction between stigma and other relational and structural factors supports the concept of reciprocal causation in explaining the barriers to exit and the cyclical pattern of enter/exit/re-entering the industry (Figure 4.2).

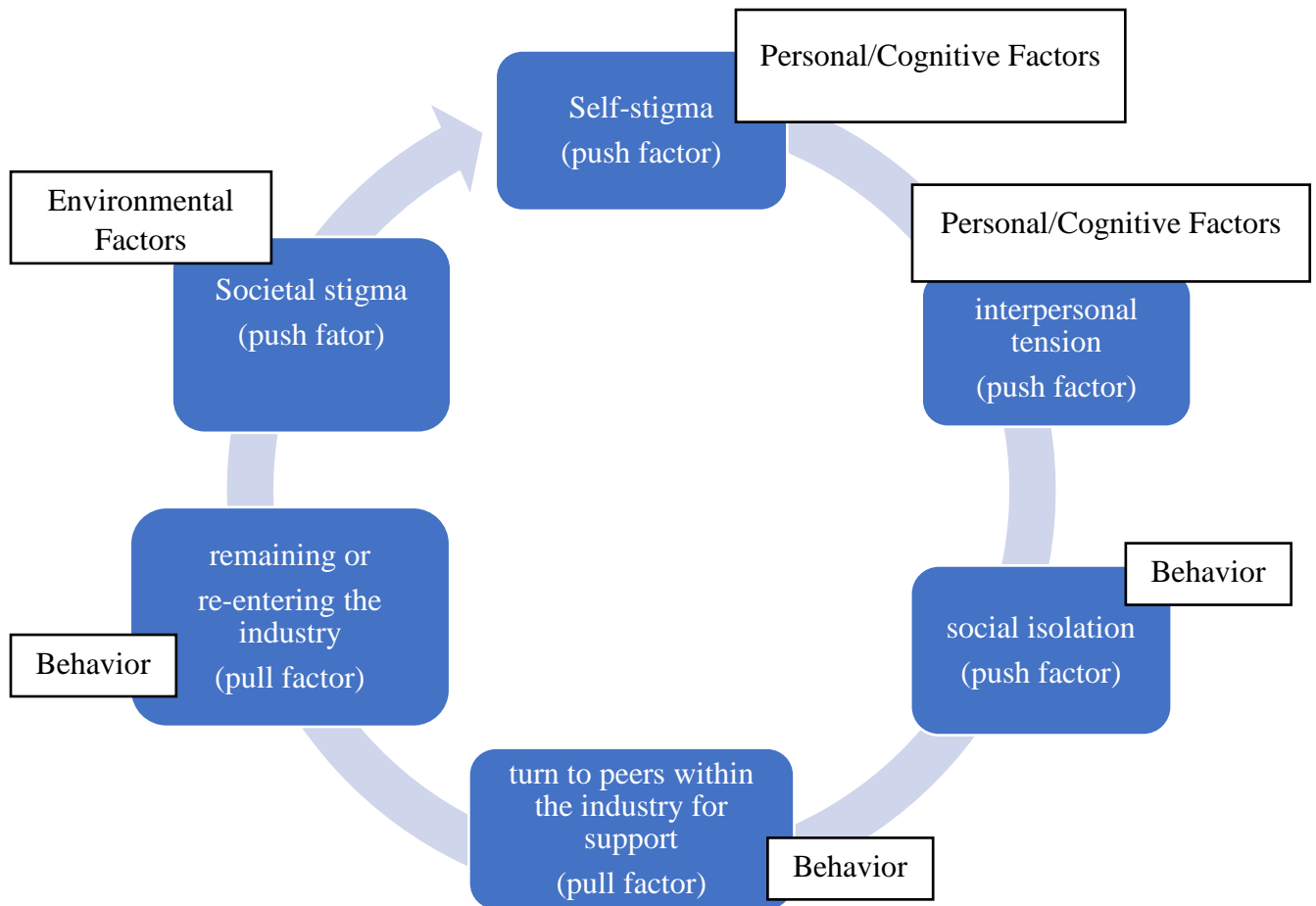


Figure 4.2. The Polymorphous Paradigm and the Concept of Reciprocal Causation in Explaining the Factors in Remaining in and Re-entering the Sex Industry.

Adverse Childhood. More than half of the participants (n = 6, 60%) in this study have an adverse childhood, including the loss of parents, involvement in the child welfare system, and childhood sexual and physical abuse. The finding is consistent with the pattern observed in existing research that traumatic childhood experiences are common factors among individuals working in the sex industry (Huang, 2015). Ann's story illustrated the depth of the childhood pain experienced by some of the participants:

I was 6 years old...my dad shot my mom and then shot himself. My grandparents took custody of me and my brother and we lived with them. That was horrible. My uncle, when I turned 11, my uncle raped and molested me from the time when I was 11 to 15. And I ended up gotten pregnant at age 14 by my uncle and my grandparents thought I asked for it... and I had a little girl. Her name was A. E., she was born with a hole in her heart. She died two minutes after being born in my arms. So, I end up burying a child at the age of 15.

Jess, who was in the industry on and off for ten years, grew up in the foster care system and shared this story of her entrance to the industry:

Well, I was 17 and I worked at McDonalds and I couldn't pay my bills. My mother saw an ad in the newspaper for dancers at ABC [a local exotic dance club] and she dragged me in there and she left. I didn't do anything. I honestly didn't take any clothes off. I stood on the stage like this [with arms crossed] the entire time and I made \$400 in like four hours just standing there.

Traumatic childhood experiences can negatively shape an individual's concept of self and the development of a sense of powerlessness that hinders the exiting process. Jess, who was in the foster care system and various placements from ages 5-18 shared her struggle with a sense of insecurity and the involvement in the sex industry:

I think you have to have some level of insecurity, that including myself, to even be a dancer. I don't think secure people ended up dancing...I don't think anybody just wakes up one day and is like: "I think it is a good idea to be a stripper". I don't think it works like that. I think you have to be some kind of desperate. And if you are desperate, you are gonna be insecure.

Dee grew up in a physically and sexually abusive home and was a victim of domestic violence. Her response illustrated how a perceived low concept of self could create a sense of powerlessness and a feeling of entrapment and therefore, hinder an individual's ability to navigate the complex exiting process.

I met a man I fell in love with. We got married; had his children. I met him in the club. He was a mistake. I had such low-esteem that I didn't think how I was hurting other people. I was just happy to be loved. I thought I was loved. And I loved him. He was married. He was a client that came in and see me all the time... He was a crazy psycho. I should have let him go but I hung on...we would get into an argument and he would hit me.

Val made an impactful statement during the interview about her involvement in the sex industry in relation to her childhood sexual abuse history.

I guess like a history of like the sexual stuff like my family. I guess like in general feeling like an object has always been a struggle for me. So yeah, the industry in general was not conducive to healing from that type of mindset...It was hard but it was also familiar...To an extent like I start to think: "Is this normal? Is this how everyone is? This is how life is? This is how things are?"

Val's reflection provided additional insight into how the existence of unresolved childhood sexual abuse trauma may become a barrier to exiting the industry. The feeling of being objectified as a dancer mimicked the unhealthy sexual boundaries she experienced from her childhood abuse. Leaving the sex industry with unresolved childhood sexual trauma may evoke mental anxieties caused by a false sense of normalcy, which arises from staying in the industry.

Substance Abuse. Fifty percent of the participants indicated struggles with addiction issues. An interesting finding from this study was they all referred to the use of drugs or alcohol as coping mechanism in dealing with the stress of sex work. Below is the response provided by Ann when queried about drug use prior to working in the industry:

Ann: No. No, I did not. Now I got really bad into cocaine and ecstasy when I was working there. I had a really bad problem for a little bit when I got into it cuz that's how it

got me through my day. I got hooked on it and I decided to up and leave my kids and everything else and I made some poor choices and I lost my kids out of it.

Jess and Pat also shared similar sentiments on the use of substance to cope with the stresses from working in the sex industry. Both Jess and Pat indicated that a problem with alcohol addiction developed after their engagement in the industry.

Jess: I didn't go to the bar and drink but I could not walk in the door of a club without drinking cause I hated it there.

Pat: A lot of girls I have seen picked up drugs and they do alcohol. Mine was drinking, just so you can kind of make it easier... [referring to working in the dance club]

The research finding of substance use to manage the negative aspects of the industry is consistent with the reports from existing literature (Cusicj & Hickman, 2005; and Young, Boyd, & Hubbell, 2000). As it will be discussed further in the section on structural barriers, financial pressure is one of the key barriers in exiting the sex industry. The presence of substance addiction will only compound an individual's financial burden and increase the challenge to exit.

Relational Barriers

The three most frequent identified relational barriers were "strained family relationships" ($n = 6$, 60%), "relationships within the industry" ($n = 6$, 60%) and social isolation ($n = 5$, 50%) (see Figure 4.3). Five out of the six (83%) participants who reported childhood trauma also shared experiences of strained family relationships (see Table 4.3). Research participants emphasized the significant impact of having a supportive network in exiting the sex industry. When seeking the participants' advice for exiting, several individuals mentioned the need to have a support system. Ellie and Ann both expressed the value of a support system to exiting the industry:

Ellie: I guess my best advice would be especially you are a mother, there are people out there want to help you. They don't want to force you but they want to help you. Let them in. Let them be your support system

Ann: The best thing is to know though is the girls will have some kind of support when they leave. It may not be financial support, it may not be the support that they are looking for. But in the long run when it comes down to it, what a girl really needs is that emotional support. That is what I needed to get out with somebody there to just be like: "Okay, you got it, you got it! Keep going, keep going."

Ann, who has successfully exited the commercial sex industry, credited her significant other's support in facing the challenges of the exiting process:

When I did get my job, it wasn't easy though. I took a massive pay cut. It's a lot on my family, but I had the support of like my boyfriend.

Although having a strong support network is crucial to the exiting process, research participants emphasized the need of self-determination to reach the goal of leaving the sex industry as voiced by Pat, Ann, and Sam.

Pat: ...somebody's not gonna keep telling you what you need to do. Like you don't want somebody constantly nagging at you and telling you: you should do this, you should do that. It's kind of like people gonna get out on their own. It's like telling an alcoholic or a drug addict what they should do. They're gonna stop when they want to stop. So, you can be the same way with dancers. They're gonna leave when they want to leave, when the time is right.

Ann: But if the girls don't want to leave, there's nothing you can do. Unfortunately, I wish there's really something I could say to change that but there's not.

Sam: ...if you are determined enough within yourself you can get out. Anybody can do anything they want to do...it's all about the person. If they're motivated enough, the girls can go to college and then stop and make it and do something. It's not the industry. It all depends on the person. Nobody is putting a gun to somebody's head.

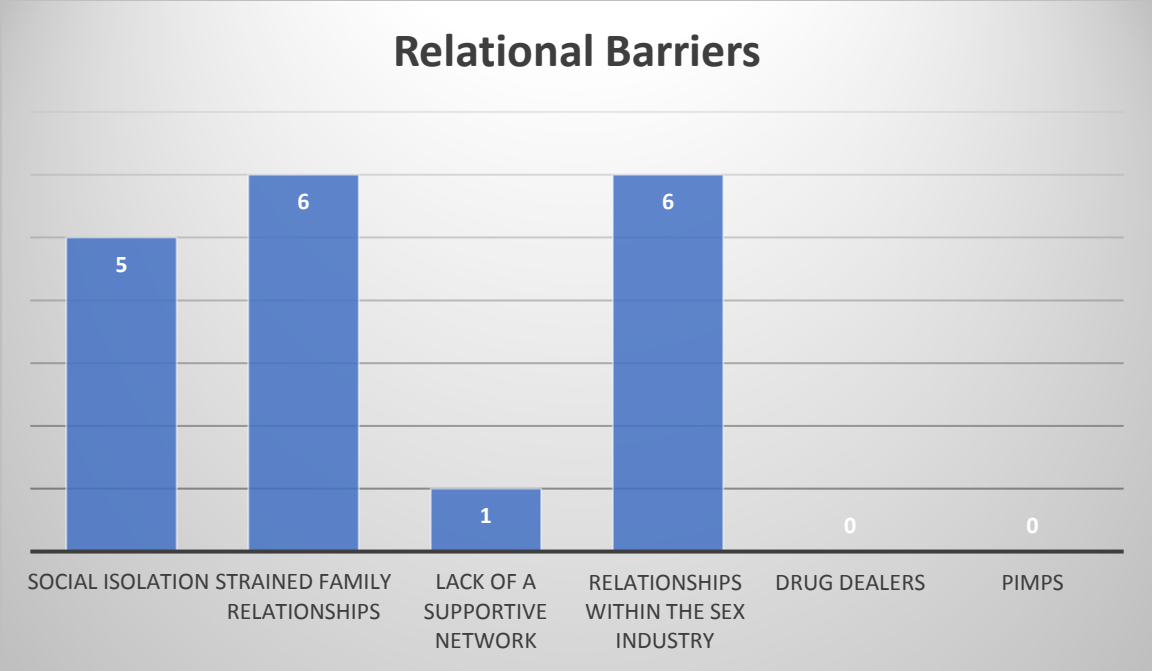


Figure 4.3. Relational barriers in exiting the commercial sex industry.

Table 4.3

Report of Childhood Trauma and Strained Family Relationships

Participant #	Childhood Trauma Yes/No	Strained Family Relationships Yes/No
1.	Yes	Yes
2.	No	No
3.	No	No
4.	Yes	Yes
5.	Yes	Yes
6.	Yes	No
7.	Yes	Yes
8.	Yes	Yes
9.	No	Yes
10.	No	No

Relationships within the sex industry. Society's stigma can cause an individual involved in the sex industry to minimize social contacts to avoid further negative interactions. As Dee puts it so well, the lack of interaction with the outside world widens the gap to the point that she feels she has nothing in common with non-dancers.

It's hard to identify overtime you are so used to being in your own social group that is hard to leave and identify or feel like you have anything in common with anyone around you...I just kept with my own kind because that's where I feel comfortable.

It is not surprising that individuals working in the sex industry that experienced social isolation attempt to seek support from each other. Participants in this study explained that the support from peers within the industry serves as a pull factor to remain in the industry. Chris, Sam, and Jean provided examples of the value of friendships within the industry:

Chris: This group of girls becomes your sisters so I worked with 10 girls and we all became very close, we became like sisters ... You kind of become like sisters with all these people and I still talk to a lot of them even though I moved away for 5 years... over time and the smaller the club the more close that you become and you become sisters and you create friends and when you move to a town where you don't know anybody. That's what you rely on. You rely on having that little family.

Sam: Now, because I'm 44 and I've been around the industry so long, now I hate it. The only thing I like about it is I have my girls, you know it's like a girl time.

Jean: I've met some really good people. And actually, three of them are better than the friends I've had in my whole life.

However, research participants such as Ann, Pat, Dee, and Jess also provided examples of hurtful relationships within the industry that serve as a push factor to exit the industry.

Ann: I thought I had the support of my friends. I had the quick money. I had my girls. We were good and we were going to run the world together. And it wasn't really that case. It was me and myself and I hustling for money. And at the end, I would have been lonely...

Pat: I knew I wasn't supposed to go back like once I lost my driver's license. All of the sudden, nobody is your friend no more. They can't give you a ride anywhere.

Dee: No, and there is no comradery. At least in the bar, when you worked in the bar, everyone is drunk and the girls are always fighting.

Jess: The drama with girls. They fight all the time, period. Every night is a different fight. It doesn't matter how nice you are or like how personable. Somebody along the line is going to hate you for no reason at all, and particularly you make money... the girls are worse than the customers most of the time. At least the customers are drunk and they have some excuse for their behaviors. The girls are just mean or insecure. I don't think they are really mean people; they are just insecure.

The tension that stemmed from the competition for customers made it difficult to cultivate friendships as illustrated by Ellie and Lynn:

Ellie: I mean I fought a couple girls in strip clubs. You get that. You got catty girls in there and every woman think it is a competition. I tell the girls: "Listen, the less competition, the more money you are gonna make."

Lynn: ... you know, if it's somebody else's regular, they're asking you for dance, I guess they weren't as faithful to that person to begin with, you know. So, it comes down to its business. Business is business; money is money, you know...at the end of the day, money is money. So, it's just business, you know... As far as those girls go, that is why I'm there. Because I don't want anything to do with those girls, you know. I'm there to work, you know. I'm not there to make friends and I ended up making just a couple friends along the way which was fine.

The results were mixed regarding relationships within the industry being a push or pull factor to the process of exiting. There was no clear distinction between supportive relationships that were formed inside or outside of the industry being more helpful to the exiting process. Relationships that are affirming and respectful to the individual's own decision making seem to be most conducive to the exiting process.

The study population being involved in legal and indoor sex work could explain the result that none of the participants mentioned the control of pimps as a barrier to exit. Exotic dancers are considered independent contractors and are generally not under the control of a pimp. Chris, Jess, and Jean all discussed the importance of filing taxes as Jean said: "...but I mean tax season sucks. You're self-employed." Several participants mentioned the flexibility of being an

independent contractor as a pull to remain in the industry as supported by Pat: “I guess it's pretty much you don't have set hours like you do a regular job. Like you can be late or you can leave.”

Dee expressed that setting her own hours as a dancer allowed her to be available to her children as a single mom:

They have really good day time clientele. Who knew that I can go to work at 11 o'clock in the morning, I can get the kids ready and put them on the bus, be at work at 11, work until 4, come home, and cook dinner. You know, so that has really helped me. Keeping the banker hours has really helped me stay being a good mother.

Substance abuse is a barrier more commonly identified by outdoor sex workers in existing research (Cusick & Hickman, 2015; van Nunen, et al., 2014). The finding that none of the participants identified drug dealers as a barrier to their exit supported the understanding that sex workers are not a homogenous group. There are substantial differences between individuals working in the various categories of sex work (Gorry, Roen, & Reilly, 2010; Shaver, 2005).

Situational Barriers

The existing research identified traumatic experiences, injury from violence, and parenthood as the three most common situational barriers. Figure 4.4 illustrated the frequency of these situational barriers found among the participants in this study.

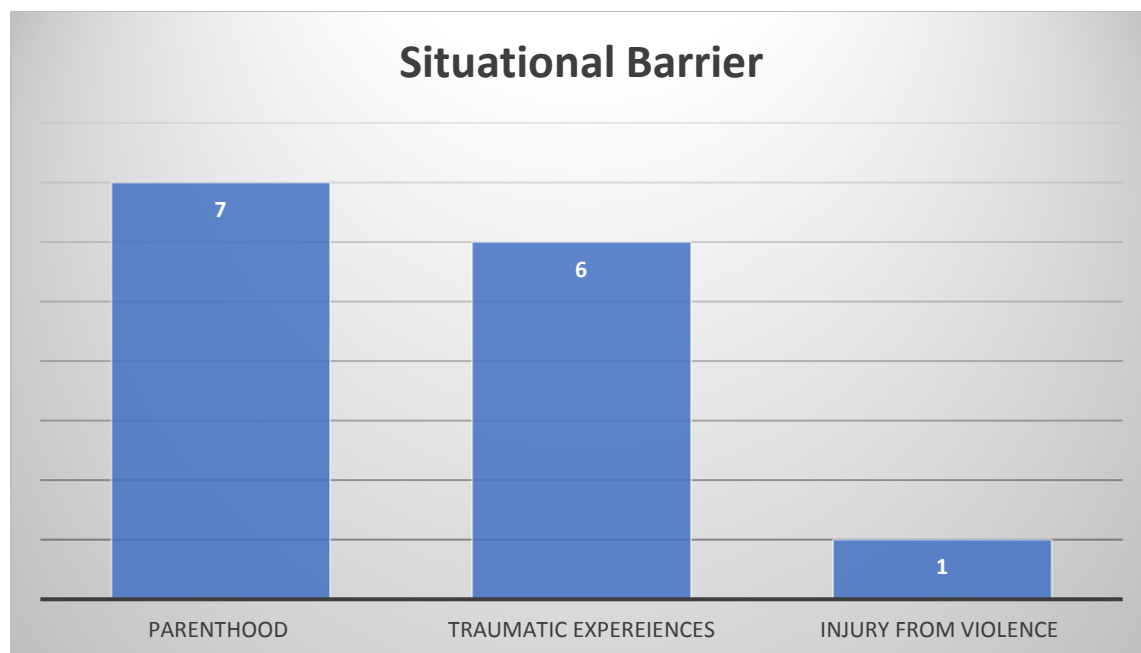


Figure 4.4. Situational barriers in exiting the commercial sex industry.

Parenthood. Seven out of ten (70%) participants in this study are single parents and most of the interviewees expressed a desire to provide for their children as their main motivating factor to stay in the industry (see Figure 4). Sam, Pat, Val, and Lynn all provided examples of how parenthood became a pull factor to remain in or re-enter the sex industry.

Sam: I'm a single mom but I always provide and I don't care what they say about me. Because I know I took care of my kids myself all my life and I provided for them all my life.

Pat: I did it when I was younger. I was like 21 and I was a single mom for about two years and then of course got out of it. Then worked regular jobs... then years later; probably 12 years later, I am back into it again. Same thing, single mom.

Lynn: Yeah, which is why I'm, you know, I'm not one of those people that blow all their money....my kids come first, you know. Everything they need is provided for.

Val: The whole situation like the baby's dad not being involved and stuff. It sucks. I don't have much like family support either. I mean I would like to, but as far as like financially and stuff, now with having a kid that's gonna be here next week, like I don't think I can financially just work like stuff like day care alone is expensive as hell.

The findings support existing research that the financial burden of parenthood created a barrier to exit or encouraged those exited to re-enter (Dodsworth, 2014; Learmonth, Hakal, & Keller, 2015). On the other hand, the role of a parent did increase some of the participants' desire to exit the sex industry. Lynn shared her plan of leaving the industry before her daughter turns eighteen, the minimal age one is permitted to patronize an exotic dance club. Lynn expressed a fear of her children finding out where she works. Several of the participants shared the same concern as Lynn as illustrated by the statements below:

Lynn: I do feel bad the fact that you know, I feel like I'm lying to them, you know. They don't know what I'm really doing, you know, for money. I think about that... I don't want them to think in their heads that my mom did it so that's why I can too, you know.

Jess: I don't usually tell my kids. They know I was a dancer but they think I was like a ballerina or something. They didn't know what kind of dancer I was.

Pat: You think is this something I'd want my daughter do? Would I feel okay with my daughter doing that...I would be like "I would beat your ass." No, I don't want my daughter doing it. Cause I know what goes along with it, you know. The drugs and everything else that gets wrapped up in it, possibly getting raped or something.

Traumatic experiences. Six out of ten (60%) of the participants shared a history of traumatic experiences. Ann suffered the loss of parents and an infant child before she turned fifteen years old. She shared a painful part of her past and the additional trauma she went through during the interview:

I met my ex-husband when I was 15 and he was both verbally and physically abusive. He locked me in the basement for like 2 years. That was probably one of the worst experience in my whole entire life. It was really, really bad.

Ellie talked openly about growing up with a drug addicted mom and the neglect and abuse she has suffered:

We moved to this place on 4th and lived there for about a year. Straight crack house. Had no running water. No heat. Mom never kept food in there... if she would keep something to drink in the refrigerator, cause that is the only damn thing she keep in the fridge. We will go in there for a drink and she would be there smoking crack.

Jess's comment indicated having traumatic experiences is not uncommon among individuals working as exotic dancers. As she said: "And is like everywhere you look in, there is another sad story. Just a building full of sad stories."

A study conducted by Cambron, Gringeri, and Vogel-Ferguson (2014) among 1,073 low-income women in the State of Utah found a significant positive relationship between the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) score and lifetime mental illnesses such as PTSD, anxiety disorders, and bipolar disorders. The experience of traumatic events and vulnerability to mental health issues can add to a sex worker's challenges in navigating the complex exiting process. In addition to childhood trauma, some of the participants also shared traumatic experiences that occurred while they were at work as illustrated by Sam:

Sam: My worst experience is when I had two guys up here, they were really drunk and disrespecting my club and everything. And I hit him with a baseball bat and he picked me up and threw me on the couch. And my friend A was here and he got him up and got him out. And I think that would be my worst one because if A wasn't here, okay, that guy probably would have hurt me.

Ellie's disturbing experience at work prompted her to consider exiting the sex industry:

I did my stage set and I came off of it, I went to go get my drink off the bar. And next thing I know, I blacked out. And so they thought that I was on drugs. I don't do drugs. I smoked weed, that's it. So, after that happened when I was drugged, I started looking at that whole atmosphere and environment totally different and like I could have died.

There was one report of injury from violence at work from the participants in this research. This result contradicted some of the existing research that found a pattern of frequent physical violence among sex workers (Dank, et al., 2014; Gorry, Roen, & Reilly, 2010). This difference could possibly be due to the distinctive work setting differences between the indoor/outdoor and legal/illegal sex work. Participants often mentioned mechanisms for safety existing within the legal and indoor dance club setting:

Jean: Usually, when you walk in the door and you see guys that are real big and bulky and bold walking around, they are bouncers. They're [the customers] not gonna do anything because they're gonna get dragged out.

Lynn: There are no bouncers but we have a lot of cameras and they are in HD...the boss can bring it up, watch you the whole time, you know can turn it up and hear what's said even... I look at it as safety. I want to be safe in a place like that.

The presence of bouncers and cameras inside the strip club provided a layer of protection that is not available to those working in an outdoor setting. Although there are minimal reports of physical harm for exotic dancers in this research, there were many instances of emotional harm that stemmed from feeling of being objectified. Dee and Ellie both expressed a strong sense of repulsiveness with the aspect of objectification in the industry:

Dee: I get disgusted. I am disgusted [by] the MEN. And what I am allowing myself to be subjected to when you do a champagne room, or do a private show, or even a lap dance. I hate these people. The money is good but I hate them. I am sick of every pig that comes into the club that I have to have the same conversation with. When they have to talk about my nipples, my tits, my ass or "What can I do to you to your body? What can I get away with? How much money can I offer you? That's got to be a price." I am just sick of it. At some point, you become very bitter and violent. You become VIOLENT. Because there are times you find yourself alone in the room with somebody, you think about how maybe you could possibly get away with murder.

Ellie: Oh my God, I hated giving lap dances so badly! That's when you really got to hear the nasty talk coming out of these men. And you got women too, just the same!

Jess also shared the emotional struggle regarding the customers' intention to use money to pressure the dancers to engage in prostitution:

Jess: I don't think that anybody feels good about that [stripping] and I think a lot of dancers would say: "I like it. I like to dance." because it makes you feel better about it. But caused I think I said that probably for five or six years but I never really liked it...I mean they are [the clients] there to see naked girls or have sex with girls. One or the other. I think it is usually the latter. I don't think anybody there it just to see naked girls. They can do that on the Internet in the living room, you know. They think they are going to be able to convince you to go home with them. That's what every single one of them gonna going to say in some point in your conversation: "How much money would it be for you to go home with me?" Even the nice one.

It was interesting that Chris expressed that she enjoys being in the industry because the attention she received while dancing and it boosted her self-esteem. However, the way the club presented the “girls” to patrons appeared degrading to women. Below is the statement from Chris describing the introduction of the dancers to clients at the club she worked at:

So, when you're lining up your girls, you don't put 3 brunettes together or 5 blondes. You tried to even them out to blonde and brunette, blonde and brunette. Cuz most people, they don't remember the names. They only remember: she has big boobs, she has no boobs, or she has brown, blonde, or red hair period or something nichey about them. I was the costume girl...or the girl with big boobs. That was the niche I had. It was a niche that worked for me.

Chris and Jean were the two out of the ten (20%) participants that expressed a more affirming view of the industry. Chris’ verbal affirmation of the industry contradicted the experience of objectification. Jean also expressed a sense of ambivalence about her experiences in the industry. In an hour-long interview, Jean emphasized a total of thirteen times her intention to leave the industry. Below are some of the examples from Jean’s interview:

- I don't hate it but I know it's not something I could do forever.
- Definitely don't want involvement in there forever but I don't think it's a big deal.
- It's not that bad, it was not something I personally would want to do forever but that's just me

Jess shared an interesting statement that may shed some light regarding Chris and Jean’s conflicting view:

I don't think that anybody feels good about that [stripping] and I think a lot of dancers would say: “I like it. I like to dance.” because it makes you feel better about it. But caused I think I said that probably for five or six years, but I never really liked it.

Structural Barriers

Figure 4.5 illustrates the results of each of the factors in the structural sphere. The factors of financial pressure due to chronic poverty and inadequate wages were identified by all ten of

the research participants as one of the key barriers to exiting the industry. Four out of ten (40%) of the participants expressed that the challenges of finding alternative employment pose a barrier to leaving the industry. Three out of ten (30%) of the participants identified a lack of education as a barrier to their goal to exit. There was no report of inadequate services or a lack of knowledge of services. This result could possibly be contributed to the fact that the sample from this study was obtained through a service organization that supports individuals involved in the sex industry. All of the participants were either directly or indirectly connected to the service organization and have some awareness of services available for sex workers. A few of the participants expressed gratitude towards the service organization and the support they have received.

The factors homelessness and having a criminal record were rarely mentioned by the research participants. The experience of homelessness is more commonly found among outdoor sex workers (Duff, et al., 2011). In addition, participants in this study were all engaged in legal indoor sex work and the legitimate work setting may decrease their interaction with the law enforcement agencies. These findings further support the diverse experiences and distinctive differences between outdoor/indoor, and legal/illegal sex work.

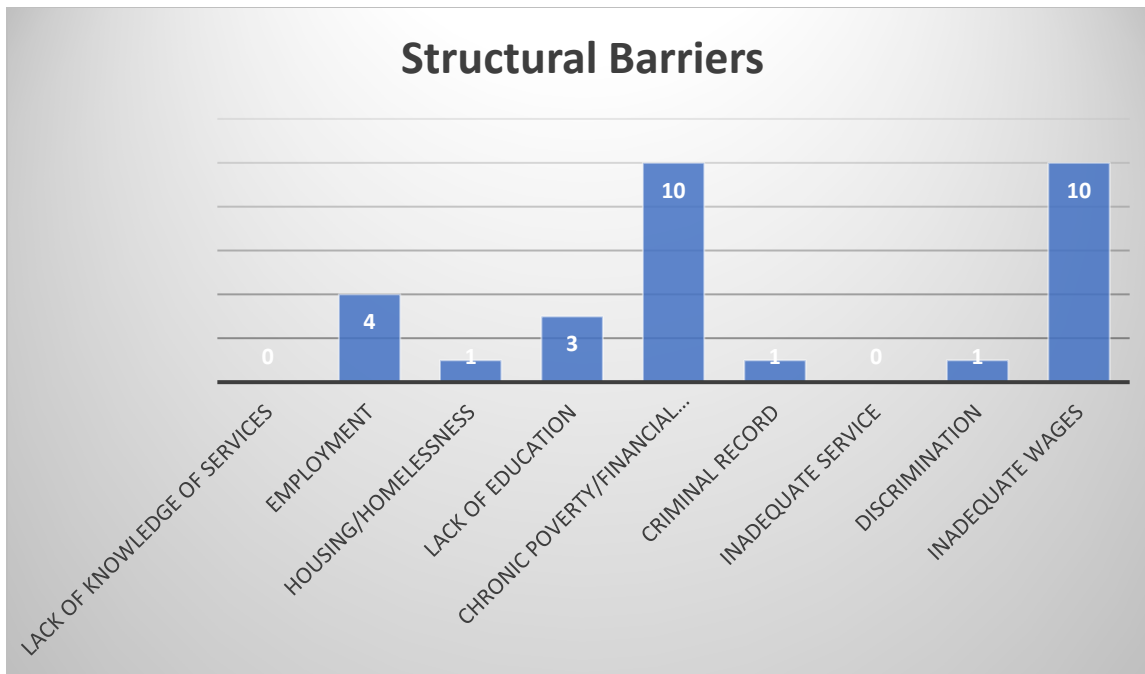


Figure 4.5. Structural barriers in exiting the commercial sex industry.

Discrimination. Dee shared the experience of discrimination due to her work history in the sex industry. She almost did not realize her career goal to become a licensed massage therapist after exiting the industry. The school official initially denied Dee’s acceptance into the program as she was told that individuals who have worked in the sex industry are “prone to commit sexual acts.” Dee recounted her experience with the program director of the school:

She told me she shouldn’t even have taken me. She shouldn’t have accepted me into the program. It was like a 2&1/2 hrs. of interview... and I didn’t want to tell this woman because I am trying to come off as completely normal. I don’t want to sit here and tell her: “Look, this is the last thing I want to do!” I hate those people and I am trying to get away from it.

The school eventually accepted Dee under the threat of a discrimination lawsuit but with the condition that Dee receive counseling. Dee’s experience reflected the society’s ignorance and stigma perceiving individuals working in the sex industry as deviants.

Chronic Poverty/Financial Pressure. Ten out of ten (100%) of the research participants mentioned financial pressure as a push factor to remain in the industry (see Figure 5). As Sam so aptly put it: “Love don’t pay the bills.” Jess, who has exited the industry, stated that she has no desire to return to the industry except for financial needs. When asked if she would re-enter the industry, Jess responded: “I don’t want to. I have no desire to. If my boyfriend got fired tomorrow, probably. Because somebody got to pay the bills...” Val echoed the same sentiment by stating this: “The money thing, only thing that draws me to the industry.” Dee, although having exited the industry and pursuing a different career as a massage therapist, indicated that she would not hesitate to re-enter the industry if she needed money.

As discussed in the situational barrier segment, 70% ($n = 7$) of the participants were single parents and the role of being the sole breadwinner added to their existing financial pressure. Lynn, Sam, Eli, Dee, and Ann all shared the financial burden they carried as a single parent:

Lynn: Yeah, money was really tight. I had a lot of debt after my divorce...there wasn't enough money between both of my jobs to pay for everything and still eat. It was awful. When you find yourself in a situation where you know you can't make ends meet, you'll almost do anything necessary you know. Whatever you have to do to make sure your kids eat.

Sam: Me and my ex split up and I had two kids. No money. No car. Well, had a car but I had no money, no nothing. I had to start all over.

Ellen: Nobody was working. My sister, her 2 kids, me and A. and her father and nobody is working. So, there is rent, bills, and we had a dog. Four children and everybody needs to eat. And there is rent needs paid. Bills need paid.

Dee: He never got another job. The only thing that I could do was to keep dancing. What else am I going to do? I have more children, I have another child to feed.

Ann: I have 2 kids to worry and so I decided to take a long shot and I went to this place called H. [club name] in L [city name]. And it was a really, really nasty place.

The research interviews revealed that the financial pressure experienced by the participants was not unlike any household, specifically single parent families. The need to provide for their loved ones was the key motivator to work in the industry. Sam, a manager in one of the strip clubs, observed the same pattern when describing reasons for individuals to remain in the industry:

It's the money. I mean like I said every girl is different. It is because every girl is gonna want to be a dancer for a different reason. Some because of college, you know, to get to pay for books and stuff. Some is cuz of drugs, some cuz they need money to support their kids. They had no other option. So, everybody's situation, every girl's situation is different. Like the girls I have here, it's all to support their kids. They're not doing it because "Oh, let's just do it." And you know, just to do it. They all need money just to support their kids.

Participants discussed the struggle of finding a job that could generate sustainable income and allow time to be with family. Societal barriers such as the stigma of sex work create a hostile environment for individuals who have a desire to seek alternative employment.

Inadequate wages. According to all the research participants, the structural barrier of not having a livable wage hinders exit and serves as a push factor to remain in the industry. Table 4.4 comprises statements made by each participant related to the theme of "inadequate wages." Nine out of ten (90%) research participants shared their experiences of working outside of the sex industry and finding the wages not sufficient to meet basic needs. The structural factor of an inadequate livable wage justified the use of the oppressive paradigm in explaining the barriers to exiting the sex industry. However, research participants also clearly demonstrated the process of conscious decision making to enter or remain in the industry as a means to generate income for the limited resources they possessed. As Ann said:

I have no high school diploma. I have no GED. I have absolutely nothing. I wouldn't take it back for the world. I did what I did to get through what I had to. But you know what, I don't miss it.

Ellen's response supports the empowerment paradigm with an element of self-determination:

So, I was like let me weigh this out real quick: strip club or McDonald's? What's going to pay my bills? What's going to be enough to take care of buying diapers and milk and all that stuff? Strip club, obviously! Duh!

This finding supports the validity of the use of the polymorphous approach. Employment that does not provide a living wage stems from structural barriers and can be explained by the oppressive paradigm. However, participants such as Ann and Ellen made their decisions to work in the sex industry based on the availability of resources at that point in their lives. The desire to be financially independent was important and empowering to some of the participants such as Pat, Lynn, and Sam:

Pat: My mom had asked my stepdad for money and all that and I was like I'm never gonna do that. If my kids want something; I don't have to ask a man for money.

Lynn: I do feel successful in the sense that I can do all this on my own. I don't need anyone else. You know, I do not ask my boyfriend for money, you know. I never would. He tries but I don't take it.

Sam: I have this thing I cannot depend on a man. I cannot kiss ass, I cannot depend on a man. I did it all myself and that makes it all worthy. That I knew my kids were taken care of.

Table 4.4

Statements Pertaining to the Theme “inadequate wages”

Participant #	Research Participant Statement
1	I was working about 4 to 5 days a week and I ended up getting cut down to one day a week and my paycheck starting to be around about \$25 a week. Can't do it... I have 2 kids to worry and so I decided to take a long shot and I went to this place called H (club name). in X (town's name). And it was a really, really nasty place.
2	...the job I did have I was working 60-70 hours a week but it was pissing me off because I didn't have any time to see the kids. I'm like I have a fiancé, I have a home take care of, I have kids to take care of. Yeah, I gotta work all these hours to make the money I need to make
3	So, C (club's name) is small. On average, I can make about 200 bucks a night so it's \$400 a weekend for two days work. My other job, I make \$18 well I make 17.50 an hour... and after taxes with overtime at 92 hours so I had 12 hours overtime on my last paycheck, and I brought home 1500 dollars. That was for 92 hours versus \$400 you can make on a low ball like making a night at a club.
4	I worked for Target for three months and my check for working for them was \$650 a month. How do people live on \$650 a month? I could make that in a day.
5	It was a lot of money. It was more than my entire paycheck for two weeks at McDonald's
6	Minimum wage doesn't pay anything and I'm not gonna work 40 hours a week and then get a two-week paycheck and then we have like maybe probably \$300 after they take taxes out...I can't live off of. You can live off maybe a kid or a teenager that can live off of 300 dollars every two weeks.
7	Like right now, I'm working in a restaurant and get pay \$7.50 an hour that is a huge drop of pay. Like my weekly check I could make a few hours dancing.
8	You will be stupid to be busting your ass at McDonalds only to get \$400 in two weeks that doesn't even cover my rent. And that's how I started looking at stripping.
9	I was working at a hotel waitressing and the business started to go under and I was making like \$10 for five hours and I was working few days a week.
10	I wasn't doing very good financially at the time. I was only a waitress at this time. Money was really tight. I had a lot debt after my divorce...there wasn't enough money between both of my jobs to pay for everything and still eat. It was awful.

Employment and Education. There was 40% ($n = 40\%$) of the participants who expressed that the challenge of finding alternative employment posed a barrier to leaving the industry. As discussed in the individual barriers section, the stigma attached to individuals engaged in the sex industry kept many of the participants from sharing their employment history. The apparent lack of job experience positioned the participants at a disadvantage in the job application process. In addition, 30% ($n = 30\%$) of the participants identified a lack of education as a barrier in relation to seeking employment outside of the sex industry. Ann recognized the lack of education was limiting to her and contributed to her decision to remain in the industry: “I was a high school dropout; come-on man, what other job can I have? No GED or high school diploma, and I have nothing.”

The limitation of career choices due to a lack of training or low educational attainment can create a sense of entrapment and pressure to remain in the industry. Ann and Dee both expressed the frustration from a lack of skills and education during the interviews:

Ann: What other job? I have no GED or high school diploma and I have nothing!

Dee: For \$7.50 an hour, I can't pay the rent, I can't put food on the table. And I don't qualify for anything else.

Pat was very aware of the benefit of an education in securing better employment: “Education comes with a good job and nobody wants to work for \$8 an hour nor can they afford to.” At the time of the interview, Jess was enrolled in an on-line college program and hoped to obtain a business degree and desired to start her own business. Dee, as discussed above, was receiving training as a massage therapist. Despite the negative experience Dee had during the admission process, she recognized that the benefit of an education was more than widening her career path. Education also contributed to Dee's stronger sense of self-confidence:

It has been such a process personally to take the first step of getting an education. In just the past 7 to 8 months from starting to school to now, I no longer feel inferior to people around me. Like I would feel totally disconnected and feel like everyone here could look at me and tell something is wrong with me...going to school and being able to meet people outside of my own social network, people that are not other strippers, and being able to hold a conversation with them and be able to establish friendships. You know, yea, I can carry on a conversation with people and they can actually like me.

Another interesting theme that emerged from this research study is the differences in work expectations between the strip clubs and the mainstream work environment. As mentioned earlier, exotic dancers are considered self-employed and there is some flexibility with work schedule. As Pat said while referring to jobs outside of the industry:

...jobs [outside of the strip clubs] have rules. You can't miss too many dates at work, you can't just show up when you feel like it; you can't leave when you feel like it... [at the club] it's kind of like you don't really get reprimanded.

Jess also voiced the differences in work culture between the strip clubs and jobs outside of the industry: "You, in a club, when you don't like somebody you can X them and nobody is going to yell at you. You can tell them to go die...you can't be like that in a regular job." Dee described the cultural gap between the sex industry and the society and an increased sense of marginalization:

I noticed, well, I started dancing, I didn't mature past 18 in a way. Ok, everybody in the real world went to college; they got an education; they got a job. Slowly there has been this departure from my age group; because I am still with these people we are wearing lingerie and high heels and doing this; everyone else being educated and is deep in their vocabularies and getting great job titles. To the point I noticed around my 30s I feel very inferior, even if I just went out in public or went to a real bar to socialize. I am no longer able to hold a conversation with people in my age group because I have not gotten an education and people literally using words that I don't know the meaning to, you know.

For individuals such as Dee who considered herself a "lifer" who worked as a dancer for a long period of time, it can be challenging to reorient oneself to the mainstream society's work culture

once exited. Sam explained that she was getting tired of working in the sex industry but the thought of working for someone else kept her from exiting:

I've done it so many years and it gets old and it does. After you do it so long it gets really old. But I can't handle authority either. So, if I do work somewhere else...if I see something wrong I'll say it and that usually gets me fired.

Fast Cash. Another significant finding from this study that complicates the exiting process is the theme “fast cash,” which was frequently mentioned by the research participants as a pull factor for staying in the industry and preventing exit. All ten participants referred to the amount of money made in a short amount of time as a reason for staying in the industry. Table 4.5 provides examples of statements made by each participant using phrases such as “fast cash,” “quick money,” and “easy money” when referring to the sex industry in the strip club setting. Pat’s statement: “Fast easy money but it's not worth it because then it's like you just get sucked in. It's like quicksand you just get sucked in you can't get out” echoes the sentiment of an addict’s feeling of a lack of control. Ann and Ellie both specifically used the phrase “addiction to money” during their interviews and Ellie compared the experience to gambling:

Ann: What sucked me in was the *addiction to the money* (emphasis added). It was that *fast cash* (emphasis added).

Ellie: I did that because I was a single mom at the time. So, and that's how I got involved. Well, I didn't know how *addicting* (emphasis added) it was going to be, the *fast cash* (emphasis added). Every night like easily. It was so easy...It’s worse than gambling. It’s definitely the money.

Addiction research has found addictive behaviors can be used as a self-medicating means to cope with emotional distress (Bühringer, Kräplin, & Behrendt, 2012). The reward of fast cash may serve the same function as drugs and alcohol in dealing with the negative aspects of the sex industry.

The phenomenon of addiction to fast cash can also stem from a desire to relieve the stress

from the condition of chronic poverty. The unending stress of financial desperation may increase one’s vulnerability to an addiction to the fast cash generated in the sex industry. Ellie shared a sense of relief from the money generated by working in the sex industry:

And you have this whole addicting thing. You're so used to having money every day. If you would get into an accident, you're good. You got money on the side. If you had a flat tire broke down, you're good, you got money on the side. If you are out in the store somewhere and they are having a fit and you don’t want to hear it no more, you just grab that toy and they just be quiet. You are good, you got money on the side. If you run out of diapers, you are cool. You got money right here.

Table 4.5

Fast Cash in the Industry

Participant #	Statements on Money in the Industry	# of time the word “money” was mentioned
1. Ann	What sucked me in was the <i>addiction to the money</i> . It was that <i>fast cash</i> ...I was in almost five and a half almost 6 years. But it was that <i>quick money</i> , the adrenaline, it was the drama.	20
2. Pat	<i>Fast easy money</i> but it's not worth it because then it's like you just get sucked in it's like quicksand you just get sucked in you can't get out.	23
3. Chris	It is the <i>fast cash</i> and it is hard to budget.	30
4. Dee	I think the entire time along the way there were points I want to stop. But dancing is so easy. So <i>easy</i> ...the income is so high you get used to blowing <i>money</i> . You know, if you made \$400, \$500, \$1500 a night and you are used to having that kind of <i>cash</i> income.	23
5. Jess	Yeah, it was <i>easy</i> . It was a lot of <i>money</i> .	37
6. Sam	I've been doing it ever since cuz it's <i>fast, easy money</i> .	60
7. Val	It was very <i>quick</i> and I could make at least a few hundred <i>dollars</i> a night even like a slow night.	22
8. Ellie	I did that because I was a single mom at the time. So, and that's how I got involved. Well, I didn't know how <i>addicting</i> it was going to be. The <i>fast cash</i> . Every night like easily. it was so <i>easy</i> ...The <i>money</i> just came so <i>quick</i> . I was just like: “Oh, my God! All this <i>money</i> at one time. Holy s****!”	29
9. Jean	I'm not gonna lie. I like the <i>money</i> . Um, like I said it's gotten me stuff.	24
10. Lynn	Obviously, the amount of <i>money</i> that you make as a dancer, completely exceeds anything you'll ever do.	22

Note. *Italics* denotes emphasis added

The Enter/Exit/Re-entering Cycle

The elements that functioned as the push factors for remaining in the industry were often the same factors that contributed to the cycle of enter/exit/re-entering. From this study, it was discovered that financial pressure, identity confusion, and effects of stigma are all factors that play a part in the enter/exit/re-entering cycle.

Financial pressure. The barrier that was consistently mentioned by the research participants was financial desperation, compounded by inadequate livable wages. Several of the participants who have left the industry ended up returning due to financial pressure. Jess worked in the industry for ten years and shared her experience of cycling through the enter/exit/re-enter process:

I probably stopped every year. Every year the income tax time because I never liked it [the industry]. So, every year when I get my income tax return, so I always file my taxes, I would quit because I think I would have enough money to quit and I will try to find another job but they never pay enough. And then probably by July I would be back every year.

Lynn, who has training in the medical field and left the industry for several years, returned as a dancer after her second divorce put her in financial ruin. Sam, who has been in the industry for fifteen years, has never attempted to leave but voiced her desire to do so if the financial barrier was removed:

So, if I had enough money to get out and I was set, you know, then yeah. I tell you what, oh yeah, I would get out in a heartbeat...if I hit the lottery or if I've found a good man, you know help me out of this. I'm going to throw somebody the keys and I am going to be "Bye!" in a heartbeat. Everything bye!

Identity Confusion. The issue of identity confusion created an internal conflict among some of the participants, and posed challenges to exit, and also caused some exited individuals to return to the industry. It is a common practice for the dancers to have stage names and to create

a persona to attract the customers. As Lynn said: "...once you walk in those doors, you have to, you know what I mean, I have to be this other person that they are expecting me to be." Pat and Ann both used the word "chameleon" to describe themselves as they alter their personal interest according to their clients' preferences. The constant change resulted in a diminished sense of self as Ann said: "You are going to change a 110% into somebody and eventually you end up losing your identity." Ann further explained she continued to struggle with identity even after having exited the industry for almost two years:

It's still taking me awhile to figure out who I am as a person. Cause even now I'm still struggling with that. And I've been out a year and a half and I'm still trying to figure out who I am as a person outside of that... You honestly lose yourself. You lose your identity. You lose your person. You ended up transforming into a person that you made when you walked in there... when I hear my name Ann, and I'm like, every once in a while, I'm like "Who is that?" Once you have been doing it for so long, you ended up becoming the person you created when you're in there. Inside and outside.

You live so much in somebody else's life that you created. Once I stepped out, I have no friends, no nothing. It was like people call me Ann and I was like: "Who are you talking to?" It took me a while. I want to say it took me a good 6 or 8 months to accept that name... Ann is my real name. I didn't know how to accept that. I don't even know how to respond to it cause I was like "Who are you taking to?"

Pat expressed a similar struggle about life after exiting the industry:

You lose stuff within yourself; kind of like who you are. You got to find who are you again. When you are a dancer, you become a different person... I am this person during the week but then on Sundays, I am me, I guess. But then this person kind of the dancer part. Kind of fighting a battle between the two.

Dee shared the pressure to put on a facade that takes a toll on a dancer's mental health:

But you sit in the dressing rooms, most of us are on some kind of anti-depressant, or an anti-anxiety medication. Because even we are really good on the outside, we could sell ice to the Eskimo, we are sharks. We know how to get in there and socialize with people. A lot of time, on the inside, we rather hide behind the pole. You know, there are a lot of depression and antianxiety medications.

Drahota and Eitzen (1998) described three characteristics of a role exit: disengagement from the behaviors of the exiting role, disidentification from the exited role, and resocialization into the new role. Ann and Dee expressed how challenging it was to disengage and disidentify with their former role of a dancer.

Ann: My stripper mentality came in way too many times [after exited the industry]. Sitting in there and I be like: well, maybe I could sit next to this guy and just work on him. You know what I mean? Trying to turn that off alone was very difficult.

Dee: But I always look at a man “Why am I talking to you?” because what you are going to do for me? What is the purpose of you being here doing this for me? So, it is not healthy.

Ann and Dee’s experience demonstrated the difficulties in moving past the initial two stages of disengagement and disidentification with the dancer role and reaching the goal of resocialization into a new role.

Effects of Stigma. When applying Bandura’s concept of reciprocal causation, one can understand how the effect of societal stigma can contribute to the cycle of enter/exit/re-entering. In addition, as suggested by Ebaugh’s (1998) role exit theory, the society may continue to interact with and respond to individuals in light of their former roles. “The attitudes of non-exited involve ignorance, stereotype, curiosity, and a lack of sensitivity to the nuances of a previous role” (p. 6). The responses from the “non-exs” can reinforce the stigma of sex work and pose a significant hurdle in an individual’s exiting journey. Even if the exited individuals want to leave “the life” behind, society’s response may not permit the individual to do so.

Advice for Exiting the Sex Industry

Research participants were asked to offer advice for individuals contemplating exit from the industry. The following three themes emerged from the interviewees' responses: establishing a support system, having a backup plan, and establishing a work history to combat stigma.

Establishing a support system. Ann, Ellen, Pat, Dee, and Lynn all stressed the importance of having supportive network to achieve the goal of a successful exit. As Ellen said: "I guess it all comes down to support system. Every girl need a support system because you have a lot of damaged women in the strip clubs." Dee, who has exited the industry for a year, found having a support network outside of the industry helpful to her exit: "You know, that really helped me, expanding my social network. Even taking the first step to meet new people like the people from [a local service organization], those are women that are non-strippers." Lynn credited the support offered by a local service organized for her successful exit of two years. Lynn provided a helpful insight as she shared that the support person needs to respect her right of self-determination: "somebody's not gonna keep telling you what you need to do. Like you don't want somebody constantly nagging at you and telling you: you should do this, you should do that."

Having a backup plan. Lynn, who hopes to exit the industry in a few years emphasized the need to have a plan prior to exiting: "Always have a plan...you know, to have a fall back or to have a goal. You know what I mean? You want to get out, you need a goal and you need to stick to it." Sam encouraged dancers that are considering exit from industry to save money and to consider going to college or a trade school. Jess' advice echoed Sam's sentiment as she suggested individuals considering exit and take a budgeting class and to further their education. Jess offered the practical advice of watching YouTube videos on etiquette to prepare for

interactions in work outside of the sex industry. Ann contributed her successful exit of two years to having a job outside of the industry set up prior to quitting as a dancer. She acknowledged that the cut in pay was a burden to her family financially, initially. However, Ann's job offered her long-term benefits such as health insurance, a stable and predictable income, and promotion opportunities. The excerpt below reflected Ann's excitement about her current job:

I have a fantastic job, fantastic benefits and a fantastic pay. I can't even... my youngest daughter is going to have a fantastic life. do you know what I mean? My health insurance is free. I paid nothing. I paid nothing for [insurance company's name]. We pay nothing for it. I'm making probably close to \$40 an hour right now. Anything over 8 hours is a time and a half. I work about 60 hours a week so I'm getting almost 20 hours overtime every week.

Establishing a work history to combat stigma. Val observed that some of her peers from the industry struggled to find employment outside of the sex industry as she said:

I know a lot of dancers like dance for several years. That's all they did though. So, when they came time that they wanted to get out of the industry, they wanted to get an actual job, you know, they didn't have anything to put on their resume that shows that they worked at all.

Val recognized that the society's stigma prevented individuals in the industry from listing their job history on a job application. Val worked as a waitress and an aid in a medical facility to establish a work history to prepare for future employment. At the time of the interviews, Lynn, Chris, and Jean all had other jobs in addition to dancing at strip clubs.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RESEARCH LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

This study provided valuable insight into barriers and factors contributing to the cycle of enter/exit/reentering the industry faced by indoor U.S. sex workers. Societal stigma influenced multiple areas of a sex worker's life and posed significant barriers to the exiting process. Stigma limited employment opportunities, impacted interpersonal relationships, and negatively affected the sex workers' sense of self. Financial pressure was also commonly identified by the participants as the main factor for remaining in the industry. The lack of a livable wage from other employment prevented individuals from exiting the sex industry. An adverse childhood, substance addiction, strained family relationships, and social isolation were all identified as barriers among some of the participants.

The findings suggested financial desperation, stigma, and role confusion were factors that perpetuated the cycle of enter/exit/re-entering the sex industry. The stress from living in chronic poverty may increase one's vulnerability to an addiction to the fast cash generated in the sex industry. The sting of stigma increased a sense of social isolation and heightened the challenges of adjusting to the new roles and values outside of the industry.

Limitations and Strengths

There are limitations to this study's design that should be considered when reviewing the results. The sample was initially recruited from one specific agency in Central Pennsylvania. The non-probability snowball sampling method was then used to recruit additional participants. The sample size ($n = 10$) was small with the research participants coming from the same

geographical area of central Pennsylvania. In addition, the study participants were all females and engaged in the indoor legal sex industry, specifically in the strip club setting. The conclusions of this study may not apply to those working in a different environment, such as outdoor and illegal sex work. These limitations could all contribute to sampling bias and limit this research's generalizability. In a qualitative study, Padgett (2017) indicated that transferability of a qualitative study's findings is emphasized over its generalizability. Several participants affirmed this study's importance during the interviews and found it healing to share their stories. In addition, service providers also found the research results encouraging to their practice as indicated by one of the providers:

One of the things that stuck out to me was the barrier of identity confusion and the need to disengage and disidentify with the stage persona. I think that's been on our radar, but to hear in the quotes of the struggle to discover their true self after exiting...it's powerful.

As discussed previously in Chapter 2, there has been limited research into the subject of exiting sex work in the United States (see Appendix A). Although this study may be limited in its generalizability, the findings did provide insight into the barriers experienced by a sample of women in the indoor legal sex work setting. This study provided a research framework that can be replicated in future studies.

A qualitative research method relies on the researcher's subjective observation and interpretation of findings. The stories shared by the participants in this study were powerful and personal and could have increased the researcher's reactivity and bias. Triangulation was employed to enhance the vigor and trustworthiness of this study. An intercoder with no direct interaction with the participants served as an additional source to analyze the transcripts. As Creswell (2013) suggested, the use of an intercoder is helpful in qualitative studies with data interpretation to promote reliability in the coding process. The principal researcher and

intercoder had an identical set of transcripts and pre-established codes (Table 1.1). There was a high level of agreement in the majority of areas. The differences in coding certain segments of the transcript between the coders were discussed and clarification was made regarding the definition of the preestablished codes. Three service providers working with exiting sex workers provided peer debriefing support and allowed the researcher opportunities to process the experience and minimized personal bias.

Implications for Practice

The research findings generated insight for service providers and policy makers to address the barriers faced by individuals exiting the commercial sex work industry. The findings also expanded the understanding of the factors that contributed to the cycle of enter/exit/reentering. The following discussion focuses on applying the research results to practice and makes recommendations for future research on removing the barriers and breaking the cycle of enter/exit/reentering the sex industry.

Removing Stigma. Although individuals involved in the commercial sex industry are diverse, there is one experience that is commonly identified by sex workers: the scorn from societal stigma. As discussed in Chapter two, the six models on exiting all comprise the same three elements: awareness, planning, and exiting. An individual's awareness of a need to exit and the efforts of planning when moving towards exit were often thwarted by the challenges posed by stigma. Eight out of ten participants discussed the negative effects of stigma on their lives including limited job opportunities, damaged relationships, and a poor self-image. The first place to begin this essential work of removing barriers to exiting the sex industry is eliminating stigma attached to commercial sex workers. Service providers can initiate steps to address

stigma by reflecting on their own attitudes towards sex workers. As Bowen and Bungay (2016) observed:

sex workers are often presumed by those in positions of power to be irrational child-like beings instead of logical, innovative, problem-solvers who work within structures that they did not create in order to negotiate for safety, rights, and economic security for themselves and their loved ones. (p. 192)

Service providers need to be aware of the biases they may have toward sex workers as this stigma can degrade the quality of their service delivery and perpetuate the society's negative assumptions regarding sex workers. Service providers can encourage each other to cultivate the value of dignity and worth of each person as embraced by the social work profession.

Another step in removing stigma is advocacy through education. Bindel and colleagues' (2012) research on breaking the barriers of exiting sex work in the United Kingdom supported the importance of awareness raising: "It must be ensured that the public, general services, and specialist services working with women involved in prostitution all understand the realities and complexities of prostitution" (p. 15). She's Somebody's Daughter and Peace Promise Ministry are two of the Central PA programs that provide supportive services to individuals in the sex industry. Both organizations have a component of public education with a goal to raise awareness of sexual exploitation and address stigma attached to commercial sex workers. National programs such as Exodus Cry and GEMS also have a strong emphasis on prevention by raising awareness of sexual exploitation.

Outreach as a Pathway to Exit. A significant finding in this study was the path to exiting the industry was different for the participants in this study when compared to the existing research. As discussed in the literature review section (Chapter 2), some of the common

pathways to exiting the sex industry were through a diversion program, a harm reduction program, or a formal exiting program. The legal nature of exotic dancing minimizes a dancer's interaction with the criminal justice system where often these programs originate. In addition, indirect sex work such as exotic dancing has a lower risk of sexually transmitted disease. Exiting using a harm reduction or diversion program may not be applicable to individuals that are involved in legal and indirect sex work.

The six participants who have exited the industry were all aided by a formal exiting program in Central PA. Ann, Dee, Pat, and Ellen all gave credit to this organization in supporting them to reach the goal of exiting. When asked what worked for her in exiting the industry, Pat said: "T. [name of the representative from the organization], cuz I prayed for a way out and it was like that's when she started going into the clubs." Dee appreciated the opportunities provided by the service organization to build her confidence in leaving the sex industry: "It really helped me expanding my social network. Even taking the first steps to meet new people like the people from [Organization's name] ... Those are women that are non-strippers."

This study's results provide insight for service organizations that offer supportive services for exiting sex workers. Formal pathways to exiting such as harm reduction and diversion programs do not necessarily benefit all sex workers that have a desire to leave the industry. Direct outreach may be a more valuable and effective method in connecting services to individuals that are involved in legal and indoor sex work. Accessibility to services can lessen some of the challenges for individuals exiting the industry. Ouspenski (2014) suggested bringing the services to participants and expanding the hours of operation. The two Central PA organizations, She's Somebody's Daughter and Peace Promise Ministries both conduct outreach

to commercial sex workers. The service providers and volunteers from these organizations bring essential items, fill out forms, assess needs, and conduct support groups, all in the participants' place of employment (T., Stauffer, personal communication, 2/20/2017; S. Vigliano, personal communication, 3/25/2017).

Establish a sustaining source of income. For individuals that have a desire to exit, the existence of stigma and a lack of education limited one's employment opportunities and led to financial entrapment. Financial pressure is one of the most significant factors that perpetuates the cycle of enter/exit/re-entering. Service providers need to develop innovative ways to connect exiting sex workers to employment and provide training opportunities for marketable skills. One such example is an international nonprofit organization Freedom Business Alliance (FBA). FBA provides resources to businesses that employ and pay sustaining wages to human trafficking survivors or individuals who have experienced commercial exploitation (Freedom Business Alliance, n.d.).

Service providers can cultivate relationships with organizations such as the Freedom Business Alliance and connect exiting individuals to businesses within the alliance. Businesses that hire exited individuals can provide a practical solution to removing the obstacle of a lack of work history. Most importantly, businesses that respect the dignity of individuals that have exited the sex industry can empower them to reject self-stigma. As Androff (2016) said: "Human rights also seek to give people access, opportunity, and ability to exercise power within and between societies" (p. 41).

Address the issue of identity. Drahota and Eitzen (1998) found the path to a successful exit includes an individual's ability to leave the former identity as a sex worker and adopt a new identity in the society. This study found some participants have struggled with their identities

after exit, which created challenges for adjustment outside of the industry. Ebaugh's (1988) role exit theory recognized the former role's impact on an individual's present concept of self. An individual's past, present, and future roles all have an impact on a person's identity. It is therefore vital to integrate previous roles into a person's present identity. The change of role will also impact the significant relationships within the person's circles; these include the relationships in the former and current roles. To disregard the past identities and relationships from the sex industry entirely may be unrealistic and unhealthy to the exiting individual. Service providers that expect individuals exiting the sex industry to abandon the "old" life can cause more confusion to an exited individual's sense of self. The expectation also sends the message that the old identity was undesirable and deviant, reinforcing the stigma and judgment felt by those involved in the sex industry. Individuals engaged in commercial sex work are highly stigmatized, and they rely on peers in the industry as a source of support to minimize social isolation. The complete disengagement from relationships within former social circles can be viewed as an unreachable goal and become a barrier to exiting.

Ebaugh (1998) stressed that the society may continue to interact with and respond to individuals in light of their former roles. "The attitudes of non-exited involve ignorance, stereotype, curiosity, and a lack of sensitivity to the nuances of a previous role" (p. 6). The responses from the "non-exs" can reinforce the stigma of sex work and pose a significant hurdle in an individual's exiting journey. Even if the exited individuals want to leave "the life" behind, society's responses may not permit the individual to do so. Service providers may need to offer support to strengthen and develop a sense of self that incorporates the past and the present roles. Ebaugh suggested (2008) some key areas of adjustment for role exit and in creating a new

identity such as how to present oneself, dealing with the response of others regarding the ex-status, and interacting with members from the former group.

Participants also shared how the culture of the sex industry can be very different from the mainstream society. The inability to relate to people outside of the sex industry created a pull factor to return to the industry. This leaving of a familiar culture to move into a new and unfamiliar realm mirrors the immigration process. The drastic change of familiar social structures and relationships creates a sense of loss that may provoke a grief response. As stated by Bhugra and Becker (2005), “Cultural changes in identity can be stressful and result in problems with self-esteem and mental health” (p. 21). Providers offering supportive services may need to address the sense of loss and address issues that stem from the “cultural shock” of “migrating” from the sex industry to the main stream society.

Policy considerations. The results from this study pointed to a need to reshape certain policies to address the barriers to exiting the sex industry.

1. livable wages. A majority of the participants in this study expressed the frustrations of insufficient pay for jobs outside of the industry. Manning (2018) defined the living wage as “...an income that would allow workers to have what could be regarded as a decent standard of living” (p. 132). Service providers need to encourage policy makers to view the issue of fair wages not only from a monetary perspective, but from the lens of a “living wage.” Our society needs to address the pay gap with jobs that do not provide a sustainable income that could meet a family’s basic needs, especially amongst families with dependents.

2. education. The factor of financial pressure that creates a barrier to exit and perpetuates the cycle of enter/exit/re-entering sex work needs to be addressed with a multi-prong approach. Having a livable wage is essential but empowering individuals to pursue education to

expand future opportunities is equally important. A 2016 College Board (Ma, Pender, & Welch, 2016) report found a higher level of education corresponded to a higher income and ease of finding employment. This same report also found having a college education “increases the chance that adults will move up the socioeconomic ladder and reduces the chance that adults will rely on public assistance” (p. 4). Education is an essential component in breaking the cycle of enter/exit/re-entering by addressing the financial barrier.

3. *rights for individuals in the sex industry.* A few of the participants mentioned the positive aspect of being an independent contractor as this status allows for a flexible work schedule. However, this status also means not having any health insurance, sick days, or vacation benefits. Chris shared her personal experience of how a minor health issue kept her from work and had a major impact on her finances:

You're going to hurt yourself, you have no insurance. You are going to be out of a job... That was always the biggest worry. I can vouch on that. I was in a car accident, and I fractured my tailbone. And I still have a fractured tailbone to this day. That hurts. But I was out of work because of it. For something as simple as that.

Some of the participants also mentioned paying a fee to dance at the clubs. There was no industry standard as to how much a club can charge a dancer working in the club. A club fee tagged on to a slow night can be particularly brutal. As Val said: “\$10 f xxxxxx dollars for 8 hours shift.”

Overs and Loff (2013) suggested that laws that penalize sex work could contribute to the stigma experienced by sex workers and pressure sex workers into working in an unsafe environment. Policy makers need to evaluate the current laws with the rights-based lens to ensure sex workers are treated with dignity and fairness. It is also essential to understand the distinction between one’s choice for sex work and the coercive nature of human trafficking. The use of the oppressive paradigm in assuming individuals working in the industry are all victims in

need of rescuing can further marginalize and stigmatize individuals in the sex industry and weaken their ability for advocacy. As Jackson (2016) expressed: “the right to work, and to work safely, and the sociocultural struggle to refute stereotypes are cornerstones of a rights-based frame—and this is at odds with a victim frame of rescue, rehabilitation, and protection” (p. 28).

For individuals that choose to stay in the industry, there needs to be changes at the policy level to protect their rights and well-being. Policies need to focus on labor issues such as ensuring a safe working environment and fair pay for individuals working in the sex industry. Studies conducted by Amnesty International (2016) found criminalization of sex work hinders sex workers’ human rights in various areas such as health care and protection from law enforcement agencies. There is a need for policy makers to critically evaluate and assess current laws that result in harming a sex worker’s basic human rights.

Implications for Research

The results from this research study revealed a need to expand existing research on the barriers to exiting. The results also increased understanding of the cycle of enter/exit/re-entering the sex industry. The following are some of the recommendations for future research on the topic of exiting sex work:

Heterogeneous Nature of the Industry. The research results that emerged from this qualitative study reinforced the need for researchers to recognize the heterogeneous nature of the industry when conducting research on commercial sex workers. Factors contributing to the barriers to exiting are different among different types of sex work. For example, issues such as substance abuse, a criminal record, and experiences of violence were not as prevalent among the participants in this study when compared to studies conducted among sex workers that were involved in direct and illegal sex work (Benoit, et al., 2015b; Dalla, 2000; Roe-Sepowitz, Hickie,

Loubert & Egan, 2011; and Cusick & Hickman, 2005). Future studies may want to include samples from various domains of sex work and compare experiences among participants in diverse settings. Research that recognizes and respects the diversity of the sex work industry can guide the development of supportive services that are effective in facilitating a successful exit.

Self-Efficacy, Modeling, and Exiting. The concept of reciprocal causation from the social cognitive theory was helpful in explaining barriers to exit and factors contributing to the cycle of enter/exit/re-entering sex work. This theory's concept of self-efficacy may also be helpful in gaining insight about the exiting process. Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as "...belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). The level of self-efficacy one possesses impacts the ability to endure hardship and the determination to persevere when challenges arise. An efficacious person is able to proactively and creatively problem-solve. On the other hand, an inefficacious individual may become easily discouraged by life's challenges and has a limited ability to problem-solve. The level of an individual's perception of self-efficacy may have a pivotal impact on the outcomes of a sex worker's exiting process. The understanding of an individual's efficacy level may shed light on the barriers of exiting the sex industry. Future research may want to explore the variables that impact the development of self-efficacy and one's ability to exit.

Another tenant of the social cognitive theory is the use of observation and modeling to form new behaviors. One's motivation to adopt new behavior is also based on observing the consequences of a specific behavior (Rogers, 2013). The experiences of individuals who have exited the sex industry can serve as models to deter or encourage the exiting process. For example, would observing a high number of repeated exits among sex workers serve as a negative model and further decrease the level of self-efficacy? On the other hand, would

interacting with individuals who have exited the industry successfully serve to increase the level of self-efficacy?

Addiction to Fast Cash. A review of the literature found financial desperation and substance addiction identified as common factors among individuals engaged in the commercial sex industry. There was no mention of addiction to money as a potential factor in entrapping an individual and it may contribute to the cycle of enter/exit/re-entering. Ellie expressed frustration about some of her work days that made almost no money but the good days were adequate to balance those low earning nights:

You would have like two good days of the week; and those two days can make up for the days that you only made \$10. \$10 f***** dollars for 8 hours shift.

From a behavioral theory perspective, the cash rewards although unpredictable, can be an intermittent reinforcer that conditions an individual to remain in the industry. According to Polezzi, Casiraghi, and Vidotto (2012), behaviors conditioned by intermittent reinforcements can be harder to change even if the rewards are infrequent. Val, one of the participants, temporarily exited the industry due to pregnancy, discussed her future plan of returning to the industry after the birth of her baby “cause the money is good.” However, Val also shared the experience of “bad nights” during the interview:

Every dancer has bad nights. like there's nights that like I left with like \$25 and there is night that I heard of people leaving with nothing or other clubs they have like house fees. I heard of dancers actually paying at the end of the night to work.

The nature of the industry with an unpredictable income that varies between extreme levels of cash flow could potentially create a cognitive and behavioral condition that increases the barriers to exiting the industry. The factor of addiction to money as a barrier to exit is an emerging theme that needs to be explored further.

Criminalization, Stigma, and Barriers to Exiting. The stigma of sex work created a ripple effect in a sex worker's life and intensified the challenges to exiting. The fact that exotic dancing is legal in the U.S. did not exempt the participants in this study from the impact of social stigma. It is not clear that societal stigma of sex work is a direct result of the criminalization of sex work in the U.S. Further research exploring differences between a country that decriminalized sex work and the U.S. may provide clarity in the issue of stigma.

Conclusion

The generosity of the ten participants in sharing their experiences expanded the understanding of barriers in exiting and identified the factors that contributed to the cycle of enter/exit/re-entering the commercial sex industry. The data also filled some of the gaps in current knowledge on barriers to exiting the sex industry among indoor legal sex workers in the United States. Organizations and service providers that offer supportive services to exiting sex workers can use the expanded knowledge to develop more appropriate programs and services. The additional questions generated by this study provided a framework for researchers to broaden the knowledge on the topic of exiting sex work. The study affirmed the need to use a polymorphous paradigm and the concept of reciprocal causation to comprehend the challenges of exit and factors that reinforce the cycle of enter/exit/re-entering the indoor sex work industry. The societal stigma and insufficient wages to meet one's basic needs are structural factors that fit into the oppressive paradigm. The research results also validated the empowerment approach as the participants made a conscious decision to work in the industry as a way to generate income to care for their loved ones.

Perhaps the most significant contribution these individuals made was demonstrating their approach towards life. All the women in the study demonstrated great strengths and courage despite the many challenges they faced in their lives. The unfair and negative interactions they had with society due to stigma did not deter them from sharing their stories in order to assist others with the exiting process. As Sam responded to the request to participate in this project: "She [the researcher] won't be able to help me get out, but if it can help other girls, yeah, I'll do it."

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Appendix A: Country of Origin and Category of Sex Work for Existing Research

Research on Barriers to Exiting the Sex Industry

Author(s)	Title of the Article	Country of Origin	Indoor/Outdoor Sex Work
Bindel, J., Brown, L., Easton, H., Matthews, R., Reynolds, L. (2012).	Breaking down the barriers: A study of how women exit prostitution. Executive Summary. London, UK: Eaves.	U.K.	Indoor
Cusick, L., & Hickman, M. (2005).	'Trapping' in drug use and sex work careers. <i>Drugs: Education, Prevention & Policy</i> .	U.K.	Outdoor
Learmonth, D., Hakal, S., & Keller, M. (2015).	"I can't carry on like this": barriers to exiting the street-based sex trade in South Africa. <i>Health Psychology & Behavioral Medicine</i> , 3(1), 348.	South Africa	Outdoor

Exiting Sex Work

Author(s)	Title of the Article	Country of Origin	Indoor/Outdoor Sex Work
Baker, L., Dalla, R. and Williamson, C. (2010).	Exiting prostitution: An integrated model. <i>Violence Against Women</i> , 16(5), 579-600.	U.S.	Outdoor
Benoit, C. & Millar, A. (2001).	Dispelling myths and understanding realities: Working conditions, health status, and exiting experiences of sex workers. .	Canada	Unspecified
Cimino, A. (2012).	A Predictive Theory of Intentions to Exit Street-Level Prostitution. <i>Violence Against Women</i> , 18(10), 1235-1252.	U.S.	Outdoor
Cusick, L., Brooks-Gordon, B., Campbell, R., & Edgar, F. (2011)..	"Exiting" drug use and sex work: Career paths, interventions and government strategy targets	U.K.	Outdoor
Hickle, K. (2017).	Resiliency and women exiting sex trade industry work. <i>Journal of Social Work</i> , 17 (3):302-323.	U.S.	Mixed
Manopaiboon, C., Bunnell, R., Kilmarx, P., Chaikummao, S., Limpakarnjanarat, K., Supawitkul, St Louis, M and Mastro, T. (2009).	Leaving sex work: barriers, facilitating factors and consequences for female sex workers in northern Thailand. <i>AIDS Care</i> , 15(1), 39.	Thailand	Unspecified
Månsson, S.A. and Hedin, U.C. (1999).	Breaking the Matthew effect on women leaving prostitution. <i>International Journal of Social Welfare</i> , 8, 67-77.	Sweden	Outdoor
Mayhew, P. and Mossman, E. (2007).	Exiting prostitution: Models of best practice. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Justice.	New Zealand	Unspecified
Oselin, S. (2010).	Weighing the consequences of a deviant career: Factors leading to an exit from prostitution. <i>Sociological Perspectives</i> , 53 (4), 527-549.	U.S.	Outdoor
Oselin, S. (2014).	Leaving Prostitution: Getting out and staying out of sex work. New York: NYU Press	U.S.	Outdoor
Ouspenski, A. (2014).	Sex work: Transitioning, retiring, and exiting. British Columbia, Canada. Ministry of Justice.	Canada	Unspecified
Sanders, T. (2007).	Becoming an ex-sex worker. <i>Feminist Criminology</i> , 2(1), 74-95.	Canada	Unspecified
Ślęzak, I. (2015).	The influence of significant others on the course of the process of leaving sex work. <i>Qualitative Sociology Review</i> , 11(3), 132-153.	Poland	Unspecified
Steffan, E., Kavemann, B., Netzelmann, T., and Helfferich, C. (2015).	Support for leaving prostitution: Final report from the study of the federal model project. Abridged Version. Berlin, Germany: Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizen, Women and Youth.	Germany	Unspecified
UK Network of Sex Work Projects (UK NSWP) (2008).	Working with sex workers: Exiting. Manchester, England: UK NSWP.	U.K.	Unspecified
Vanwesenbeeck, I. (2013).	Prostitution push and pull: male and female perspectives. <i>Journal of Sex Research</i> , 50(1), 11-16.	Netherlands	Unspecified

Appendix B: Permission Letter

██████████ SHE'S SOMEBODY'S DAUGHTER

Today's Date: 10/11/2016

Millersville University
Institutional Review Board
1 S George St.
Millersville, PA 17551

Dear Millersville University IRB:

Please allow this letter to serve as permission for Millersville University researcher Ling Dinse to conduct research at She's Somebody's Daughter for the project titled, Understanding Exiting Commercial Sex Workers' Needs. The purpose of this study is to identify the key elements needed to exit the sex industry.

I have reviewed the study procedures and understand that the researcher plans to conduct research at this site: Harrisburg, PA (specific address location is withheld for the purpose of protecting participants' safety).

On behalf of She's Somebody's Daughter, permission is granted for Ling Dinse to conduct research at this institution as described above.

Sincerely,



Tammy S. Stauffer
Executive Director



1152 Mae St., #233 Hummelstown PA 17036

shessomebodysdaughter.org | ourbe.org

Appendix C: IRB Approval Letter

Millersville University

Institutional Review Board

Dr. Karena Rush
221 Byerly

Dr. René Muñoz
McNairy 500

February 21, 2017

Ms. Ling Dinse
Millersville University

Re: AY2016/17-034

Dear Ms. Ling Dinse:

Members of the Millersville University Institutional Review Board (IRB) have reviewed your proposed research "Understanding Exiting Commercial Sex Worker's Needs". Your proposal has been approved by a Full review process.

Approval for use of human subjects in this research is given for a period of one year from the date of this letter. If your study extends beyond one year, you must again contact the IRB for re-approval six weeks before the expiration date.

By accepting this decision, you agree to notify the Chair of (1) any additions or changes in procedures for your study that modify subjects' risk and (2) any events that affect the safety and wellbeing of subjects.

Thank you for cooperating with our efforts to maintain compliance with federal regulations for the protection of human subjects.

Sincerely,



Dr. Karena Rush
Chair, Millersville Institutional Research Board



Dr. René Muñoz
Director, Sponsored Programs and Research Administration

Cc: Members of the Millersville University IRB

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form

The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in this study.

The **purpose** of this study is:

- to identify barriers in exiting the sex industry

The **benefits** of the research will be:

- to identify the factors that hinder a successful exit
- to offer insight for service providers who address these barriers

The potential **risks** of participating in this study:

There is the possible risk of psychological distress when sharing your experience in the industry that may involve a distressing event. Please be assured that you may stop the study at any time. You can also choose not to answer any question that you don't want to answer.

There will be a list of no to low cost community resources available should you find the discussion causes you to experience psychological distress and be in need of emotional support.

The **methods** that will be used to meet this purpose include:

- One-on-one interviews

Our interview will be recorded to help me accurately capture your thoughts in your own words. The recordings will only be heard by me for the purpose of this study. If you feel uncomfortable with the recorder, you may ask that it be turned off at any time.

Voluntary Participation:

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. In the event you choose to withdraw from the study, all information you provide (include audio recording) will be destroyed and omitted from the final paper.

Confidentiality:

Insight gathered from you and other participants will be used in writing a report. I would be happy to share the findings with you after the research is completed. Though direct quotes from you may be used in the paper, your name and other identifying information will be kept anonymous.

Contact Information:

Please feel free to ask questions at any time about the nature of the study or the methods I am using. Please contact me at any time at the e-mail address or telephone listed below.

Ling Dinse, LSW, Principal Investigator

MU/KU DSW Candidate

e-mail address: lidinse@millersville.edu

Institution Approval:

This study has been approved by the Millersville University Institution Review Board (IRB).

___ I understand the above information, and consent to participate in this study.

Appendix E: Low or No Cost Counseling Services (Harrisburg, PA)

Catholic Charities

Capital Region Counseling Office

939 East Park Drive, Suite 101

Harrisburg, PA 17111

717-233-7978

Hope Within Counseling Services (HWCS)

4748 E. Harrisburg Pike

Elizabethtown, PA 17022

717-367-9797, ext. 303

Bethany Counseling Ministry

231 Chestnut Street

Harrisburg, PA 17101

(717) 236-6083

Crisis Intervention Program

100 Chestnut Street, Harrisburg, PA.

Phone number (717) 232-7511 or 1-888-596-444

Appendix F: Interview Questions Guide

My name is Ling Dinse. I am a doctoral student at the University Millersville. This interview will be a conversation with you about your experience in working in the industry.

The interview should take approximately 1 hour to complete. To show my appreciation for your time and participation, you will receive a \$10 gift card, which will be provided to you on the date of the scheduled interview. You will be able to keep the gift card even if you choose to not proceed with the interview.

The interview will be recorded. I will keep the recording confidential. The recorder will be kept in a locked drawer and the recording will be erased as soon as I have the data downloaded. The written transcript will be password protected. Only I will have access to the password. What you say may be written in reports or presentations, but I will not share any information that may identify you personally.

I want to remind you that:

1. There are no wrong answers.
2. You do not have to answer a question if you are uncomfortable.
3. You will receive the gift card even if you choose not to answer one or more questions.

Questions:

1. How did you come to work in the industry?
2. Have you ever thought of leaving the sex industry?
3. Did you try to leave? If yes, what was that experience like?
4. For participants that have re-entered: Why did you decide to return to the industry?
5. What kind of advice do you have for others if they want to leave?
6. What kind of advice do you have for others if they are considering working in the industry?