

Survival stripped bare: an ethnography of street sex workers in Dandenong

Submitted by

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A thesis submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

School of Arts and Sciences (VIC)

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Submitted 11th June 2015

DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma. No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis. This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution. All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics/Safety Committees (where required). Editorial advice has been sought to minimise punctuation and grammatical errors. The researcher has considered this advice and acted upon suggestions that positively contribute the theses presentation.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an ethnographic exploration of the micro world of the street sex market in Dandenong Australia. Using participant observation and semi structured interviews it explores the culture of the markets and network of people who sells sex in it, and considers how this knowledge may contribute to a more effective response from the youth and community sector. This study contributes to the existing body of research on street sex work through its exploration of the emerging and currently under-researched street sex market in Dandenong. Using an ethnographic approach, this study provides an in-depth account of the daily lived experience of people selling sex on the street in this context.

This study asks questions about the geography of street sex work in Dandenong, the social network of this street sex market and its role in the lives of people selling sex in this context, the relationship between agency and addiction in the lives of local sex workers, and of the men who buy sex in this market. The study finds the space of street sex work in Dandenong to be the product of competing tensions between sex workers, police and the broader community as they play out on the street. People selling sex on the street in Dandenong are among the communities most marginalised, vulnerable and disenfranchised. Local sex workers often have few positive mainstream social connections, which can increase their reliance on peer connections and position in the markets social network for access to key resources required for their survival. The relative isolation sex workers often empowers violent or exploitative partners and can keep them in these relationships longer than they may have been otherwise.

This study finds that most people selling sex on the street in Dandenong do so to fund a high-cost addiction to heroin. The thesis suggests that the participation of local sex workers in illicit, high-risk forms of commercial sex forms part of their negotiation of the negative affects of heroin addiction. Their experience of addiction and reliance on the local street economy for their survival binds them to a cycle of drug use and street sex work around which life for most people in this

context revolves. Finally, clients report a preference for 'authenticity' in the sex they buy. They cite the use of public space and more casual style of dress and demeanour of street sex workers in Dandenong as key to their decision to buy sex in this market instead of in other commercial sex contexts.

Street sex work in Dandenong occurs in a high-risk, contested space in which sex workers negotiate risk and exposure to harm as part of their daily lives. Their relative isolation from mainstream support increases their reliance on their ingenuity, savviness and position in the peer network for their survival. This thesis argues that a front-line, relationship based response from the youth and community sector could reduce local street sex workers' reliance on the range of potentially exploitative social ties that become particularly problematic when they develop beyond the reach of mainstream support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the support, commitment and encouragement I received from of many people through my time as a PhD candidate.

Firstly, I wish to acknowledge my research participants, particularly those people who I formed ongoing connections with throughout the research process. Your ingenuity and resilience is inspirational and often served as a reference point that carried me through some of the most challenging phases of this research. Without your trust and input this research would not have been possible.

I would also like to acknowledge the support I received from the youth and community sector throughout the research. During the planning and design stage of the research I received written support from key organisations including the Dandenong Police, Southern Health and the South Eastern Drug and Alcohol Service. The lines of referral and front-line support provided by the South Eastern Drug and Alcohol Service and people working in the Foster Street needle exchange and primary health clinic is highly appreciated and was key to the success of the study. Their strong reputation among people selling sex on the street in Dandenong is a testament to their ability to build trusting and highly beneficial relationships with a hard to reach, typically untrusting group.

I certainly wouldn't have been able to complete this research without the unwavering support of my two fantastic supervisors, Dr Jen Couch and Dr Sue Rechter. I can't thank you enough for sticking with me over the journey. Hopefully we've been able to produce something that can positively affect the lives of people selling sex on the street in Dandenong.

I'm also extremely fortunate to have a strong family network that have supported and encouraged my journey through the process of this study and thesis. To my brother Mark, Monique, Madison and Aiden, thank you for all of your love,

encouragement and understanding. Like most partners of people doing a PhD, my partner Fari deserves a medal for putting up with me through the challenging periods of the process, the long hours I spent locked away in my little office, and for living with someone as they struggle on a student income. Finally, I certainly couldn't have done this research or survived this process without the love and support of my mum. Thanks mum.

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INTRODUCTION

Street sex is commonly described as over-represented in the body of research on commercial sex (Weitzer 2005; Sanders 2005b; Cesario and Chancer 2009).

However, with the range and severity of experiences captured in these contexts, changes in legislation and social attitudes, and variability across different sites of street sex work, more up to date and specifically focused research into street sex work to continue to ensure appropriate policy and service delivery by government agencies, community program developers, and policymakers. This research is an ethnography of street sex work in Dandenong, one of the largest suburbs in the outer eastern area of Melbourne, in Victoria, Australia. Apart from the author's previous honours research that explored the pathways and experience, of young people selling sex on Curtis Street and their use of community programs, this research provides the first documented, holistic account of street sex work in Dandenong. At the time of writing, no community organisation or program works specifically to address the range of issues experienced by local street sex workers. While most of these sex workers have histories that include some form of connection to government and non-government organisations, the network of people selling sex on the streets of Dandenong can now be seen as a highly isolated group who for a range of reasons have fallen through the cracks. This ethnography is therefore informed by a dual agenda. The first is to provide a foundation upon which further research into street sex work in Dandenong can develop. The second is to influence a more concerted and effective response from government and the youth and community sector to the range of issues experienced by the highly-marginalised people selling sex in this context.

Selling sex in Victoria

Selling and buying sex in street sex markets in Victoria is illegal (Victorian Government 1994). Consistent with a shift towards regulation in commercial sex legislation through many parts of the Western world, the Prostitution Control Act 1994 regards some indoor forms of commercial sex legal, but continues to criminalise street sex work (Sullivan 2007a; Sullivan 1997). The Act deems people selling and buying sex in street sex markets subject to penalties that range from monetary fines through to custodial sentences for repeat offenders. However, despite its illegality, street sex work continues in some spaces across metropolitan Melbourne; the most notable is the market on the streets of St Kilda (Rowe 2006). The front-line approach of police in these spaces has been described as regulated tolerance (Brants 1998), in which clients and other non-worker participants are criminalised in accordance with the Act, while sex workers are charged only when considered to be in need of control or during periods of intense community concern (O'Neill et al. 2008; Aitken et al. 2002; Terpstra 2012). While not formally legislated, this front-line approach in Victoria shares many similarities with the “Swedish model” (Waltman 2011; Danna 2012) of prostitution regulation.

Researching street sex work

Most research on street sex work paints a picture of street sex workers as highly-marginalised communities for whom daily life is characterised by multiple hardships, many of which are exacerbated by the experience of high-volume illicit drug addiction (Rowe 2006; Sanders 2004; Degenhardt et al. 2002; Roxburgh et al. 2008). Strong associations exist between drug abuse, addiction, and selling sex in street sex markets (Degenhardt et al. 2002; Roxburgh et al. 2008; Hanley 2004). High-cost addictions to heroin, crack cocaine, and methamphetamine are often cited as the most influential factor to a person’s participation in street sex work, but the (mis)use of alcohol, marijuana, and prescription medications are also often found to be common in these contexts (Rowe 2006; Degenhardt et al. 2006; Roxburgh et al. 2008). Illicit street sex markets are commonly described as high-risk spaces in which sex workers are continually exposed to a range of harms as part of their daily lives. Exposure to violence, rape, sexually transmitted infections, blood borne viruses, exploitation, and criminal charges are among the most commonly described harms

(Degenhardt et al. 2006; Rekart 2005; Williamson and Cluse-Tolar 2002; Williamson and Folaron 2003, 2001; Sanders 2001; Sanders 2004). Even in this small snapshot, the current body of research begins to paint a picture of the vulnerability of street sex worker populations, the forces that often bind them to the high-risk practice of street sex work, and the range of harms and risks that these workers negotiate as part of their daily lives.

Despite being described as over-represented in the broader body of commercial sex research (Perkins et al. 1994; Weitzer 2005), some gaps in our knowledge about street sex work remain. Many studies focusing on the experience of street sex workers are situated in large, well-established street sex markets where the researcher's access to people selling sex in the street is mediated by an assisting community program or organisation (Dalla 2006; Rowe 2006; Degenhardt et al. 2006). These studies provide highly valuable contributions, but are not necessarily generalisable to the experiences of people selling sex in other street sex markets, or in smaller, emerging markets such as the one in Dandenong, where no dedicated organised community response exists. This thesis focuses on the small, largely concealed and currently under-researched street sex market in Dandenong. Its examination of the micro-world of the people selling sex in this context provides a unique and potentially useful contribution to knowledge that could inform local policy and program development.

Dandenong

Dandenong provides an interesting backdrop to the exploration of a street sex market. Located approximately 38 kilometres south-east of Melbourne, the land on which the City of Greater Dandenong sits was originally inhabited by the Bunurong people, who occupied land spreading from the Werribee River in the north-west to Wilson's Promontory in the south-east (Koori Heritage Trust n.d). Today, Dandenong is a predominantly working class suburb characterised by a high degree of cultural diversity and a range of pressing social issues. Greater Dandenong's population of 142,000 people is the second most culturally diverse in Victoria (City of Greater Dandenong 2007; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010). Many of its residents are first- and second- generation immigrants from Cambodia, Sri Lanka, India, Vietnam, China, Italy, Greece, Bosnia, Afghanistan, New Zealand, and Great

Britain (Dandenong 2013). It is estimated that up to 2500 people add to the area's population each year after arriving as refugees or asylum seekers, with most people currently coming from Afghanistan, the Cook Islands, Somalia, and Bosnia (Dandenong 2013; City of Greater Dandenong 2007).

Dandenong is associated with some key social problems. Unemployment, problematic gambling, illicit drug use, and instances of drug and non-drug related crimes are reportedly higher in Dandenong than in many other areas across Melbourne (Dandenong 2013). Despite a slight decrease through the 2010–2013 period, Dandenong's unemployment rate of 9% remains higher than both the national (5.8% in 2013) and state (5.7% in 2013) rates through the same period. Employed residents reported a weekly income in 2011 of \$395, which is only 67% of the metropolitan average (\$592 per week). The area's low socio-economic status is exacerbated by the volume of its population's gambling losses. The 2011-2012 period saw \$118 million pass through the suburb's electronic gaming machines alone (Dandenong 2013). This sum averages to a yearly loss of \$1083 per local adult resident, which was the highest per capita gambling loss in Victoria during this period (Dandenong 2013). Dandenong also has higher than average rates of crime and illicit drug use. Reports of crime were 37% higher in Greater Dandenong than the Melbourne average during the 2011-2012 periods, with drug-related crime and violent offences respectively 99% and 70% higher than the average of other Melbourne suburbs. As these figures indicate, Dandenong is affected by a range of social issues, reflected not only in statistical data but also in the number of youth and community services that operate in the area.

In spite of its association with a range of social issues, Dandenong has been identified by the Victorian State Government as a potential key business hub for Melbourne's expanding south-eastern suburbs, and is the subject of an urban renewal plan. "Revitalising Central Dandenong" began in 2006 with the Victorian State Government committing \$290 million to the urban revitalisation of the area over the following 15 to 20 years (City of Greater Dandenong and VicUrban 2007). Although much of the proposed infrastructural development is not due for completion until 2018, a great deal of construction has already been completed. Notable developments include improvements to Dandenong Railway Station, construction of the George Street Bridge allowing easier traffic access to Dandenong, re-development of the Lonsdale Street shopping strip, the city walk, and the renewal of

Dandenong Market. These developments have run concurrently with significant housing developments and an increase in spending on education and vocational training in the area. These developments are expected to spark a further \$1 billion of spending in the area from the private sector over the next 15 to 20 years (City of Greater Dandenong and VicUrban 2007). Taken together, the government's commitment to the urban renewal of Dandenong and the prediction of additional private sector investment in a suburb historically characterised by socio-economic hardship and a range of challenging social issues provides an interesting context in which to explore the presence of a street sex market.

Research set in other urban spaces used as street sex markets increasingly finds that urban renewal projects often coincide with increased policing that either pushes people participating in street sex work into neighbouring areas, and further to the margins where sex workers are often considered to be exposed to increased risk of various harms (Venkatesh 2013; Edelman 2011; Draus, Roddy, and Asabigi 2015; Cameron 2004; Lehtovouri 2010). With this mind, the researcher expects Dandenong's urban revitalisation project to include an increased focus on policing the people and places associated with street sex work in the local area. Rather than push street sex work to a neighbouring suburb, or reduce the people's participation in high-risk forms of commerce, the researcher anticipates an increase in traditional policing practices will increase sex worker participation in high-risk practices on the street, or increase people's participation in highly-concealed forms of high-risk commercial sex (Venkatesh 2013; Edelman 2011; Draus, Roddy, and Asabigi 2015; Cameron 2004; Lehtovouri 2010). The researcher suspects this will place an already highly-marginalised group at significant increased risk in the community, and make the development of an effective response from the local community sector extremely difficult. Drawing from existing literature on street sex work and discussion of street sex work in Dandenong presented in this thesis, the researcher argues instead for a community-based response to the issue that develops out of the experiences and needs of people caught in a cycle of drug use and sex work in this context.

My connection to the issue in Dandenong

The topic of this research is one that I could not have imagined I would be pursuing as a doctoral thesis when I took my first tentative steps into tertiary

education in 2007. Illness during my mid-teens through to my early twenties brought a premature end to my secondary education and left me without a clear sense of vocational direction. Upon my recovery I moved from low-paying job to low-paying job in what, with hindsight, was a search for meaning and vocational purpose. I spent time working in a metal fabrication factory, I served 18 months of a baking apprenticeship, worked in retail selling gardening equipment, and eventually made my way into call centre work where I spent a miserable 12 months. It was not until I attended a public lecture in which a person from the Youth Substance Abuse Service spoke about the role of the organisation and her experiences working with marginalised young people that I felt I had found what I was seeking. Filled with a sense of purpose, I quit my job and enrolled in a Bachelor of Social Science (Youth Studies) at the Australian Catholic University.

It was in my final year of my undergraduate degree that I first learned of people selling sex on the street in Dandenong. While on student placement with the Brosnan Centre—a program of the Jesuit Social Services that supports young people exiting the juvenile justice system by providing them with accommodation and building healthier support systems around them—I soon began noticing physical evidence of street sex work in the space around central Dandenong. Curious, I began asking Brosnan Centre workers and people in other related community organisations about the issue and soon learned it was something that most local community organisations were aware of but to which they were unable to respond as they would like, primarily because of a lack of funding and resources. Like most Melbournians, I associated street sex work with the inner-city suburb of St Kilda and thought this was the only place in Melbourne where it was practiced. Learning of its presence in Dandenong was a surprise.

As a student with a strong grade point average going into the final semester of an undergraduate degree, my lecturers and course co-ordinator spoke to me frequently about the possibility of undertaking an additional year of study in an Honours degree. During one seminar filled with a room full of other potential honours candidates, a previous student gave a presentation in which she spoke of her experience during her Honours year:

It's about finding a topic you're passionate about ... and it's not just like writing an essay where you just regurgitate something someone else has done. It's your first chance to move beyond what other people have said or

done, and say “This is my little contribution. This is what I found, or this is what I think about this”.

It seemed like perfect timing. By the end of the presentation I knew exactly what I wanted to do. I had already performed a literature search of street sex work in Dandenong during my student placement, in which I found a large body of research on street sex work but nothing that explained the issue in Dandenong. The only documented accounts I located were one short article in the local newspaper that highlighted the discontent of local shopkeepers who complained that it affected their businesses (Durant 2010), and a reference to an inter-organisational study conducted in 2002–2003, the findings of which had not been published or made publicly available (Resourcing Health and Education in the Sex Industry 2003). A fire in my belly was lit and I saw an opportunity to not only make a small contribution to society, but to do something that had meaning. I was going to research the street sex market in Dandenong with the intent of raising awareness about the under-researched and largely hidden population of people selling sex in this specific context, and hopefully to influence local community organisations to take a more proactive approach to the issue. Thus began my journey into the world of street sex work in Dandenong.

Prior to this thesis, the only available research on this topic is my Honours thesis, completed in 2010 (Durant 2010). That research focused on young people between the ages of 18 and 25 who sold sex on the street in Dandenong. It used individual semi-structured interviews to explore young people’s pathways into street sex work in this area, their experiences selling sex on the street in Dandenong, and their use and perceptions of potentially relevant youth and community services. I found that these young people’s participation in street sex work was driven by a need to fund a high-cost addiction to heroin. Most required between \$150 and \$500 per day from street sex work to fund their addiction, and sometimes the addiction of an ongoing intimate partner who also often had a presence on the street. Unsurprisingly, their current experiences on the street were characterised by multiple hardships including violence, poverty, and homelessness. Many had spent time in juvenile and adult detention, and described their teen years as being spent in and out of various out-of-home forms of care. Their connections to youth and community organisations were limited. It appeared that most people here had simply fallen through the cracks between the current network of community support programs. The only connection

to a current program was to the local needle exchange where users could access clean FITS and condoms. All interviewees held this service in high regard, not only for its utility in their daily lives, but for the ability of its workers to form non-judgemental relationships with the program's clients.

An ethnography of street sex work in Dandenong

This doctoral study continues my exploration of the under-researched street sex market in Dandenong. Like my previous study, this project is informed by my desire to influence local policy and program developers, and ultimately to influence an effective community response to the issue and the range of harms it presents to its current participants and other potentially vulnerable people. Street sex work in Dandenong is currently concentrated in one street, but in the interests of protecting the identities of people selling sex in this space I have not only changed the names of the research participants and other key market figures, but have also created a fictional street name and altered the names of other key landmarks as a way to conceal the exact location of the street sex market. I have taken this approach as a way to further conceal the identities of the people selling sex in this context and limit the potential of this research to contribute to the reproduction of harm in this space that may occur if it disclosed the exact location of this market.

My approach to this project is influenced by the idea that an increase in the respectful and accurate representation of people selling sex on the street in Dandenong in research and community discussion can influence a positive community response with the potential to at least minimise many of the harms currently experienced by this group. This approach is advocated by Fraser (2003), who describes how the misrecognition of marginal communities actively contributes to the economic and cultural injustices that render them marginal and ultimately powerless. Economic injustices describe the various economic and political structures that actively contribute to the marginal status of some people and groups. Challengers of economic injustices often seek structural change within the current economic system, or advocate redistributive policies that address these economic imbalances. Alternatively, cultural injustices are typically rooted in social misrepresentation, where they can restrict the ability of the misrepresented person or group to act as full members of society. However, Fraser suggests that the economic

and cultural injustices that contribute to the marginalisation and hardship experienced by some groups are often inherently linked, and are advanced by the misrecognition of the hidden or marginalised communities (Fraser 2003). For example, she asserts that misrecognition not only harms people and communities through cultural injustice, but can actively exacerbate the economic injustices responsible for their marginal status and continued exposure to harm. Increasing the recognition and representation of marginal communities through research not only raises awareness about particular groups or challenges the stereotypes that inform cultural injustices, but also promotes justice at the economic level. Applying Fraser's ideas to the present study, I suggest that the understanding of how people selling sex on Curtis Street in Dandenong negotiate their lives presented in this study is effective in redressing current misrepresentations, and can also provide a platform upon which to understand their needs more comprehensively, and thus respond to those needs.

This research is an ethnography of the street sex market in Dandenong that asks questions about the market's geography, social network, its clients, and the agency of the people who sell sex there. The study borrows tools from a number of social theories to illuminate key elements of the market and the experiences of its participants. While cognisant of the broader social context that contributes to the phenomena of street sex work and the reproduction of harm that shapes the participation of most people in street sex work, the focus of this project is firmly fixed on the micro-world of this particular street sex market and on the daily lived experiences of those who sell sex there. This focus is reflected in the selection of the project's data collection method, which included a 12-month period of participant observation at the market's coalface and of the network of people bound to the market, and the use of individual semi-structured interviews as a way to explore the perception and experience of market clients. The decision to situate the research in the micro-world of the street sex market on Curtis Street is informed by my belief that that a targeted push from youth and community organisations onto the market's front-line within an assertive outreach, relationship-based model could have a significant effect on the lives of people selling sex in this space, and on the broader community.

Significance of the research

The significance of this research lies in its sociological representation of the under-researched street sex market in Dandenong and the lives of the people who sell sex in the market. The use of key sociological concepts such as agency, power, and social capital, and the development of a network analysis allows this thesis to contribute to the body of ethnographic study into street sex work, and to ethnographic knowledge of the lived experience of street sex workers in particular. Many sociologically-informed accounts of the experience and practice of people surviving by selling sex in illicit street sex markets highlight the range of harms they are exposed to as part of their daily lives, and often provide insight into the complex interplay of oppressive structures that shape the lives of the workers and the various—often ingenious—strategies they employ to negotiate their lives. This study's focus on both the social context of street sex work in Dandenong, and the individual, front-line experience of people selling sex in this context, prompts the research to explore the interplay of structure and agency in the lives of these street sex workers, and by doing so engages with and provides a contribution to the broader debate of about the relationship of structure and agency in social theory. Finally, the study's focus on the spatial production of the street sex market on Curtis Street allows the thesis to engage with other sociological accounts of spatial production and evolution of street sex markets. The small size of Dandenong's street sex market, coupled with its relative immaturity, allows this study to contribute to the currently marginal body of research set in emerging markets, which not only provides an empirical contribution in its own right, but contributes to broader sociological discussion of sex markets' appropriation of spaces and the evolution of commercial sex markets.

Research questions

Effective research questions determine “who and what” will be researched, while still encouraging flexible discovery within a clearly demarcated site (Punch 2003; Robson 1993; Denzin and Lincoln 2008). This research asks a series of distinct questions about the street sex market in Dandenong, and addresses these through in-depth consideration of the daily lived experiences of the people whose addictions and social ties in the area bind them to this market. While primarily

concerned with the experiences of sex workers, the research also asks questions of the male partners of sex workers and the clients of the market. Their inclusion in the research is designed to provide a holistic account of the market's micro-world, and to provide insight into the different perceptions, experiences, and motivations that shape the market participation of its key players. The research questions focus the study on the micro-world of the market and its social network, and are informed by a desire to influence the development of an effective front-line community organisational response to the range of harms experienced by the currently isolated group of people selling sex in this context. It is with this in mind that this thesis concludes with the proposal of a relationship-based, front-line response from the local youth and community sector in Dandenong.

This study's exploration of this street sex market begins by considering the geography of street sex work in Dandenong. Data gathered through participant observation on the market's front-line, and discussions with local sex workers about the use and appropriation of particular spaces for street sex work in Dandenong, is presented and discussed in Chapter 3. This discussion provides the foundation upon which the thesis considers these questions: What is the relationship between street sex work and public space in Dandenong? Further, how does this relationship affect the experience of people who sell sex on the street in Dandenong? Consistent with observations in other geographies of street sex work, the space of street sex work in Dandenong develops out of ongoing tensions between government, police, local community members, and people selling and buying sex on Curtis Street. Unique to this market is the relationship between its use of space on Curtis Street and a nearby youth accommodation facility that houses vulnerable young people. This relationship is particularly concerning, and appears to place vulnerable young people in a geographical and social context in which their exposure to street sex work is highly likely. Lefebvre's ideas of the social production of space and this spatial trialectic are used as the lens through which this study organises its geographical enquiry.

At the core of this thesis, and the daily lives of people selling sex on Curtis Street, are the range of social ties and network connections that run through this street sex market. This study's use of participant observation as its principal data collection method provides the research with a rich body of data with which to consider the range social ties and networks negotiated by people selling sex on Curtis Street as part of their daily lives. This information is presented in Chapter 4,

and provides the foundation upon which the thesis considers the questions: How does peer connection and participation in this market's social network affect the experience of people selling sex on the street in Dandenong? This study finds that the lack of effective mainstream ties and the shared experience of significant hardship forces local street sex workers to increasingly rely on peer connections and their position in the market's social network for access to the range of key resources required for their ongoing survival in this context. Network theory is adopted as the methodological approach to explore the social lives of local sex workers, while the associated concept of social capital positions the social participation of the market network members as a strategy of investment directly linked to their survival.

Differences in the way the relationship between agency and participation in commercial sex is thought about sits at the heart of many divisions between dominant conceptualisations of commercial sex. Strong associations between drug addiction and significant hardship and participation in street sex work increases the complexity of this relationship when considering the agency of people selling sex in street markets. By spending considerable time with local sex workers during fieldwork, this research has exposed itself to a range of contexts and situations in which the complexity of the relationship between agency and addiction in their lives were most apparent. These are discussed in Chapter 5, and provide the backdrop upon which the thesis considers the question: How does the experience of addiction affect the agency of people selling sex on the street in Dandenong?

Finally, informed by the relative lack of research on commercial sex clients, particularly on people who buy sex in illicit street sex markets, this research asks: What motivates men to buy sex in Dandenong's illicit street sex market instead of in other commercial sex options? Information used to address this question is gathered through individual semi-structured interviews with nine men who buy sex from women selling sex on Curtis Street. This study finds that a lower fee for sex in comparison to other legal and illicit commercial options, and familiarity with the area, people, and processes of this market, play a role in shaping these men's apparent preference for buying sex in this market. However, the greatest impetus is the value clients attribute to the ability of Curtis Street to provide a more "authentic" sexual experience than what they perceive to be available in other markets. The concept of sexual capital focuses this assessment on what these men consider the most attractive characteristics of this market.

Thesis structure

The thesis is organised into six chapters. Following the introduction, in Chapter 1 I draw on data gathered in comparable contexts and attempt to draw out a set of assumptions about street sex work in other locations that may provide clues as to what to what the research may identify on Curtis Street.

The focus of Chapter 2 is on the methodological approach and data collection methods of the thesis. This research is an ethnographic exploration that draws on multiple conceptual tools and theoretical approaches to present a rich account that never strays far from the daily lived experience of people selling sex on Curtis Street. The geography of street sex work in Dandenong is explored through this lens of Lefebvre's spatial trialectic; network theory is used in the exploration of the role social connection and participation in the market's social network plays in the experience of local sex workers; the concept of agency and its relation to addiction assists the study to develop insight into the ability to local sex workers to self-determine key aspects of their lives; and finally discussion of the range of market and personal characteristics local clients describe as shaping their preference to buy sex in this market instead of other contexts draws upon the concept of sexual capital. The study's use of participant observation and individual semi-structured interviews is discussed, and provides an initial introduction to Curtis Street and the people who acted as the project's gatekeepers. The chapter concludes with a consideration of some of the key ethical concerns that emerged through the practice of the research and how they have been addressed.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 take the thesis to the market's front-line on Curtis Street and into the network of people who sell and buy sex in that market. The focus of Chapter 3 is the geography of street sex work in Dandenong. This chapter explores the market's use of public space, and how the territorial practices of market participants, police, and local community members that play out on the street shape the geography of street sex work in Dandenong. Chapter 4 moves the thesis into the market's social network. By exploring the social daily lives of people selling sex on Curtis Street through the lens of network theory, this chapter provides key insights into the various strategies of social connection and network participation that local sex workers consider key to their survival in this context. In Chapter 5, the thesis considers the agency of street sex workers in Dandenong, and the experience and

perceptions of the men who buy sex on the suburb's street. Discussion in this chapter explores the relationship between agency and addiction in the lives of local sex workers, and presents key findings from interviews with nine men who buy sex from women on the street. Together, these chapters present an ethnography of the micro-world of the street sex market in Dandenong that develops from the daily experiences of the market's key participants.

The final chapter discusses the data presented in the previous chapters in light of the thesis's methodological approach and research questions. The chapter begins with an exploration of the presented data through the lens of the project's adopted sociological tools to highlight key elements of the micro-world of the street sex market on Curtis Street and its social network. The discussion develops into an assessment of the research findings and their potential to influence a contextually-specific organisational response to issues that surround street sex work in Dandenong.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review considers a range of key factors that shape street sex markets and the experiences of the people who sell sex on the street. Due to the lack of research on street sex work in Dandenong, this chapter draws from studies conducted in other street sex work locations to identify themes of relevance to this current investigation of the street sex market in Curtis Street, Dandenong. This chapter begins with an assessment of what the current body of research can tell us about the geography of street sex work, and how these can aid this study in its exploration of the relationship between public space and street sex work in Dandenong. Key theoretical approaches to the geography of street sex markets are discussed, and their ability to explain the socio-spatial development of street sex markets as they continue to evolve are assessed. Contextual factors such as key legislative frameworks and empirical observations of the role police and communities play in the construction of the space of street sex markets are also considered. The focus of the next section of the literature review is the social and economic context of street sex work. Key findings from empirical research on the lived experience and social lives of people selling sex in street sex markets is presented and discussed. These observations paint a picture of the social context in which people engage and continue to participate in street sex work. The economy of street sex work is then discussed, developing insight into the relationship between addiction and participation in the range of practices often observed in street sex markets. The chapter continues with an assessment of the key theoretical approaches to street sex work, and considers the role of agency in the lives of people who sell sex in street sex market. This consideration includes an assessment of what existing studies tell us about the relationship between addiction and agency, and considers how these can aid the research questions about the agency of people selling sex on Curtis Street. The chapter concludes with a discussion of empirical research on men who buy sex. In this section, the thesis considers the reasons informing the lack of research on this group in comparison to studies of sex workers, and how a greater

focus on this group can contribute to a more holistic understanding of commercial sex, and street sex work in particular.

Street sex work and the production of space

Sex work and public space

Public spaces used for the street sex market are highly-contested spaces in which sex workers, clients, police, local businesses, and residents often wrestle for control (Hubbard 1998a; O'Neill et al. 2008; Hubbard and Sanders 2003; Hubbard 1999, 2002, 1998b). One stream of theory on the production of urban spaces assumes that sexual hierarchies are mapped onto city spaces and the broader urban landscape (Lehtovouri 2010). Consistent with this, town planners, academics, and the media increasingly consider cities to be made up of distinctive spatial milieus that evolve from an association with the sexualised figures that inhabit them (Lehtovouri 2010). One key group often present in the socio-spatial labelling of urban spaces is street sex workers (Hubbard 1999). The caricature of the “street prostitute” in particular has a longstanding and influential history as the “quintessential sexualised figure of the urban scene”, and “the central spectacle in a series of urban encounters” (Walkowitz 1992, 233). In the dominant rhetoric, she (because the sex worker is almost always characterised as female) is held up as a commodified figure that encapsulates both sexual desire and social disgust (Hubbard 1998b; Walkowitz 1992). Through their repeated presence in particular urban spaces, the social identity of the street prostitute and the meanings attached to her become linked to the marginal, often decaying, urban spaces into which they are typically forced to solicit and sell sex. The association between the street sex worker and mainstream disgust and disease entwines with their presence in decaying urban spaces in the broader social conscious, and contributes to a lack of regard for both (Hubbard and Sanders 2003; Hubbard 1999, 1998b; Mort and Nead 1999).

Socio-spatial labelling not only develops out of an association between people and place, but requires direct experience of the urban setting and its users in ways that elicit feelings of otherness or a sense of belonging (O'Neill et al. 2008; Hubbard and Sanders 2003; Hubbard 2002; Lefebvre 1991). Differences in the way the mainstream population and street sex workers experience urban spaces appropriated as street sex markets has been explored in relevant research. In a red-light district in

Birmingham in the United Kingdom, Hubbard and Sanders (2003) found local residents had developed their opinions of the street sex market spaces by focusing on the dilapidated tower blocks, discarded condoms, and dimly-lit alleyways. These images merged with their existing perceptions of street sex workers, pimps, and “johns” (clients) in the construction of a space they consider to be scary, foreign, and disgusting. The response of local residents included wanting to leave the area, or wanting to reinscribe the hegemonic socio-sexual order through various forms of activism. In contrast, sex workers approached this space with a sense of belonging unavailable to them in most other public spaces in the urban landscape (Hubbard and Sanders 2003). The space of the street sex market was one they shared with peers tarred with the same socially-discredited brush, and therefore elicited feelings of security, belonging, and comfort. Together, these contrasting senses of otherness and belonging within the local mainstream population and sex workers contributes to the highly-contested nature of street sex markets and their association in the mainstream with dilapidation, danger, and disease.

While these studies provide insight into the processes through which particular spaces become mapped into the social conscious and local urban geographies, the studies often presume a pre-existing street sex market that is already ingrained in the social conscious of local community members. In a market such as the one at the heart of this study, of which much of the local community remains unaware, assessments of the spatial experience of non-sex working community members can only offer limited insight into the geography of street sex work in Dandenong. One approach that provides some insight into the relationship between public space and an emerging street sex market such as the one in Dandenong is Cameron’s (2004) model of the evolution of paid sex markets. Drawing from the available literature on the relationship between policy, spatial organisation, and commercial sex, Cameron (2004) develops a model of the evolution of paid sex markets as they move from the clandestine sale of sex in un-regulated urban spaces to highly organised and often clustered arrays of legal and semi-legal commercial sex options that provide consumers a “ladder” to commercial sex options. Within this model, Cameron argues that sex markets develop from sporadic sex economies to partially-laddered sex economies that provide some degree of laddering that allows clients to access to multiple products that vary depending on cost and exposure to risk, through to mature commercial sex markets in which clients are provided with a wide array of

laddered commercial sex options in a spatially-clustered context. Cameron argues that commercial sex economies develop over time through a relationship between the practice of street sex work and the often “ad hoc tolerance policy-makers have shown to entrepreneurs operating largely outside, or on the fringes of, the legal system” (Cameron 2004). Cameron considers emerging street sex markets—such as the one in Dandenong—to be extreme examples of sporadic paid sex markets in their relative infancy. Sporadic sex economies are described by Cameron as illegal markets in which fringe criminal actors sell sex in a highly unstructured manner that provides little opportunity for market expansion. Markets in this evolutionary phase are often highly unstable markets in which participants are often isolated and exposed to violence, exploitation, and episodic forms of policing and law enforcement. Due to their marginal character and the lack of organised clustering of an array of laddered services often seen in more developed commercial sex economies, sporadic sex economies tend to operate in isolated public spaces. Their use of marginal space, along with its illicit status and lack of organisation among sellers, works to restrict the market’s ability to develop and provide its participants with an income beyond subsistence. While Cameron’s model provides some insight into the relative evolutionary infancy of the street sex market in Dandenong, it appears limited in its ability to adequately address questions about how particular street sex markets appropriate spaces in the urban landscape.

The focus of Hubbard and others on the contested nature of the geography of street sex work provides a framework that appears to allow for a more comprehensive understanding of emerging street sex markets and the process through which they appropriate public spaces. Hubbard and Sanders (2003) assert that street sex markets both emerge from and are produced through an ongoing relationship between the territorial practices of sex workers and strategies of the state, law, and other third parties including community action groups. Territoriality is described as the contested process of both exerting and resisting power and authority in the negotiation or claiming of geographical space (Sack 1986), while Storey (2012) describes territorial behaviour as a connecting fabric constantly re-woven through resistance and reification of perceived boundaries, which provides the link between the structure of society and urban spaces.

In describing this process Hubbard (Hubbard 1998b, 2002; Hubbard and Prior 2013; Hubbard and Sanders 2003) and others (Draus, Roddy, and Asabigi 2015;

Quinet 2011; Crofts, Hubbard, and Prior 2013; O'Neill et al. 2008) draw from de Certeau's (1984) relationship between spatial strategies and tactics, and Lefebvre's (1991) theory of the social production of space. In his analysis of daily life in urban cities, de Certeau argues that spaces in the urban landscape are created socially through a relationship between the strategies of the state and other social elites who create and attempt to enforce boundaries between moral and immoral behaviours and spaces, and the tactics of the daily users of space who seek to escape these limiting processes, and use space for their own ends. De Certeau's distinction between the strategies of key state actors and the resistant tactics of people wanting to use space for a different purpose engages with Lefebvre's spatial trialectic. These concepts include spatial practice that includes routines of the everyday use of space, representations of space used in describing the dominant discourse on how a particular space should be used, and spaces of representation which are created bodily through the everyday uses of space at its front-line. The role of de Certeau's (1984) strategies and tactics in the social production of space—together with Lefebvre's (1991) spatial trialectic—positions the ongoing negotiation of space and territory as a key process of urban life. Whether engaging directly with the concept of territorial practice and the social production of space, much existing research on street sex work provides insight into the contested nature of these spaces, and the context in which state actors, community members, and sex workers wrestle for control.

The legislative context of street sex work

The representation of space in which street sex workers struggle for a place in the modern urban landscape is shaped by a region's legislative stance on commercial sex and the front-line approach of police. A region's legislation on commercial sex is shaped by the dominant moral and political beliefs about selling and buying sex; these beliefs contribute to an overarching ideology about the role of commercial sex in society and the people who participate in it (Brants 1998; Weitzer 2005). Four key legislative approaches dominate discussions of the legislation of commercial sex through most parts of the Western world (Hayes-Smith and Shekarkhar 2010; Brants 1998). Each framework occupies a position in the ongoing debate around commercial sex and the front-line approach of police in the local context, and will therefore be discussed in turn.

The criminalisation of commercial sex is the dominant policy through much of the Western world, including in Victoria through much of the twentieth century (Sullivan 1997, 1993; Victorian Government 1994). The blanket criminalisation of commercial sex applies to all acts associated with buying and selling sex, with all participating parties subject to punishment under criminal law. While strict adherence to criminalising legislative frameworks are still in effect in some parts of the world, a generalised shift in contemporary Western thought towards the control of commercial sex through selective regulation spawned the development of hybrid policies, in which some forms of commercial sex are regulated while others continue to be criminalised (Sullivan 2007b; Sullivan 2007a). The current stance of the Victorian State Government provides one such example (Victorian Government 1994). In 1984 the Victorian government moved from blanket criminalisation of all forms of commercial sex to a legislative stance where selling sex under certain conditions and in specific ways was considered legally acceptable. While street sex work remained illegal, much media and academic research suggests that it has continued since the implementation of Victoria's revised legislative stance, most notably on the streets of St Kilda (see Rowe 2006).

Despite the illegality of street sex work in Victoria, the front-line approach of police in street sex markets is often described as a form of "regulated tolerance" (Brants 1998; Halter 2010; Biradavolu et al. 2009). This approach to street sex work is thought to be informed by an understanding that people selling sex on the street do so as their only means of generating an income large enough to fund a high-cost drug addiction. Within this front-line approach, police efforts are re-focused onto sex market clients and other third parties who may benefit from the sex worker's current predicament. The people selling sex on the street only receive criminal charges in relation to their sex work when deemed necessary by individual police, or when they are uncooperative with police during periods of intense community concern (O'Neill et al. 2008; Aitken et al. 2002; Terpstra 2012). While this approach reduces street sex workers' exposure to criminal charge, policing styles such as these within a criminalised legislative framework places significant power in the hands of individual and local police, which has been seen across many settings to produce a unpredictable, often volatile context (Biradavolu et al. 2009; Small et al. 2005; Jordan 2004).

The front-line approach of regulated tolerance shares many characteristics with the abolitionist approach to commercial sex. Emerging out of radical feminism, the ultimate goal of abolitionists is to eliminate the practice of commercial sex. This approach has re-established itself as one of the dominant ideologies in the global debate on prostitution/sex work. It sits at the heart of the United Nations' protocol on Human Trafficking (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2012), and provides the framework around which the "Swedish model" of commercial sex legislation has been developed. Active in Sweden and Norway (Harrington 2012; Kotsadam and Jakobsson 2011) and increasingly influencing sex work policy in other areas, such as the United Kingdom (Kingston 2010; Sanders, O'Neill, and Pitcher 2009; Hammond 2010), the Swedish model is built around an ideology that wishes to eradicate all forms of commercial sex through criminalising buyers and third parties. Consistent with a radical feminist ideology and increasingly linked to an association between commercial sex and people trafficking, the people selling sex are often considered victims of circumstance and abuse who are in need of support and redirection in line with mainstream sensibilities (Farley 2004). Following some reports of its success in reducing the number of people selling sex on the streets (Waltman 2011), it is increasingly held up by anti-prostitution advocates as the way forward for commercial sex law reform. However, despite its apparent success, there are also growing suggestions that such a strategy has the potential to displace already marginalised sex workers into the clutches of pimps and exploitative others where they are simply hidden from view (Svanstrom 2004; Kulick 2005; Kingston 2010). While this legislative stance has some similarity with those seeking the criminalisation of commercial sex, the abolitionist aim to abolish all forms of commercial sex, to recognise sex workers as victims in need of rescue instead of criminal punishment, and to position the purchasers and other third parties as abusers, are key points at which this ideology distinguishes itself as its own approach to the issue of commercial sex.

At the other end of the spectrum of commercial sex legislation are those who seek its decriminalisation. Advocates for the decriminalisation of commercial sex argue that sex work should be considered a legitimate income-generation strategy and should therefore be legislated accordingly (Hayes-Smith and Shekarkhar 2010; Brants 1998; Brents and Hausbeck 2005). The strongest advocates of decriminalisation are often pro-sex work groups from around the world; it is the

preferred legislative stance of the World Health Organisation, which argues for commercial sex to be recognised as a dynamic process in which a legitimate transaction is created between the buyer and seller of a sexual service (World Health Organisation 2014). Common to this ideological framework is a belief that many of the harms experienced by people selling sex in most contexts—including street sex markets—are created by the criminalised legislative frameworks (Sanders and Campbell 2007; Rekart 2005; Lutnick and Cohan 2009). Arguments for the implementation of this framework suggest that the criminalisation of commercial sex is seen to marginalise sex workers further to a point where they are not only excluded from potentially beneficial mainstream supports, but are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and various types of violence (Miller et al. 2011; Hubbard and Sanders 2003; Mitchell 2003; Hubbard 2002; Cameron 2004; Tani 2002; Sanders 2004; Kingston 2010). Advocates for the decriminalisation of commercial sex argue that the removal of current legislative sanctions would promote the safety of street sex workers by increasing their access to health and support services while allowing them additional avenues for protection against harms and violence during their sex work practice (Lutnick and Cohan 2009; Sullivan 2007a).

A fourth key framework to consider regarding commercial sex is legalisation. Within this framework the State plays an active role in the regulation and licensing of commercial sex venues, business and individual workers. Commercial sex businesses and individual suppliers are required to meet regulative and licensing procedures deemed necessary by government for the provision of commercial sex. Commonly discussed legislative practices include specific taxes for commercial sex, an emphasis on zoning and placement of commercial sex sites, the licensing of a commercial sex business and individual sex workers, and the implementation of standardised sexual health checks (Sullivan 1997). Despite the displeasure of some sex workers regarding the increased restriction on their mobility and the inconvenience of having to submit to periodic sexual health testing (for example, for sexually-transmitted infections) in regions where commercial sex has been legalised (see Poe, Rocha, and Thomas 2010), its advocates assert that the introduction of any laws that separate sex work from criminal networks are likely to have a positive effect on the health, safety, and human rights of the sex workers in marginal parts of the sector (Rekart 2005; Brents and Hausbeck 2005; Wolffers and van Beelen 2003). In Australia, as in most parts of the Western world, proponents of this legislative

stance for street sex work often call for the establishment of controlled tolerance zones, in which marginal forms of commercial sex can be practiced in a monitored environment where the risks experienced by people selling sex on the streets are reduced (Bellis et al. 2007; Rowe 2003a).

Street sex work, drug use and legislation

Policies concerned with the sale and use of illicit drugs also have significant effect on the lives of people selling sex to fund a problematic substance addiction. One drawback of policing efforts designed to remove large quantities of illicit drugs from the streets is that it often lowers the purity of the drug that remains in circulation, and drives up its street price (Strathdee et al. 2010; Beyrer et al. 2010). Reductions in drug purity have been seen to cause drug-dependent street sex workers to increase their participation in higher risk jobs to gain the additional money required to fund the increased volume of drug(s) needed to satisfy their addiction (Shannon et al. 2008b; Johnson et al. 2010; Luke 2006; Deering et al. 2011). These have spawned calls for an evidence-based, pragmatic approach to address through legislation the association between problematic drug use and street sex work, with a focus on increasing the scope of existing addiction treatments and prevention programs considered vital to the legislation's effectiveness (Lutnick and Cohan 2009; Wood et al. 2010). In spaces where this approach has been implemented, the co-existence of drug-related policing and increased accessibility to relevant youth and community programs has led to decreases in the number of people participating in high-risk commercial sex practices to fund a problematic substance addiction (Oviedo-Joekes et al. 2009; Schwartz et al. 2007). This co-existence appears not only to reduce the number of active participants, but makes participation in high-risk commercial sex practices less likely. Unfortunately, there is no information about the presence of a similar model designed to divert or provide exit points away from selling sex on the street as a means to fund a problematic substance addiction in Dandenong.

Community members/groups

Research exploring the spatial practice of street sex markets also provides insight into the territorial practices of local businesses and communities as they attempt to wrestle back control of public space appropriated as a street sex market.

These studies of the relationship between residents, sex workers, and space speak to ideas of social exclusion and a narrow, normative framing of “community” by different groups and actors as they attempt to delineate who and what belongs in the community (England 2011). Discourses such as these attempt to assert a “moral geography in which sex work is deemed incompatible with family occupation” (Hubbard and Prior 2013, 145).

The spatial agendas of street sex market participants and other local community members, such as businesses and residents, shape these spaces as sites of tension. Complaints from local residents and businesses often develop from concern about public sexual displays, crime, noise, discarded condoms and syringes, increased local traffic, reductions in land value, and harms to local business as a result of the sex market’s use of a particular public space (Bellis et al. 2007; Hubbard 1998a; Campbell and Kinnell 2002). In many cases, community frustration materialises into residential collectives and activist groups driven by a desire to either protect the neighbourhood from theft, violence, or other harms associated with markets (Tani 2002) in order to displace the market to another area (Hubbard 1998a), or to eradicate street sex work from the urban landscape (Sibley 1995). The focus of much community action is on the kerb-crawler, who is often considered to be a dangerous figure responsible for the moral destruction of local communities (Hubbard 1998a; Koskela and Tani 2005; Tani 2002), however, conflict between resident groups and people selling sex on the streets is also common (Smith 2010; Sibley 1995). Some of the more notable tactics include citizen patrols designed to shame sex market clients, and recording licence plate number that are published in newspapers, on television, or on flyers (Weitzer 2000; Tani 2002). While some of these tactics are reported to have temporarily reduced the impact of the street sex market on the broader community, most have been seen to simply intensify existing tensions between residents and sex workers (Tani 2002; Hubbard 1998a, 2002).

Perhaps the key group in the mainstream construction of street sex markets as spaces of danger and disgust are the men who buy sex from women who solicit on the street. Street sex markets are often seen as sites that encourage a male gaze that is both intense and highly sexualised (Koskela and Tani 2005; Tani 2002; Weitzer 2005, 2000; Monto 2000). While necessary for the successful operation of the market, this gaze is also the way through which non-sex working women are often

forced to negotiate the goings-on of street sex markets (Tani 2002; Koskela and Tani 2005). In Helsinki, Tani (2002) found that the sexual objectification of non-sex working women was not so much a product of the clients' inability to read the signs of commercial sexual availability in the physical presentation of individual women, but was instead a product of the clients' assumption that any woman was assumed to be sexually available if they were in the space appropriated as a street sex market. To counter this unwanted attention, many women began demonstrating active forms of resistance against unwanted attention from red-light district clients. Some of the most commonly observed tactics included dressing in a more casual style, pretending to be on a mobile phone, the use of a strong assertive posture intended to signal their intent to avoid interaction with kerb-crawlers, or simply avoiding these spaces (Koskela 1997, 309; Koskela and Tani 2005). For others, their resistance to their sexualisation developed into various forms of activism and participation in formal programs, seeking either the eradication or relocation of the red-light district (Koskela 1997; Koskela and Tani 2005). As this suggests, the sexual objectification and harassment of non-sex working women in spaces used as street sex markets appears to be common. Women who are not sex workers typically respond through the use of harm minimisation strategies when in these spaces, participating in direct forms of resistance against their sexualisation, or simply avoid these spaces all together. Their experience plays a key role in the mainstream creation of the spaces of street sex markets as foreign and dangerous.

Summary

The discussion so far has focused on the geography of street sex work. It has considered key theoretical approaches to the socio-spatial relationship between street sex work and public space, and the legislative contexts and communities in which street sex markets develop. These observations suggest a dynamic relationship between street sex work and public space, and that street sex markets continue to develop and evolve as the interplay of tensions and territorial practices of the state, sex market participants, and communities play on the street. The chapter now continues by considering what empirical research into street sex work can tell us about the social and economic context in which people selling sex in street sex markets live their lives.

The social and economic context of street sex work

Who sells sex in street sex markets?

Street sex work sits at the bottom of an informal hierarchy of commercial sex, where some of the most marginalised and disenfranchised people sell sex as a way to survive. While some people selling sex on the street end up in this market after falling from a position in the higher sectors of the commercial sex hierarchy through a combination of problematic substance addiction and acute hardships (Murphy and Venkatesh 2006), most have histories characterised by a range of extreme hardships. While each person's pathway into street sex work appears unique, research continues to identify experiences and socio-economic circumstances that make a person's participation in street sex work more likely.

Most people selling sex in street sex markets have been raised in low socio-economic family environments that expose the young person to parental instability, neglect, and abuse (Nadon, Koverola, and Schludermann 1998; Martyn 1998; Hanley 2004; Fitzgerald 1997; Gibbs Van Brunschot and Brannigan 2002). Violence, problematic drug use, and parental participation in other illicit activities are often key factors in the childhood of street sex workers. Violence between parental figures, or the violent behaviour of a parental figure towards children, is often reported as part of the street sex worker's history, and is often described as a product of the parental figure's position in a culture of violence. (Kramer and Berg 2003; Potterat et al. 1998; Roe-Sepowitz 2012; Dodsworth 2012). At least one parental figure is often an active participant in a street culture of which the child is aware from a young age, including illicit drug use or dealing, street level crime, and various forms of commercial sex (Hanley 2004; Roe-Sepowitz 2012; Kramer and Berg 2003). The illicit practices of parental figures significantly increase the rate of family instability through the incarceration of the child's primary caregivers (Nadon, Koverola, and Schludermann 1998; Potterat et al. 1998). In many cases, this produces an unstable childhood, where the young person is passed from family member to family member when the pressures of parenthood becomes too much to bear (Dalla 2006; Dodsworth 2012; Roe-Sepowitz 2012; Vaddiparti et al. 2006; Lung et al. 2004; Gibbs Van Brunschot and Brannigan 2002).

People selling sex in street sex markets frequently report experiences of childhood sexual abuse, which much current research describes as influential in a person's trajectory into street sex work (Pedersen and Hegna 2003; Stoltz et al. 2007; Svedin and Priebe 2007; Lavoie 2010; Martyn 1998; Hanley 2004; Fitzgerald 1997; Roe-Sepowitz 2012). While some earlier theories about the association between childhood sexual abuse and a person's later participation in street sex work cited an almost causal link, many current theories suggest the experience of childhood sexual abuse can produce psychological scarring that, if left untreated, can increase the likelihood of the young person's later participation in a range of high-risk practices, such as high volume drug use, immersion in a street culture, and street sex work (Cusick 2002; Stoltz et al. 2007; Brannigan and Van Brunschot 1997; Gibbs Van Brunschot and Brannigan 2002; Lavoie 2010; Nadon, Koverola, and Schludermann 1998). Despite some ongoing debate on the nature of the association, the experience of childhood sexual abuse continues to be overrepresented in the histories of people who sell sex in street sex markets.

An association between a person being placed in out-of-home care or in youth detention during their teens and later participating in high-risk forms of commercial sex such as street sex work continues to be observed in relevant research (Hanley 2004; Mitchell, Finkelhor, and Wolak 2010; Dodsworth 2012; Nadon, Koverola, and Schludermann 1998; Bruce and Mendes 2008). Many studies propose this association is a product of the shared histories of abuse and hardship of people placed in out-of-home care, and their placement in a context where they are able to form strong social ties to other vulnerable young people who may already be immersed in a street culture of street sex work (Cusick and Berney 2005; Bruce and Mendes 2008; Mitchell, Finkelhor, and Wolak 2010; Martyn 1998; Hanley 2004; Fitzgerald 1997). Youth detention and out-of-home care provide social contexts in which suitable problematic young people with similarly problematic backgrounds are brought together in an environment where knowledge of, and participation in, deviant street networks are considered acceptable and effective means of generating an income (Cusick 2002). For young women in particular, the relatively large sums of money able to be generated through street sex work becomes an option that allows a way to negotiate a life already characterised by multiple hardships (Gwadz et al. 2009; Lankenau et al. 2005; Hanley 2004; Martyn 1998).

The histories and current experience of people selling sex in street sex markets often includes significant periods of homelessness, which in many cases increases people reliance on their position in street and deviant social networks (Roe-Sepowitz 2012; Fitzgerald 1997; Hanley 2004; Martyn 1998; Miller et al. 2011; Chettiar et al. 2010; Lankenau et al. 2005; Clatts et al. 2005). Some researchers, such as Nadon et al. (1998) have gone as far as suggesting the association between homelessness and street sex work is stronger than the connection to the criminal justice system, placement in out-of-home care, or the experience of childhood sexual abuse. There are two key themes in the available literature used to describe the association between homelessness and high-risk forms of commercial sex. Some consider the experience of homelessness, particularly during a person's mid-teens, to increase a young person's vulnerability to street-wise peers who encourage their participation in illicit sex work as part of an exploitative arrangement, often designed to fund the peers' drug use (Hanley 2004; Miller et al. 2011; Nadon, Koverola, and Schludermann 1998; Abel and Fitzgerald 2008; Roe-Sepowitz 2012; Dalla 2006). One tactic of exploitative peers is to provide the vulnerable person protection, shelter, drugs, and other resources of value to create a debt that can only be repaid by the vulnerable person selling sex. The second line of thought considers homelessness and the experience of severe poverty to encourage participation in a street economy, in which selling sex on the street an acceptable and effective means of economic survival (Hancock 1995; Harding and Hamilton 2009; Lankenau et al. 2005; Miller et al. 2011; O'Grady and Gaetz 2004; Clatts et al. 2005; Bell and Walls 2011). Despite differences in the way the association between homelessness and high-risk forms of commercial sex are theorised, there is little doubt that homelessness significantly increases the likelihood that a person will turn to high-risk forms of commercial sex, such as street sex work, as part of their strategy for survival.

Connection to the social network of a street economy or street sex market are often cited as an influence on a person's entry into selling sex on the street (Jesson 1993; Hanley 2004). Some suggest that increased rates of family breakup, growing income disparities, urbanisation, growing youth unemployment, and a lack of appropriate housing are pushing more people into street economies than at any time in the past (Miller and Sovereign 1989; Miller et al. 2011). Street economies are highly gendered spaces in which a person's gender and sexuality influence a person's ability to generate an income, secure in-group power, and develop in-group

status (Fitzgerald 1997; Hanley 2004; Miller et al. 2011). While an increasing number of straight and gay young men sell sex to other men for their survival in street economies (Minichiello et al. 2001; Ronit 2005; Lankenau et al. 2005), most male strategies in the street economy involve street-level crime and drug dealing (Gwadz et al. 2009; O'Grady and Gaetz 2004). In general, it appears more women than men use their sexuality for survival by participating in a street sex market (Gwadz et al. 2009; Williamson and Folaron 2001; Miller et al. 2011; Bell and Walls 2011).

The strongest and most immediate motivation for a person to sell sex in a street sex market is commonly found to be a desire to fund a high-cost problematic substance addiction (Lung et al. 2004; Pedersen and Hegna 2003; Svedin and Priebe 2007; Potterat et al. 1998; Hanley 2004; Loza et al. 2010; DeBeck et al. 2007; Needle et al. 2008). While addictions to alcohol, crack cocaine, and ice are often reported as problematic in street sex working populations (Roxburgh et al. 2008; Degenhardt et al. 2006), it is often the higher-priced heroin that is seen to tie people to high-risk forms of commercial sex and the networks of people who run through illicit drug markets and street sex markets (Rowe 2006; Maher et al. 2002; Maher et al. 1998; Hanley 2004; Durant 2010). Heroin is an illicit, highly-addictive drug that provides its users with a transcendental, euphoric high. Its street price across Australia during the 2010-2011 period ranged from \$200-\$700 per gram, with the average price being \$300 (Australian Crime Commission 2011). Most heroin addicts face a never-ending spiral of economic hardship, making the relatively fast access to large sums of money that street sex markets provide the only option for at least some people (Needle et al. 2008; Deering et al. 2011; Strathdee et al. 2010). This pushes people further to the margins of society where they become increasingly reliant on their social ties within local sex work and illicit drug networks for their security, access to key resources, and ultimately their survival.

Stigmatised people and places

Despite the discursive reframing of “prostitution” as “sex work” in much recent mainstream discussion, people and social networks in street sex markets continue to be highly stigmatised (Koken 2005; Pheterson 1990; Sallmann 2010). People selling sex on the street bear the brunt of a more affective stigma than their indoor counterparts. Much of this is a result of street sex workers’ use of public space, the

effect of their sex work on local communities, and their association with a range of additionally discreditable behaviours and characteristics. Conceptualisations of the street sex worker develop out of their associated drug abuse and addiction, disease, deviance, and debauchery and create a social caricature that is applied to all people selling sex on the streets in mainstream thought, discussion, and debate (Sallmann 2010). One particularly damaging effect of the external stigma attached to street sex working populations is the reduction in youth and community program engagement among people in these groups (Sallmann 2010; Sanders 2004; Simmonds and Coomber 2009; Fitzgerald, McDonald, and Klugman 2004). A number of studies have found street sex workers to be cautious when engaging with potentially relevant youth and community programs for fear of being judged negatively because of their sex work or high-volume drug use (Sallmann 2010; Fitzgerald and Threadgold 2004; Lutnick and Cohan 2009; Hanley 2004). Some appear to negotiate these concerns by actively concealing their sex work from organisational staff, while many simply reject organisational support for fear of negative judgement (Koken 2005; Sallmann 2010; Hanley 2004; Lutnick and Cohan 2009; Browne and Minichiello 1995). One context in which the stigmatisation of street sex working populations plays out is in the pharmacies where pharmacotherapies used to treat drug addiction are dispensed. Studies have found that people using these services are acutely aware of the negative judgements of pharmacy staff and customers; many consider these experiences of prejudice as a barrier to their continued participation in these programs (Simmonds and Coomber 2009; Thetford 2004; Fitzgerald, McDonald, and Klugman 2004). Together, these observations suggest that the stigmatisation of street sex workers plays a significant role in limiting the youth and community service engagement of people selling sex on the street, and they therefore continue to remain isolated from potentially beneficial forms of support.

People selling sex on the streets have also been observed as having to negotiate in-group stigma from peers, much of which is concerned with patterns of drug use and modes of drug administration. Stigma attached to drug use began finding its way into academic literature during the 1950s. Some prominent early examples include Garfunkel's (1956) observation of the tendency of drug users to verbally denigrate other drug users in an attempt to raise their own social standing, and Sutter's (1966) observation of an informal hierarchy through which drug users attempted to demonstrate superiority over others by highlighting peers' lack of social worth.

Similar observations continue to be made in more contemporary contexts. Fitzgerald et al. (2004) identified a trend among intravenous drug users (IDUs) to pass moral judgement on peers who contracted hepatitis C, which the researchers considered to be part of a strategy designed to raise their own in-group standing. The goal of the stigmatiser was to distance themselves from infected peers whom they deemed as “irresponsible”, “not caring” and as having fewer morals, which, in turn, raised their own in-group standing. Similarly, Simmonds and Coombs (2009) found homeless IDUs to be the target of in-group stigmatisation from their housed peers, the process evolving out of their perceived participation in higher risk forms of intravenous drug use. Housed IDUs consider these practices typical of their homeless counterparts, who they effectively blame for the spread of blood-borne viruses among other IDUs. While only a selection of a broader body of work on in-group stigmatisation, these studies provide some insight into the nature and effect of peer-initiated stigma in IDU populations that is similar to those found in street sex markets.

Networks of risk

People surviving in the social networks of a street sex market are often forced to negotiate significant risk. Of these, exposure to violence and disease are among the most pressing. High rates of intravenous drug use, dangerous drug administration practices, increased rates of un-protected commercial sex, and drug use and sex within a cohort of other injecting drug users significantly increase the risk of contracting a sexually-transmitted infection (STI) or blood-borne virus (BBV) (Roxburgh et al. 2008; Degenhardt et al. 2006; Rowe 2003b; Leonard 1990; Dalla 2006). While higher than average rates of chlamydia, gonorrhoea, herpes, HPV (human papillomavirus), and hepatitis C are often observed in street sex working populations (Coughlan, Mindel, and Estcourt 2001; Tucker et al. 2004; Grulich et al. 2003; Kakar et al. 2010), it is the HIV/AIDS virus that is described as most concerning in street sex market populations (World Health Organisation 2014). While cases of HIV/AIDS within street sex working populations in the West are relatively low (Scambler and Paoli 2008), the prevalence of unsafe injecting practices, unsafe sex within an IDU population, sharing IV equipment, and being reliant on the assistance of a peer to inject have all been found to increase the risk of HIV/AIDS and the transmission of other STI/BBV to and among people working in street sex markets (Mitchell, Finkelhor, and Wolak 2010; Marshall 2008; Hanley

2004; Aderinto and Samuel 2008; Strathdee et al. 2010; Surratt et al. 2011; McInnes et al. 2009; Evans and Lambert 2008).

The networks of street sex markets are also a context in which violence is common. It has been suggested that the location in which sex work is practiced outweighs all other factors in determining the degree and range of violence experienced by a person selling sex (Church et al. 2001). In many cases, the illegality of street sex work increases sex workers' exposure to violence by pushing them into secluded urban spaces where they are more vulnerable to attack, and by leaving them isolated from legitimate forms of protection under law when they are wronged or assaulted (Church et al. 2001; Sanders 2001; Sanders 2004; Sanders 2005b; Lutnick and Cohan 2009; Hubbard 1998a; Williamson and Folaron 2001). While violence between sex workers is a characteristic of most street sex markets, (see Rowe 2006; Pyett and Warr 1999), it is often the violence perpetrated by clients, pimps, dealers, and other abusive men that is the most severe. The violence of street sex clients often involves rape and/or robbery (McKeganey and Barnard 1996; Salfati, James, and Ferguson 2008), but the risk of kidnap (Kurtz et al. 2004; Surratt et al. 2004) and homicide (Quinet 2011; Chan, Heide, and Beauregard 2011) have to be considered by sex workers in their interactions with clients. While the pimp often appears as a key figure in the daily life of street sex workers across Europe and the United States (Faugier and Sargeant 1997; Norton-Hawk 2004; Williamson and Cluse-Tolar 2002; Pheonix 2000), research in Australian sex markets are more likely to describe third party males as an intimate partner whose drug use is funded by their partner's sex work (Rowe 2006; Warr and Pyett 1999; Pyett and Warr 1999; Hanley 2004). Regardless of the nature of these relationships, street sex workers' experiences of violence from these people seems both common and significant (Warr and Pyett 1999; Pyett and Warr 1999; Hanley 2004; Rowe 2006). In contrast to the violence of clients, the motivation behind the violence of these men develops out of a desire for control over their partner's sex work, money, and life. While rape is common, violence from this group is more likely to involve the sex worker's confinement, kidnap, or murder (Pheonix 2000; Sanders 2001).

The role of technology in isolated networks

Information technology is increasingly seen to affect traditional forms of commercial sex, including street sex work and the networks of people who sell sex

in this way. Information about street sex markets has traditionally been highly discreet and “organised laterally in social networks among and between sex-buyers and sex-sellers” (Rocha, Liljeros, and Holme 2010, 5706). But the internet and the increasing affordability of personal computers, mobile phones, and tablets has sped up and spread the flow of information about commercial sex, making it more accessible than ever before. The creation of dedicated client forums and commercial sex websites have provided sex workers and clients a relatively safe, anonymous place where they could share information, form associations, and even advertise in ways that have centralised and facilitated the flow of information on commercial sex. Some of the most popular client-based websites are global and attract between 500,000 and 1,000,000 new visitors each month, which, when considered in light of the benefits they provide to buyer and seller, is hardly surprising (Cunningham and Kendall 2011). For buyers, information-sharing about commercial sex options is considered to reduce their risk of disappointment, being overcharged, or even scammed when buying sex (Cunningham and Kendall 2011; Sanders 2005a). Sex workers have also been found to place great importance on the client reviews they receive on these sites, which many consider vital to their future earnings (Cunningham and Kendall 2011). Some describe using these sites to build a profile of their client base and to assess new clients through an informal mode of referral from other sex workers that includes a client blacklist for problematic clients (Cunningham and Kendall 2011). While the economic vulnerability of people selling sex in street sex markets has slowed the effect of technology on street sex markets in comparison to other commercial sex markets (Cunningham and Kendall 2011), its increasing affordability promises to continue to impact marginal forms of sex work in the years to come (Cunningham and Kendall 2011; Cameron 2004; Rocha, Liljeros, and Holme 2010).

While some suggest that the increasing use of information technologies in commercial sex, and the benefits they provide to sellers and buyers, has the potential to transform street sex work into safer forms of sex worker/client engagement (Cunningham and Kendall 2011; Weitzer 2005; Gertler, Shah, and Bertozzi 2005), others suggest that these technologies will simply be used to augment existing street sex market practices. In a hypothetical model put forward by Cameron and Collins (2003), the estimated reduction of people working in street sex markets as a result of online forms of solicitation will intensify the police gaze on people who remain in

street sex markets. This intensification would increase police pressure on pimps and other third parties, and would eventually push them out of the market. Through the reduction of third party participation, sex workers are assumed to enjoy increased autonomy of their sex work and daily lives, which would reduce their exposure to risk through decreasing their participation in high-risk sexual practices. However, a negative side is also hypothesised. The anonymity available to clients using information technologies as an initial site of engagement is thought to reduce the number of men wanting to buy sex in street sex markets. The resulting reduction in demand on the streets would place downward pressure on the fees for sex and decrease the overall income of people continuing to sell sex on the streets. As people working on the street would still presumably be funding a problematic substance addiction, there would be increased pressure on them to participate in higher-risk commercial sex practices to generate their daily required amount of money (Cameron and Collins 2003).

Money, drugs, and condoms

There is little doubt that most people who sell sex in illicit street sex markets do so as their only means of generating an income large enough to fund a high-cost substance addiction. Because of this, a person's access to money plays a significant part in the shape of a market's social network and the experience of those who sell sex in the market. While there are suggestions that the use of technology as a site of engagement between sex worker and client has reduced client demand and the income available to people selling sex on the streets (Levitt and Dubner 2009), incomes in street sex markets are still considered to be as much as four times higher than what most sex workers could earn in other low-skilled mainstream roles (Venkatesh 2013). While some pricing uniformity for sex has been observed in some street sex markets (de la Torre et al. 2010; Rao et al. 2003; Goldenberg et al. 2011), the incomes of individual street sex workers are often fluid and shaped by a range of personal and interpersonal characteristics. Interpersonal factors include the type of sex act performed, the sex worker's relationship with the client, and the role of the condom in the sexual act (Johnson et al. 2010; Shannon et al. 2008a; Rao et al. 2003; Gertler, Shah, and Bertozzi 2005). Influential personal characteristics include the age of the sex worker, the amount of time spent as a sex worker, and the sex worker's

physical attractiveness (Johnson et al. 2010; Shannon et al. 2008a; Rao et al. 2003; Gertler, Shah, and Bertozzi 2005).

Theoretical models describe the income available to street sex workers as a product of the relationship between the compensation required for their participation in the high-risk, discreditable act of street sex work, and the search costs of the client, which includes the negative effect of being identified by police, peers, or other mainstream figures as a sex purchaser. For example, Edlund and Korn (2002) propose an economic model in which sex work is considered a low-skilled, high-paid, predominantly female occupation where income is seen as compensation for their lack of bargaining power in the mainstream marriage market because of their participation in commercial sex. Similarly, Cameron and Collins (2003) describe the income available to street sex workers as a product of compensation for the social exclusion, exposure to risk, decreased wage profile in mainstream employment, and inconvenient working hours. In a more generalised theory of sexual exchange, Baumeister and Vohs (2004) suggest that women, as the key suppliers of sex, ultimately determine the monetary fee they will accept as payment for their participation in various sexual acts. This theory builds from the belief that our culture places value on female sexuality, and that sex with a woman is a resource men must pay a premium to acquire. When applied to street sex work, the size of the fee for sex is dependent on the cultural context in which sex is bought or sold, and the cultural value given to various characteristics of the individual sex worker (Baumeister and Vohs 2004; de la Torre et al. 2010). Clients are thought to enter the market with some knowledge of the culturally-specific value placed on sex with a woman, and at least some knowledge of the economic cost required to purchase sex in the respective market. The negotiation between the individual sex worker and client on the street is required to settle on a fee for the service that both buyer and seller find agreeable (Baumeister and Vohs 2004; de la Torre et al. 2010).

The prices of key drugs of addiction in local drug markets have been seen to influence the fees charged for sex in street sex markets. A notable example of this in Australia has been the reduction in fees for sex in Kings Cross following the introduction of the lower-priced, but highly-addictive crack cocaine into the area (Roxburgh et al. 2008; Degenhardt et al. 2006). The widespread uptake of the drug, the strength of its addictive properties, and its relatively low price increased competition among people working on the street, and caused many to reduce their

fees for sex in a bid to secure the jobs (read: income) over their competitors. While these lower fees for sex were able to satisfy the draw of crack cocaine, the reduction in overall income of street sex workers significantly increased their overall economic vulnerability and negatively affected their holistic well-being (Roxburgh et al. 2008; Degenhardt et al. 2006). The relationship between heroin addiction and extreme economic hardship among people in street economies and street sex markets is also well documented (Deering et al. 2011; Graham and Wish 1994; Bammer and Sengoz 1994; Miller et al. 2011; Marshall et al. 2008; Gibson et al. 2005; Needle et al. 2008). Because of the high street price of heroin, dependent street sex workers are more likely than their non-heroin dependent peers to participate in higher-risk commercial sex practices for a larger payment, and are more likely to deal drugs and participate in robberies and other crimes as a way to continue funding their addiction (Deering et al. 2011; Rowe 2006; Graham and Wish 1994; Miller et al. 2011).

The condom often plays a key role in the experience of people buying and selling sex in street sex markets. Sanders (2008b) suggests that the condom is often at the fore of power relations between buyer and seller, where it is afforded a specific set of cultural meanings that serve to remind both parties of the bounded, economic basis of the interaction. For sex workers, the increased premiums available for providing sex without a condom are something most people working on the streets have to negotiate as a regular part of their commercial sex work (Bucardo et al. 2004; Gertler, Shah, and Bertozzi 2005; Loza et al.; Johnson et al. 2010; Rao et al. 2003). As economic vulnerability created by problematic drug use typically informs a person's participation in street sex work, the promise of an increased fee in exchange for unprotected sex is an option that many find difficult to resist (Deering et al. 2011; Aral and St.Lawrence 2002; Shannon et al. 2008a; Luke 2006; Johnson et al. 2010; Belza et al. 2008). In some cases it has been suggested that men seeking unprotected commercial sex are often aware of the economic vulnerability of street sex workers and see this as a way through which they can entice them into high-risk unprotected sexual acts by offering an increased monetary payment (Johnson et al. 2010). Plumridge (2001) found that men with a preference for unprotected commercial sex use one of two key strategies that they believed would reduce their risk of contracting an STI during the encounter. The first involved an assessment of risk based on the type of sexual practice being purchased. Here, unprotected vaginal and anal sex were believed to carry a much higher risk of STI transmission than

unprotected oral sex, which is often reported as the most commonly requested and performed unprotected commercial sex act (Sanders 2008b; Leonard 1990; Freund, Lee, and Leonard 1991; McKeganey and Barnard 1996). The second strategy centred on the selection of a commercial sex partner who they assessed as less likely to have an STI based on their physical appearance, and the physical context from which they sold sex. Clients considered people working on the street and with visible signs of intravenous drug use to be a higher risk than people working in indoor, highly-regulated environments. Despite clients considering unprotected commercial sex in a street market as higher risk than when purchased in other settings, much of the currently available body of data suggests that it is a practice that is more likely to occur in sex worker/client arrangements established on the street than in other regulated environments (Gertler, Shah, and Bertozzi 2005; Rao et al. 2003; Dickson et al. 1995; Strathdee et al. 2010; Belza et al. 2008). This provides a serious impediment to the health and well-being of the people who sell sex in street sex markets.

The monetary value placed on the condom in street sex markets is difficult to measure, but data collected in non-Western markets provides some insight. One study in Mexico found a 23% premium was available to sex workers willing to provide unprotected sex to their clients (Gertler, Shah, and Bertozzi 2005). This premium increased to 46% if the female sex worker was considered “very attractive”, which itself was described as a valuable market commodity. Interestingly, men expressing a preference for condom use in their negotiation with a sex worker were charged a 9% premium for sex with a condom, while sex workers who preferred not to use condoms had to reduce their rates by as much as 20% as compensation for the client’s perceivably increased exposure to risk. In a similar Mexican setting, de la Torre (2010) observed the average fee charged by sex workers for sex without a condom to be US\$19.90, while sex workers providing unprotected sex were able to increase their fees to US\$32.80 for sex. In Calcutta the demand for unprotected commercial sex was seen to be so strong that Rao et al. (2003) estimates a fee reduction of between 66%–79% for sex workers demanding condom use. The strength of the client’s preference for sex without a condom has been cited as a key impediment to the sexual health of women working in this environment (Biradavolu et al. 2009; Rao et al. 2003). Despite being set in non-Western markets, these studies provide some insight into the strong preference for unprotected sex among street sex

market clients, and the inflated fees available to workers willing to take the risks to meet those preferences.

Similar to fees for sex in street sex markets, the premium attached to the condom is influenced by the sex worker's possession of characteristics the client considers more or less desirable and the unprotected sexual act being purchased (Gertler, Shah, and Bertozzi 2005, 540). The experience of the sex worker, their age, the sex worker's participation in a HIV educational program, and the number of clients serviced that day or night are all considered to affect the amount the client is willing to pay for unprotected sex (Deering et al. 2011; de la Torre et al. 2010). In almost all observed cases, sex workers who are younger experience significant financial hardship, and those who have high levels of alcohol/drug consumption are seen to be more likely to participate in unprotected commercial sex for a lower premium than peers with more control over their drug use (de la Torre et al. 2010). The age of the sex worker and their perceived attractiveness is seen to have the strongest influence on the premiums payable to them for unprotected sex (de la Torre et al. 2010; Gertler, Shah, and Bertozzi 2005). For example, Gertler et al. (2005) estimates the effect of a sex worker's youth and physical attractiveness results in up to a 29% increase in payment for unprotected sex. This premium then decreases by approximately 2% each year after the legal age of consent (Gertler, Shah, and Bertozzi 2005). A similar observation is made by Rao et al. (2003) in India, who found clients were willing to pay a higher premium to younger sex workers for unprotected sex than they were prepared to pay to older sex workers. Rao et al. consider this to be a reflection of the strong association between youth with beauty in the Indian culture. These observations are significant as they move our understanding of the increased premium for unprotected sex in street sex markets beyond a straightforward supply-and-demand framework, taking us into a range of personal and interpersonal characteristics of the sex worker–client dyad that significantly effects the well-being of the people selling sex on the street. The presence of inflated premiums for young, vulnerable sex workers is an issue that requires particular consideration in the issue of street sex work in Dandenong.

Summary

In this section of the literature review the thesis has considered the social and economic context in which people participate in street sex work. Research indicates

that people selling sex in street sex markets experience a range of significant hardships in their history and current experience in street sex work, and are often among the community's most vulnerable people. The marginalisation of street sex workers and their participation in various illegal behaviours increases their reliance on peer connections and position in the networks of street sex markets and local drug markets. A strong association exists between the experience of a high-cost drug addiction and street sex work, and this typically provides the most immediate motivation to solicit and sell sex on the street. A range of personal and interpersonal characteristics shape the fee for sex and overall income street sex workers are able to generate, but age of the sex worker, their perceived physical attractiveness, and the role of the condom in the interaction are among the most influential economic factors in street sex markets. The discussion now moves to a consideration of the agency of street sex workers. It begins with an assessment of the role of agency in key feminist and gendered critiques of street sex work, and ruminates upon what existing research tells us about the relationship between addiction and agency.

The agency of street sex workers

Prostitution/sex work is a highly debated and contested issue in academic literature, and becomes increasingly complex when considered alongside the structural poverty and exposure to harm typically observed in marginal forms of commercial sex such as street sex work. Within the contemporary Western feminist paradigm two polarised positions dominate theoretical debates of prostitution, with differing understandings of the agency in the lives of people selling sex at the heart of this polarisation. At the core of both conceptualisations is the assertion that prostitution is representative of women's subordinate position in a patriarchal society in which they are deprived of economic and political power (Rowe 2006). It is from this premise that key contemporary feminist arguments diverge.

Radical Feminism

Often using the descriptive terms "prostitute" or "prostituted women", radical feminism considers commercial sex to be manifestation of the gendered abuse women are subjected to as a result of their subordinate position in a patriarchal hegemony (Dworkin 1981; MacKinnon 1987; Jeffreys 1997). Key to the radical feminist position is an understanding that the prostitution contract is not simply an exchange of money or goods for sexual service, but that the exchange constitutes a form of violence in which the male asserts ownership over the body of the prostituted woman (Jeffreys 1997). Radical feminists argue against suggestions that selling sex is a product of an individual's free choosing. These suggestions are typically countered through citation of the various cultural and structural determinants which have traditionally left women with little other avenue of income generation (Jeffreys 1997; Dworkin 1981; MacKinnon 1987). More recently, with increased employment and economic opportunities available to women as a result of gains made by the feminist movement, this argument has been re-framed within contemporary accounts to suggest that women's participation in prostitution is best understood within a constrained choice (Jeffreys 1997). Where the potential agency exercised by prostitute women was absent in earlier accounts, the agency of participating women is now somewhat recognised within the radical feminist

framework, although still firmly situated within the limited scope of the patriarchal hegemonic system.

In Sweden, Norway, and Iceland radical feminist understandings of prostitution have informed the decriminalisation of selling sex and the criminalisation of buying sex. Despite the growing influence of the radical feminist perspective in some policy circles, its approach to prostitution has also been heavily criticised (O'Neill 2001; Scoular 2004; Weitzer 1999, 2009). For example, some writers argue that the radical feminist position suffers from sensationalism, essentialises sex worker experience with a focus on the negative, overlooks male sex workers and female clients, conflates commercial sex with human trafficking, and represents sex workers as passive victims incapable of agency (Weitzer 1999, 2000, 2007, 2009; Hausbeck and Brents 2000).

Libertarian Feminism

The libertarian feminist conceptualisation of sex work includes elements of liberal and post-modern feminism. It has its roots in individualism, and the commercialisation of sexuality in Western societies; and often seeks to include the voices of sex workers within debates concerning them (Jagger 1997). Sex work is regarded as a form of empowerment as it can provide women with a source of income large enough to become self-sufficient, freeing them from the need to rely on a husband or partner for economic survival (Perkins and Bennett 1985; Perkins et al. 1994; Chapkis 1997). Additionally, sex work allows women to take control of their sexuality in ways not otherwise possible within the patriarchal system. Within this framework, an individual's participation in commercial sex is described in terms of agency and choice, rather than through implicit or explicit force or coercion. Those emphasising the post-modern orientation within libertarian feminism go so far as to "portray prostitutes as sexual pioneers, and prostitution itself as a form of political resistance" (Jagger 1997, p. 6). Within this framework, selling sex is seen as both a form of gendered empowerment for participating women, and as a form of gendered political action with potential benefit for all women. While calls from within this framework advocating legislative change regarding street-based sex work are not uncommon (Scarlett Alliance 2010; Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics 2010), discussions regarding the sex work of those aged under 18 are scarce.

Male prostitution, transsexual prostitution, and female sex tourism

While the focus of this thesis is on women who sell sex to men on the street in Dandenong, the increasing presence and visibility of male sex work presents a challenge to traditional gender-based conceptualisations. Unlike female prostitution, most researched male sex work operates in a homosexual context, regardless of the male prostitute's own sexual orientation (Browne and Minichiello 1995; Minichiello et al. 2001; Wilson and Arnold 1986; Hanley 2004). Brown and Minichiello (1995) cite both the challenge of appropriating homosexual male prostitution to established feminist conceptualisations, and the historical condemnation of homosexuality as key reasons for the currently under-researched status of male prostitution. Altman (1999) develops this position by suggesting that as both buyer and seller enjoy the social privilege of being male, the concept of homosexual male prostitution is perceived as being less exploitative.

But assertions that gender-based conceptualisations are not representative of homosexual male prostitution have come under recent criticism. Gaffney and Beverley (2001) argue that as feminist critique is concerned with how certain bodies are controlled and constrained within the patriarchal hegemony, the same analytical tools can be applied to other marginalised groups such as male sex workers. Within this framework, it is not only male participation in the role of sex worker, but also factors such as age, homelessness, and immigration status which contribute to their subordinate social positioning (Gaffney and Beverley 2001). Gaffney and Beverley adopt Connell's (1995, 2002) concept of the gender hierarchy to incorporate the homosexual male sex worker into gender-based feminist conceptualisations. Inherent in the adoption of the gender hierarchy concept is a shift away from viewing masculinity as a singular entity or embodiment, and towards a recognition of multiple masculinities and femininities which are both plural and socially situated (Connell 1995). Within a hierarchy, an individual's identification and performance within the gendered continuum determines their social status in relation to the overarching patriarchal hegemony (Connell 1995). Therefore, in applying this framework to feminist analyses of commercial sex, it is the performance and identification as a homosexual prostitute which determines social status, shapes social experience, and limits access to power within mainstream society.

The relationship between the performance of gender, social status, and commercial sex is developed further through an exploration of transgender and transsexual prostitution. Although feminism has considered the concept of transsexualism and its relation to established gender norms, the experience of male-to-female transsexual and transgendered individuals has traditionally been rejected due to their perceived inability to genuinely embody the female experience (Johnson 2005). Recently, the work of Butler (1990, 1993) has created space for the transsexual and transgender experience in gendered debates within the feminist paradigm (Johnson 2005). These include the reduction of gender to appearance and performance (Butler 1990); and her challenge of the ontological truth of male and female bodies, which Butler asserts are simply unattainable ideals maintained through the reiteration of gender norms within the social ordering determined through heteronormativity (Butler 1993). This framework, which situates claims to the gender binary as fictional, has aided the inclusion of the transgender and transsexual voice within the established conceptual spaces concerned with the reproduction of gender. Therefore, it is argued that transgender and transsexual people are in the same process of attaining a gender as other non-transgendered people, and are consequently represented within existing theoretical gender analysis of sex work/prostitution.

Findings from empirical research exploring the influences, antecedents, and experiences of male-to-female transsexual prostitutes vary according to the cultural and social environment in which it is situated. Through an exploration of the histories and experiences of currently active transsexual street prostitutes in Brazil, a number of differences were identified in comparison to similar research situated within the traditional gender binary (Kulick 1997). Kulick observed that only one of the research target group reported experiencing childhood sexual abuse, suggesting this experience may not be as influential in the trajectory of transsexual prostitution as has been previously identified among male and female street prostitutes (see Nadon, Koverola, and Schludermann 1998). Furthermore, Kulick states that transsexual individuals are highly represented within a number of mainstream employment fields in Brazil, indicating that conceptualisations in which participation in prostitution is solely accounted for through a lack of alternate avenues of income generation may not be applicable to the experiences of young transsexual prostitutes in Brazil. Of most difference to research concerned with male and female

commercial sex is the identification of commercial sex as an arena in which transsexual people experience being an object of desire, which reportedly fosters feelings of self-worth and self-esteem (Kulick 1997). The potential for prostitution to provide positive emotional and psychological outcomes is in stark contrast to the majority of research on male and female street-based prostitution, in which problematic substance use, exposure to abuse, and poor physical and emotional health are commonly identified among its participants (see Rowe 2006; Dalla 2006; Fitzgerald 1997; Martyn 1998; Hanley 2004).

Alternatively, explorations of the narratives of adolescent and young adult transsexual prostitutes in Israel provides accounts similar to those often observed in research concerned with male and female street prostitutes in developed nations. Leichtentritt and Davidson-Arad (2004) identify intertwining narratives of exclusion from the family home or care situation, with accounts of limited alternative employment opportunities among self-reports regarding the entry and continued participation of young transsexual prostitutes. Where these narratives of exclusion differ from research operating within the gender binary is the role gender identity and performance plays in this process. As a result of their exclusion from family and active community life as a result of their gender identity, these young people report being left with little alternative but to turn to prostitution to meet the economic demands of their basic living requirements.

Finally, the increasing presence of female sex tourism provides a platform for the contestation of gender-based conceptualisations of prostitution. These challenges are particularly pertinent to the radical feminist framework which builds its theoretical critique upon the premise that prostitution constitutes a range of men's gendered violence towards women (see Dworkin 1981; MacKinnon 1987; Jeffreys 1997). Radical feminists seek to draw clear distinctions between the sexual tourism of men and women. Jeffreys (1997) argues that the sexual tourism of men and women should be regarded as separate phenomena as they are created and maintained through different interplays of power. These distinctions have manifested within the social conscious into the labels of "male sex tourism" and female "romance tourists". The former is regarded as encompassing men's exploitation of both adult and child prostitutes in marginal economic environments. While female "romance tourists", behave in almost identical ways (Taylor 2006), they are regarded as less exploitative as the social power of tourist women and local young men is

regarded as equal, and the resulting sexual-economic exchange is mutual (Phillips 1999). Consistent with the radical feminist framework, Jeffreys seeks to maintain the distinction between male and female sex tourism within the social conscious and theoretical debate, as she argues that their conflation would result in the politically problematic situation of de-gendering prostitution. This would make feminist arguments against prostitution vulnerable as women would also be regarded as exploiting others through prostitution.

Within an analysis of female sex tourism operating throughout the Caribbean, Sanchez Taylor (2006) identifies two key problems female sex tourism produces for the radical feminist critique of prostitution. Sanchez Taylor suggests that references to the prostituted person as a victim of sexual exploitation not only feminises the sex worker but also strips them of any agency demonstrated within the sex work practice. Sanchez Taylor found that heterosexual male prostitutes servicing female sex tourists demonstrated high levels of agency throughout both the initiation of the sexual-economic contract, and its subsequent maintenance. This was particularly true of young men who were able to clearly demarcate their roles as prostitute within the sexual-economic exchange, and their engagement within other interpersonal relationships. Additionally, it has been argued that radical feminist accounts of sex tourism are informed primarily through patriarchal relations; they overlook the roles racial- and class-based power play within sexual-economic exchanges (O'Connell Davidson and Sanchez Taylor 2005). To develop a better understanding of sexual tourism, Sanchez Taylor (2006) suggests that conceptualisations need to move away from essentialist accounts of gender, sexuality, and exploitation, and toward a framework which addresses the complex interplay of power present in the sexual-economic exchanges themselves.

Addiction and Agency

The role of agency in the creation and maintenance of an addiction is a highly-debated relationship that has significant repercussions in the moral and legal position of the addict in society, and in the development of interventions and community programs. West (2013) describes a spectrum of academic thought on addiction bookended by two opposing views that dominate debates in most relevant disciplines. What differentiates these positions is their consideration of agency in the development and maintenance of an addiction. Described by some as the *disease*

model of addiction (Heyman 2013; Uusitalo, Salmela, and Nikkinen 2013), this model describes addiction as a disease with a biological basis that compels the sufferer to continue using drugs despite their recognition of its causes. Addiction is seen as a mechanistic product of apparent abnormalities in a person's genetically-informed brain anatomy and physiology, from which they have no control once a pattern of prolonged use causes the addictive pathology (Leshner 1997). Addiction is seen as an illness that renders its victim incapable of the control required for their responsible agency. Once the addictive pathology is established, it is seen as a life-long affliction that can't be cured but only managed through ongoing intervention. Drawing heavily on medicalised ideas of disease and pathology, these conceptualisations of addiction position addicts as victims incapable of effective agency.

At the other end of the spectrum of thought on the relationship between agency and addiction are those who consider the development and maintenance of an addiction to be a matter of individual choice. While still recognising the presence of somatic or psychosomatic disease and biological factors of addiction, the development and maintenance of addiction is still ultimately considered as a "latent property of the rules of choice" (Heyman 2010, 159). People who become addicted through continued drug use are thought to either lack the willpower to abstain from drug use, or to have a deficient rationality. Perhaps the key criticism of this approach is that it fails to account for differences between the behaviours typically considered either free or constrained when the motivation is strong enough to over-ride other reasons (Watson 1999, 9). The effect is that this approach fails to account for the past actions and experiences of the addict, and as a result treats the choices of addicts as being on par with non-addicts.

The affective choice model

Uusitalo, Salmela and Nikkinen (2013) argue that the choice model overlooks the specific challenges of addiction by treating the choices made by addicts and their informed rationality in the same manner as those of non-addicts, and fails to adequately account for the addicts' agency. Instead, Uusitalo et al. suggest that a greater focus on affects—and the ways these conspire with the person's reasoning and thinking in ways that support the choices of addictive behaviour—allow us to consider the relationship between agency and addiction. In a theoretical description

of the ambivalence of addiction, Ainslie (2000) argues that an addict's hyperbolic discounting of the future produces a preference reversal that allows the addict to act against a desire for abstinence. The hyperbolic discounting of the future often observed in addicts informs a reversal of the person's preferences that allows them to act against their better judgement (abstinence). For example, while many addicts may initially place a higher value on abstinence than their continued drug use, the more immediate payoff of drug use when it becomes available can raise its value and make it a more attractive option in the moment. Ainslie argues that it is this process of hyperbolic discounting of the future, which he describes as a hard-wired mechanism of all organisms, which explains why many addicts continue using despite a sincere preference to abstain. Similar observations about the role affect plays in an addict's rationalisation of continued drug use were made by both Baker et al. (2004) and Khantzian and Albanese (2008), with both works citing the negative affect of withdrawal as the most influential factor in a person's rationalisation of addictive behaviour. Both suggest that as the addict's experience of negative affect increase, the cues associated with drug use in the immediate context over-ride the person's longer-term goal of abstinence with the more immediate affect of drug use, and contribute to the rationalisation of addictive behaviours in the moment.

Bounded Rationality

Considering the affect of addiction, and the role it plays in a person's continued participation in high-risk behaviours associated with their drug use, indicates the development of an impaired rational framework from which people suffering addictions engage with the world. One way this has been addressed is through the concept of "bounded rationality", which is often referred to in descriptions of situations where the options available to people are significantly limited. Rosen and Venkatesh (2008) provide an example in their description of the decisions of people selling sex in a Chicago ghetto, whose assessment for action was significantly constrained by poverty, lack of mainstream opportunity, and position in a street economy. Rosen and Venkatesh found most people in this context considered their sex work to provide them with "just enough" money, autonomy, and professional satisfaction to make it a more attractive option than other income-generation strategies available to them in this context. Similarly, Calhoun and Weaver (1996) frame their ethnographic exploration of young men's decision to sell sex within a

bounded rationality. They found the young men in their study to weigh the “potential benefits of hustling against the potential liabilities” (Calhoun and Weaver 1996, 223) within a constrained socio-economic context where their access to alternative working class forms of employment were limited. Drawing on a wide rational choice approach in this research, and the concept of bounded rationality in particular, allows the thesis to consider the people selling sex on Curtis Street to be agents who actively negotiate their lives within a highly-constrained setting shaped by problematic substance addiction, extreme hardship, and lack of alternative opportunity.

Summary

The preceding discussion has considered the role of agency in the lives of people selling sex in street sex markets. Key feminist and gendered conceptualisations of commercial sex and street sex work in particular have been discussed, and the research into the relationship between addiction and agency considered. This body of research suggests that people who sell sex in street sex markets to fund a high-cost drug addiction operate within a highly-bounded psycho-social context shape by a lack of resource and the positive and negative effects of their drug use and addiction. In the chapter’s final section, the body of empirical research on the men who buy sex is presented and discussed. This discussion considers the characteristics of sex market clients, men’s perceptions of commercial sex, and the reasons that inform their currently under-researched status.

Men who buy sex

While studies continue to explore the range of issues experienced by people who sell sex in street sex markets, less research exists on the men who buy sex from people working in these markets. Concern at the unitary view of commercial sex produced by the strong academic focus on sex workers without corresponding knowledge of the people who buy sex from them sparked a recent, concerted push for sex market clients to be incorporated into accounts of commercial sex (Sanders 2008b; McLeod 1982; Peng 2007; Earle and Sharp 2007; Hardy, Kingston, and Sanders 2010). For many, the inclusion of sex market clients in relevant research is considered to be the next necessary step in the development of a holistic account of commercial sex (Sanders 2008b; Ward et al. 2005; Hardy, Kingston, and Sanders 2010). Increased knowledge about people who buy sex is considered necessary for the advancement of policy and programs designed to improve the welfare of the commercial sex sector's most vulnerable people (Sanders 2006, 2008a; Hardy, Kingston, and Sanders 2010).

Earle and Sharp (2007) describe three key reasons that they believe contribute to the relative absence of sex market clients from relevant research. The first reason explains the absence as a product of the generalised acceptance of men buying sex. This line of thought often stems from earlier ideas of the high sex drive of men, and prostitution/sex work as crude, yet required, outlet to satisfy that drive. The relative acceptance of men buying sex problematises the people who sell sex to them and pushes them to the front of the researchers' gaze (Scoular and O'Neill 2007; Maher and Pickering 2009; Weitzer 2000). Second, it has been suggested that the academic focus has traditionally fallen on the body of the sex worker because of its "doubly deviant nature" (Sanders 2008b): the sex worker presents a challenge to hegemonic forms of acceptable female sexuality, while also being considered the site from which disease spreads from deviant networks to mainstream society (Sanders 2008b; Earle and Sharp 2007). But perhaps the most prominent reason for the omission of clients from commercial sex research is the difficulty researchers have in gaining the participation of men in this group. Being exposed as a commercial sex client invites labels such as "criminal", "pervert", "dangerous", and "dirty", or being

considered “sexually repulsive” or “sexually inadequate” (Sanders 2008a; Soothill and Sanders 2005; Earle and Sharp 2007). For men, an association with these labels can have a negative effect in their personal and private lives, and challenge their masculine sexual identity. Because of this, most clients have a strong desire to conceal their participation in commercial sex, which can make them a hard-to-reach population for researchers seeking their participation.

One line of research on sex market clients attempts to measure the demand for commercial sex by identifying the number of people who buy sex. While early studies based in the United States suggest up to 80% of men buy sex in their lifetime (Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin 1948), most contemporary accounts are much lower. In Australia, a small population study conducted in 1986 found 19.2% of respondents reported ever having paid for sex; 2.5% did so in the preceding 12 months (Dickson et al. 1995). Of these, 64.6% occurred in a brothel, 32.6% through an escort service, 26.6% in a massage parlour, 27.6% in a private house, and 5.9% in a street sex market (respondents selected all options that applied). More recently, Rissell et al. (2003) conducted a series of telephone interviews with Australian men ($n = 10,173$) and women ($n = 9134$) and found 15.6% of men and 0.1% of women reported ever having paid for sex. Among men who purchased sex, 97% had done so with a woman, while 3% had paid for sex with a man. A similar Australian study was conducted among men and women attending a sex industry event in Melbourne, Victoria (Pitts et al. 2004a). Of the men surveyed, 23.4% ($n = 612$) reported ever having paid for sex, although Pitts et al. acknowledge that this figure may not be truly representative of the local male population as the sample was taken from a context where attitudes towards sex were quite liberal. While these statistics provide some insight into the prevalence of men’s use of commercial sex services in developed Western countries, most researchers cite both the illegality (of some forms of sex work) and stigma attached to buying sex as reasons to question the validity of using these figures as representative of societal prevalence (Belza et al. 2008; Rissell et al. 2003; Pitts et al. 2004a).

Some research attempts to understand the various motivations for buying sex. While some position the purchase of sex as a product of unequal power relations in patriarchal societies (O’Connell Davidson 1998; Dworkin 1981), the growing body of empirical research suggests a range of more immediate motivations. In Australia, Pitts et al. (2004a) found a belief that paying for sex was less troublesome than

obtaining sex in other ways (36.4%) and the use of commercial sex as a form of entertainment (35.5%) motivated most men in their sample to buy sex. Alternatively, Atchison et al. (1998) approaches the issue of buying sex from a deficit approach, and constructs a model of men's motivations by considering their perceived social and physical deficiencies. In this model, men's motivation for buying sex is a product of their physical unattractiveness, poor social skills, impaired sexual development, manifestations of gendered role expectations, and avoidance of traditional masculine responsibilities. Sanders (2008b) develops a more holistic model in which the motivations for buying sex fall into "pull" and "push" factors. Factors that "push" men into commercial sex include aspects of their intimate or sexual lives which they perceive to be lacking, and which they think they can satisfy through purchased sex. "Pull" factors include the perceived attractiveness of the sex industry and its increasing association with leisure and entertainment. While each of these projects provides insight into motivations for paying for sex, what can be gleaned from this body of research as a whole is that people's reasons for buying sex are varied and complex.

Other researchers draw from sex worker accounts to develop client typologies in an attempt to highlight the spectrum of characteristics of men who buy sex (Minichiello et al. 2001; Stein 1974; Brewis and Linstead 2000; O'Connell Davidson 1995; Sawyer, Metz, Hinds, and Brucker Jr 2001). Vanwesenbeeck et al. (1993) develop a typology that breaks clients into three distinct groups. These include the "business type", described as clients who understand the nature of the sexual-economic transaction and approach it in a business-like manner, the "romantic-friendship" type whose purchase of sex is motivated by a desire to form a type of non-commercial relationship with the sex worker, and the "misogynist type" whose purchase of sex provides him with a context where he can play out a gendered dominance over the female sex worker. While the misogynist type was associated with violence and a reduction in condom use, it is the romantic type and their desire to break down the boundaries of the sexual-economic encounter that sex workers experienced as most problematic. In a similar project, Della Guista et al. (2009) distinguish between two types of clients. "Regulars" are men who use commercial sex to satisfy a desire for sexual variety, which they are unable to satisfy in their ongoing intimate relationships. They were found to hold flexible views about women, commercial sex, and the women from whom they bought sex.

“Experimenters” are men who consider commercial sex as a way to complement the sex they receive in their non-commercial intimate relationships. These men were considered more likely to hold misogynistic views about women in general, and sex workers in particular. Experimenters not only bought sex more often, but were more likely to enjoy higher-risk sexual practices and to demonstrate control in the sex they bought. Finally, Sanders (2008b, 48) develops a client typology containing five distinct client types. These include “explorers” who can be of any age and whose sex work career is sporadic and short-lived; “yoyo-ers”, whose engagement ceases during periods of intimate relationship satisfaction and who are drawn to the sex industry as a form of excitement rather than specifically for sex, “compulsives”, who purchase sexual services whilst either in or out of an intimate relationship and who are more concerned with the process of accessing sex workers rather than the sex, “bookends” are either regular clients or potential suitors of sex workers, and typically have high frequencies of sexual purchases both early and late in their adult lives, and finally, “permanent purchasers”, who are sporadic purchasers and whose sexualised purchasing continues whilst in romantic relationships and throughout their lives. While it is probable that variations in client characteristics may occur between street sex markets in different cultural contexts, these characterisations provide invaluable insight not only into the spectrum of men who buy sex in street sex markets, but how sex workers think about the men who buy sex from them.

A phenomenon observed across many commercial sex contexts is the desire of some men to establish an ongoing arrangement with a selected sex worker. Ongoing arrangements have been seen to last anywhere between a few months to a few years, with many of these longer-term associations blurring the lines between commercial and non-commercial intimacy (Sanders 2008a). Men seek out these arrangements to satisfy a desire for ongoing social connection, intimacy, and companionship, but they have also been identified as one way that some men are able to rationalise the use of commercial sex better within a masculine identity (Peng 2007; Walby 2010; Sanders 2008a; Bernstein 2001; Sanders 2008b). Establishing ongoing arrangements with one sex worker allows men to blur the lines between commercial and non-commercial intimacy, through both long-term associations with the sex worker and by reframing payment for sex as gift-giving or providing financial support. This allows men to bypass the more straightforward transaction of money-for-sex that can

challenge some men's masculinity and maintain a belief that they can obtain sex without having to pay for it.

Sex workers also report that they benefit from establishing ongoing sexual-economic arrangements with men. Despite requiring more emotional labour than standard sexual-economic transactions (Frank 2006; Brewis and Linstead 2000), many sex workers cite a preference for establishing long-term client arrangements because they are associated with a reduction in the violence, rule-breaking, and non-payment more common with short-term clients (see Sanders 2008a; Earle and Sharp 2007). However, long-term arrangements also present some risks to the sex worker. Two of the more notable include an increase in unprotected sex (De Graaf et al. 1995; Luke 2006; Minichiello, Mariño, and Browne 2001; Coughlan, Mindel, and Estcourt 2001; Leonard 1990; Belza et al. 2008; Gertler, Shah, and Bertozzi 2005; Shannon et al. 2008a), and an increase in needle-sharing and reduction in condom use in arrangements with ongoing clients who are also injecting drug users (Goldenberg et al. 2011). Together, these can significantly increase the sex workers risk of STI and BBV transmission.

The final section of the chapter has considered the key findings from research on men who buy sex. These studies suggest that men who buy sex are a heterogeneous group who have been studied through their comparison with men who don't buy sex, by measuring their prevalence in the broader community, and through the creation of typologies developed from the perceptions of the women who sell them sex. Despite a recently increased research focus on this group, the body of research on sex buyers remains small in comparison to sex sellers. While researching men who buy sex presents a range of significant challenges to researchers, their inclusion in relevant research is integral to the development a holistic view of commercial sex, and street sex work in particular.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered the available literature relevant to this study's questions of the geography of street sex work, the social and economic contexts street sex workers negotiate in the daily lives, the agency of sex workers, and the experience and perceptions of street sex market clients. As this thesis presents the first documented exploration of street sex work in Dandenong, the considered

literature has been drawn from empirical studies conducted in other street sex markets, and theories of commercial sex. In the next chapter, the thesis presents and discusses the methodological and conceptual approach adopted, and how these will be used throughout the study to address the research questions. This is followed with discussion of the research method, and how the study addresses key ethical challenges.

LOCATING THE FIELD

Findings from research conducted in comparable settings suggests the network of people selling sex on Curtis Street is often made up of highly-marginalised people whose lives are characterised by multiple hardships. Research conducted in such a marginal, high-risk group requires a process of careful, reflexive consideration (Liamputtong 2007). Good research uses methods and methodological tools that illuminate key elements of the observed cultural setting while remaining ethically cognisant of the effect of the research on the lives of its participants. This chapter discusses the research methodology, the theoretical frameworks that frame the discussions in the following chapters, and data collection methods. The chapter begins by situating the study within the field of qualitative and ethnographic research to illustrate the importance of the approach. This is followed by a discussion of the theoretical toolkit adopted by the thesis and its application through the following chapters. The second half of the chapter provides a detailed account of the study's data collection methods and how these have been applied in the field. This discussion provides the first glimpse into the street sex market on Curtis Street and introduces the reader to the market's key figures, whose experience and perceptions are often drawn upon in the chapters that follow. The chapter concludes with an analysis of some of the project's key ethical considerations and how these were addressed throughout the research process.

A qualitative approach

The qualitative paradigm is a broad and diverse approach to social research. There are numerous types of enquiry that are considered qualitative, with the options available within paradigm continually evolving (Denzin and Lincoln 2008a). Qualitative research poses open-ended, exploratory types of questions that seek to understand the experiences and meanings people give to their life and to their world. Its principal focus is the meanings people give to other people, places, events, and objects, and from this focus it aims to produce a representation of the world from the

point of view of the people at the project's core. This study is firmly situated in the qualitative paradigm. It strives for an in-depth understanding of the meanings that people selling sex on Curtis Street in Dandenong give to the world around them and their place in it by posing a series of questions about the various strategies, experiences, and meanings people give to their participation in sex work on Curtis Street.

Questions about culture

As an ethnography, this research is concerned with the culture of the street sex market in Dandenong and the network of people who sell sex there. The concept of culture has been described as “notoriously ambiguous” (Hebdidge 1989, 5), with an early attempt to collate the various definitions returning more than 150 results (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952). Despite this variability, there are many consistencies in the ways key figures describe culture. For example, Fetterman (1998) describes culture as the beliefs, knowledge, and values of a particular group of people, while Van Maanen (1988, 3) describes it as “the knowledge members of a given group are thought to more or less share; knowledge of the sort that is said to inform, embed, shape, and account for the routine and not-so-routine activities of the members of the culture” (p.3). Culture is not only a difficult concept to define accurately, but it also often provides a significant challenge to researchers wanting to understand, interpret, and ultimately document it. As Geertz famously stated, knowing a culture is like “grasping a proverb, catching an illusion, or seeing a joke” (Geertz 1974, :45). Ethnographers often experience culture as fluid and illusive, and something akin to a “never-ending story” (Van Maanen 1988, :119). It is with this in mind that I present this ethnography of the street sex market in Dandenong as an inherently partial, interpretive, cultural account that can provide a framework for further research in the area.

Ethnography and sub-culture

The term *ethnography* was originally used in reference to the “thick descriptions” generated in anthropological research (see Geertz 1973), but has since been appropriated and developed as a sociological approach to research that seeks an in-depth interpretation of the experiences of people in a particular context (Glasser

and Bridgman 1999). Ethnography is the study of culture, but many ethnographies look beyond the parent culture and peer into the various sub-cultures that developed within them. In fact, one key difference between early anthropological studies and modern sociological ethnographies is the increased focus on sub-cultural groups in developed Western cities. Sub-cultures are always inherently related to the parent culture where they develop out of interactions between people who “share and embody” (Wolfgang and Ferracuti 1967, 98) similar values and beliefs, where they come to form a set of culturally unique traditions, rituals, and codes of behaviour that are transmitted through symbol and language in a sub-cultural “web of meaning” (Pearson 1987, :15).

One way sub-cultures distinguish themselves from others is through their use and appropriation of particular spaces in the urban landscape (Gelder 2007, 2). At least some of this thinking stems from the early work of Robert Park, his students, and contemporaries at the Chicago School, who approached the modern city as a social laboratory whose social fabric was made up of the various sub-cultural groups who inhabited it. Park saw the overall structure of contemporary Western cities as highly complex, tangible expressions of human nature (Capetti 1993, 37). More specifically, while on the surface cities can be seen as a set of distinct spaces allocated to commercial and residential use, the unique cultural microstructure in these spaces transforms them into unique, yet malleable, neighbourhoods and slums with their own set of cultural norms, temperaments, and tastes within social and cultural networks (Capetti 1993, 39). This creates a socio-spatial process through which these small, sometimes “deviant” sub-cultural groups demarcate themselves from others through the construction of a unique moral and social order, which often includes their use and appropriation of particular urban space or patches of “turf” (Gelder 2007, 2). The ethnography presented in this thesis takes inspiration from some of these earlier examples of research that explored the relationships between deviant groups and their use of city spaces by asking questions about the geography of street sex work in Dandenong and its ongoing reproduction on Curtis Street.

Ethnography is an interpretive, discovery-based approach that seeks an in-depth understanding of the lives, experiences, and perceptions of people in a particular cultural setting (Kuper and Kuper 1996). Ethnographers strive for a comprehensive understanding of the meaning people give to the world around them. People engaged in ethnography can use a range of methodologies, tools, and strategies to develop

thick descriptions of the groups they examine (Geertz 1973). What unifies this diverse range of practices under the umbrella of ethnography is the desire to capture and interpret the various markers and meanings that shape people's daily lives, most often through an extended period of direct social engagement (Hammersley and Atkinson 2003). The resulting interpretation is then translated into the researcher's cultural milieu and presented in a written ethnographic monograph that serves as a de-coded bridge from the explored setting to the researcher's typically mainstream audience (Van Maanen 1988).

Ethnography provides a methodological approach that is consistent with this study's goals to capture and present the experiences and perceptions of marginal, typically closed group, such as the network of people selling sex on the street in Dandenong. Due to the exploratory nature of ethnographic research, it has been described as an ideal methodology for research in under-researched contexts, such as the street sex market on Curtis Street (Hammersley and Atkinson 2003; Wolcott 2005). The written ethnographic text is also an effective way to disseminate academically-gained information on specific cultural groups to non-academic audiences, such as the various youth and community services whose increased work with people selling sex in this context may produce a positive effect within both the community and lives of sex workers. It is therefore not surprising that many of the studies presented in the literature review that focus on under-researched elements of commercial or exploitative sex adopt an ethnographic methodology. For this project, I have drawn on these the ability of ethnographic studies to shed light on under-researched commercial sex practices and to make this research accessible to a broad spectrum of readers, particularly those with the ability to increase youth and community service engagement with people selling sex in this setting.

Theoretical frameworks

Ethnographers such as Gatling (1990) and Wolcott (2005) state one of the strengths of the ethnographic approach is its ability to draw on a family of theoretical perspectives, and its ability to produce thicker accounts than many single theory approaches. Taking this guidance, this thesis draws on multiple theories and conceptual tools to produce a rich account of street sex work in Dandenong and to address the research questions. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 provide empirical accounts of

life on Curtis Street, each of which are framed in a distinct theoretical or conceptual approach. The following discussion outlines the conceptual approaches adopted in each of these three key empirical chapters, and explains how these allow the thesis address the research questions.

The spaces of street sex work in Dandenong

The first of the empirical chapters in this thesis explores the geography of street sex work in Dandenong. Its focus is the market's use of space, and how this is produced socially through ongoing spatial tension between key mainstream actors and participants of the street sex market as they interact out on the street. Informed by the geographical explorations of commercial sex of Hubbard (Hubbard 2002, 1999; Hubbard and Sanders 2003) and others (Draus, Roddy, and Asabigi 2015; Crofts, Hubbard, and Prior 2013; O'Neill et al. 2008), this research considers the current location and spatial practice of the street sex market on Curtis Street to be a product of an ongoing dialectical relationship between the spatial strategies of the state (and local police as their key front-line agents), and the tactics of the women and men who subvert these strategies by using public space to sell and buy sex. Considering the geography of street sex work in Dandenong as the product of an ongoing relationship between strategies and tactics allows the thesis to consider the space of the street sex market as a contested space, one that is constantly made and remade through a process of spatial tension between market participants and police on the street. This approach positions Dandenong's street sex market as a socially-produced space, which is used as the framework through which the geography of street sex work in Dandenong is considered.

This approach to the geography of street sex work engages with Lefebvre's philosophy of the social production of space, and his recognition of the emancipatory potential of the lived experience of marginal groups in the production of space. As discussed in the literature review, many academics have argued that that Lefebvre's focus on the daily lived experiences of people and groups makes his approach to space particular appealing to analyses of marginal and deviant spaces (Draus, Roddy, and Asabigi 2015; Hubbard 1999; Crofts, Hubbard, and Prior 2013; Hubbard and Prior 2013). The discussed studies provide evidence of the efficacy of this approach and its ability to address questions about the spatial production of street sex markets.

Key to Lefebvre's assertion that space is socially produced is the distinction he makes between three moments of space, each of which are held in a constant state of tension with the other. The first of these is *spatial practice* which Lefebvre describes as the experiences, activities, and routines that constitute the everyday experience and organisation of a particular urban setting. Spatial practice incorporates the material dimension of social interaction and activity as it occurs in particular spaces, and encourages continuity of experience and cohesion in ongoing social formations. It achieves this through the creation and shared recognition of socio-spatial boundaries and behavioural norms.

Lefebvre labels the second moment as a *representation of space*. In modern urban environments, this is space as created by the state and urban planners who through design and control attempt to determine how a particular space should be used. Within his broader philosophy of space, Lefebvre describes representations of space as the dominant type of space, and the antithesis of the emancipatory capacity of the lived experience of people and groups and their role in the production of space.

The final moment in Lefebvre's spatial trialectic is the *space of representation*. Lefebvre describes the space of representation as the inversion of the dominant representation of space. Where the representation of space is ultimately created and enforced from above, the space of representation is created bodily through the spatial and territorial practices of people and groups who use particular spaces as part of their lived experience. Therefore, according to Lefebvre, the world of spatial practice or lived experience exists in a dialectic relation with representations of space, which can be transcended through creative bodily acts. Lefebvre argues that through tactics of resistance, people and minorities are able to undermine the strategies of the state and powerful elites by misusing space and escaping its constraints. In relation to the street sex work in Dandenong, this thesis equates the territorial practices of people selling and buying sex on Curtis Street to Lefebvre's spaces of representation that transcend the relationship between spatial practices and representations of space, and actively contributes to the spatial reproduction of the street sex market on Curtis Street.

If we consider Delaney's (2005, 15) assertion that "territories are the products of social practices and processes", then we can see street sex markets come into being through their ongoing use by sex workers and their resistance to various forms of

intervention. In this chapter, the thesis presents a discussion of the relationship between the representational space of Curtis Street and the front-line actions of police, and the spatial practices of local sex workers and other market participants who actively appropriate this space as their space of representation. By adopting Lefebvre's ideas of socially-produced space to conduct a spatial analysis of street sex work in Dandenong, this chapter contributes to a growing body of academic research that highlights the active role sex workers play in shaping the spaces used for sex work. By highlighting the territorial practices of sex workers, and their ongoing negotiation of power and resistance within the space of the street sex market, this research also inherently highlights the agency of sex workers, and ultimately the power of their subversive spatial strategies in the creation of space (Draus, Roddy, and Asabigi 2015; Dewey and Kelly 2011; Sanchez Taylor 1997), albeit it in a constrained context.

Inside the social network on Curtis Street

The literature review shows how influential peer connections are for the careers of people selling sex in street sex markets. For example, a social connection to a street economy and other people selling sex is often described as influential in shaping the pathways of vulnerable young people into high-risk forms of commercial sex (Martyn 1998; Hanley 2004; Fitzgerald 1997). For people who continue to sell sex on the street, illicit drug use can limit their opportunity in the mainstream, which often increases people's reliance on peer connection as the only means through which they can access key resources required for their continued survival in that setting (Lankenau et al. 2005; Baker, Dalla, and Williamson 2010; Sanders 2007). Informed by these observations, Chapter 4 develops an analysis of the social network of Dandenong's street sex market. It analyses the relational nature of the daily lived experience of people as they use the market to fund their addiction(s), and the impact this has on the practice of street sex work in Dandenong. Network theory is used as the lens through which the social lives of people selling sex on Curtis Street are analysed and discussed. This approach allows the ethnography to situate the various individual characteristics, actions, and interactions of people selling sex on Curtis Street into the web of relationships that run through and shape the street sex market in Dandenong.

Network theory is a relational theory that sees people, or nodes, as linked to other nodes through social ties within a broader social network (Wasserman and Faust 1994; Monge and Contractor 2003; Katz et al. 2004). Ties indicate some degree of bonding or activity between actors, and can directly affect the experience of group members, and influence the flow of information and resource within the social network. One way the affect or value of a particular social tie has been assessed is through a consideration of its strength. The most commonly used distinction in social network analysis is between strong and weak ties (Wasserman and Faust 1994; Rice and Yoshioka-Maxwell 2015; Scott 2000). Strong ties can provide groups members with access to the knowledge and resources of other network members, and produce a context in which action is often oriented toward a shared goal. But strong ties have also been observed as constraining people's access to resources by creating closed groups and micro-dyads within which the flow of knowledge is limited in ways that reduce access to opportunity beyond what is available to them through their immediate social ties (Granovetter 1973). Instead, Granovetter and others (Fujimoto et al. 2015; van der Hulst 2011; Rice and Yoshioka-Maxwell 2015; Scott 2000) suggest that weak ties can be of higher value because they provide people access to information and resources outside the bounds of their primary network, and because they are more conducive to community harmony and connection.

Research discussed in the previous chapter highlights how a person's position in the network of a street sex market or street economy effect the opportunities available to them and experience of daily life (Raffo and Reeves 2000; Tucker et al. 2011; Hanley 2004; Dodsworth 2012; Sanders 2001). As often demonstrated in network analyses, a person's position in a social network provides an indication of their ability to mobilise resources, affect the flow of information, and to influence peers and the broader network. To capture the prominence and power demonstrated by some network members on Curtis Street, the thesis draws upon the concept of betweenness centrality. Betweenness centrality is often used in network analyses in describing the effectiveness of a particular node to bridge gaps between other network members. People in possession of a high degree of betweenness centrality have an abundance of direct social ties across a particular network, which they can effectively manipulate to position themselves as bridges between other network actors. Betweenness centrality typically provides an indication of a person's

prominence within a network, and their ability to manipulate and influence connections between other parties to satisfy group or individual needs (Burt 2004). By considering centrality within its analysis of the market's social network, the thesis is able to identify key network members, the various strategies used to obtain and manipulate power within a marginal peer network, and consider the effects key network participants have on the network and market structure.

A related theory drawn upon in this thesis as a way to assess the savviness of some network members and the role this plays in the network's volatility is Burt's theory of structural holes. Burt's theory incorporates the concept of social capital and its strategic use by "social entrepreneurs" in network settings (Burt 2001, 1997, 1999, 1992, 2004; Burt and Ronchi 2007). *Structural holes* are defined as spaces created in and between networks where social ties are either indirect or non-existent. Once identified, savvy network members can use their social capital and strong knowledge of the network's communication linkages to position themselves as a bridge between previously unconnected people, cliques, or groups, from where they can manipulate the flow of information or resources in ways that benefit themselves (Granovetter 1973; Burt 1992, 2004). But the effect of people's manipulation of their social capital in structural holes varies in and between networks. For example, other network members can also experience an increase in their social capital as a result of their connection to the person who positions themselves as a bridge. Through their ties with a person adopting the role of a bridge, other network members may be able to negotiate access to resources outside their immediate social ties in ways that may not have been previously possible. Further, Burt considers the entrepreneurial savviness of network members in structural holes to be a process that contributes to the dynamic, fluid quality of a social network. Within the analysis of the market's network in this thesis, Burt's theory is used as a way to highlight the savviness of some network members, their reliance on peer connections for key resources and security, the isolation of local street sex workers from mainstream networks and other forms of support, and how these work together to foster a highly-complex social context that is both volatile and unforgiving.

Entwined within network theory's recognition of the value of social connection, social capital is another concept used to explore the marginalisation and strength of sex workers' reliance on peer connections in studies, also discussed in the previous chapter. First introduced by economist Glenn Loury (1977), the concept of social

capital has been adopted and used across diverse studies as a way to conceptualise the value of social connection within societies and communities (Raffo and Reeves 2000; Burt and Ronchi 2007; Stephenson 2001; Poortinga 2006; Phongsavan et al. 2006; Januraga, Mooney-Somers, and Ward 2014). Among the most prominent social capital scholars are Bourdieu and Coleman. Bourdieu conceptualises social capital as the “sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, :119). Coleman also draws on social capital in describing the reproduction of social inequality, but uses it to consider the patterns of action, ways of being, and other diffuse information transmitted within families to children and young people in ways that solidify their position at the bottom of a broader social hierarchy. However, Coleman also expands the concept of social capital to also describe it as an in-group resource available to people in marginal communities and groups that can be manipulated and mobilised by people as part of a strategy to satisfy their desires or attain their goals. This form of social capital is described as a contextually-specific asset that evolves out of trusting social connections that, once established, can be used in conjunction with other assets, such as acquired skills or money, in the negotiation of their daily life and survival through their addiction. This thesis draws on Coleman’s treatment of social capital as an in-group resource available to people in marginal groups as part of its own strategy to address questions about the value of peer connection and its manipulation within the broader survival strategies of network members. By adopting this approach, the thesis is able to consider people’s participation in the market’s social network as a “strategy of investment” (Shilling, 1993) linked to their negotiation of their addiction and survival.

Together, the conceptual tools drawn upon throughout this chapter allow the thesis to develop in-depth insight into the value and effect of peer connections among people selling sex in this context, and presents the data necessary to address questions of the market’s social network. The consideration of the effect of strong and weak ties highlight both the complexity and importance of peer connection in this network, and how the value placed on these connections is amplified through an absence of mainstream connection, support, and access to resources outside of the local street economy. Further, this research work’s consideration of people’s experience and negotiation of peer connection provides a mechanism through which

it can consider the experience of exploitation and abuse in these relationships, how the networks' marginalisation and normalisation of abuse contributes to their rationalisation, and in some cases how sex workers draw upon network resources to attempt to extricate themselves from these situations. In addition to providing insight into the network structure, these observations inform the proposal in this thesis of a community intervention that builds relationships with vulnerable sex workers in ways that increase their access to key resources.

Capital and Agency on Curtis Street

In Chapter 5, this thesis considers the role of addiction in the lives of people selling sex on Curtis Street. It assesses the role addiction plays in people's participation in street sex work and the range of high-risk, illicit practices associated with funding an addiction in Dandenong's street sex market. It approaches the relationship between addiction, street sex work, and other high-risk practices through a consideration of agency of local street sex workers, and explores the factors that limit their ability to make fully rational decisions. The chapter continues with an assessment of the research data gathered during interviews with the men who buy sex on Curtis Street. Discussion about the content of these interviews in this chapter is focussed on these men's perceptions of their participation in street sex work, the nature of their connections to individual sex workers, and reasons why they buy sex in this market instead of in lower-risk, legal markets. The paragraphs that follow provide an overview of the conceptual tools adopted in Chapter 5 and the role they play in allowing the research to address its guiding questions.

Agency in street sex work in Dandenong

Differences of opinion about the agency of sex workers often sit at the core of discussion about commercial sex, and become increasingly complex when considered in the context where street sex workers are often highly marginalised, vulnerable, and typically sell sex to fund a high-cost drug addiction. Recognising the limitations of disease and free choice models of addiction discussed in the literature review, this research addresses the question of agency in the lives of people selling sex on Curtis Street through Uusitalo, Salmela and Nikkinen's (2013) affective model of the relationship between addiction and agency. Consistent with the observations of Uusitalo et al., this study anticipates that its focus on the affects of

addiction experienced by people selling sex on Curtis Street will provide valuable insight into the ways these affects conspire with the person's cognitive framework in ways that re-affirm their continued drug addiction, and illuminates the context in which choice and addiction are negotiated.

The central hypothesis of this theoretical approach is that addictive behaviours are reinforced by the affects of addiction and drug use. These are hypothesised to develop through two key mechanisms. In the first, the person's emotional state and social context work together to skew the parameters of their cognitive framework in a way that either normalises or increases the likelihood of their participation in addiction-producing behaviours. This involves the emotional affect of a person's historical and current experience, and the norms and behavioural opportunities available to them as a result of their social participation. Evidence of this mechanism in street sex working populations is seen in the identification of historical hardship and abuse within populations of street sex workers, and their participation in social contexts and networks that exposes them to and normalises drug abuse (Hanley 2004; MacDonald and Shildrick 2007; Lankenau et al. 2005). The second mechanism involves the development of epistemic distortions that affirm the person's continued participation in addiction-promoting behaviours. This is thought to occur within a highly compromised dual cognitive process. Through one process, the anticipated positive affect of drug use increases the probability of the addict choosing behaviours that lead to their experience of the desired affect. In the second process, the addict's experience of existing negative emotions such as depression, anxiety, poor well-being, and withdrawal symptoms raise the value of the expected utility of behaviours that allow the person to escape their emotional turmoil.

Uusitalo, Salmela and Nikkinen (2013) argue the role affective choices play in the development and maintenance of an addiction increases when these choices not only skew the addict's preferences, but contribute to the development of a belief that justifies continued drug use. Once established, these addiction-supporting beliefs provide evidence for the addict's rationalisation of drug use *in the moment*. Despite recognition of the harms of drug use, or even a commitment to abstinence, these distorted beliefs provide reason for the person's continued drug use that they experience as rational at the time of their continued drug use.

The focus in this chapter on the affects of addiction as experienced by street sex workers and their partners, coupled with the role these play in the creation of a

bounded rationality that affirms their continued participation in their continued drug use (and sex work to fund it), provides the framework through which this study approaches the agency of people selling sex in this context. This approach allows the thesis to both account for the strength of an addiction that is often cited as key to a person's entry and continued participation in street sex work, and the ability of sex workers to continue to determine at least some of their actions within a highly-constrained cognitive and social context. By adopting the affective model, the thesis engages with debates of the agency of street sex workers, their participation in high-risk practices, and provides a unique avenue through which the thesis considers the connections between street sex workers and other people using this context to fund their addiction(s).

Why do men buy sex on Curtis Street?

As discussed in the previous chapter, while the body of research on commercial sex clients is growing, research on men who buy sex in illicit street sex markets is still under-developed (Pitts et al. 2004a; McKeganey and Barnard 1996; Rissel et al. 2003; Sanders 2004). In Chapter 5, the research presents the perceptions of men who buy sex from female street sex workers on Curtis Street. Drawing from interviews conducted with these men during this study's fieldwork, the resulting descriptions of experience, perception, and opinion are examined through the conceptual lens of sexual capital. The concept of sexual capital was developed as a way to recognise the value of sex, sexuality, and sexual attractiveness in particular social and cultural contexts (Farrer, 2010; Green, 2008a, 2011, forthcoming; Martin and George, 2006; Weinberg and Williams, 2010). Sexual capital describes the "resources, competencies and endowments that provide status as sexual agents within a field" (Farrer, 2010, 75). Its value is generated through physical presentation coupled with the use of demeanour and style, and its relation to the logic of the field. This means that value of sexual capital is temporal and contextually specific, as it can have different meanings and values attached to it in particular sites (Martin and George, 2006; Green, 2013). Approaching questions of why men buy sex from women soliciting on Curtis Street when other legal, potentially safer commercial sex markets are available to them firmly grounds its discussion and assessment of client participation connection to this market in the practice of street sex work in Dandenong.

Methods

Where methodology describes the nature of enquiry, methods refer to the processes of data collection (Spradley 1979; Agar 1996; Brewer 2000; Gobo 2008). For this research, I have taken the prescription of Hammersley and Atkinson (2003), who suggest ethnography requires the researcher to take an active role in “people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions through informal and formal interviews” (2003, :3). Prior to Hammersley and Atkinson’s contributions, Bronislaw Malinowski, the anthropologist regarded as the first ethnographer, asserts in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* that the goal of the ethnographer is to “grasp the native’s point of view ... to realise his vision of his world” (1922, :25). Malinowski and many that have come after him cite participant observation and interview as the methods most effective at achieving this (Agar 1996; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Geertz 1973; Van Maanen 1988). This research makes use of both methods.

Participant observation

Participant observation is the principal data collection method used for this research. Participant observation requires the researcher to actively participate in the observed social context as a strategy to uncover the cultural markers and patterns of interaction that make up its cultural fabric (Agar 1996). Famously described as a “predicament transformed into a method” (Clifford 1988, 93), participant observation takes advantage of a person’s innate ability to identify various signs of culture when entering a new cultural context (Hammersley and Atkinson 2003, 9). The goal of the participant observer is to identify, understand, and document cultural “rich points” (Agar 1996, 33) pertinent to the observed cultural context, and fascinating to the researcher’s sensibility. But observing the diversity within people’s lives and the close engagement this requires means that participant observation is a method that necessitates more than detached observations. Because of the specific aspects of people’s lives that ethnographers aspire to understand, the practise of ethnography involves close and careful observation on the one hand, and engagement and active participation in their lives on the other. The relationship

between observation and direct participation is often reflected in the labels that participant observers ascribe to themselves, such as “marginal natives” (Freilich 1970), “professional strangers” (Agar 1996), “self-reliant loners” (Lofland 2006) and “self-denying emissaries” (Boon 1982). Consistent with this, Lofland (1971) suggests participant observers strive to consider themselves as an “acceptable incompetent” who are not only expected to observe, but to ask questions, make mistakes, and actively participate in social life as an accepted outsider (also see Hammersley and Atkinson 2003). It is ultimately through this active participation that elements of cultural life appear to the researcher *in situ* from where they can be documented, analysed, and ultimately presented to the reader (Agar 1996, 33).

Frameworks for the practice of participant observation vary considerably. Some, such as Clifford (1988), cite the method’s flexibility as an asset that allows the researcher to mould and manipulate their strategy in accordance with the nuances of each cultural context. Others advocate more structured approaches that produce a more predictable process of data collection (see Spradley 1980). Because of the variability in approach, an emphasis is placed on the researcher’s ability to remain flexible and ethically aware during the collection of data and creation of the ethnographic text (Hammersley and Atkinson 2003). Reflexive ethnography is described as “the self-aware analysis of the dynamics between researcher and participant” (Gobo 2008, 42), and requires the researcher to constantly assess their position in the field, their effect on the cultural group, and the research outcome. For this research I have drawn from both structured and unstructured models in the research design, but I have found the space available in participant observation a key to gaining access to the range of cultural markers that shape the street sex market on Curtis Street into its unique cultural context. Throughout the research I have continued to consider my position in the field, the effect of my relationships on the research, and the effect of the research on participants. My adherence to this approach has allowed data collection and the broader approach to the research to remain malleable to ensure an effective, ethical research practice.

Twelve months is often considered to be the ideal amount of time required to gain a rich understanding of a cultural setting (Van Maanen 1988; Katz 2010; Clifford and Marcus 1986). Consistent with this, I spent 12 months as a social participant in the cultural economy of Curtis Street. During this time I spent between 2–5 days or nights per week in the field, and 6–12 hours on each of these occasions.

My presence on Curtis Street during this time was shaped by my field relationships, the “work – score – get on” patterns of the market’s key figures, fluctuations of movement in the street sex market, and an assessment of the data available to me at a particular time. Much of my time in the field was spent in the immediate vicinity of the primary site of solicitation on Curtis Street, but the strength of my field relationships allowed me to spend an increasing amount of time in other related sites and in other directly-related social networks that sex workers negotiated as part of their daily experience. While a classic ethnography in nature, this project’s ability to follow key elements of the market’s cultural network across various sites means it shares some similarities with what Van Maanen (2010) has labelled “new ethnography”, in which further knowledge is gained as a result of the researcher’s presence in various key sites. Being able to move within other key sites has been particularly valuable to this research, as much meaningful interaction between sex workers and other people in the social network occurs away from the market’s spatial epicentre on Curtis Street. Following the daily cultural lives of sex workers through various sites as they negotiate their lives contributes to the depth and understanding of the experience of daily life that is presented throughout this ethnography.

Hot Chocolates and Monte Carlos: a story of prior engagement

My connection to the network of people selling sex on Curtis Street began the year prior to the commencement of fieldwork for this project, when I conducted research on young people selling sex on Curtis Street as part of a Bachelor of Social Science (Honours) degree. That project gathered information on the pathways, experiences, and service use of people aged between 18 and 25 who sold sex on Curtis Street. While ultimately successful, securing research participants proved to be a significant challenge. My initial participant recruitment strategy involved enlisting the help of various youth and community services that I expected to be engaged with young people selling sex in the area. However, due to the relative lack of youth and community service engagement among the cohort of people with whom I was trying to engage (something I only came to learn during the research) this strategy proved unsuccessful. Instead, I developed a strategy of engagement that drew from my training as a youth worker. Knowing where most street sex work in Dandenong occurred, I re-purposed my 1998 Hyundai Excel into a type of

makeshift, mobile drop-in centre which I drove to Curtis Street, parked, and from which I began distributing cups of hot chocolate, Monte Carlo biscuits, small heat packs I had purchased from a pharmacy, and umbrellas. While most sex workers were initially suspicious of me, this strategy allowed me to engage with the people working on the street and to build enough trust over the following days and weeks that some young people began expressing an interest in participating in the research. As I continued to set up on Curtis Street, my reputation among people selling sex in this area as an acceptable outsider developed to the point that it not only allowed me to successfully complete the Honours degree project, but it provided me with the social connections required to begin the fieldwork for this research.

Welcome (back) to Curtis Street!

It had been eight months since I had “been out” on Curtis Street and I was concerned that some of my existing contacts may have moved on and that I would have to begin the relationship-building again from scratch. Thankfully, my concerns were alleviated almost immediately as I parked my car on the first day of fieldwork when I saw three people with whom I had formed strong relationships the previous year standing near a phone booth on Curtis Street. As I got out of my car, Pok parted from Linda and Kerry, who both continued to look for a “job”, and approached me like an old friend with a smile and hand extended.

Hey, I haven't seen you in ages. Where've ya been? (Pok)

Before I could answer, Pok waved to his partner Linda, indicating for her to come and join the conversation. Both Linda and Kerry crossed the road and walked the 15–20 metres to where Pok and I were standing. As they did so, they both continued to try and catch the gaze of passing male drivers in the hope of getting a job. Although both were a little preoccupied as they continued to look for work, they seemed happy to see me. I told them of the relative success of the previous research and the interest it had garnered from relevant youth and community services, and I gave them a very brief rundown of the HREC process that allowed me to “come back out here” once again. Each responded by telling me about some of the key events that had happened on Curtis Street over the previous months, with an emphasis on the people who had moved on from their time on Curtis Street as well as giving me a brief synopsis of a few new arrivals.

People pretty much come and go out here all the time, man. It doesn't really matter who's out here, it's just the same old shit really ... just different people. Different people, same shit. (Linda).

One almost throwaway line in this initial rundown was news that one of the young women I had interviewed the previous year on Curtis Street had died from overdose after taking a mix of heroin and other prescription medications. Linda, Kerry, and Pok all shook it off as something that was unfortunate but expected, given the regularity with which she had (mis)used prescription medications in addition to her heroin use. News of this tragedy reinforced my desire to produce the research necessary for relevant youth and community services to increase their efforts at reaching this “hard-to-reach” population. This is the ultimate agenda that drives my research.

‘Just hang with me. You’ll be right’: Gatekeepers

My relationships with Kerry, Linda, and Pok continued throughout the fieldwork and were central to its success. In addition to facilitating my access to sensitive, otherwise guarded elements of the market’s cultural fabric, they also afforded me a degree of “street cred” that made it easier to establish relationships with other people moving through the street sex market. The value of being able to establish and maintain strong relationships with key cultural network members during participant observation is well documented. Aull Davies (1999) describes the relationship between participant observer and gatekeeper(s), and how it creates a space where many of the researcher’s theorising and conclusions about culturally-specific phenomena are born, tested, and solidified. This has certainly been the case with my relationships with Kerry, Linda, and Pok through the fieldwork and research process. Because of their importance to the research, it is appropriate that briefly introduce these gatekeepers in turn.

Linda: Linda turned 25 during the fieldwork. She lives in an apartment near Curtis Street which she purchased four years prior to the fieldwork with money she earned working as a stripper and illicit masseuse. She turned to street sex work in Dandenong “a couple of years ago” after she was diagnosed with a serious illness (and after she stopped stripping), but still needed to generate an income large enough to fund her heroin addiction. I had met and interviewed her the previous year while conducting research with young people who sold sex on Curtis Street. At that time,

she was living in an intimate relationship with Pok who also acted as her “spotter” while she solicited and sold sex. This arrangement continued throughout much of the fieldwork until she “kicked his sorry arse to the kerb” following a sharp increase in domestic violence in their relationship.

Pok: Pok was born in Cambodia and came to Australia with his parents when he was 12. He is one year older than Linda and had been in an intimate relationship with her from 2009 after meeting through mutual friends. Pok describes himself as “always having problems with the coppers”. His connection to the police stems back to his early teens when he was an active participant in the Springvale heroin market, for which he’d “done a bit of time (in jail)”. Pok began using heroin during his teens, but “only smoked it”, which he described as being less potent and more recreationally-based. It was only after forming a relationship with Linda that he started “jackin’ it” (IV drug use; considered much more potent and more addictive), after which he describes his heroin use as “getting a bit out of control”. Although he’s had a few jobs working in local factories, he has not had any form of formal employment during the period I have known him. His heroin use during his relationship with Linda was funded through her sex work practice. During this time, his reputation for violence and for carrying knives and other weapons allowed Linda to operate in the network of street sex workers with relative impunity. He was also the perpetrator of quite severe instances of domestic violence in his intimate relationship with Linda.

Kerry: Kerry turned 26 a few weeks after I entered the field. Although she had various men “spotting” for her during the fieldwork period, much of her time was spent in a working arrangement with another young woman. Although married to an Indian man, Kerry was homeless for much of the fieldwork period. Most of her housing came through various “sex for accommodation” arrangements that lasted anywhere from a few nights to a couple of months. Kerry had the highest ongoing level of heroin use among any of the sex workers I met during the fieldwork. She typically used between 1½ to 3 grams of heroin a day. Much of this merely held off the negative effect of heroin withdrawal; she was rarely stoned. Because of her high-volume heroin use, she also spent more time working on the street than any of the other women I met during my time in the field. Of my three gatekeepers, my relationship with Kerry was, and remains, the strongest. She is well known in this,

and other directly-related, social networks, and my relationship with her created avenues of knowledge that would otherwise not have been possible.

‘This is Ben. He’s kinda like a worker out here’

While my relationships with gatekeepers aided my entry into the field, my ability to build new relationships and negotiate my way through complex and emotionally-charged situations had a significant effect on the body of data I was to collect through participant observation. Hammersley and Atkinson (2003) cite “impression management” (Goffman 1955) as key to a participant observer’s ability to gain trust among research participants and to access potentially sensitive and otherwise hidden aspects of the cultural landscape. My initial strategy to build relationships and gain trust was simply to be transparent about my role and my research, and to allow field members to determine their degree of connection to me based on this. As a result, I made a point of alerting people of my role in the field as I met them.

Hi, I’m Ben. I do research on street sex work in the area.

Conversely, in cases where I was introduced to someone by a gatekeeper or other group member, I allowed that person to define my role in any way they felt appropriate. Despite one case where I heard a sex worker arguing with a client, then point and refer to me as “my mother-fuckin’ pimp who’ll come and fuck ya up if ya’ don’t give me fuckin’ money now”, most described my role to peers as similar to the more familiar youth or community worker.

This is Ben. He’s kinda like a worker out here.

This strategy not only created a context of trust with people introducing me to peers by allowing them to control the flow of information about my role in a way that ensured they did not “lose face” among peers, but also signalled to the person(s) I was being introduced to that I was accepted as someone *in* the field, but not *of* the field (Van Maanen 1988). It was from this position, as a person oscillating between researcher and youth worker, that most people in this network connected with me and from where I was able to negotiate the process of participant observation in the chaotic, volatile, social network of people who sold sex on Curtis Street.

Key sites

Much of my time conducting participant observation was spent at one of two key sites in the immediate vicinity of the phone booth area on Curtis Street, where most solicitation occurred. These included a permanent picnic table directly adjacent to the corner where the phone booth is located, and my car while parked on Curtis Street.

The ‘Picnic Table’

The site referred to as the “picnic table” is located in a public courtyard on the adjacent corner of the roundabout intersection on Curtis Street. Like most of the “girls” and their “spotters”, I used this site as a place to sit and socialise during the day when the weather was nice, or at least not raining. Sitting at the picnic table provides a clear view of the roundabout on Curtis Street, the phone booth area in front of a solicitor’s offices, and the entrance to a small public carpark before the youth accommodation facility: each of these locations is where most sex worker–client interactions begin. In addition to its use by local employees during lunch and “smoko” breaks, it was also a site from where spotters would “keep an eye” on their partner as she solicited at the phone booth area. Sometimes, this was also where she would have her previous client drop her, crossing the intersection in search for another job. As this suggests, my presence here allowed me a high degree of social interaction with girls, spotters, and others connected to the supply side of the market. This site not only placed me in a seemingly endless hub of social interaction with people moving through Curtis Street to “do a few jobs”, but provided me with invaluable access to otherwise concealed aspects of the market and cultural network.

The ‘Pimpmobile’: Parked on Curtis Street

Ethnography is a practical methodology that produces practical knowledge. It is only by actively participating in ethnographic study that a researcher is able to fully understand how it is done. Using my car as a site of observation and social participation was one way that I conducted ethnography, and one of the ways I came to understand both the method of ethnography and the context and chains of social connections I sought to investigate. Using my car emerged as a key practice through which both sex workers and spotters came to identify with me as an acceptable outsider. Sitting in my car parked in Curtis Street provided me with the clearest point

from which to observe the general operation of the street sex market. The regularity with which I was in this space, and the way some clients and residents came to consider my presence, soon resulted in my beat-up 1998 Hyundai Excel to be jovially labelled by some network members as the “pimpmobile”. From this position I had clear view of the area around the phone booth, the roundabout where prospective clients would often “come back” after driving past and spotting a sex worker they liked, the carpark and street-side parking spaces where clients typically pulled up when wanting to negotiate a job, and the front of the youth accommodation facility. Most of the “jobs” done by women working on the street in Dandenong were initiated in these spaces.

Within only a few weeks, some women began using my passenger seat as a place of respite from sex work, as an escape from a tense encounter with a peer or client, or just to avoid some bad weather. The regularity with which this occurred resulted in my car being inadvertently transformed into a small, informal, drop-in centre that provided women a safe, relaxed environment where they could take a few moments away from the stresses of sex work to vent, chat, or simply sit and stare out the window to collect their thoughts. In some cases my car boot also became a space where some women would ask to leave things such as heavy coats, other clothes or bags while they either “did a few jobs” or simply disappeared for a few hours. During one period of the fieldwork, it became a regular practice that some of the women would pitch in together to buy a pizza that they’d store in my car, taking pieces while soliciting or after getting dropped back to Curtis Street from their previous job. While seemingly menial, these interactions became vital to my ability to build relationships and establish trust with the women who would ultimately control my access to the experiences and cultural markers that shape daily life on Curtis Street.

Sitting in my car on Curtis Street was also a site where I spent a lot of time with “spotters” and other male partners of women selling sex. This was a practice that I found ethically challenging, but one that produced a rich source of data on an under-researched population whose actions not only have a significant effect on the daily lives of the women selling sex on Curtis Street, but on the shape of the street sex and local drug markets. From my car, I was able to use this time to build trust and develop relationships with a particularly difficult group whom I often found more difficult to engage with than their female partners; however, it also provided me with

an extended period of time where I could draw significant information through low-keyed conversations. These were often the only times male spotters would drop their guard with me, and as a result it became the most effective method of drawing information from this group.

Notes: upon notes ... upon notes

Central to the ability to gather a rich body of data through participant observation is an effective process of note-taking. Van Maanen (1995) describes note-taking as a liminal activity vital to the researcher's ability to collect a rich body of data. Drawing from the advice of key figures on ethnographic note-taking (Kleinmann and Copp 1993; Wolcott 2005), I adopted a process comprised of three distinct, yet interrelated phases. The first was to make preliminary handwritten notes in a small notebook about events, people, interactions, thoughts, and suspicions while in the field. I made no attempt to conceal this from anyone in the field as it acted as an inherent reminder to participants of my role and intention to conduct research (see Van Maanen 1995). On the rare occasions I considered note-taking inappropriate, I simply took mental notes that I typed out upon returning home that day or evening.

The second phase of note-taking began once I had returned home after each period in the field. The size of each entry was dependent on my experiences during participant observation, but in general they increased as my knowledge of the street sex market, people, and cultural fabric developed. While I was not able to complete some of the larger entries on the same day as the fieldwork, I ensured each entry was complete before I went back to Curtis Street (Kleinman and Copp 1993). While some suggest a second journal for recording the researcher's personal reflections (Aull Davies 1999), I made a concerted decision to incorporate this additional information into the one journal, because I considered my experiences and what I observed in the field as inseparable. This strategy is consistent with an increasing trend in both qualitative and ethnographic research that suggests the inclusion of the researcher's experiences and emotions can add analytical rigour to note-taking by encouraging reflexive research practice and critical reflection throughout the fieldwork process (Hoffmann 2007; Kleinmann and Copp 1993).

The final phase of note-taking required me to re-read the notes from the previous day or night, where, after some sleep or reflection, I would add to them

(Kleinmann and Copp 1993). This final “look over” was particularly useful as I would often recall additional points of interest that I had either overlooked or initially thought were insignificant. These points often provided depth to my observations and allowed me to reflexively consider the implications of my observations while still in the field. In many cases this level of note-taking directed my intentions for the following day or period of participant observation.

Interviews

Data gathered through participant observation was supported through the strategic use of individual semi-structured interviews. While some consider the use of formal interview in research using participant observation a sign of inadequate fieldwork practice (Wolcott 2005), others see it as a way to enrich the researcher’s cultural learning (Agar 1996). I incorporated individual semi-structured interviews into this research as part of a strategy designed to incorporate the views of people and groups that may be difficult to capture through participant observation alone. These interviews provided significant value to the research, but did not proceed as initially planned.

My initial plan to conduct 20 individual semi-structured interviews with people selling sex on the street and their partners changed as a result of the success of participant observation. Instead, I conducted only six interviews with people from this group. Four of these were used to engage with a select few women and spotters with whom I had not been able to successfully establish rapport. Interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes and were conducted in various locations, including in my car while parked in Curtis Street, in my car while parked at the Dandenong Showgrounds (a space to which sex workers commonly direct their clients for the sexual component of the sexual-economic exchange), in their home(s), and while sitting at the “picnic table”. While I commenced each interview with the same list of questions I wanted to address, the topics covered in each interview were ultimately guided by the interviewee, and were therefore often unique.

One reason for the initial inclusion of interviews into the research design was to use them as a way to incorporate the voice of people who had a stake in street sex work in Dandenong, but who were not active participants. These included people from local government, businesses, residents, police, and potentially relevant youth and community services. I had initially hoped that input from these groups would

develop a holistic body of data on street sex work in Dandenong, but this part of the research did not turn out as planned. Local government, a selection of local businesses (situated either directly in Curtis Street or in the immediate area), and some potentially relevant youth and community organisation were approached directly, by phone, and/or email but chose not to participate. I decided not to send an invitation to local police while conducting participant observation through fear that knowledge of an association between police and I would pose a threat to my relationships in the street sex market. Groups and individuals that did not respond were re-sent the information four more times through the 12 months of fieldwork, but no further response was received. While frustrating at the time, this relative silence on the issue was consistent with the position of street sex work in Dandenong from multiple parts of the local youth and community sector through my time in the field:

There's nothing to see here.

Interviews were also included in the research design as a way to potentially incorporate the voice of men who bought sex on Curtis Street into the research. To recruit men from this group, I asked some of the sex workers with whom I had established good relationships to pass on a research information forms and a request for participation to clients whom they thought may be willing to participate. This strategy proved successful, and allowed me to conduct interviews with nine clients over a three-week period. Interviews with clients were conducted in various locations, such as in one of our cars, at a local pub, and at the home of a woman who worked on Curtis Street. Because of the illegality and stigma associated with buying sex in an illicit street sex market, I assumed that getting some of these men to discuss their use of commercial sex openly would be difficult. It was with this in mind that while approaching each interview with a list of questions I hoped to address, my main objective was simply to get these men talking about street sex work in Dandenong. The content of these interviews is discussed through the following chapters.

All interviews followed a structured ethical practice. All potential interviewees were provided with written and verbal descriptions of the research, the purpose of the interview, and the treatment of collected information. If they chose to participate, interviewees were required to read and sign two consent forms: one for their own

keeping and one for the researcher's records. There were two occasions when interviewer suspected the potentially interviewee experienced difficulty reading and comprehending the written information and content of consent forms provided. In both cases the interviewer offered to read both forms to the interviewee. On both occasions the offer was accepted. All interview participants were remunerated with \$50 cash at the conclusion of the interview (Liamputtong 2007). No mention of this payment was made by the researcher prior to the person consenting to a research interview as prior knowledge of financial remuneration in such a marginal population may have provided an inducement that negatively impacted the person's ability to freely determine their participation in a research interview. Interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and were later transcribed by the researcher. During the transcription process the names of interviewees, other people and potentially identifiable data was removed or altered to ensure anonymity. Consent forms and interview transcriptions were kept in a locked filing cabinet on Australian Catholic University's premises. Digital recordings were then deleted, and transcriptions transferred to a university drive from where they were assessed and analysed in the thesis's construction.

Analysis

The term analysis is used broadly in the description of the management, analysis, and interpretation of empirical data. The analysis of this study was concerned with two key sources of empirical data: the field notes of participant observation, and interview data from clients and sex workers. Field notes from participant observation were managed in NVivo 10, where I began coding data during the fieldwork as key themes emerged and developed. The result was a reflexive approach through which I was able to explore and clarify further my understandings through additional observation, or informal and formal interview, and to continue considering these understandings until the completion of the written draft. Consistent with this studies focus on the relationships of local sex workers, a relational approach was used in the initial phase of coding of field note data. This approach has been successfully used to define the boundaries of marginal networks in other studies (Heckathorn 1997; Marsden 2005), and to identify key themes in explored social network such as trust, the relationship between group and individual

goals, the development and use of strategy, and social and organisational systems (Krebs 2002; Carley 2003; van der Hulst 2011; Hulst 2009). Coding began with the mapping of network boundaries, which it achieved through the identification of people who sold sex on the street in Dandenong, and other people with direct interest in the economy of street sex work in Dandenong. As people's connection to street sex work is often fluid (Sanders and Hardy 2013; Rowe 2006), this analysis was conducted for each month of the fieldwork. This analytical approach proved valuable as it allowed the study to track changes in the network size and structure as people moved through Dandenong's street sex market.

The study also used thematic coding in its analysis of data collected through participant observation. Thematic coding is an analytical process often used in ethnographic research that allows the study to develop theories and assertion that are grounded its own data (Guest 2012; Saldana 2009). The process of coding developed alongside my immersion into the market's social network, and ultimately my understanding of the social and cultural processes on the street. The initial phase of thematic coding focused on directly observable phenomena such as the processes of the market, the working and drug use patterns of sex workers and spotters, and interactions between people on the street. As my participation in the market's social network and understanding of the rules of the game developed, a range of new and more complex themes began to emerge. While continuing to build on the body of coded data of observable phenomena, the process of coding increasingly focused on the nature of social interactions between people in the market's network, the rules and cultural markers in the network and the ways people negotiated these, and the effect that people's position in the social network seemed have on their access to resource and experience. This progressive method of analysis, in which I was able to extend and refine my understanding, helped me to narrow my focus onto a range of elements that shaped the daily lives of people selling sex in this context, and ultimately shaped the ability of the researcher to manage, analyse, and interpret a large body of rich, ethnographic data.

Interviews with sex workers and clients were also digitally recorded and later transcribed. Once in transcribed form, they were entered into NVivo 10 and thematically coded. Interviews were entered into their own software project file where interviews of clients and sex workers were separately managed and analysed. However, the interviews often contributed to my interpretation of social and cultural

life on Curtis Street through the entirety of the research process. Data from interviews were thematically coded. The initial coding of interviews was managed and analysed in direct relation to the interview questions, and served as a way for me to re-engage with an interview narrative that, in most cases, was exploratory and followed lines of contextually-relevant information as they evolved in each interview. It was in this secondary analysis where key themes of the experiences of the clients, the meanings they gave to commercial sex, and their connection to the street sex market really began to emerge. Interviews with sex workers were focused on specific aspects of the street sex market or its social network and were coded accordingly. Interviews with clients often covered a broader range of questions and therefore required a broader approach to coding through which information was chunked within a range of themes, such as the nature of their connection to the people selling sex on Curtis Street, their perceptions of various sex workers and spotters, and how they thought about their use of commercial sex. This data management and analytical process served as framework through which I was able to compare responses and identify themes in a way that contributed to my understanding and their representation in the research.

Ethics

Seeking and being granted formal ethics clearance is a prerequisite for academic research involving human participants (Liamputtong 2007). While gaining ethical approval is an essential part of the process, and requires the researcher to consider the potential effects of the research and its processes on research participants, it is rarely enough when working with vulnerable populations (Liamputtong 2007; Dickson-Swift, James, and Liamputtong 2008). Conducting research in vulnerable populations requires concerted adherence to an ethical practice throughout both the planning and implementation of the research (Block et al. 2013; Liamputtong 2007). How ethnographers see the cultural fabric of the researched group is affected by their background, socio-economic status, beliefs, and values. An ethnographer lacking a reflexive approach runs the risk of observing the environment in accordance with their cultural expectations, which may contradict or at least conceal the context's cultural reality (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Reflexivity is described as the "self-aware analysis of the dynamics between researcher and participant" (Gobo 2008, 42)

and requires the researcher's consideration of their position in the field. Incorporating reflexivity into ethnographic research brings the researcher's cultural bias to light and allows them to enter the observed cultural context with their eyes, ears, and mind open (Fine 1993, 274). Reflexivity has been an ongoing part of this research, and has involved ongoing reflection on my role as both researcher and social participant in the network of people selling sex on Curtis Street.

The first step in a reflexive approach to research is the consideration of the differences in power between the researcher and the researched (Chapman 2010; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). When conducting research on marginal populations, such as the one at the heart of this project, differences in resources and power between researcher and researched can be vast (Block et al. 2013, 71; Chapman 2010). In addition to the research contributing to my career in the academy, it was my gender as a male conducting research in a group of particularly vulnerable women, and the gap between our socio-economic statuses, that required concerted consideration. My gender as a man conducting research with women selling sex on the street appeared a point of concern for some people and organisations external to the research, and was a power dynamic that required ongoing consideration throughout the research process. Part of my initial challenge in the field was to establish a position in the network of people selling sex in Curtis Street that was inherently different from the roles occupied by males in and around the street sex market. I achieved this by adhering to a model of active transparency about the research, my role in the field, and even elements of my personal life (Sands 2002), which ultimately distinguished me from other men in and around this network in the eyes of the women selling sex in on Curtis Street. This transparency allowed me to develop a reputation as an honest, trustworthy person who had no direct interest in their sexuality or the money they made on the street, while providing people all the information necessary to determine their level of engagement with me and the research. While little has been written on the effect of researcher transparency in researching vulnerable populations, there is no doubt that this had a significant positive effect on my ability to establish some degree of trust with the people at the heart of this project.

Researching marginal populations often requires the researchers to extend their ethical considerations beyond the protection of a participant's human rights, and to include an emphasis on reciprocity (Liamputtong 2007; Block et al. 2013; Eder and

Fingerson 2002). In addition to the use of standard ethical protocols, such as gaining informed consent and remunerating interviewees, the participation of most participants was repaid through various human endeavours born of an orientation to harm minimisation. Referral pathways were established with members of the Southern Health Community and Family Services Team to provide resources to research participants seeking or requiring additional support. I also commonly acted as informal referee (usually in the form of a “lift” or as just as moral support) to other potentially relevant services and programs with people seeking assistance or solutions to specific instances in their lives. Accommodation services, drug detoxification programs, primary health, and legal services were those most commonly accessed through this pathway. I also employed a number of other more direct harm-minimisation strategies as I became aware of specific issues; these strategies included distributing information on safe sex and injecting practices, appropriately discarding used syringes when necessary, and in some cases monitoring people (as best I could) when they were particularly affected by substances. As my role shifted between researcher and network participant, I also found myself engaging in more subtle forms of harm minimisation, which included trying to calm angry group members from committing acts of violence, verbally highlighting the potentially negative outcomes associated with participation in some other high-risk illegal activities, and on some occasions talking people away from big losing runs on the “pokies”. Complex, ethical practice within the market was an ongoing, highly-reflexive practice that focused on managing and reducing the risks to participants and researcher as they evolved.

Effective reflexive ethical consideration extends beyond the direct field engagement of research participants and into the presentation of data. Protecting the identity of research participants, and reducing the possibility of this research contributing to the reproduction of harm in the space currently used by people soliciting on the street in Dandenong, has therefore been of primary importance in the organisation and presentation of this ethnography. During the fieldwork, I gave participants the option of choosing an alias which I then used in reference to them in the ethnographic presentation. People who did not provide an alias have been allocated one by the researcher. The use of aliases has been an effective practice in comparable studies, as it protects the identity of research participants while still providing the reader with a sense of continuity and identification with the

participants as the thesis develops (Rowe 2006; Dalla 2006). I have also created a fictional name for the main street currently appropriated as a street sex market in Dandenong, as well as for other landmarks that could be used to identify the exact location of this space. This strategy further conceals the identity of research participants and limits the potential for the flow of information about the market in this thesis to contribute to the reproduction of harm in this space.

Finally, in the interests of accuracy, I have made a conscious effort to use terms and phrases used as part of the cultural vernacular among people on Curtis Street in the presentation of data and discussion through the thesis. The most notable examples include the use of the term *girls* in reference to women of all ages selling sex on Curtis Street, *sex* work in reference to what they do on Curtis Street, and *spotters* in description of those allocated the duty of protecting female workers while they solicit and sell sex on the street. While the use of the term girls in reference to women selling sex on Curtis Street in this thesis has the potential to invite intense criticism from people and groups at either end of the spectrum of thought on commercial sex, its widespread use among the women selling sex in Curtis Street when talking about their sex work and the sex work of their peers informs its use in the presentation of their social life throughout the thesis. The use of aliases and cultural vernacular not only protects the identity of research participants, but brings the reader closer to the cultural fabric and daily lived experience inside the street sex market on Curtis Street.

Conclusion

This chapter outlines the methodological approach adopted for this research and the range of sociological tools it draws upon in its organisation and discussion of the micro-world of the street sex market on Curtis Street. This research is an ethnography of street sex work in Dandenong that uses tools developed by Bourdieu for use in rational choice theory and network theory. Data for the research was gathered through a 12-month period of participant observation among people selling sex on Curtis Street, and the strategic use of individual semi-structured interview with sex workers and their clients. The following two chapters present the data collected from the street sex market on Curtis Street during the period of fieldwork. The focus of the following chapter is on the presentation and processes of the market

as they appear on its front-line. The chapter following the next moves the ethnography into the network of people selling sex in this context. Together, they paint a picture of the practice of street sex work on Curtis Street and the daily lived experience of the people who sell sex in it.

Vignette:

As soon as Pok walked back into the unit after scoring from his cousin in the carpark at the local Coles supermarket, he went straight into the lounge where he sat on the couch directly in front of the coffee table. He took the small folded-up piece of paper from his sock and began to carefully unwrap it. Linda was in the kitchen but moved into the lounge as soon as she heard him come in. She had been waiting eagerly for the past 20 minutes after giving him \$200 that she earned doing a few jobs earlier that afternoon to go and score with. Linda had been complaining of “feeling sick”, and the heroin she’d sent Pok off to score was going to make her feel better.

Linda: “’bout fuckin’ time ... I hope he didn’t short us like he did last time.”

Pok: “Nah, I had a talk with him. I told him not to fuck with us or we’ll start getting our gear from someone else. I reckon he hooked us up with this to make up for it.”

The small, unwrapped piece of paper that now sat on the coffee table in front of him revealed a surprisingly petite, broken-up piece of heroin he’d just scored. He began lightly toying at it with his finger as he assesses its size and apparent quality. It’s supposed to be a 0.6 (of a gram), enough to stop both Linda and Pok from “getting sick” for a few hours, until Linda goes back “up the street” to earn some more money so they can repeat the process again.

Pok: “Yep, I reckon he’s given us an extra point.”

Linda: “So he should. We’re his best customers. He should be takin’ care of us; not tryin’ to fuck us over ... How much money does he get from us, man?”

The conversation peters out to nothing as each begins playing their part in a process they have repeated at least daily over the past two years. The importance each places on what is now happening is so great that it almost looks like some sort of sacred ritual. Linda grabs a half-empty bottle of water and spoon from under the coffee table and places them on top of the table just to the side of the small parcel of heroin Pok continues to examine. She then reaches down the side of the couch beside

her and emerges with two unopened FITS, which she neatly places next to the spoon and bottle of water. The way she moves and the way she sets these key implements next to Pok reminds me of a theatre nurse. Pok moves into action by repositioning the spoon directly in front of him as he very carefully transfers the heroin into it, using the paper it was packed in as a type of makeshift funnel. It's at this stage that I get my first clear look at the amount of heroin \$200 buys; I'm surprised how small it is. With the heroin in the spoon, Pok picks up one of the FITS Linda placed on the coffee table, unwraps it from its packaging and begins using its butt end to break up the small chunks of heroin into a powder. Seemingly satisfied, he re-grips the syringe, puts the needle end into the bottle of water, and sucks up a small amount into the syringe's barrel. With movements that remind me of a surgeon, he very carefully uses the syringe to shoot this water into the heroin and begins mixing it together again with the butt end of the syringe into a thin chalky liquid mixture. After 30-45 seconds of mixing, his eyes come off the heroin for the first time as he puts the syringe down on the coffee table next to him. He reaches for a loose cigarette and pair of scissors from under the coffee table and cuts a small, very thin piece from the butt end of the cigarette. He places the small cut-off piece of cigarette butt on the end of the needle, puts it in the heroin mixture and slowly begins to pull back on the syringe's plunger.

As the heroin mixture reaches the 30ml mark on the syringe's barrel he stops, lifts the syringe up to the light and flicks it with his finger twice. Satisfied there are no air bubbles in the syringe's barrel, he puts the needle back into the centre of the filter in the heroin mixture and continues filling the syringe until it reaches the 60ml marker. He then repeats the process of flicking the chamber to remove any potential air bubbles in the mixture. He places the now loaded syringe back on the table next to the other one. Almost immediately, he picks up the other syringe, unwraps its plastic packaging and begins the same process of sucking up the heroin mixture into the syringe's chamber, although this time stopping around 10ml short of the amount in the other syringe.

Pok: "I gotta make sure the boss gets most of it or I'll be in the shit." He winks.

I realise now that the first syringe is for Linda; the second with the slightly smaller amount in it is his. With all the heroin mixture now transferred into the two syringes, the process of “mulling up” is complete. It’s finally time to “get on”. It is Linda’s turn first. As Pok picks up the loaded syringe with the slightly larger amount of heroin in, Linda repositions herself with a sense of anticipation and purpose on the edge of the couch beside him. She removes her hoodie and pulls the neckline of her t-shirt down while tilting her head to the right, exposing the left side of her neck to Pok. Familiar with the routine, Pok stands up, gently rubbing the 2–3inch black part of vein on the side of Linda’s neck with his index finger for a moment before he carefully begins guiding the needle into the spot he’d eyeballed along the already-blackened part of the vein. Linda winces a little at first but takes a breath and relaxes.

Linda: “Have you got it?”

Pok looks at the syringe where he sees the small puff of blood enter the syringe and mix in with the heroin mixture in its barrel; that tells him the eye of the needle was now sitting in the blackened vein in Linda’s neck.

Pok: “Yeah. Got it.”

With that, he begins depressing the syringe’s plunger in a slow yet purposeful manner. After emptying approximately a third of the chamber’s contents into the vein in Linda’s neck, he and takes a closer look at the site where the needle entered Linda’s skin.

Pok: “Are you OK, babe?”

Linda: “Yeah. Keep going.”

By this stage Linda’s demeanour and body posture has changed in a way that suggests she is already beginning to feel the effect of the heroin being injected into her. The pained look on her face when Pok first put the needle in her neck has been replaced with one suggesting a sense of relief and euphoria. Seemingly satisfied following his observation of the site at which the needle entered Linda’s neck, Pok puts his thumb back on the plunger and depresses the remainder of the syringe’s contents into Linda’s vein in one slow, steady effort. Linda relaxes yet again. Her

eyes are now completely closed as she looks to be taken over with an extreme sense of calm, perhaps bliss.

Pok: "All done. I'm just gonna flush it babe."

With the syringe now empty, Pok draws back on the plunger slightly and sucks around 10–20mls of Linda's blood back into the chamber of the syringe before he expels it back into her vein. He repeats this two more times before he finally removes the needle from her neck. Perhaps noting that I was turning pale, Pok comments:

"It just flushes any left over bits in the FIT and makes sure the heroin doesn't just sit there (in the vein). You don't have to do it, but you should."

Linda doesn't seem to care at this stage. As soon as the needle is removed she presses two of her fingers on the point where Pok injected her to allow the small wound to close over, and sits back into the couch where she seems to float off into her own world as she stares at the television.

It's Pok's turn. After a brief moment when he takes the syringe he's injected Linda with and places it in a large yellow sharps container in the corner of the room, Pok moves with anticipation through his own "jackin' up" process. In contrast to the time and care he took when assisting Linda, Pok's process is relatively quick and even a little crude. After sitting back down next to Linda he quickly locates a wound on the inner part of his left forearm he used repeatedly over the past few weeks when jackin' up. Similar to Linda's neck, it is all black and bruised from repeated injections, and has a small, always seemingly open wound at its core. Now with syringe in hand and eyeballing the open red welt on his arm, he carefully but relatively quickly inserts the needle of the loaded syringe into it. Unlike with Linda previously, there is no puff of blood in the chamber's syringe.

Pok: "Fuck. This one's going bad too [this vein]. It happens to us, you know? It [injecting heroin] fucks ya' veins after a while so ya gotta keep finding new ones."

He lifts the cuff of his pants and looks at his calf for a moment as he seems to consider another potential site before he pushes his pants back down and shifts his attention back to the bruised, open wound on his inner forearm. After picking at its core with his finger two to three times he decides to give it another try. I can feel the

blood drain from my face as I watch on, but for Pok it simply appears as a frustrating yet routine part of his day. Thankfully, after another careful yet quick entry jab at the centre of the red welt at a slightly different angle, a small puff of blood shoots into the chamber of the syringe. He has the tip of the needle in the vein, and boy, does he seem relieved. With that he pushes down on the plunger and starts injecting the heroin mixture into his arm. After a moment he stops, lets the syringe simply hang from his arm (I nearly faint at the sight) as he re-examines the site where the needle went into his skin. Content, he re-grasps the syringe and plunges the remainder into his arm in one swift push. As he's done with Linda, he finishes the process by drawing back on the syringe's plunger 2-3 times as he flushes out any remaining heroin from the syringe while making sure the heroin begins moving away from the injecting site and through his veins.

Similar to Linda, his movements and posture indicate that the heroin has already taken effect. His eyes are half closed as if he is struggling to stay awake, his shoulders slumped, and his movements slowed. Instead of standing up and putting the used FIT into the sharps container in the corner of the room, he simply puts the cap back on the end of the syringe as he slouches back into the couch. Both just sit there, sunken into the couch, their eyes half open, staring at the TV while in an apparent world of their own. Everything they've done so far today they did so they could experience what they are experiencing now. In the next few hours, Linda will go back out onto Curtis Street where she'd hope to earn between \$350-\$400 so they can not only get on one more time today, but also again later tonight before they go to sleep. But for now, at least, they are exactly where they want to be.

THE SPACES OF STREET SEX WORK IN DANDENONG

The previous chapters outlined the rationale for researching the street sex market in Dandenong, discussed key findings from research in comparable locations, and described the guiding methodology and methods used to collect data to address the research questions. This chapter moves the thesis to the front-line of the street sex market on Curtis Street, where it explores the social production of street sex work in Dandenong. It draws upon Lefebvre's model of space as a socially-produced phenomena, which it uses to explore the relationship between the dominant *representation of space* in which local police serve as key front-line agents, and the market's *representation of space* created by people selling and buying sex in this space. This chapter provides an account of the ongoing tensions within the relationship as they unfold on the markets front-line, which serves as the framework for the thesis to address questions about the space of the street sex work in Dandenong.

The sex market on Curtis Street

As often observed in other street sex markets, the space currently appropriated as a street sex market in Dandenong is situated on the outskirts of its city centre, and between its commercial and residential spaces (Draus, Roddy, and Asabigi 2015; Cameron 2004; Hubbard 2002; Laing and Cook 2014). At first glance the site used as the street sex market on Curtis Street looks similar to many other spaces in and around central Dandenong. Curtis Street runs directly off one of central Dandenong's busiest roads where, after two blocks of commercial space, it becomes a predominantly residential street. The part of Curtis Street currently used by sex workers sits at the intersection between these commercial and residential zones, along a 20–30 metre strip that surrounds a public payphone. The payphone itself is slightly offset from the footpath that runs along the side of some single-storey office space before it reaches the entrance to an off-street carparking space, typically filled with the cars of local office workers during business hours, but largely vacant outside these times. Directly opposite on the other side of the road is more occupied office space with its own dedicated carpark at the rear. On both sides of the road, it is

these off-street carparks that designate the end of the commercial space of Curtis Street and the start of the residential area. Of particular concern in the current context, one of the initial residential spaces is used as a refuge for highly-marginalised young people whose placement in the immediate vicinity of a street sex market appears to put them in significant risk. On the other two corners of the Curtis Street–Robinsons Road intersection is a small block of public space that houses a permanent picnic table, and a vacant lot of land that appears destined for a new multi-storey residential complex aimed at young professionals wanting to live within easy access of Dandenong’s central business district.

The evolution of an emerging street sex market

The street sex market in Dandenong is a small, emerging market whose presence on the fringe of Dandenong’s CBD is held in a constant state of tension between the spatial strategies of government, urban planners, and police, and the tactics of market participants who subvert the dominant representation of space to appropriate it for their own purposes. At the time of the fieldwork, the spatial point around which this was being played out was a public phone booth on Curtis Street. Tanya, a woman in her early 40s who had been selling sex on Curtis Street since her early 20s—between brief periods working in brothels (both legal and illegal), as an escort, and on the streets of St Kilda—describes a recent spatial history of street sex work in Dandenong and processes that led to the market’s current appropriation of the phone booth on Curtis Street as its spatial hub.

See, when I first started coming out here all this shit was going on down toward Ashdown Street [a high-traffic street in central Dandenong]. You’d see girls hangin’ around there all the time. If you stood right on the corner all the guys driving down Lonsdale Street would see ya and they’d just stop almost right on the corner for ya, or some of ’em would turn up Curtis Street and pull over just in front of the pub over here. But then, as it sort of became known a bit more we’d pretty much just stay around the pub. I mean fuck, man, wouldn’t you? It was fuckin’ great. You could just be sitting in here [a local hotel] drinkin’ with your mates and be thinking “fuck, man, I need some more money”, and then just come out the front here and get a job ... or a few jobs if ya want to get on or some shit. ... Some of the blokes started coming in the pub looking for us though [for jobs], and the management started to clue on and they started kicking us out. That was pretty much the end of that, but all it really did was push us all back out the front of the pub again.

In the weeks and months that followed, tensions between older and younger women selling sex on Curtis Street intensified to the point that people in the two groups separated and began soliciting from different parts of Curtis Street:

It was pretty hectic down here for a while. Some of the younger ones started coming down the street and doing a few jobs here and there Then a few of the older girls, like Kaz, started getting pissed off at a few of 'em 'cos she reckoned they were stealing jobs from us. It got real bad. There were lots of fights and shit ... you know. So then Kaz goes to 'em, "well, if you guys really wanna do this shit, then you fuckin' stay up there" (points towards the phone booth area of Curtis Street) ... most of 'em were staying up there anyway [at the youth accommodation facility on Curtis Street], "and we'll stay down here and we'll all be sweet".

Escalating tensions between established sex workers and younger women wanting to capitalise on the economic opportunities available to them in Curtis Street produced two key sites from which women solicited in the area.

But then the jacks [police] started givin' us a hard time for hanging around down there near the pub. They started saying shit to us like we're hurting business for the pub and other shops and shit. Fuckin' bullshit, man. We probably spent more money in that place [the local hotel] than anyone else. But the jacks were on us pretty hard so we sorta started moving up back up to the next block away from those businesses and shit ... you know, near the carpark bit just up there?

This positioned them in much closer proximity to the younger women who could now often be seen working near the phone booth.

But then some of the older ones started to cotton on that some of the johns out here liked the younger ones [sex workers] and would pretty much just hang around this bit around here [the phone booth area], and started to come up here, too. Every now and then someone will start hocking their box somewhere else [around Dandenong], but most of the fuckin' shit that goes on pretty much happens around here [the phone booth area on Curtis Street] now.

As Tanya describes, most solicitation in the early stages of the market's development happened closer to the central business district, where sex workers were visibly exposed to a higher volume of passing traffic. After police pressure pushed them into the more secluded area of Curtis Street and to the front of the local hotel, complaints from the hotel management resulted in another spate of police pressure that pushed the street sex working practices of most women in the area

towards the street's residential space. A period of conflict erupted between older women selling sex on Curtis Street and the younger women housed in the nearby youth accommodation facility who began soliciting from the space around the public phone booth, after which a relative truce was reached and the market appeared to settle at this 20–30 metre stretch of Curtis Street. Over time, the repeated actions and interactions between women selling sex on the street and their clients created a spatial-norm which the market's participants and other key stakeholders, such as police, local business, and residents currently recognise as the market's spatial epicentre.

The spatial practice of Curtis Street

You gotta be careful out here, man. It's not like it is over at the plaza or wherever. It's different here. You'll see.

Ongoing tensions between police as advocates of the representation of space on Curtis Street and the tactics of market participants to use this space for their own ends are played out in a type of hidden war on the street, as both parties have an interest in concealing the market as a space of representation from the broader community. The market's proximity to the central business district brings traffic off Dandenong's main roads and into the residential area, causing a lot of traffic to run through the roundabout intersection on Curtis Street at the phone booth area where most local street sex workers solicit. During peak traffic times, particularly late in the afternoon, driving through the intersection can be challenging; the sounds of car horns honking and tyres screeching from frustrated drivers are common. The regularity with which police drive through this part of Curtis Street as they visually scan the sidewalks on either side of the road may initially catch the eye of a casual observer, but for someone unaware of the presence of a street sex market it could simply be seen as the result of the suburb's higher-than-average crime rate rather than anything specific to this particular space.

While pedestrian traffic has often thinned from central Dandenong's main roads by the time it reaches this roundabout on Curtis Street, mainstream pedestrian movement through this space is still common as people move to and from their parked cars, move between residential and commercial spaces on foot, use the public phone, or simply use this public space to socialise with friends or acquaintances.

Like other spaces in and around Dandenong's CBD, this space is often used by people from various socio-economic positions and from various cultural backgrounds, many of who have nothing to do with the street sex market. Local employees can often be seen moving through this space during standard business hours. Their smart, clean-cut style of dress and sense of purpose indicates a lack of time, and their need to be somewhere else marks them out as employees from one of the local offices. Similarly, the start and end of each working day brings with it a flow of people wearing high-visibility workwear through this space as they make their way to and from one of the local factories, worksites, or even to one of the nearby hotels at the end of the day. At all times of the day and into the evening, this space's proximity to public housing, youth and community services, and private low-cost housing brings a mix of low socio-economic and newly-arrived people from culturally diverse backgrounds through this space as they go about their daily lives. People in these groups are more likely than other members of the community to adopt a more casual or relaxed style of dress and are more likely to stop and use the public phone or socialise with peers they encounter in this space.

Curtis Street, the phone booth, and the market's space of representation

The number of women selling sex on Curtis Street is relatively small which, together with the casual style of dress, reduces the market's visibility. On an initial observation, similarities in style and social connection between non-sex-working and sex-working people on Curtis Street provides a type of social camouflage, making it difficult to identify any signs of the group to which a woman may belong. The market's camouflage is further enhanced by the small number of women using this space to solicit, and the relative abundance of prospective clients compared to sex workers in this market. This makes the image of sex workers spending long periods of time soliciting on the street that is often observed in other markets (Rowe 2006; Draus, Roddy, and Asabigi 2015) a relatively rare practice in this context.

There's not that many of us out here really. I dunno, I probably know of maybe 10 or so other girls who come out here. Some girls, you know, like Helen, are out here all the time. But most just come out here, get what they need, and go back home or wherever. (Emma)

I know heaps of girls out here. But people pretty much come and go. It's not like other places where there's girls out here all the time though. There's usually like, one or two ... maybe a few more, but not many Some'll do a few jobs and just take off, and other girls are out here all the time. (Jezzabelle)

While there were periods where one or more women stood or strolled the footpath near the phone booth area in search of a job, an initial observation of the area was more likely to capture single male drivers repeatedly circling through the area as they surveyed pedestrian traffic, or parked on Curtis Street in clear view of the phone booth area.

See, like most of the guys out here know that at least one of us will be out here working, pretty much anytime. So if they don't see someone [soliciting on Curtis Street] straight away, then they know that they're [the presumably present sex worker], you know, busy, and will probably be back soon. In a way that's good for us. I mean, when it's busy out here guys'll just park all around here and wait for us. So it's like, as soon as you get back [from the previous job] the next job is already sitting there waiting for you. On nights like that, man, it's pretty much snap, snap, snap. I get what I need and get out of here. (Abby)

Consistent with both formal and informal modes of policing increasingly observed in street sex markets (Waltman 2011; Danna 2012), the focus of most retributive forms of policing is focused on prospective clients, and means that these men are the first to be questioned by passing police. Of course, the outcome of these risks amounted to little if a client adopting the less risky strategy of repeatedly driving through Curtis Street was able to time their pass at the precise moment a sex worker was dropped back in Curtis Street. With a running, mobile car, they are simply able to pull up directly in front of the newly-arrived sex worker, pushing themselves to the head of the client queue. This practice reduces the amount of time sex workers spent soliciting on Curtis Street and contributed to the relative concealment of the market as a space of representation.

A tactic of style

In addition to its small size, much interaction on Curtis Street is concealed by the relaxed, casual style of dress worn by most women. The following discussion describes how the seemingly unique style of street sex workers in Curtis Street is both a product of the fluidity of their daily sex work practice, their rejection of

stereotypical labels often attached to people who sell sex, and as a deliberate tactic against the constraints of the representational space of Curtis Street.

In contrast to the styles of dress often observed in other studies of street sex work whereby sex workers demarcate themselves from non-sex workers as part of a strategy to draw the attention of prospective clients (Rowe 2006; Weitzer 2005; Sanders 2004), most women on Curtis Street dressed in a style that mirrored that of many other low socio-economic women moving through this part of Curtis Street. Adopting an attire of track pants, leggings, hipster jeans, loose-fitting summer dresses, t-shirts, and hoodies, often with either flat sole shoes or runners, provided sex workers with a type of social camouflage designed to conceal the market's space of representation from mainstream view. Even as my knowledge of the field developed over time, similarities in style often made distinguishing street sex workers from other women using this particular section of Curtis Street difficult. It appeared that many prospective clients also found distinguishing sex workers from other local women moving through this space challenging. This latter point often resulted in non-sex working women moving through the space of the street sex market also meant having to negotiate a client gaze.

Dressing down

The casual style of dress used by most women selling sex on Curtis Street is part of a broader tactic that allows them to move between Dandenong's representation of space and the market's space of representation. Most women considered their sex work to be a fluid, opportunistic part of their everyday experience. Selling sex on Curtis Street was something most did between spending time at one of the local hotels, going to a pharmacy to "get me 'done" (methadone), smoking and/or scoring some "choof" (marijuana) with friends, and socialising with peers and other people they encountered as part of their normal daily experience:

I only know one girl who comes out here dressed up like some she's kinda whore. But she's the only one. The rest of us are not only out here for that though, so like I'd have to go home and change if I was gonna do that. Like before, yeah, I've been out here since early this afternoon, but I haven't just been out here getting jobs. I've been at the chemist getting my 'done, then I had to meet Joel at the market, then I was at the pub for a bit, too. Then I saw a few guys I know driving around the place so I thought, "fuck it, I'll go make some money". But, if I got around looking like some sorta ho', I'd never hear the end of it [from her peers]. (Abby)

Abby's description not only highlights the fluidity of her sex work and its relation to her understated style of dress, but introduces the adoption of a casual style of dress as a tactic of resistance against the stigmatisation of street sex work. Here, a relaxed, everyday style of dress was used by women as a way to distance themselves from the prospect of peers assessing their sex work to be a product their own sexual needs or desire for male intimacy and attention.

I'm out here doin' this shit 'cos I've got a drug problem I've gotta pay for. But I ain't no fuckin' whore. (Tamara)

Fuckin' Rachel, man. Did you see her out here last night? She's wearing this little fuckin' dress thing and flashin' her g-banger to everyone drivin' past Fuckin' disgraceful, man. It makes us all look like fuckin' whores. I haven't seen her yet today, but when I do I gonna have a fuckin' word to her ... I don't reckon I'll be on the only one either. I wouldn't like to be in her shoes at the moment. (Helen)

What, do you expect me to standing around out here in fishnet stockings and come-fuck-me boots, do ya? You won't find any o' that shit around here, mate. Girls get bashed for doin' shit like that.' (Abby to a prospective client who pulled his car to the kerb as she solicited on Curtis Street)

As these quotes suggest, most street sex workers' use of a casual style of dress when working on the street was a product of their fluid participation in sex work as part of their everyday life, but over time had evolved into a norm to which others were also expected to adhere. Dressing seductively invited criticism from peers such as "ho", "slut", or "whore". This characterisation was in direct contrast to how most women thought about their sex work and was therefore seen as highly offensive. All women considered their sex work to be their only real option to generate an income large enough to fund their substance addiction. Selling sex, while troubling to some degree, was considered little more than an act of labour they were willing to perform for a sum of money they deemed acceptable. As described in the previous section, it was their desire to score and "get on" that informed most people's decision to sell sex on Curtis Street. Their use of a casual, sometimes messy style of dress when selling sex was one way women signified this to people in their peer network and to others they interacted with as part of their daily lived experience.

Just 'cos we're out doing shit like this doesn't mean we're all hos or anything. I fuckin' hate when cunts look at me like that. It makes me sick. (Mae)

I'm telling ya now, man. I'm not gonna do one fucking thing for these cunts [clients] unless they're paying me a shitload of money to do it. If one 'em wants me to dress up like a fuckin' slut or some shit, then he can buy the fuckin' clothes himself and pay me to fuckin' wear 'em. Otherwise I'm just gonna do my own shit. (Julia)

In addition to a visual rejection of the “whore” or “slut” labels was an understanding among sex workers and their partners that the understated style of dress used by most women selling sex in this context was part of a broader tactic designed to reduce the likelihood of police intervention while soliciting and selling sex on Curtis Street. There seemed to be two lines of thought within the network of sex workers about the exact nature of the strategy. The minority view, typically held by people whose connection to Curtis Street was short-term or sporadic, was that it allowed them to conceal the market as a space of representation from police.

If I'm down here all dressed up then the cops are going to know exactly what I'm down here for. But if I'm just wearing normal clothes I can just say that I'm waiting for someone or making a phone call or something. I mean, most of 'em sorta know what you're down here for anyway, but if you're just wearing something like you do every other day, then they can't really do much unless they actually catch you in the act. Like, they can still think it, but they can't really do anything about it I've got a right to just stand out here if I want. It's none of their fucking business. (Tanya)

In contrast, most people with an ongoing presence in Curtis Street believed that police were simply more likely to leave them alone if they visually blended into the representation of space advanced by police. Most assumed that their long-term familiarity with individual local police meant that they were aware of “what we're all about out here”, but believed that police were more likely to be lenient in their dealings with them if they weren't “out here causin' a fuss”. A key element in not “causing a fuss” when working on the street was to ensure their presence and action continued to conceal, as much as possible, the market's space of representation from mainstream view.

Some of these other girls out here reckon they're fooling 'em, but c'mon, the jacks fuckin' know what's going on out here. Mirandoss [a local police officer] is out here all the time and she just asks how it's all going. Most of 'em are pretty good like that. As long as you're not out here causin' a fuss, they they'll pretty much leave you alone. If I was out here dressed up like some tart then they'd try and pull me in on some warrant or try and get me off the street some way straight away. They don't like that shit around here.

But, like most of 'em, I mean, if you just look kinda normal they won't do shit. They'll stop and talk to us, but that's about it. I reckon they know why we're out here and that we're goin' to get our money one way or another, and us being out here doin' our thing is better than us robbin' cunts or doing burgs or some shit. (Linda)

Common to all participants is the use of style as a tactic to reduce police interference in their daily agenda to earn enough money on satisfy their addiction(s), and interference in the market's space of representation. Sanctions for breaches of this stylistic tactic were often severe, ranging from a reduction in trust and opportunity within their peer network through to the more abrasive "bashings", which although rare were typically carried out by people with an ongoing presence in Curtis Street. As discussed in detail in the following section, one product of this is a spatial practice that appears unique to this market, in which street sex workers and their clients are required to rely on a range of other visual signs and processes to distinguish themselves to each other as participants in the market's space of representation.

Gazing into the market's space of representation

The male gaze in other street sex markets has been described as intensely sexualised and broad in comparison to the male gaze in most other urban spaces (Aalbers 2005). This is certainly the case in Curtis Street, where it is common to see prospective clients visually scan the footpaths and kerbs on either side of the road as they pass in their cars while checking for commercial sex options. The "sexualised" gaze is directed not only to Curtis Street's sex workers; their use of the same style of dress as that used by other local and marginalised people moving through this space means the sexualised client gaze is also drawn to non-sex working women and girls using this space. This, in turn, produces the most affective and problematic mechanism through which the market's space of representation rubs up against the representational space of Curtis Street.

Often aware of this gaze, and assessing it as a sign of risk to their personal safety, most non-sex working women appeared to approach and move through this space with a degree of caution. Female employees appeared most concerned as they moved to and from their cars parked in Curtis Street to their place of employment,

which they often did in pairs or with their eyes fixed on the ground a few feet in front of them in a strategy that seemed designed to negate the gaze of any prospective sex market clients. Other women who also wore a casual, relaxed style of dress similar to sex workers often had to deal with concerted stares from men passing or parked on Curtis Street, and in some cases were forced to respond directly to men as they pulled their cars to the kerb beside them in the hope of establishing a dialogue, presumably about a sexual act. For most, and particularly those possessing attributes marking them as physically attractive to passing sex work clients, this highly-sexualised client gaze not only caused many of these women stress, but actively contributed to their unwitting participation in the market's space of representation.

Game of Gazes: the sex worker

I gotta find a job

To counter the social camouflage created by their tactic of style, sex workers employed a purposive gaze of their own as their principal strategy to signify their intent to sell sex to prospective clients. From being socially obscured by their casual style of dress, it was the street sex workers' focused gaze on men in passing cars that ultimately pushes them to the foreground of the potential client's view. This gaze, along with their presence in the space appropriated as a street sex market, signified to clients their commercial availability, and their point of entry into the market's space of representation. Whether responded to by pulling their car to the kerb or continuing to kerb crawl, it was this meeting of gazes within the space normalised as a street sex market that served to mark out each actor as participants in the same market.

The negotiation

Once the client gaze was met by the sex worker, the searching client would either continue driving around Dandenong while periodically passing through the phone booth area on Curtis Street (usually because the sex worker did not have the physical attributes he valued, they had done a "job" together before with which he was dissatisfied, he was fearful of the potential for police intervention, or was "scared off" through fear of being negatively judged as a sex purchaser by non-sex working people in the area), or he would decide to engage her in a conversation

about service and price. While some variation exists, the standard process requires the client to either pull their car to the kerb directly in front of the sex worker, into one of the kerb-side parking spaces in front of the vacant lot behind the public carpark or youth accommodation facility, or into the public carpark a few metres from the phone booth on Curtis Street. Seeing this, the sex worker(s) would read this as the driver's intent to discuss the terms of a job. Unless she suspected, from previous encounters, that this person was just "wasting my time", she responded by moving to the front passenger or driver's side window where they began a conversation, and ultimately a negotiation of sex and fee. A characteristic of most sex workers at this point of the interaction was the presentation of a self that was often more soft, feminine, engaging, and sexual than their regular daily persona. This was a strategy many believed would increase their chances of not only securing the job, but would allow them to demand a higher monetary fee.

Hi hun, are you looking for a girl?

Hey sweetie, what are you up to tonight?

While some of these men appeared to play along by trying to match the cool, friendly, slightly sexualised attitude with a masculinised version of their own, the potentially high cost of being identified by police means that most clients experienced this part of the process as particularly stressful. Because of this, most prospective clients got straight to the point:

It depends. What are you offering?

Yeah. Have you got like standard rates or something?

What do you charge for ...?

Or:

Can you do sex for \$50 again?

While a sex worker familiar with the client could move straight into a negotiation of service and price, most interactions proceeded with the sex worker outlining what could be considered something akin to the menu of sexual services she was willing to provide and the respective monetary fees. The regularity with which they did this meant it just rolled off the tongue, even in cases where they were highly intoxicated or "on the nod" (heavily affected by heroin).

I do hand relief for 40 [dollars], oral for 50 and sex for 70.

I don't do sex. Just hand jobs and blow jobs. Hand jobs are 40 bucks and I'll blow ya for 50.

Hand relief's \$40, oral's \$50, and sex is \$70.

While some clients responded by simply stating the service they wanted, most appeared to treat the sex worker's initial menu of service(s) as a starting point in a negotiation of service and fee. Many were repeat clients of the market who sought to capitalise on their experience to either try to negotiate a lower fee or to entice her into selling him a sexual act not originally included on her list of performed sexual service. In response, the sex worker either held firm on her fee and/or service or entered into a deeper negotiation with the client. If they could not agree on the terms of a job the mood could quickly turn sour, which, from my vantage point, was often signalled by the sex worker slamming the prospective client's car door and storming off back to the phone booth in search of another client. From the perspective of the sex worker, the client had monopolised her time and may have cost her the opportunity to do a job with another who may have been driving past during their negotiation.

Fuck you, mate. You're a fuckin' waste of time.

I'm telling ya, mate. If you keep fuckin' me around with this shit I'm going to go fuckin' ape shit.

What? You want me to fuck you for fuckin' 20 bucks? Fuck off you cheap bastard. Come back after you get a fuckin' job.

Alternatively, if they were able to strike a deal that satisfied both parties, the sex worker entered the client's car and they drove away from Curtis Street to a more secluded site where they would complete the job.

Stretching the space of street sex work in Dandenong

The illegality of street sex work, and recognition of the sex act as the point where police intervention could be most significant, means sex workers and clients typically seek out public spaces away from the market's spatial epicentre to complete the purchased sex (Tani 2002; Sanders 2004; Miller et al. 2011; Grov, Seal, and Smith 2008). This process stretches the spaces of street sex work from its main

thoroughfare(s) into more isolated spaces, where sex workers are often at an increased risk of client violence or exploitation (Rowe 2006; Rowe 2003b; Campbell and Kinnell 2002; Williamson and Folaron 2001; Shannon et al. 2008a). On Curtis Street, after striking a deal and getting into the client's car (typically the front passenger seat, unless there is more than one male already in the car) the sex worker directed her client to drive to one of her preferred locations. In most cases these sites were public spaces away from Curtis Street but close enough that they required no more than a few minutes of driving. Most sex workers had a preference for secluded spaces in close proximity to Curtis Street, as this not only kept her in close proximity to peer support if she needed it, but reduced the overall time they would need to be away from Curtis Street, and ultimately, the time between jobs. Clients and sex workers preferred sites that were concealed from public view as these reduced the risk of drawing the attention of police, or local residents and employees. Sex workers also had strong preferences for spaces with multiple exits so they could escape "if the client turned out to be a creep".

While each sex worker had their preferred sites, some key sites were so frequently used they could be seen as synonymous with the market's space of representation. Some were used more than others depending on the time of day the job was performed. While one particularly isolated local park was a popular choice during the day and early evening, more centrally-located public and business car parks across Dandenong's CBD were often preferred by sex workers later in the evenings. Sex workers preferred to use these closer, inner CBD spaces after hours as they were often less isolated than the more secluded local park, which after dark could produce an increased risk of robbery and rape. Although I was not aware of an instance where a client attacked a sex worker at the local park during my time in the field, stories of previous instances where a sex worker had been ambushed and raped by associates of a client when doing jobs in these contexts were common. Together with the site's relative isolation, it was this fear of being ambushed and isolated with a violent client that informed the decisions of most sex workers to appropriate other, more local sites within the representational space of Dandenong's CBD when those spaces were not being used for the purpose of their original design.

Spaces of business and solitude

An alternative for both the sex worker and client was to have sex at the residence of the sex worker; this was only of value to the sex worker if her residence was nearby to Curtis Street and convenient. Sex workers were only able to capitalise on this option as a component of their sex work if they were in the relatively privileged position of living or staying in close proximity to Curtis Street. Having a private residence was in contrast to most women who were moving from place to place, living in a sex-for-accommodation style arrangement, or “crashing” in someone else’s home. A private residence where they could take clients not only allowed sex workers to increase their fee by as much as \$10-\$20 (depending on the service provided), but also increased their client group, as it allowed them to stretch the space of the street sex market by providing a location out of public view where they could meet clients who contacted them by phone, and by selling types of sex that require a more secluded, private space.

In addition to monetary benefits, using a private residence was associated with an increase in safety and security. One of the more notable benefits is the reduction in client-initiated violence, robbery, and attempts at under- or non-payment. This appeared to be part of a sex worker’s strategy to increase her control over the environment, which for others relying on public space is often isolated and high-risk. Having a private residence allowed sex workers to have another person present (a friend, spotter, or another sex worker) who was able to provide assistance or act as a deterrent to a client who may otherwise consider deviating from the bounds of their contract. Another benefit was that selling sex in this way allowed them to effectively “stash” their income as they collected it in a safer place at their home rather than having to carry it while working. This all but eliminated the threat of being robbed by clients, other sex workers, or spotters when back on the street.

A number of regular clients preferred “getting a job” with a sex worker who had a private residence. Three key reasons appeared to inform their preference for this. The first was a desire for sex in the relative comfort of a private residence instead of the confines of their parked car. Some men saw increased value in this style of interaction as it afforded them an experience that shared some similarity with high-priced sex bought in a brothel. Second, having sex in the confines of a private residence significantly reduced the risk of them coming to the attention of police. For

clients this all but eliminated the risk of being identified by police or other passers-by. The value placed on these factors was reflected in the slightly inflated fees a sex worker with access to a nearby private residence was often able to charge. Finally, using a sex worker's private residence for jobs was also a necessary ingredient for men wanting to buy acts beyond the services typically offered on the street. Relevant examples ranged from various forms of sexualised massage through to more extreme acts, such as bondage and discipline or sadomasochism. While not all sex workers with a private residence sold these services, those who did had a monopoly over this portion of the market if or when they decided to do so (typically only when experiencing dire economic need). From the client's perspective, the cumulative value of these benefits positioned a sex worker's private residence as a resource they not only sought out, but for which they were willing to pay an increased premium to include in their purchased sexual encounter.

A space of capital and conflict

Sex worker accounts of a standard encounter with a client involved the negotiation of service and price, accepting the job, getting in the client's car and driving to a suitable location, getting the money from the client, and then having sex before being dropped back on Curtis Street. But as often observed in other street sex markets, disparities in the power available to buyers and sellers in illicit markets, and fear of police intervention, caused key market processes—including the negotiation of service and fee, safety assessments, and insisting on payment before sex—to be rushed or overlooked (Williamson and Folaron 2001; Waltman 2011; Sanders 2001). In Dandenong, client tactics, the ever-present threat of police intervention, and the relative desperation of women to make a large sum of money in the shortest amount of time possible typically meant that after coming to an agreement on service and price, the sex worker would get into the client's car and direct him to a nearby site where they would have sex. It was only after the "job" had been completed, and oftentimes only upon getting dropped back at Curtis Street, that the sex worker would ask the client for payment. While the majority of jobs proceeded without incident, some clients saw this as an opportunity to question the agreed price, and given that they had finished the job, they were in a much more powerful position in the negotiation for fee than they were before. Some used this power to either try to

reduce the fee payable or sometimes would simply refuse to pay. It was within this space that most conflict between sex worker and client occurred.

‘That guy just tried to rip me off’

Client attempts to underpay a sex worker progressed one of two ways, both of which resulted in conflict. One tactic commonly used by exploitative men was to offer a reduced fee upon “realising” that they didn’t have the amount of money on their person they thought when they negotiated the service/fee. Whether pre-planned or simply opportunistic, as the time for payment arrived the client reached into his pocket or opened his wallet, often with a look of shock and/or concern and said:

Oh shit. I thought I had more money on my than that. I’m really sorry.
(Pranesh)

The client then continued feigning embarrassment as he took the smaller amount of money from his pocket or wallet and handed it to the sex worker in the hope that she would be sympathetic to his story and accept it as full payment. This amount was usually \$10 or \$20 dollars below their initially negotiated fee, but on occasion it was as high as \$50. Apart from the very inexperienced, most women were well aware of this ploy, saw it as a deliberate tactic of the client to “rip them off”, and responded accordingly. A typical response from the sex worker was to aggressively snatch the offered money from the client but refuse to get out of his car until he paid her the remainder of her fee. Now back in the market’s space of representation, the client’s perceived risk of being attacked by the sex worker’s peers or being spotted by police was increased to the point that many often abandoned their attempt to underpay the street sex worker (when the remainder of her fee was miraculously located in one of his other pockets). However, some remained committed to their ruse, which all but guaranteed a swift and severe escalation of the situation into something that carried significant risk for both parties. While unsure of the thought process of the client, through repeated exposure to these instances in Curtis Street it was clear that the affected sex worker’s mind immediately shifted to how she could best financially capitalise on the situation.

The general sense of desperation to make large sums of money quickly, and their often greater familiarity with the processes of street sex work in Dandenong, meant most had already begun scanning for items of value in the client’s car or on

his person that she could take in lieu of financial payment. While on occasion this coincided with the woman's demand that the client instead give her an item of value as payment, not only for the sexual service but for the inconvenience his apparent faux pas caused her, most saw greater benefit in simply grabbing the item of value and making a run for it. This was often the case when this altercation occurred in Curtis Street, where the sex worker felt safe in the knowledge that either her spotter or other sex workers would come to her aid if the client decided to put up a fight. Some of the more commonly snatched items included the client's mobile phone, bag, briefcase, tablet, or laptop. Stolen mobile phones, tablets, and laptop computers are commonly bought and sold in and around the street sex market and are therefore commonly preferred in instances such as this, as they can quickly and easily be turned into cash, which in turn is exchanged for heroin.

Despite the potential to be challenged by spotters, peers of the sex worker, or identified by police, this type of client rarely conceded anything snatched from their car in this manner. Most attempted to grab either the sex worker or the item being taken from their car or person. If they were successful, a struggle between the client and sex worker was inevitable, with the sex worker's spotter and even other sex workers trying to get involved. In a few cases where the client successfully wrestled their item back from the sex worker, they quickly drove away from the scene as soon as they could. Despite a dent or scratch in their car doors caused by the sex worker (and sometimes her peers) during his getaway, this effectively ended the situation. But once the item escaped their immediate grasp, most clients appeared to make a choice between continuing to try and get their property back by pursuing the sex worker on foot or in their car, or trying to verbally rationalise with them from a distance. Attempts to reason with the sex worker were the most common:

Come on. I'll pay the rest of the money. I swear. (Pranesh)

That's not even mine. Give it back and I'll give you another \$50 on top of what I owe you. (Aman)

At the forefront of each of these situations from the client's perspective was the realisation that they were unable to seek police assistance, as there would be little doubt that they had gotten themselves in the situation by illegally buying sex. It was at this stage where most clients appeared to realise his attempts to underpay the sex worker, and her response, now placed him in a situation where he had to play by a

set of rules he was not familiar with. A fear of the unknown and lack of protection or recourse in this setting meant many conceded that their best course of action was to cut their losses and retreat. Either angrily or solemnly, most accepted defeat, returned to their cars and drove away. While in a select few cases these men attempted retribution by coming back at a later date with one or more of their peers, their lack of familiarity with the rules rendered the vast majority of these cases uneventful. But overall, most of the encounters between client and sex worker ended quickly without further incident, as both saw little benefit in continuing with the conflict.

A second strategy used by some clients in the hope of reducing the fee was to offer her a lesser amount together with claims that he found some aspect of the encounter unsatisfactory. These critiques tended to focus on the negative elements of the sex, the sex worker's appearance, or even parts of their body. For sex workers, these critiques were not only seen as a strategy to underpay them, but were often experienced as personal and deeply hurtful. Some were able to keep their composure and responded by arguing that the client's lack of satisfaction was a product of their own sexual dysfunction, but others could not control the anger and rage these insults built inside them. After taking the reduced amount of money some would begin striking the client with a number of slaps, punches, or even kicks. This was commonly followed by getting out of the car and attempting to do as much damage to its exterior as they could before he drove away. Slamming the passenger door, attempting to kick a dent in it, punching the passenger side windows hoping it will smash, or even trying to bend back the passenger door in an attempt to break it off its hinges were all common. While this was usually done as the client attempted to drive off and escape the situation, some clients responded with their own physical attack on the sex worker.

During the 12 months of fieldwork, I counted 23 altercations between street sex workers and clients that were a direct result of this client tactic. Most resulted in a physical struggle between sex worker and client, lasting between 15–30 seconds before the client's concern with intervention from other sex workers, or with being identified by police as someone in a confrontation with a street sex worker (an association difficult to legitimately explain), informed the client's decision to flee to avoid further violence or damage to their vehicle.. Despite carrying the potential of serious harm for both parties, the outcomes of these brief altercations were—in

comparison to other physical harms experienced by street sex workers, at least—relatively minor. A bloody nose, grazed hip, knees or elbow, or a bruise on some part of their body were the most visible signs of harm done to the sex worker in these altercations. In two cases the client fled only to come back at a later date seeking vengeance upon the sex worker. On both occasions, confusion about who the offending sex worker was, the dominance of demand over supply in the market resulting in most workers going from job to job without spending much time standing on the street, and a fear of anyone else who may come to the sex worker's aid, caused both to be short-lived and unsuccessful.

Taken to the extreme, some clients sought to capitalise on the sex worker practice of requesting payment after sex with the intention of obtaining sexual service without payment. This occurred at least once every few weeks. In one example, the client encouraged the sex worker to get out of his car immediately under the pretence that it would be easier for her to put her clothes back on rather than struggling within the confines of the car. As soon as she stepped out he started his car and drove off, leaving her without payment and having to walk back to Curtis Street. A more common tactic occurred in Curtis Street when being dropped back by the client. In these instances, the sex worker was typically forced out of the car by a larger male client before he drove off. While most sex workers escaped without serious injury, the potential for serious physical harm was realised on one occasion when a woman's clothing became caught on the driver's front passenger door as the client attempted to drive away, and she was dragged approximately 10–15 metres before her jacket ripped and she was freed. She was fortunate to escape with only grazes to her back, hip, and thigh from being pulled along the road, but the possibility of falling under the wheels of the car speeding off was apparent not only to her but to others who witnessed the incident. Despite the apparent trauma, the never-ending pull of a heroin addiction meant she had little choice but to recommence soliciting on the street immediately to earn more money.

In summary, while most street sex worker–client interactions progressed without incident, the illegality of street sex work, and the competing agendas and chaotic lives of many of the market's participants, created a context in which violence could seemingly erupt at a moment's notice. While clients were often the most visible perpetrators, local sex workers' intimate partners, previous boyfriends, drug dealers, acquaintances, and other sex workers were also active participants in a range of

violence seemingly inherent in this market's space of representation. To negotiate this violence, women selling sex on Curtis Street have needed to develop a range of risk-reduction strategies that form part of their daily work–score–get-on cycle. For anyone with an ongoing presence on Curtis Street, these strategies formed a routine part of life that became ingrained in the market as a space of representation for the people using it to survive, and as an integral part of daily life within its social network.

The figure lurking in the shadows: 'spotters'

We're everywhere. You won't see us coming, but we'll be on ya in a flash if ya fuck with one of our girls. (Paul)

Most studies of street sex work identify the key role pimps, boyfriends, and other third party males can play in the lives of women selling sex on the street. These studies often provide insight into the effects of these men in the lives of women through interview and discussion with street sex workers (Rowe 2006; Shannon et al. 2008b; Kennedy et al. 2007; Ralph 2009). The methods used in this study not only captured the role of third party males through the reports of women selling sex in Dandenong, but also through direct observation over an extended period of time on the street, and in interactions with various network and non-network actors. The discussion in this chapter explores the actions of these men in the market's space of representation as it plays out on the street. It provides the information required by the theses to address the question of these men's role in the social production of the space of street sex work in Dandenong.

As highlighted in the previous chapter, the most common strategy used by sex workers to reduce their exposure to client violence is to have someone *spot* for them. Referred to within this context as a *spotter*, the role of this person is to provide physical protection to a particular sex worker as she solicits and sells sex on the street. My research found in most cases this person was male and in an intimate relationship with the woman, but other short-term arrangements and associations between sex workers themselves or extraneous others were also common. While care for the woman's safety provided some motivation for men in long-term relationships to fill this role, it was ultimately the promise of payment with a portion of the money earned on the street or in the form of drugs (usually heroin, but sometimes ice or

even “choof”) that provided the strongest motivation for a person to adopt the role of spotter. While each of these associations had unique characteristics, there were a number of seemingly universal expectations and responsibilities that someone performing the role of spotter was expected to fulfil. Here, I will focus on the most common behaviours and actions associated with the spotter. The position of the spotter in the market’s social network will be explored in the following chapter.

The practice of the spotter

While the sex worker solicits, spotters could be found on the footpath on the other side of the road, at the picnic table in the front yard of the church on the opposite corner of the Curtis Street–Robinsons Road intersection, or in some other spot within eyesight of their partner. The goal of this spatial distance between street sex worker and spotter was to try to conceal their association to any prospective client. The belief was that a client is less likely to approach a street sex worker if he sensed a male partner in close proximity.

Clients don’t usually pull up if they see us there, too. Like, if they see us they think we’ll rob ’em or some shit, so they just keep driving around ’til we disappear. We’re never far away though. (Pok)

If they see Dan [a spotter] they just keep drivin’. That’s why I get pissed off at him all the time. He gets bored sitting in the car so he keeps coming up to talk to me. But he doesn’t understand that guys aren’t going to pull over when they see him up here too. He’s blown heaps of jobs for me doing shit like that. It fuckin’ pisses me off, man. (Helen)

While the spotter’s presence “in the shadows” provided the sex worker with a general feeling of safety, it was the point at which a client approached her that the role of the spotter really began. There were two key processes required of a diligent spotter. The first is that they were expected to make a record of the make, model, colour, and number plate of any car she approached. Some did this by entering details into a text on their mobile phone, while others simply noted it in their memory. The logic behind this strategy was that this data will act as a starting point for any action if the sex worker was harmed or did not return when/where expected if she decided to take a job with this client. Second, if the sex worker took a job, the spotter was expected to move from their location “in the shadows” and into the eye line of the client. To ensure the client was aware of the sex worker’s connection to

someone on the street who was aware of who she is with and concerned about her welfare, the sex worker would usually support this movement by either waving to the spotter (in a manner suggesting she had taken the job and would return soon), or would sometimes speak or yell something to her spotter as she entered the client's car.

I'll be back in 30 minutes.

Wait here for me. I'll be back soon.

This process was not only designed to reveal to the client that the sex worker was not alone (as he may have initially thought), but sent the message that someone was aware of where she was and who she was with, and that some form of action would be taken by the spotter if the client deviated from the bounds of the standard street sex worker–client interaction. Street sex workers and spotters believed that affirming their association to the client provided a significant deterrent to men who considered the relative isolation of women selling sex on the street as an enticement to harm the sex worker in some way. Through this part of the sex process, the “man lurking in the shadows” was presented to the client as a person with unknown potentials that the client would ultimately have to deal with if he did not abide by the terms of his verbal contract with the sex worker.

There's been a few times when I've started getting a bit of a weird vibe from the guy after we've started to drive away (from Curtis Street) ... so I've started talking about Lee, but you know, like pulling stuff out of my arse big time, just to scare the guy a bit. I told him he'd just gotten out of jail for stabbin' some bloke, and that he carries a gun, and you know, that he's a massive psycho that loves bashin' cunts. So as I was telling him I could see him start to tense up and he got really quiet. He was a fuckin' arrogant prick in the beginning, but after I started spinning a bit of shit, he was fuckin' shitting himself thinking that he have this mega badass after him if he fucked with me (laughs). (Mae)

Makin' the call

After the sex worker left Curtis Street with her client, the role of the spotter was reduced to little more than being “on call”. It was at this stage that most spotters became distracted from what was expected of them and instead sought out peers and other people they knew in the area to socialise with. To the sex worker they were spotting, it was often this distraction that reduced the spotter's value. Becoming

engrossed in some sort of game on their mobile phone or walking to one of the local hotels to play the pokies were common ways spotters passed this time. Their responsibility to the sex worker during this time was to respond quickly to any phone call or text message she sent (as this could form her primary means for self-defence if a client became aggressive), and to call her on her mobile if she did return to the site of the street sex market in a reasonable amount of time. While somewhat dependent on the service, most sex workers expected to allocate no more than 30 minutes to a client. Making the phone call at the right time was a core component in the arrangement between sex worker and spotter, and served the dual purpose of assessing the safety of the sex worker while signalling to the client that they were taking up more of the sex worker's time than a standard job requires. The weight placed on maintaining a line of communication with their spotter while away from Curtis Street with a client meant that most sex workers would answer a call from their spotter, even if at the most inopportune time:

Is everything alright babe? (Darren)

Or:

What the fuck's going on? Why are you taking so long? (Paul)

Tell that cunt to hurry the fuck up or pay for another job. There's heaps of your reggys [regular clients] driving around out here [in reality, there weren't] so stop wasting your fucking time. Wrap it up now or I'll come and get you myself. (Pok)

While comments such as Pok's were initially directed at the sex worker, its intended target was the client. Through repeated use of this strategy—not only by this couple but a number of others—it became clear that this was a strategy designed to suggest the threat of a violent intervention into the client's interaction with the sex worker if the client did not actively conclude their encounter and take the sex worker back to Curtis Street. Alternatively, the savvy sex worker used this to suggest he paid her an additional fee if he wants to “finish” (ejaculate). This strategy was most often used by people in long-term sex worker/spotter associations, and could be particularly lucrative:

We do that shit all the time man. Michael'll call me after I've been gone for a bit and start yelling all this sort of abuse and shit like he's gonna come and kill the bloke I'm with if he doesn't take me back up the street fuckin' pronto.

So I've got the phone to my ear, right. But I make sure I'm close to the bloke so he can hear what's goin' on. Most blokes, man, they fuckin' shit 'emself when they hear some cunt's comin' to get 'em ... So I'll fuckin' say to 'em, "I can just tell him that you'll pay me a bit extra, like say 20 bucks or so". Some'll say, "nah, I'll take ya back up the street now", but fuck man, some get so shit scared that some'll just fuckin' start noddin' their heads and just start handing ya money (laughs). (Sarah)

Holdin' money

After being dropped back to Curtis Street by a client after a job, it was common for women working with a spotter to give the money they had just earned from the client to their spotter for safe-keeping. The success of this habit in reducing the likelihood of the sex worker's daily/nightly earnings from the street being stolen from her by other sex workers, spotters, clients, and others made it a common practice that was often expected in these types of arrangements. While the sex worker's relative isolation when with a client provided a situation where she could be a target for robbery, the most prominent threat came from peers (street sex workers and spotters) , especially those who looked to be "hanging out bad". The severity of substance addiction experienced by peers meant that the threat of being "jumped" by someone they knew for the money made that day or night was a reality most sex workers had to negotiate:

I've got a bad feeling. I don't reckon Mae's got a job since she's been out here ... and she's all fuckin' shaky and shit. If she doesn't get a few jobs soon I reckon she's gonna try and jump one of us. (Tracy)

Julie's fuckin' hangin' out bad, man. With the shit Linda's been givin' her over the last few days I reckon she's just gonna fuckin' jump her and take her shit [money] as soon as she gets back [to Curtis Street from the job she is currently on]. (Helen)

When in Curtis Street, the pattern of monetary transfer between a street sex worker and her spotter progressed in a reasonably predictable manner. Upon being dropped back from a job, the woman would give the money to her spotter, as this was considered a safer option than continuing to carry it on her person. This process was repeated until a large enough amount of money was reached that they could both "score". While successful in reducing the risk of losing the money as a result of being robbed, this strategy was not without its problems.

Despite being the preferred mode of practice for long-term spotters, particularly as it granted them a sense of control over their partners, most spotters associated this process with an increased likelihood of being “harassed by the jacks” (questioned by police while on the street). But while inconvenient, it was simply considered to be something they had to bear as part of the arrangement in which their drug use was funded by their partner’s sex work. As described by Paul and Pok while sitting at the picnic table while both of their partners were “on a job”:

Paul: See right, it’s OK when we’re only out here for a bit ’cos I might only have like \$100, maybe \$150 on me at most. And if the jacks search me and find it I can just say that I’ve just been paid or won it up the pokies or some shit. It’s when we’re out here trying to score a few days’ worth [of money to purchase heroin with] that it can get really bad. I mean she’s young and can get work pretty quick out here, so within an hour or so I could be carrying around \$500 or \$600 bucks. If the jacks get you then, then it’s real hard to explain.

Pok: For sure. Most of these jacks out here aren’t totally dumb. They know us and what we’re all out here for, but some of ’em really fuckin’ hate us. I mean REALLY fuckin’ hate us, man. And sure, I win on the pokies all the time so I’ve always got \$100 on me or so, but like, we earn a lot out here and are out here pretty much every day. We’re supporting pretty big habits. I mean \$500 a day would only just get us through. Ideally we’d need more than that. So carrying around these big amounts all the time means that when the jacks get us, they can really give us a hard time.

Me: A hard time, like how?

Pok: Oww, fucking bad shit man. And they only do it ’cos they know we can’t do anything back to ’em. I mean as soon as you bash a cop, you’re fucked. So they say shit like “Does it make you feel like a big man to pimp out your girlfriend?” or “Why don’t you go and get a job instead of living off your prostitute girlfriend?” That shit just pisses me off, man.

Paul: And even if you say you won it, or its from your Centrelink, they say shit like “Why don’t you save it and spend it on normal stuff like food and bills rather than making your girlfriend fuck all these blokes out here so

you can get stoned?” But they don’t know man. I mean I don’t want her to do it [street sex work], but what choice have we got? The money’s gotta come from somewhere and this is harmless. It’s not like we’re going out and robbin’ people’s houses and shit. It’s fucked man. They should just leave us alone.

Spotters were far from the only ones who experienced some inconvenience as a result of this strategy. In fact, some sex workers experienced reasonably significant losses through the actions of spotters. It was not uncommon that a sex worker would return from a job thinking she had accumulated enough money for her and her spotter to “score”, only to find that she had to do another job (or more) because the spotter had spent or lost a portion of the money they had been holding. While some of this was caused by the spotter buying cigarettes, food and/or drink during their down time on the street, the most significant problems were caused by spotters who made a habit of “playing the pokies” at the nearby hotel. Unfortunately, for some sex workers this was a reasonably common experience that in some cases made this strategy an unprofitable experience. The female partners of Paul and Pok clearly felt this way on a number of occasions:

I’m sick of this kid [Pok], man. He’s been losing all my fuckin’ money on those pokies when I’ve been working my arse off to get us money so we can score. It’s fucked man. He keeps saying, “Oh, but I’ve been using it to try and win us the rest of the money we need so you don’t have to do this shit (sell sex on the street)”, but I know how those things work man. Nobody really wins except the place they’re in. Anyways, it’s happened like three or four times already this week, but he just doesn’t get it. He telling me he’s doing it ’cos he’s trying to help me, but all he’s doing is making me do more jobs. (Linda)

Ultimately, for women selling sex on the street with the aid of a spotter, this strategy was something of a double-edged sword. While successful in countering the threat of robbery from peers and clients when on the street, the loss of income caused by spotters purchasing cigarettes, food, and “playin’ the pokies” was a common experience for many of the women. Because of the strength of most women’s heroin addiction, they were left with little choice but to go back out onto the street and do more jobs to earn back the money lost by their spotter. Despite this, most women working with a spotter regarded the potential for losing some of the money through

her spotter's spending as less of a risk than carrying their earnings on their person while they solicited and sold sex. As a result, the practice continued.

It's fucked, but what do you want me to do about it. If I start holding onto it [the money made on the street that day/evening] then I gotta start walkin' around here with eyes in the back of me head. (Linda)

Residents, local business, and the jacks: intersections of space

The literature discussed in the preceding chapter highlights the role local communities, businesses, and police often play in the spatial development of a street sex market (Sanders 2004; Hubbard and Sanders 2003; Tani 2002; Edelman 2011; Laing and Cook 2014). Adopting Lefebvre's ideas of spatial production, observations of the perceptions and actions of these groups in response to street sex work provide insight into the dominant representation of that space, and the relational tensions out of which the space of street sex markets are produced (Draus, Roddy, and Asabigi 2015; Hubbard 1999; Hubbard and Sanders 2003; O'Neill et al. 2008). The following paragraphs discuss the perceptions and actions of people in these groups as they occur on the market's front-line and considers their affect in the production of street sex work in Dandenong.

The views of most local residents, businesses, and of course police in relation to street sex work in Dandenong can be categorised as disapproving. Despite some crossover with the men who buy sex from the women on Curtis Street, chance encounters with some local residents and local employees during my fieldwork provided a clear indication that many in these groups preferred the street sex market be moved or eliminated:

No one wants it here. Who wants to come out here and see all this? It's a disgrace. I don't know why the police just don't come down here and arrest them all. We all know who they [the women selling sex] are. It's illegal what they're doing, isn't it? Just arrest them and lock them up. It's the only way it's gonna stop. (Local employee)

Would you want this near where you live? Of course not! I know it's about money, but I don't understand why they don't just go out and get normal jobs like the rest of us. Even if they went to a brothel or something, you know. They could do whatever it is that they need to do, you know, away from here,

and we could just go on with the rest of our lives. But they don't. It's just constant out here. (Local resident)

But as is often seen in other street sex markets, it was the police who were the most affective agents of the representational space of Curtis Street (Draus, Roddy, and Asabigi 2015; Sanders 2004). It was rare that an hour passed on Curtis Street without at least one police car cruising slowly through the space of the street sex market as its occupants surveyed the landscape. This resulted in many local police and people with an ongoing presence in Curtis Street being familiar with each other. When seeing a police car approach, it was common to hear comments between sex workers and/or spotters about the cars' occupants.

Ah, look out. That frickin' Cummings chick is out again.

It's that Edwards cunt. Fuckin' hell. He fuckin' hates. Bastard. Shit!

Isn't that the new chick? Man, she's a fuckin' nasty bitch ... they all are 'til they prove 'emselves.

While on some occasions police simply continued cruising slowly through this part of Curtis Street while visually surveying the action and interaction of the people within it, most pulled the police car to the kerb near any present sex workers or spotter, called them over to the car, and began a conversation. Unless the woman (or man) was new to the area, most police already knew the name and even background of the people they approached. In some cases their association, while strained, had been established over a long period of time as a result of the sex worker's/spotter's criminal record and repeated presence in the space:

Hi Helen. Where have you been? I haven't seen you in a while.

Have you seen Linda? She's missed another court date. I need to have a talk with her.

I can't see Pok out anywhere. What, is he making you come out by yourself now?

As in many street sex markets in the West, despite the illegality of street sex work, much of the front-line approach to local police to street sex work on Curtis Street appeared designed to limit the market's affect on the broader community, which it did by attempting to control the actions of street sex workers in ways that reduced its visibility on the street, and the attempted criminalisation of the market's

clients (Waltman 2011; Danna 2012). Most interactions between street sex workers and police appeared to be concerned with both information-gathering on the actions of peers and operation of the market, and the curtailing of market actions that would affect or draw the attention of the other mainstream community members. While shared histories and the stresses of each person's position caused tensions in some of these interactions to flare, most interactions between police and women selling sex on Curtis Street progressed without significant incident. In the majority of cases, after a brief discussion, the police often left to carry on with other duties while street sex workers continued soliciting.

These cops, man. They know what's going on out here, really. Some of 'em are fuckwits, but most know that it's better for them, well everybody really, if we're out here doing this shit [selling sex on Curtis Street to fund a heroin addiction] instead of doing burs or some other shit, just so we can get some money. Out here, no one's getting hurt or nothin', so they pretty much just leave us alone. It's only if ya got any warrants and anything that you've got to worry about 'em. (Linda)

While disapproving of people soliciting and selling sex on Curtis Street, police were clearly aware that most were doing so as a way to fund an addiction to heroin, and, to at least some degree, considered them victims. At least in the eyes of the women selling sex on the street, police were reluctant to charge them on prostitution offences as they considered their street sex work to be a less harmful or destructive way of funding their addictions. While most sex workers considered the lack of criminal charge from these encounters beneficial, relative tolerance also brought with it some negative effects, most of which were related to inconsistencies in the way individual police interacted with the girls and spotters.

I fuckin' hate that McDougall cunt. He's a fuckin' CI, yeah. So he doesn't really give a shit about what goes on out here [on Curtis Street]. If he comes out here he's just looking for information on someone that he reckons we're gonna rat on. So when he comes out here he'll fuckin' come up to ya with his partner or whoever it is and will say something like "I saw you get into that car before and I know what you're doing out here, so unless you like the sound of having a prostitution charge against you then you'll start telling us about so and so" or whoever it is that they're after. (Helen)

One particular police practice that produced significant tension between women and police was the practice of a few individual police taking on-the-street mug shots of any street sex worker they encountered on Curtis Street with the camera of a

mobile phone. In these cases women were told by police that taking these photographs was now part of standard police practice regarding street sex work in Dandenong's CBD. Despite being seen by all women on Curtis Street as "not fuckin' right, man", they were effectively powerless to do anything about it. While the practice ceased after only a few weeks, it highlighted the space created by the police's regulated tolerance and the potential for harm to sex workers as a result of it.

That's fucked, man. They've got no right to do that shit. He [the police officer] reckons 'cos I didn't have any ID on me that he can start takin' photos of me with his phone. Like, seriously. It was like he was takin' a mug shot of me. He's like, "Ok, now look straight at me. Now turn your head to the right." They can't fuckin' do that, can they? (Tanya)

While most interactions between police and street sex workers progressed without incident, tensions as a result of their competing agendas were always present and often surfaced. Many women and their spotters were serving some form of community order or had an upcoming court date, which, in combination with their presence in the street sex market, made the possibility of police citing a breach of their order a reality that could occur at a moment's notice. In addition to this was a strong, underlying level of distrust, and in some cases hatred, of police that was often a product of the person's long-term association with a deviant social network and their trouble with the law. The overall strength of this distrust and hatred for police fuelled a norm that demanded a general un-cooperativeness with police that, if breached, would result in peer sanctions that varied from negative sentiment, exclusion from various street-based deals or scams, through to violence. This made interactions with police particularly stressful as the person was required to walk a fine line between appeasing their peers and their position in the market as a space of representation, while at the same time being wary of offending individual officers for fear of being charged or breached by police for acting outside the constraints of the representational space of the mainstream urban landscape.

Jacks and Johns

Consistent with accounts of police action in other illegal markets in which highly vulnerable women sell men (Waltman 2011; Svanstrom 2004; Danna 2012), the primary targets of police intervention on Curtis Street were clearly the market's

male clients. It was not uncommon for a police car to speed off mid-way through a conversation with a street sex worker in pursuit of a passing driver they suspected of being a potential street sex work customer. Men parked in cars in and around the phone booth area (including me) were also often targets of much stricter forms of police intervention than many of the women who worked on the street. When coming across a man parked in a kerb-side carpark on Curtis Street whom they suspected of being a client, most police quickly pulled their car alongside or in front of theirs, turned their lights on and began a line of questioning that often sounded much more accusatory than most of their interactions with sex workers. Despite most of these men escaping criminal charges, coming to the attention of police still appeared, at least in some cases, to be a highly stressful and inconvenient experience. Following a line of questioning, police tended to shift their attention to other areas that may attract charge or inconvenience, such as a rigorous assessment of the condition of their car and the possessions inside it. Despite not being privy to the outcome of all these interactions, it appeared that the suspected sex work customer was often given some sort of fine or vehicle infringement notice before their encounter with police ended. For the prospective client, these encounters with police and the resulting charges or notices were designed to increase the perceived costs of buying sex in this street sex market. Accounts from some men suggested that this additional stress made buying sex in Curtis Street a process that was too costly to continue. Those that continued were either more careful in their dealings on Curtis Street or began using other points of contact, such as the mobile phone.

Police blitz: dominating space

During the course of fieldwork, there were two brief periods of intensified policing tactics designed to disrupt or eliminate the presence of street sex work in this space. Seen by street sex workers, spotters, and myself as concerted “blitzes” on street sex work in the area, the two most prominent periods during the fieldwork were in August and September, 2011. Occurring almost nightly over the course of 5–10 days each, between four and six police cars and vans would swoop on the phone booth area where they would come to a halt. Their occupants dispersed from the vehicles and began questioning any people in and around the phone booth area about their reason for being there. In contrast to the relatively cordial police/sex workers

interactions, the tone of police towards street sex workers during these times were much firmer and more unaccepting than they had been in other circumstances. While not charging any of the women with offences directly relating to their street sex work, many were “pulled up” on warrants or outstanding charges, told to leave the area or face a criminal charge, or given a notice informing them they must stay out of Dandenong’s central business district for three days—which appeared to be a new police power. Any men present who were suspected of being prospective clients were questioned firmly before their cars were searched and a vigorous roadworthy inspection was performed on their vehicle. At least one man that I observed was forced to leave his car parked on the kerb near the phone booth area and find another way home, as his car was found to be unroadworthy and unregistered. Other men suspected of being either a pimp or client (including me) were treated in a similar manner by police during this “blitzes”. The goal of police appeared to be to make the purchase of sex for these men an experience that was uncomfortable and high-risk, in the hope that it would deter them from returning.

The outcome of these tactics appeared limited. They destroyed any trust developed through previous police and sex worker interactions, while their effect on the operation of the market was minimal. After “moving on” as instructed by police during these blitzes, most sex workers returned and recommenced soliciting after only a short amount of time. Within 15–20 minutes the sex market was back in full swing. For sex workers, the strength of the threat of further police intervention and potential charges paled in comparison with the strength of the primary motivating factor for most women’s participation in this market: a strong addiction to heroin.

They don’t fuckin’ understand. We’re addicts, mate. We don’t get days off. We’ve gotta get our money every day, no matter what. So we don’t really give a fuck what they [the police] do. The only way I’ll get a day off is if I rob some rich cunt. (Helen)

‘That youth accom’ place’: the perfect storm

Research exploring pathways into commercial sex often find strong links between a young person’s placement in out-of-care accommodation and participation in high-risk forms of commercial sex such as street sex work (Lankenau et al. 2005; Dodsworth 2012; Nadon, Koverola, and Schludermann 1998; Hanley 2004). As

pointed out by Tanya in her earlier description of the recent spatial history of street sex work in Dandenong, a nearby youth accommodation facility appeared to play a significant role in the reproduction of street sex work in this location. The unit is located on the first residential block on the phone booth side of Curtis Street. Due to the links between a young person being placed in out-of-home care and participation in various high-risk commercial sex practices, its ongoing role as an introductory setting for vulnerable young people to the market as a space of representation is particularly concerning.

Over my 12 months in the field, I met five women who had stayed in this youth accommodation facility during their mid- to late-teens, who I considered to be full-time street sex workers as they regularly solicited for at least three months, and some for the entire 12 months, of my fieldwork. By “full-time”, they fell into the cyclic pattern of selling sex on the street, scoring, and “gettin’ on”, around which their daily lives during this period revolved. While each was now over the age of 18 and therefore ineligible to be accommodated in the unit, each described the time they spent in the unit as a factor informing their entry into street sex work in Dandenong. The motivating factor for most was a desire to earn enough money to score either “smack” (heroin) or “a few shards” (ice), but some suggested that there were occasions when they simply sought to capitalise on the ability to generate money quickly through selling sex so they could buy other items:

Smokes, clothes, shoes, and you know ... just normal shit. (Helen)

The pull from clients

It became clear from the early stages of fieldwork that at least some of the regular clients on Curtis Street were aware of this youth accommodation facility and the possibility that some young women staying were willing to do a job to earn some money. Client knowledge, suspicion, or hope that some of the young women staying in this unit also sold sex appeared to evolve out of a number of factors, including the market’s use of kerbside parking spaces immediately in front of the youth accommodation facility, sex worker’s use of the space in front of the unit to solicit, and a high degree of socialisation and similarity in style between women selling sex in this space and young people from the unit in utilising the spaces in its immediate surrounds. Together with the high client value placed on youth and a “fresh face”, these young women’s repeated presence in the vicinity of the market, and the client

knowledge of the youth accommodation facility, presented many young women in this unit with an almost endless pull into sex work. Coupled with vulnerability and previous experience of trauma, client knowledge and demand provided a pull into the workings of the market that most of these young women had to negotiate.

‘I don’t wanna go to that place, man. I’ll end up a fuckin’ prostitute’

The pull into the street sex market experienced by many of these young women occurred through two well-established processes. The first involved a young person’s unwitting thrust into the market processes through direct advances from prospective clients. These advances were either a product of the client misreading the young woman’s role as a result of similarities in the style and demeanour between the young women and slightly older women soliciting and selling sex, wishful thinking that the young woman was there to sell sex, or an assumption that they may be susceptible to some type of coercion or economic manipulation. Most young women’s existing knowledge of the street sex market already placed them on high alert for this style of male attention while in the space, and, in turn, shaped a range of pre-considered responses designed to clearly and swiftly deflect the inevitable advances of clients.

Fuck off you dirty old bastard.

She’s fuckin’ 14 years you dirty bastard ... you like young girls, do ya?

What the fuck are you looking at?

If ya don’t fuck off I’ll fuckin’ smash ya, cunt.

These verbal onslaughts were almost always enough to rebuff the advance of approaching males. The second, indirect, approach by clients revolved around the premium of youth in the street sex market, and the purposive manipulation of older street sex workers to capitalise on their position in the market’s social network and space of representation. In practice, this took the form of some clients offering something akin to a “finder’s fee” to older street sex workers if they could arrange a job for the prospective client with one of the younger girls living in the unit. In contrast to many direct client approaches on the street, which could possibly be seen as a result of the client misreading signs of commercial sex availability, men offering

this premium were clearly aware of the age of the younger women and it appeared central to their motivation. Linda recounted a conversation with one such client:

Client: Who's that dark-haired chick you were talking before?

Linda: You mean Emma? She's just some chick I know whose staying in that youth home place on Curtis Street.

Client: Does she do jobs, too?

Linda: Nah.

Client: Do you reckon you could ask her if she'll do a job with me? If you can get her to do it I'll give you 100 bucks for doing it.

Linda: I don't know man. I don't reckon she will.

While the above conversation is only one example, the proposal and structure of this arrangement was consistent with many others made during my time in the field. The client wanting to have sex with one of the young women staying in the youth accommodation facility would approach a street sex worker and offer her a fee (typically between \$100 and \$150) if they could convince one of these younger women to do a job with them. The prospective client would also attempt to provide an additional inducement to the young woman by suggesting he would pay her a higher fee than what was typically obtained by other women working on the street. The typical fee proposed by these clients to be paid to the under-age young woman was \$200 for vaginal sex. I am unaware if any of these client requests made through existing street sex workers were successful in achieving their desired goal. However, as some of older sex workers were the same ones who assisted some of the younger women to access "good dealers" of various illicit drugs in and around Dandenong, and were in a more influential position in the network that ran through the market and into this accommodation facility, they often entered negotiations with these younger women from a strong position of advantage.

'They're like spotters in training'

All these young guys out here, man ... they're just like little spotters in training.

The relationship between Curtis Streets' representational space and the markets space of representation also appear to provide significant challenges to the young

men housed in this youth accommodation facility. Like young women, young men staying in the youth accommodation facility became aware of the street sex market on Curtis Street through direct observation and information-sharing among peers. Like some of their female counterparts, some of these young men also saw the market as a context from which they could economically benefit. While some current street sex workers described previous occasions when young men connected to the young accommodation unit sold sex to male clients on Curtis Street, I was not directly aware of any similar cases during my time in the field (although it is certainly possible). Because of the strong adherence among men on the supply side of the market to a highly masculinised social identity, I suspect any overt presentations of homosexuality in this space would have been challenged by other men moving through the supply side of the street sex market in the market's space of representation. If it did occur, it was extremely discreet.

Instead, during my time in the field, the participation of young men out of the unit typically mirrored the actions of the older, more established male peers. Much of this activity involved the younger man's adoption of the role of spotter for a woman already selling sex on Curtis Street, but most often in a short-term and sporadic manner. In each case the arrangement between younger man and established street sex worker appeared relatively consistent: the young man was drawn into the market's space of representation through a promise of a portion of the money the sex worker earned that day or night. The payoff for the younger male was to be able to use a portion of the sex worker's total income to purchase heroin or ice, but marijuana and alcohol were also commonly obtained this way.

In many ways, these inducements into the market for both young women and men contributed to the cyclic nature of the supply side of the market. Their familiarity with the processes of the market as a result of being housed in its spatial proximity, their experience of many antecedents often seen in the histories of people working in street sex markets including problematic drug use, and the economic benefits available in the market can make the market an attractive option that can set some of these young people on a course characterised by extreme levels of hardship and risk.

Conclusion

The street sex market in Dandenong is a small, emerging market whose presence on the fringe of Dandenong's CBD is held in a constant state of tension as the spatial strategies of government, urban planners, and police, meet the tactics of market participants who subvert the dominant representation of space on Curtis Street and use it for their own ends. As key parties on both sides have an interest in concealing the presence of street sex work in Dandenong, most of these tensions played out in a manner designed to limit the market's visibility to the mainstream. The concealed nature of the market is advanced by the small number of women selling sex in this context, and the tactics of police that encourage sex workers to solicit in ways in which they blend in to Dandenong's representation of space. As a result, the market's buyers and sellers rely on their shared knowledge of the market as a space of representation on Curtis Street and an informal mode of eye contact to mark themselves out to each other as market actors. Consistent with observations in other street sex markets, women selling sex on Curtis Street also adopted other public and private spaces around Central Dandenong in ways that stretched the space of the market beyond its spatial epicentre on Curtis Street. While most interactions between market buyers and sellers took place on Curtis Street, the space of the street sex market is one in which conflict between sex workers, clients, and other third parties were common. One way sex workers attempted to mitigate their experience of violence was to work in partnership with a spotter, who provided some form of physical protection to the sex worker from their position in the market's shadows. As commonly represented in studies of street sex markets, police adopted the role of the primary agent for the dominant representation of space. Their regular interaction with people selling sex on Curtis Street was often the site where tensions between Dandenong's representation of space and the market as a space of representation played out on the street. Finally, the presence of a nearby youth accommodation facility appears to play a significant role in the establishment of a street sex market on Curtis Street and its continued reproduction in this space. In the next chapter, this thesis moves into the market's social network, where it explores the relational context in which people selling sex to fund an addiction on Curtis Street must negotiate as part of the daily lived experience.

LIFE INSIDE THE SOCIAL NETWORK OF PEOPLE SELLING SEX ON CURTIS STREET

In this chapter discussion moves beyond the practice of street sex work on Curtis Street and into the network of people whose addiction binds them to a cycle of drug use and street sex work in Dandenong. As demonstrated in relevant literature, social networks within street sex markets are typically made up of highly-marginalised people experiencing extreme hardship, whose participation in street sex work and illicit drug use further reduces their access to opportunity in the mainstream, which in turn increases their reliance on peer connection for their survival (Rowe 2006; Pyett and Warr 1999; Williamson and Folaron 2001; Phrasisombath et al. 2012). In this chapter, network theory is adopted as the conceptual framework through which the daily social experience of people selling sex on Curtis Street is explored. The value of peer connection is borne out in an assessment of the effect of various strong and weak tie types common in the markets social network, while the consideration of peer connection as a valued form of capital provides a strategy through which the tactics of social investment on Curtis Street are considered. The pages that follow provide a rich, often confronting, account of the social lives and daily experience of people as they struggle with their addiction and a reliance on peer connection for protection, access to key resources, and ultimately their survival in this market's highly marginalised social network.

Pairings and partnerships

As discussed in the preceding review of literature, the networks of people selling sex in street sex markets are often closed, highly-isolated networks whose distance from the mainstream is a product of the illegality and stigma of street sex work and problematic drug use (Murphy and Venkatesh 2006; Venkatesh 2013; Sallmann 2010). The network of people selling sex on Curtis Street is a small, somewhat closed network in which the exclusion of its members from mainstream networks as a result of their drug use and street sex work increases their reliance on social ties

within this network for their survival; the network ensures access to key resources such as heroin, physical protection, and accommodation. Survival in this network, therefore, requires a high degree of social interaction and the strategic manipulation of ties within the network and its periphery. The product is a small, close-knit social network in which all its members had at least some degree of direct connection to all other network members.

Pretty much everyone around here knows each other. (Rose)

Yeah, I mean there's not that many of us girls out here, so we pretty much look after each other while we're out here. There are a few girls that like to stir up some shit, but I reckon most of us all pretty good mates. (Linda)

I worked in St Kilda for a bit and that was just fuckin' constant drama. Like if you're standing where someone else doesn't want you to be they'll tell ya ta fuck off or they'll bash ya or stab ya or some shit. It's pretty much everyone for 'emself over there. But here it's different. There's a bit of shit goin' on between some of the girls over the last few weeks and stuff, but it's nothing really ... just a lot of fuckin' bitchin' backwards and forwards between them and their blokes. But when push comes to shove we all take care of everyone else out here ... even with them two [a feuding pair of street sex workers], they wouldn't help each other out with money and shit, but if they were coppin' shit from any of these blokes out here I reckon they'd still help each other out. That's just how it is around here. We all know what it's like out here, so we look out for each other, even if we don't like 'em that much. (Julie)

A Girl and her Spotter

Research on the social experience of people selling sex in street sex markets often describes the social organisation in these contexts as something that develops out of the range of strong, often highly intense social ties between one or many street sex workers and a person(s) who provides them with some form of physical protection from the violence of clients, other sex workers, and pimps in return for some portion of the sex worker's income (Venkatesh 2013; Shannon et al. 2008b; Kennedy et al. 2007; Ralph 2009; Williamson and Folaron 2001). On Curtis Street, the most common micro partnership type was intimately-based connections between a woman who sold sex on the street and her male partner who acted as her spotter. The following discussion provides an insight into the complexity of the daily life and typical progression of these arrangements, especially as each person's connection to the other becomes entwined with their connection to heroin. The relationship

between Linda and Pok serves as an archetype for the sex worker–spotter authority relationship that develops out of an intimate relationship.

Linda and Pok

Linda and Pok met in 2009 when they “scored” together as part of a group of five mutual friends. When they met, Linda had been working on Curtis Street for “around two years”. During this time she was in an intimate relationship with a man named Rob, whose heroin use was funded by Linda’s street sex work. That relationship ended around six weeks before she met Pok, after which she continued working on the street by herself. Linda described her break-up with Rob as a result of escalating conflict associated with their addictions, along with Rob’s arrest, charge, and incarceration after “fucking up at drug court”. Rob was incarcerated and placed on a methadone program to support his transition to abstinence.

Pok began using heroin during his mid-teens. From this stage in his life he said he “always seemed to be in trouble with the jacks, for this and that ... nothing serious”, but he soon found himself moving through youth and adult forms of detention. Most of his offences were tied to his heroin use, which included dealing heroin. When Pok met Linda he had only been out of jail for “a few months” and was living with his mother in a suburb immediately neighbouring Dandenong. Since his release he had been “using a bit [of heroin] here and there”, but remained “on the ’done” as he wanted to “start doing the righty” so he did not end up back in jail. At this stage it seemed as if his heroin use was problematic, but relatively sporadic and somewhat under control.

Linda took an immediate liking to Pok and later commented to a friend that she thought he was “hot”. This got back to Pok who, after getting her phone number from a friend, called her and they arranged to “hook up and score”. They hit it off and formed a relationship. Within a week, Pok moved out of his mother’s house and into Linda’s unit. Pok knew of Linda’s street sex work and almost immediately adopted the role of spotter. He described this to me as a product of his care for her:

I couldn’t just sit at home wondering what will happen to my girl out here, like some of these other guys out here do. I gotta make sure no one fucks with her. (Pok)

Despite the regularity with which this was used as a rationalisation by Pok and other men in this network in description of their position in the market, it was also

clear that he performed this role as a tactic designed so that he could position himself as a partner in Linda's sex work, and would therefore have more of a "legitimate" stake in using the money she made on the street for his own heroin use. His adoption of the spotter role and the demands he placed on Linda with regard to her street sex work increased as he became increasingly entrenched in the cycle of addiction. As this developed, their connection to each other quickly intensified into a very strong, close tie in which their increasing reliance on each other reduced their participation in other parts of the network, and eventually limited their ability to access key resources outside of their most immediate social ties. By the time I entered the field (approximately 10 months into their relationship) it appeared that any genuine intimacy reportedly present in the early stages of their relationship had been engulfed by their heroin addictions. While Linda was clearly aware of this shift in their relationship, Pok appeared to reconcile his addiction to heroin, his connection to Linda, and her street sex work in a way that I considered to be highly complex and contradictory. The following quote presents an ongoing theme of how Pok thought about his role, his connection to Linda, and her street sex work:

See, I'm not most of the other guys out here. Most of 'em, they're just out here making their girlfriends work so they can get on [use heroin]. Apart from that, they don't give a fuck about 'em. Like if they get bashed or some shit, they don't give a fuck ... as long as they're makin' money, that's the main thing. But I'm not like that. Like I only let my girlfriend give hand jobs and blow jobs out here, 'cos you know, there's a boundary that you don't want your girl to cross. No full sex or any of that other shit. I mean, we're out here to score, yeah, for sure, but if we can't get it through just hand jobs and head jobs, then fuck it, we'll just go without or get it some other way.

Central to Pok's internal negotiation of his relationship with Linda, his heroin addiction, and his need for money from Linda's sex work to fund his drug use was his attempt to demarcate parts of her body and certain sex acts that he deemed acceptable to commoditise, and those he saw as belonging only to the confines of their intimate relationship. This quickly became a highly complex, volatile connection as Pok became extremely jealous of the men to whom Linda was selling sex to (particularly her "reggys"), but he was also acutely aware that he could not satisfy his addiction unless she continued to fund it. While Linda continued to uphold the pretence that she was adhering to Pok's demands about the types of sex she sold through fear of violent retribution, the financial pressures of funding two

heroin addictions meant she had little choice but to continue selling the types of sex she had in the past.

He's fuckin' dumb, man. See, he's told you that he only lets me do hand jobs and blow jobs out here. Yeah, well that's not all I do [giggles]. Like, does he really think that I could make all this money if that's all I was doing? ... not even fuckin' close. I couldn't even support my own habit just doing that, let alone his too. And the worst part is that he keeps going on about how he could tell if I was, you know, full on fuckin' guys [shakes her head indicating her disbelief] ... and it's happening right under his nose. Like it's right in front of him. It's even happening in his own bed, for fucksake ... and sometimes he's even in the house [giggles again].

She continued:

But I reckon he sorta knows, man. He has to ... but I reckon that he just can't say anything 'cos right now he's getting what he wants [heroin through the money Linda makes] and he's scared that if he arcs up about it that I'll kick him out. He's gotta know. I mean, yeah, he's a dumb cunt for sure, but nobody can be that dumb. No way.

Pok's increasing suspicion that Linda was selling sexual acts that he had prohibited sparked a sharp increase in conflict and violence in their relationship. Because of her fear of what he may do to her, Linda did not leave him immediately, but soon began planning ways to terminate their relationship and get Pok out of her apartment and her life. In addition to his violence, his increasing absence from the street and the effect he had on her security on the street and in the market's network also played a key role in Linda's assessment of her current predicament and the value she placed on her connection to him.

I'm just sick of this kid [Pok], man. He doesn't even come out here anymore. He's meant to be looking out for me and shit, but he just sits at home watchin' TV waiting for me to get home with some money so he can fuckin' get on ... Fuck him man. I don't work for him. He's just a user. If he wants me to keep shouting him then he should be gettin' his arse out here and doing what he's supposed to be doing.' (Linda)

Linda soon decided to terminate the relationship, but she was well aware that Pok was not simply going to leave when she asked. The satisfaction of his addiction was now totally reliant on Linda's income, as was his accommodation. Linda knew the strength of Pok's addiction in particular, coupled with his inability to continue

funding his current drug use patterns independently of her, made this a potentially volatile, highly dangerous situation in which the risks to her were very serious.

It's not like he's just gonna say, "OK then. I'll pack up and go". He's fuckin' told me, man. "If you ever try and leave me, I'll fuckin' kill ya". (Linda)

Pok's violence towards Linda

While Linda began developing strategies with her peers regarding how she could leave her arrangement with Pok, his violence towards Linda continued to escalate as he became suspicious that she was planning to leave him, and became more cognisant of his inability to sustain his addiction on his own. Linda increasingly appeared on Curtis Street with fresh wounds, usually on her arms, back, legs, neck, and torso, which she described as a product of a recent "fight" with Pok. Pok's violence was now extreme; in addition to being kicked, punched, and even strangled, it was Pok's use of knives and other sharp implements (particularly scissors) with which he would stab, cut, and slash her that produced some of the most horrific visible signs of violence on Linda's body. These abuses were exacerbated by Pok's refusal to let Linda seek medical attention for fear he would be identified as a domestic abuser, for which he would receive a criminal charge and perhaps be sent back to jail.

Have you seen this slash on my back, man? It's fuckin' killing me. Pok got pilled off his head last night and started goin' crazy at me saying shit like I'm a fuckin' whore and that I like being out here [on Curtis Street] and all this shit. Then he fuckin' started throwing shit at me. Like, you know, all my figurines and stuff I've got on the shelves in my lounge room? Yeah, well he started pickin' 'em up and started throwing 'em at me, like full on throwing at me. One got me in the head just back here [she showed me a large lump on the back of her head]. He just went fuckin' crazy. I didn't even know where I was for a bit, but I ended up in the bathroom checkin' out where he'd got me on my head ... and he fuckin' comes chargin' in with one of his fuckin' knives and he's grabbed me by the back of the hair and holds the knife on my throat sayin', "Don't fuckin' play with me bitch or I'll fuckin' slice you up and put you where no one will find you". So he fuckin', like, slams my head forward on the sink and cracked me a good one right on my head up here [shows me a small open cut just above her hairline] and he like, gives me this big slash right up my back. Fuck man, I thought it was gonna kill me for sure. He's done shit like that a few times, but it's getting worse man ... I had a look at this one [cut] on my back and it looks pretty bad. I said to him this morning that I wanted to go to the hospital cos I reckon it's infected, but he's like "Nah, you don't need to go to the hospital. It's fine." Fuckin' bullshit man.

He just knows that if they [hospital staff] see it they'll start askin' questions and he'll be fucked. (Linda)

'I've had enough of this shit, man. It's gotta stop'

A key issue often identified in research set in street sex markets is the lack of support and exit opportunities available to women trapped in a cycles of violence, exploitation, and addiction (Scoular and O'Neill 2007; Cimino 2012; Baker, Dalla, and Williamson 2010; Hubbard 2012). This is often described as a product of the stigma of street sex work and drug addiction, and the resulting lack of supportive opportunities available to them in the community and public service sectors, and in the broader mainstream community. In Dandenong, Linda's theorising about ways to terminate her relationship with Pok increased in line with her experience of domestic violence. But she also remained acutely aware, and highly fearful, of Pok's probable reaction.

I'll fuckin' kill you before I let you leave me. (Linda, attributed to Pok)

I suggested she seek assistance from police, which she immediately rebuffed:

Fuck them, man. All the jacks do is take him 'round the corner and tell him not to come back. Then he just comes straight back all pissed off that I've lagged him in. (Linda)

She also rejected the option of a street sex work or domestic violence-based community service:

They don't do shit out here, man. (Linda)

Instead, Linda drew on a strategy previously used by some of her peers when wanting to "get rid" of a problematic male partner or spotter. While Pok stayed at the unit thinking that Linda was "up the street working", Linda began spending time with her old boyfriend, Rob, who had just gotten out of jail, and she started using some of the money she made on the street to "shout" them some heroin to use together. She would return back to her apartment and to Pok later in the evening, usually with between \$100-\$150 in hand and complain about how "slow it's been today up the street". After a few days of this, I presume Pok grew suspicious that something was going on, but beyond his continued threats of physical violence he knew his dependence on Linda to fund his addiction and to provide accommodation

ultimately rendered him now powerless to control what he had come to see as an authority relationship, in which his needs were the couple's primary concern. At the same time, Linda's connection to Rob was developing in a similar manner as the early stages of her relationship with Pok, and they soon began talking about getting back together as a couple. As Linda made abundantly clear to Rob, the only thing standing in their way was Pok's reliance on money from her sex work for his own heroin use, and his presence in her unit.

Linda: It would be great if we could spend more time together like we used to. I've just gotta get rid of Pok somehow.

Rob: Yeah Don't worry. I'll take care of it.

The plan put forward by Rob—heavily influenced by Linda—was swift, simple, and very effective. It drew on street law, and was made possible only through the relatively large number of young men Rob was potentially able to mobilise as part of a physical threat. One afternoon, under the direction of Linda, Rob called Pok on his mobile phone as he sat in Linda's apartment waiting for her to return from working on Curtis Street:

Linda wants you out of her house. I don't care where you go, but I'm coming past at 4 o'clock this afternoon with a few mates, and if you're still there you're gonna get bashed.'

There were competing stories from both sides about Pok's response, but he was seen by another sex worker a few hours later pushing a shopping trolley containing his clothes and other items through central Dandenong in the direction of his mother's place in nearby Noble Park. The following day, news had spread through the market's social network that despite her complaints, Pok had moved back in with his mother. Linda's plan to free herself from her connection to Pok seemed to have worked. As Pok had "stood over" many people on Curtis Street during his time in the market, projecting a highly-masculinised violent persona in the street sex market, word of his failure to live up to image when challenged by Rob was enjoyed by many people over the following few days. That's fuckin' priceless [laughs]. Did anyone get a photo of him? (Tracey)

Fuck, man. So much for Pok being such a tough fucker. He'd only ever beat up chicks anyway. He's fucking nothing. (Abby)

Pok's reprisal

In the days that followed, Pok's focus shifted to trying to save face and repair his reputation in the market's network as a figure of power and authority, and in turn prolong his ability to use the market to fund his addiction. He did this by trying to convince other network members that Linda and Rob had breached the in-group code of not "ratting people out to the jacks", and told anyone who would listen that he was going to address the situation by dealing out some "street justice". One of his earlier tactics was to publicise the event—the apparent breach of an in-group code of behaviour—and his intent to remain as an enforcer on the street to all members of the market's network by sending out a series of blanket phone texts to anyone with an ongoing presence on Curtis Street. After only two days away from Curtis Street, he broke his silence via text.

Been in the cells since thursday avo', waiting for court cuming up monday another two more sleeps then paybak slut rat dog. How lucky I am to get my fone in but getting low battery better turn off soon so I can stil ring people up, later people n dont worry rat,ur day is cuming really soon. (8/9/2011 @ 2.08am)

This was followed an hour later with:

Im so lucky, want to court from cells 2day, beat the charges of assault with a weapon, attempt to cause serious harm n theft, now it's time for me to get the slut azz rat dog who lag me in n who eva wants to help a rat dog slut, u will go down with them. Fuk I hate rat dogs they all should die. (8/9/2011 @ 3.15am)

Pok's goal was to discredit Linda and Rob for "ratting him out to the jacks", which he hoped would harm their reputation in the market's network, and result in their exclusion from various relationships and access to resources. Being labelled a "dog" (someone who informs police of the illegal activities of other deviant group members) not only invites peer-led sanction (being "bashed" is perhaps the most common punishment in Curtis Street), but can significantly affect a person's standing in the market's social network as they lose the trust of their peers. Dogs were treated with suspicion and kept away from sensitive or potentially incriminating information for fear that they would report this detail to police or share sensitive information with other network members. Anyone labelled a dog was often

pushed to the network's periphery, from where they had little effect on other members and were often excluded from sharing in other in-group resources, including protection on the street. By trying to attach the dog label to Linda and Rob, Pok hoped they would lose face among peers and be pushed to the network's periphery. Unfortunately for Pok, because he had failed to establish in-group credibility over the past months in Curtis Street, and instead had developed a position as an outsider, attracting negative sentiment towards him as a result of his "jumping", "ripping", and "scamming" peers during his relationship with Linda, this latest strategy was rendered unsuccessful. If anything, many of his now ex-peers appeared to enjoy his demise as an enforcer among people on the supply side of the market.

Good fuckin' riddance, man. It serves him right anyway. He's been scamming people out here for ages, man. And now he expects us to be all on his side and shit. Typical Pok ... it's all about "poor fuckin' me". The problem for him is that no one gives a shit about him. (Julia)

Clutching at straws

After a week of unsuccessfully pushing his story to anyone who would listen, Pok became desperate. While continuing to use heroin sporadically when he was able to demand a "chop out" from people he helped to score, or by convincing someone to lend him some money, he realised he could not sustain his addiction for long. He felt he had little option but to alter his strategy. Informed now by a desire to re-establish his connection to Linda, Pok began trying to garner sympathy from Linda and others in Curtis Street by telling people that his mother had passed away. Instead of contacting Linda directly, his hope was that his "new" story would filter back to her where it would elicit pity and cause her to want to re-establish their relationship. The line he spruiked to me and to others he encountered during these few days was similar:

I feel like shit man. I just can't believe it's happened. I mean, one day she was fine and seemed happy and everything, then she fuckin' gone ... I'm just totally lost now. You know, a few weeks ago everything was looking good for me. But now, I've lost my girlfriend and now my mum. I just don't know where it's gonna end, man.

But because his mother lived and shopped in an area near Curtis Street, his desperate plan was doomed from the start. It was only later that evening, just after

being told of her unfortunate passing, that a small group of street sex workers “gettin’ some smokes” saw his mother shopping at Coles supermarket. This strategy therefore failed to elicit the sympathy he’d hoped to get from Linda:

That kid’s full of shit, man. I saw his cousin last night and she didn’t say shit about it. (Linda)

I hope his mum kicks him out too [laughs] ... She might, ya know. He’s pinched so much stuff off her, so she might just tell him to get steppin’. He stole this big flat screen TV she got a few months ago and hocked it for smack. And that phone he’s been carrying around? He stole that from her too. I’d laugh so hard if she doesn’t let him move in [laughs]. (Linda)

The failed plan also furthered the lack of regard his now former Curtis Street peers held for him:

He finally got what he deserved I reckon. He was such a fuckin’ arsehole to Linda. She pretty much did everything for him, and he just beat the shit out of her. Good riddance I reckon. (Tracey)

This signalled the end of Pok’s time on Curtis Street. Without a strong tie to a woman selling sex on the street who was prepared to fund his drug addiction in return for his protection, and with his reputation as an enforcer in tatters, there was no longer a position for him in the market’s social network. The strong lack of regard for him, predominantly as a result of his manipulative behaviour within the network, made futile the few attempts he made to establish a similar connection with other women selling sex in the street. Most sex workers simply assessed a connection to him as a high-cost affair that promised them little to no benefit. Despite having broken into his mother’s home only a few weeks before to steal her TV and sell it at “Cashies” (Cash Converters, a retail company that buys and sells second-hand goods) so he could score and get on, he moved back in with her. Without an income large enough to fund his addiction, he had little alternative but to go back on a methadone program.

Linda’s street sex work and her position on Curtis Street post-Pok

In the days and weeks that followed, Linda continued working on Curtis Street, but now did so without a spotter. Despite having a “taste” of the heroin Linda occasionally “shouted” him, her new partner Rob had little interest in her sex work, and never had a presence on the street, at least during my time in the field. While

free from the abuse attached to her connection to Pok, her newfound status as a sex worker without an active spotter placed her in a highly complex position in the network; she had to re-negotiate many of her peer connections, and was now vulnerable to a range of potential harms inside the network from which she has been protected by her connection to Pok. It was through this re-negotiation that, from my position as a participant observer, some of the complexity of Linda's connection to Pok began to come to light. On the one hand, her relationship with him exposed her to a range of harms in their relationship that could only be described as horrific. But on the other, her association with him and his reputation for violence not only provided her with a sense of security, but gave her significant authority in many of her peer interactions. While partnered with Pok, she was free to scam, rob, or "talk shit" about other network members, because most people were too fearful of Pok's response to seek retribution or even respond negatively. In contrast, while her disconnection from Pok freed her from her experience of domestic abuse, it also significantly reduced her power on the street, and she had little option but to negotiate a range of situations and risks from which she was previously immune. As a single figure in the market's network, Linda faced a particularly challenging period as she re-negotiated her position as a member without a partner with high-value physical capital.

Arrangements between street sex workers

Most research exploring the effects of strong ties in the lives of women selling sex focus on their experience of intimate or working arrangements with an exploitative man (or men). Few studies provide insight into the nature of the strong working ties between women selling sex in street sex markets to fund their high-cost addictions. On Curtis Street, short-term working arrangements between sex workers were also common, and some of these developed into relatively stable, ongoing working partnerships that extended beyond the market and into each partner's social life, and into their struggle for key resources such as drugs and accommodation. These arrangements usually involved women who, through choice or circumstance, sold sex on the street without the relative security of having a dedicated spotter to watch over them. For these women, establishing a working arrangement with another sex worker in which each would simultaneously "look out" for their partner's safety on the street was an attractive option that increased their perception of security,

without having to fund the drug use of the person watching out for them. A key benefit of this arrangement style was that it reduced the amount of time each woman had to spend selling sex on the street, and therefore their exposure to a range of risks inherent in street sex work, by only having to do enough jobs to fund their own drug use.

It's not like havin' someone just lookin' out only for you. Dave'd just sit in my car and he'd just be watchin' like a hawk every time someone came near me. If anything he was too full on. He'd come running up here just if he thought someone was looking at me funny. But this [her working arrangement with Helen] is still pretty good though. I mean, even though we're pretty much doin' our own thing as soon as we come out here, we still look out for each other, you know, if shit happens. And cost, like, with Dave, yeah? Like, I'd be out here heaps longer cos I'd have to get him somethin' [money for heroin] just for comin' out here. But cos we're both out here doing our own thing I've only gotta get what I need Sometimes I'll have to put in a bit if Helen's short, but it's not like I have to do enough jobs for both of us or anything. (Kerry)

As a risk-reduction strategy it perhaps wasn't as effective as having a dedicated spotter watch over each interaction on the street, but it did tend to increase each person's standing and access to key resources in the market's social network, simply by being associated with another network member who "had their back". For many, these partnerships were often their most valuable and effective source of social capital both on the street and among peers in the market's network, and the partnerships were therefore a particularly attractive option for women without a dedicated spotter.

Peer exploitation and indirect pimping

The benefit of a strong tie is that it allows its participants some degree of access to the resources of the person(s) they are tied to, however it can also restrict their access to resources outside the network—or tie—in which they are participants (Granovetter 1973). Most ongoing arrangements formed on the street extended beyond the street context and into other areas of each partner's life, where members soon became dependent on each other both for their survival and to service their addiction(s). This extension often included being able to take advantage of their partner's accommodation when unable to secure their own. One of the greater advantages of being in a partnership was also the ability to borrow money from their

partner, with the expectation that it would be lent. Despite being the catalyst of most conflict in these arrangements, having a partner who was expected to lend them money in times of need was considered by most to be “life-saving”; this was usually because such loans were the only way the women could avoid the pangs of heroin withdrawal (“getting sick”) during times when they were unable to earn enough money on the street. While very few of these loans were ever paid back, the pressure placed on the lending partner by the person needing to be saved from “gettin’ sick”, and the ability for the lender to recall the favour at a later date, made money-lending a common practice that many considered a key asset of working in partnership with another sex worker.

Despite the positive elements of the working partnerships, each tie appeared to become increasingly problematic as the increasing reliance of partners on each other began to limit the opportunities available to them in the broader network. The ruthlessness of life on Curtis Street, and an orientation towards self-fulfilment over the interests of their partner, often made these partnerships particularly complex relationships that were often volatile and, on occasion, exploitative. The life-course of most sex worker arrangements followed a relatively predictable path, where one of the women would slowly reduce the number of jobs she did on the street while becoming increasingly reliant on the other sex worker to fund her drug use. Over time, the relationships gradually shifted from being mutually beneficial in nature to highly exploitative ties that shared many similarities with street the more common sex worker–spotter partnerships. One of the clearest examples of this shift from mutual benefit to exploitation occurred in the ongoing partnership between Kerry and Helen.

Kerry and Helen

Kerry and Helen had met years before my first observation, while Kerry was working on Curtis Street to fund her heroin addiction and Helen was a client of the youth accommodation facility on Curtis Street. At the time of this study, they had only recently reconnected. Kerry had been released from jail only a few months earlier after being “locked up on some drug court shit”, and Helen had stopped using for fear that she was headed for a similar fate. Prior to this they spent “about a year” working in partnership on Curtis Street and finding accommodation together. Since Kerry’s arrest, Helen had “cleaned up her act”, stopped using, and reconnected to her

long-time girlfriend Pam, who had also sporadically sold sex on Curtis Street since her mid-teens. But tensions about drug use grew between the pair and Helen soon found herself single and back on the street. She began using again, and for the first few weeks she was able to fund her drug use by borrowing money from friends and people she knew. Her heroin use quickly spiralled out of control and she had little option but to again sell sex on Curtis Street to fund her heroin use.

The end of Helen's relationship with Pam, and her re-engagement with the street sex market on Curtis Street, happened three months into the fieldwork of this project. Back on the street, Helen quickly re-established her friendship with Kerry, which quickly developed into a working partnership where each "looked out for each other" while working. As both women immersed themselves in the cycle of drug use and sex work on Curtis Street, their reliance on each other increased to the point where within only a few days they appeared inseparable. Despite their reliance on friends and sex-for-accommodation arrangements for their housing, they effectively began living as a non-intimate couple whose patterns of sex work and drug use entwined. Initially, they pooled their money to pay for their drug use, and often borrowed money from each other to make up for a slow day or night on the street. For the first few weeks, at least, it seemed that their association was one in which they each benefited from their arrangement. However, it was not long before their partnership began to appear exploitative, as Kerry's sex work came to fund a larger portion of the pair's heroin use. The shift from a mutually beneficial partnership to an authority-style relationship appeared to be part of a deliberate ploy.

In the initial stages of the arrangement, both women would arrive at Curtis Street late in the afternoon to catch the influx of clients going home from work, and both would solicit and sell sex on the street until they each had enough money to buy enough heroin for themselves for the rest of the day and night. But after the first few weeks, Helen's pattern on the street changed to one where she would disappear soon after arriving with Kerry to start their working shift together, only to reappear two or three hours later when she suspected Kerry had earned enough money to fund both women's drug use for the evening. The market's typically steady flow of clients meant that Kerry often went from job to job, assuming that Helen was doing the same and that their paths back on Curtis Street simply had not crossed since their arrival. When Helen eventually returned to Curtis Street she usually did with a story of being "ripped off" or robbed by a client to explain her lack of money. Present in

each of these stories was the suggestion that Kerry might “loan” her the amount of money she had supposedly lost so that she would not “get sick”:

I’m fucking pissed off, man. That was meant to be a \$70 job, but the cunt only gave me \$40 for it He took fuckin’ ages, too. I don’t know if I’m gonna be able to get another job again now. That’s just fucked me up for the night.
(Helen)

The strength of Kerry’s addiction meant she was commonly “hanging out” after only a few hours on the street, and wanted more than anything to “score and get on”. Seemingly fed up with Helen’s account of how long Kerry would have to wait for her while she re-made the money she’d “lost” before they could leave and score, Kerry typically succumbed and agreed to “chip in” Helen’s portion of their pool.

Fuckin’ hell, Helen. Alright. I’ll give ya 50 bucks, but you’ve gotta pay me back from ya first job tomorrow. No fuckin’ bullshit this time, either. It’s fuckin’ enough Helen.

Although the regularity with which sex workers were “fucked over” or robbed by clients made some of Helen’s initial claims plausible to Kerry, it soon became apparent that these were fictional accounts and part of a ploy to have Kerry’s street sex work pay for both women’s heroin use. Despite Kerry’s awareness of Helen’s strategy, this pattern soon developed into a characteristic of their partnership, in which Kerry’s sex work funded between 70%–100% of the couple’s heroin use.

Helen’s strategy on the street developed through two repeated and predictable pathways that she put into play almost as soon as she arrived with Kerry on Curtis Street. First, upon arrival Helen would simply wait for Kerry to get a job. As soon as Kerry left the immediate vicinity of Curtis Street with her client, Helen would simply walk to a friend’s house where she’d “smoke a few cones” before returning a few hours later with a story of being ripped off or messed around by a client. Alternatively, and after becoming aware of Helen’s active avoidance of sex work, Kerry would often ensure Helen got a “job” before looking for work for herself. This often involved Kerry actively seeking out clients for Helen, who to counteract this would deliberately appear uninterested in the client in the hope of turning them off. It was only Kerry’s desire to get Helen to contribute at least some money, coupled with her skill as negotiator between Helen and the client, that made any of these initial “jobs” for Helen possible. After an often jovial conversation with the client in which Kerry sold Helen’s apparent willingness to participate in various sexual acts,

Kerry's head would shoot up from the client's car window, and she would hold the passenger door open as if for a distinguished guest, yelling:

Helen! Come 'ere. This guy wants a job with ya ... I'll see ya back here in about half an hour or so ... I'm tellin' ya', don't play any of ya fuckin' games with me tonight.

Helen always got in the car, but rarely acknowledged Kerry's threat. She simply used it as an opportunity to get away from Curtis Street and return a few hours later when she suspected Kerry to have made enough money for both of them.

As an observer, I struggled to understand why Kerry continued to fund Helen's drug use when it appeared clear that she was being exploited. It appeared unlikely that there was any physical abuse or threat of violence if Kerry stopped complying with Helen's now obvious strategy. Instead, it appeared it was Kerry's strong need for peer connection and companionship, and her fear that Helen would end their partnership if she stopped funding her drug use, that ultimately allowed Helen to continue exploiting her partner. Unfortunately, like many women selling sex in this context, Kerry was desperately lonely and would often latch onto people who showed an interest in her beyond selling sex. When not in partnership with Helen, Kerry moved in and out of numerous short-term relationships with men, in which she appeared happy to fund her partner's drug use (usually heroin) as long as the male remained committed to her. Her connection to Helen provided her with the companionship she craved, which was ultimately something for which she was prepared to pay—albeit reluctantly. Helen recognised Kerry's vulnerability and was savvy and willing enough to move their relationship from a mutually beneficial one into an exploitative social connection, in which her drug addiction was ultimately funded by Kerry's sex work. This in many ways mirrored the life-course of similarly strong ties between a sex worker and exploitative male partner, but provided additional risk to Helen as it often left her working on the street for long periods without the support of another network member who could potentially intervene in the case of violence or trouble on the street. This appeared a particularly high price to pay, and one that provides evidence of the value Helen placed on maintaining an emotional connection with someone whose she could identify with.

Knowing a dealer: social capital and channels of money and drugs

Many studies set in street sex markets either assume a sex worker's social connection to an appropriate drug dealer, or positions their access to drugs within an intricate, highly exploitative network of social connections in which their access to a key drug of dependence is mediated by a pimp or dealer who uses her addiction to further exploit and command the terms of their arrangement (Venkatesh 2013; Rosen and Venkatesh 2008; Shannon et al. 2008b; Williamson and Cluse-Tolar 2002; Christou and Smith 2009). In Dandenong, despite the widespread use of alcohol, marijuana, prescription medications, and ice, heroin addiction was really the centre around which life on Curtis Street—and in the broader market network—revolved. But people's access to heroin was not nearly as straightforward as I initially suspected. For most, scoring heroin required careful negotiation of the chains of social connections within the market's network that led to one of two dealers widely regarded as “good” or “the best” in the area. The reasons for high regard these two dealers held among network members were their steady supply of “good gear” (pure or strong heroin) and their 24-hour per day availability. Other dealers seemed to come and go as they either only sold sporadically, were over-priced, or sold “gear” that many considered questionable (suspected of being low in purity). For example, a common problem with less reputable dealers was being sold “group-up oxy's” (OxyContin tablets crushed to look like heroin) which the dealers claimed to be heroin. Because of these problems, these part-time, sporadic dealers were treated with suspicion and used only when access to the “good” dealers was restricted. Alternatively, the seemingly endless supply of “good gear” sold by these two key dealers positioned them as key agents whose influence in the street sex market was significant.

Scoring from a “good dealer” was a complex process that required a person's careful negotiation of their social ties in the network of people selling sex on Curtis Street. For most, even with money in hand, scoring was a stressful ordeal. Scoring heroin was not a case of contacting a dealer and buying heroin from them in a straightforward transaction, as was often the case when purchasing other drugs in the area. Instead, access to both of these dealers required careful negotiation of their connection to one of two women working on the street, both of whom were long-

time clients of one of these dealers, and who now used these connections to position themselves as bridges between other network members and as key sources of heroin. The seemingly endless demand for heroin among other network members, coupled with the high regard given to these two dealers, positioned each of the two women as significant network figures strategically using their social capital, and created two quite distinct trade routes of drugs into and money out of the street sex market. These trade routes not only had to be negotiated by people supporting a heroin addiction in Curtis Street, but also had a significant effect on the shape of the market and organisation of its social network. Due to their significance, I will discuss each one in turn.

‘Dealers with good gear’

Maleea (and Lun)

Maleea’s shit is the best man. You gotta be careful who you get your gear from, ’cos you know, ’cos you can get ripped pretty easy or someone’ll sell some real dirty shit. But with her, it’s like guarantee that it’s gonna be good. (Alicia)

Maleea had been dealing on and off since her late teens after being introduced to the heroin trade by her previous boyfriend. She started out by simply “holding shit” (heroin) while her boyfriend dealt from more prominent public spaces in Springvale. They were “busted by the jacks” a few times, but her enmeshment in the culture of Springvale’s heroin market contributed to her experience of this as “just standard shit”, and so she continued. After the relationship with her boyfriend ended, Maleea used the contacts she had established and continued “dealing a bit here and there”, mainly just to friends as a way to supplement the money she was getting from Centrelink. It was during this period of dealing that she “hooked up” with Lun, whom she had originally met dealing in Springvale. He also “did a bit of dealing”, but, like Maleea, was not a regular heroin user. Their relationship progressed quickly and they moved into a unit in Springvale together. After only a few months Maleea fell pregnant and the couple decided to move into a house so they would have more space for their new family. To account for the increase in expenditure because of their new child and larger home, they decided to expand their heroin dealing practices from sporadic periods only dealing to a select group of recreational and/or occasional users, to a larger group of “hard core” users. To do this they re-engaged

with people they knew to be “hard core users” and told them that they “had some good shit for sale”. The offer to score from them was taken up by only a few people in the first few days, but quickly expanded to other regular users as word spread that they had “better shit” than many of their competitors. It was during this phase that they began selling to Linda, who, in partnership with Pok at that stage, acted as their key intermediary in Curtis Street.

Tim

Have you had some of the shit Kerry gets? That's some of the best gear you can get for sure. I've had shit that guys have said is fuckin' hard core, but the gear Kerry's guy gets shits all over it. He's [Tim] a fuckin' arsehole to deal with, but it's worth it.' (Steven, a sporadic heroin user who only comes into the street sex market when wanting to score through Kerry, talking to Adam who occasionally does the same.)

The other “good dealer” selling heroin into the sex market in Curtis Street was Tim. Tim was in his late 20s and lived in the rear portion of his parents' home in a suburb directly neighbouring Dandenong. Tim dealt heroin as a way to fund his own heroin addiction that had developed since his mid to late teens. In addition to maintaining an addiction, he also smoked marijuana (typically around one gram per day), was a heavy smoker of cigarettes (typically smoking a pack of 30 cigarettes each day), and took a range of other prescription medications. Rose, his girlfriend, had a similar drug use pattern but was able to maintain steady employment at a clerical level at a local health care facility. Similarly to Maleea and Lun, the basis of his high regard by users was Tim's seemingly endless supply of “good gear” and his ability to accommodate someone wanting to score at most times of the day and night. Tim's key contact in the street sex market was Kerry (and briefly Helen, as indicated previously) who recognised this relationship as a valuable form of social capital that she sought to capitalise on in many of her peer interactions. Through her strategic negotiation of this relationship and position in the market's social network, any of her peers wanting to score from Tim on Curtis Street had to negotiate access to his “gear” through her.

‘Order up!’

In an attempt to reduce their culpability if overheard either by police or non-approving others, both dealers required their bridges into the market (Kerry or Linda/Pok) to use a unique coding system to state the amount of heroin they wanted

to buy. Maleea and Lun's system was based around the McDonald's fast food menu and took the form of the purchaser asking the dealer to "pick up" a certain item for them on their way to a meeting. Some of the more common personal orders included a "cheeseburger" in reference to 0.2 gram of heroin, a "fillet of fish" for 0.4 g, a "quarter pounder" for 0.6 gram, while a "big mac" referred to a whole gram of heroin.

Can you pick me up a cheeseburger?

Do you reckon you could get me a quarter pounder?

I'm after a big mac. Can you help me out?

Alternatively, Tim used a system based around the buyer's request for a certain number of drinks, with each drink indicating a \$100 unit of heroin. For example, immediately following the initial pleasantries that seem almost irrelevant to buyer and seller, Kerry places her order:

Can you grab me four drinks on your way out?

I'm after seven drinks, hun.

Yeah, just two drinks for the moment thanks, darl.

These requests indicate a desire to purchase \$400, \$700, and \$200 of heroin respectively. As these systems suggest, while each strategy was designed to limit the culpability of each party (particularly the dealer) if overheard, a key difference for their clients was the units in which each dealer dealt. For example, Maleea's system focused on the weight of heroin, while Tim's system was built around its monetary value. Common to both dealers was the per gram price of the heroin they sold, which remained stable during my time in the field at \$300.

'Going ta' score'

Differences in the processes required by each dealer are also present in the instruction given to the buyer after making a coded request to score. Present in both processes are each dealer's manipulation of their relative power granted to them by their clients due to their possession of a highly valued substance—namely heroin. Each of these dealers had significant power in the lives of their bridges into Curtis Street and other people using their relationships with them to score, which each

dealer appeared to both enjoy and exploit in ways that shifted the majority risk of police detection onto their clients.

Scoring from Tim

While the high quality of Tim's "gear" drew many people selling sex on Curtis Street into this channel of trade, scoring from Tim was considered by many as a highly complex, problematic process that many would otherwise avoid. As he lived with his parents and continued to try and conceal his heroin dealing from them, most of his dealing took place in public spaces in and around Dandenong. Tim used a number of different public locations as sites to deal, which he appeared to cycle between as part of a strategy to avoid police detection. Some of the more common locations included late night convenience stores or petrol stations in a neighbouring suburb, a particular side street, and a busy supermarket. The two venues used most often were broadly referred to as the "little place" and the "big place". The "little" was a small shopping centre in a neighbouring suburb, while the "big" was a larger shopping plaza in the same neighbouring suburb. Regardless of the location given to Kerry by Tim on her call, the direction given by him was the same: for Kerry to make her way to his preferred location, park her car and wait for him to arrive.

'This guy's red lightin' us'

A common complaint from Kerry and others scoring from Tim was that he would often arrive at these public places much later than he initially indicated. Often magnified by his clients' experiences of heroin withdrawal at the time of calling him, Tim's seemingly deliberate tardiness was experienced by most people on Curtis Street as an infuriating practice that increased the potential of them coming to police attention. Unfortunately for most, this was not only a tactic used by Tim, but was a common practice among dealers who "thought they could play god". This practice was referred to as "red lighting":

I'm fuckin' sick of dealing with Tim. He's fucked, man. He just red lights ya pretty much every time. He doesn't give a fuck either. As long as he can just pull up to a place and have five cunts waiting for him so they can just hand over their money [to score], then that's all he cares about. It's not him who's gonna get busted, man. It's us. (Helen talking to Rose)

'Red lighting' was used in reference to a range of illicit drug dealing practices that increased a client's risk of coming to the attention of police when scoring. In one

of the more common practices, the dealer sells to multiple people in a short space of time in one public place; to achieve this purchasers inevitably have to wait in secluded public spaces while their numbers grow to an acceptable level for the dealer, but also where their presence at this space effectively “outs” them as heroin purchasers if observed by police. Another practice is the repeated use of specific public spaces, where members of the mainstream public can easily become suspicious of dealing behaviour. Of these practices, making a purchaser wait for long periods in a location that could potentially “out” them as a heroin purchaser caused most concern for people scoring from Tim.

However, when asked, Tim suggested this was not a ploy adopted simply to annoy clients. He thought making his clients wait in public spaces for him as a deliberate ploy that reduced his risk of being “set up, or ambushed by the jacks” when dealing. While his clients thought he was simply late, he described actively using this time to scout the area for a police presence before he moved in with a sum of heroin that would result in serious criminal charge if he was less vigilant, and ultimately caught.

They're junkies, man, so they're all super on edge about cops being around and all that shit It's not that they give a fuck about me getting busted with a pocket full o' smack, it's more that by the time they've got their money together or whatever, they're hanging out and more than anything they just wanna score and go jack up somewhere, like, as quick as they can. So you know Kerry? If I've got her sitting around for a while at one of these places, she's calling me every five minutes saying "where the fuck are ya?", or "hurry the fuck up". She's a fuckin' pest, but it's good too 'cos she's got a good eye and'll tell me if there's any jacks sniffing around or anything. So for me it's good 'cos I can sort of send her in first to make sure it's all sweet, otherwise I'd just be rocking up to some place with all this fuckin' smack on me and for all I know it could be swarming with jacks.

While frustrating, his clients' dependence on heroin, and knowledge that he was one of only a few people with access to a reliable supply of high quality heroin, effectively stripped them of any real ability to challenge his practices. Instead, Kerry and anyone scoring through her had little option but to accept this process that placed them at increased risk of police detection. For many, this simply reinforced their position as a person “at the bottom of the shit heap” due to their dependence on heroin.

It pisses me off, man. More than you fuckin' know. But what choice have I got? I could call Brad but the shit he's got doesn't do jack, man. Tim's the only one that gets the real good shit, and at least then when ya buy from him ya know it's gonna do what it's meant to do. Like, if you wanted to get on you could just go to whoever and score some shit and you'd be outta ya fuckin' head. But after a while that weak shit just doesn't do anything and so you need some better gear. That's the only reason I keep scoring from Tim. I'd fuckin' love to know where he gets it from, but his gear is like fuckin' miles better than any of the other shit around here. The problem is that he fuckin' knows it, and so he treats all us [his clients] like shit. (Kerry)

As this suggests, the quality of Tim's "gear" and the strength of his clients' addictions allowed him to establish authoritative relationships with the people providing a bridge into the street sex market and their peers; he was able to shift much of the risk associated with dealing in public spaces onto his clients. The relative powerlessness of Kerry and others, because of their addictions and few other good heroin sources, meant it was a practice that continued without serious challenge, and simply came to form a high risk and often infuriating part of daily life for many on Curtis Street.

'bout fuckin' time'

A characteristic of Tim's standard dealing process was his reliance on high-traffic, well-lit, and highly-visible public spaces. The standard process for Kerry, as demanded by Tim when scoring at the "little place", required her to sit in her parked car in the shopping centre's carpark until she saw him arrive, park, and walk into the shopping centre. It was only after seeing him walk into the shopping centre that she would get out of her car and follow him in. Once inside, they would walk towards each other in the main hall of the centre creating the suggestion of an impromptu meeting of two friends, where they would shake hands to make the exchange of heroin for money. Alternatively Tim would continue to walk into the shopping centre's supermarket, where he would do some grocery shopping. If he took this approach, Kerry would enter the supermarket and purchase a small item, such as a packet of chewing gum, chocolate bar, or packet of chips, after which she would walk up to Tim and shake his hand (where the money and heroin were then exchanged), again as if it was a chance encounter of friends.

As the "small place" closed at 9pm each night, it was usually the location used for Kerry's (and others from Curtis Street whom she was helping) first score of each

day. While sometimes only scoring for herself from money she had already made that day, it was common that she could have up to five other people with her who had all “put in” (contributed to a pool of money with which to score) at this time too. Whether alone or with other people from Curtis Street in tow, Kerry would also score again later in the night (at 11pm or later), but this usually occurred at the “big place”. Here, the same process of sitting in the parked car in the shopping centre carpark for Tim to arrive applied. Although most shops in the centre closed at 5:30pm, a supermarket and KMart remained open until midnight, and were used in a similar manner to the supermarket at the smaller location. The “big place” was also the most commonly used site when scoring from Tim after midnight. On these occasions, instead of trying to secure a car park from where she had clear sight of Tim’s entry to the complex, Kerry would instead park in a space at the very rear of the car park facing a 7-Eleven late night convenience store and petrol station on the other side of the road. While still demanding that Kerry park her car and wait in the car park of the “big place”, her instruction from Tim was to watch for him pulling his car into the 7-Eleven where he would either fill his car with petrol or simply park and enter the convenience store, where he would typically purchase a soft drink and snack. Once he entered the convenience store, Kerry would get out of her car, walk briskly across the road, enter the shop, then go to the snack aisle and pick out a chocolate bar or other sweet treat; on many occasions she regarded this as her evening meal. Here, Kerry and Tim once again would briefly chat as if acquaintances meeting during a chance encounter, at the conclusion of which they would shake hands (the transaction of money and heroin) and walk to the counter together, where they would separately pay for their chosen snacks. Afterwards, Tim simply walked back to his car and drove away, while Kerry typically ran back to hers full of excitement and anticipation of “getting on”, quickly leaving for a more secure location where she could “mull up” and “get on”.

Scoring from Maleea and Lun

The experience of scoring from Maleea and Lun was quite different to scoring from Tim. However, the act of scoring still relied on an authoritative relationship with Linda and Pok and their use of social connection as a bridge between the key dealers and the people wanting to score. After receiving a request for heroin, Maleea or Lun would tell either Linda or Pok to come to their home, where the exchange

would take place. Before the purchase, people wanting to score were usually required to go to Linda's unit where they would pool their money together before Linda or Pok would make the call to Maleea and Lun. During their relationship, it was often Pok's responsibility to make the journey to Maleea's house to score while Linda and anyone else scoring with them waited in Linda's unit. This pattern did vary, particularly when the person whom Linda and Pok were helping to score was able to drive Pok to Maleea's house. For Linda and Pok this was often seen as a "mission", as Maleea's home was located two suburbs away and neither of them had a car. When scoring only for themselves they had little option but to walk to Dandenong station and take the train. The entire journey to and from Maleea's home typically took between 45 to 70 minutes, which, when "hanging out", addicts reported as seeming like an eternity. Linda and Pok considered a person approaching them seeking their assistance to score from Maleea as an opportunity to streamline their own scoring process. For example, even in cases where the person/people wanting their assistance to score did not have access to a car, Pok and Linda were able to place significant pressure on them to provide some form of transportation to Maleea's home.

I don't know man. Unless you can get someone to give us a lift, there's nothing much I can do for ya If you can get us a lift, say in the next 20 minutes or so, then yeah, sweet, I can probably help you out. (Pok talking to another male wanting his help to score)

Nah, fuck. What? Do you expect me to go all that fuckin' way on the train just for you? No way. If ya want me to get ya some shit, then you'll have to get us a ride. I'm not running a fuckin' charity service here. (Linda responding to one of her peers)

It was therefore common that people wanting Linda or Pok's assistance to score from Maleea would go to reasonable lengths to either secure a "ride" directly before approaching them for help, or would often try to broker a deal with a person peripheral to the market to "give us a lift". This latter strategy often involved either a person who would also receive a "chop out" (although smaller than that given to Linda or Pok for "helping them out"), or a sympathetic sex work client who was going to receive a discounted or free sexual service in exchange. Whether a client or a peripherally-related network member, Linda, Pok and the person they were

“helping” to score would all get into the car and drive to a side street within close walking distance to Maleea’s home, where Pok or Linda directed them to park:

She [Maleea] doesn’t like people parkin’ near her place [in] case her neighbours start gettin’ sus. (Pok)

After counting the money, Pok would get out of the car and walk the rest of the way to Maleea’s, before walking back to the car with the small parcel of heroin stashed in a jacket or pants pocket. This process of deliberately obscuring Maleea’s address was routinely followed because it was demanded by Maleea to “stop randoms or the jacks turning up at my doorstep”, but also because it allowed Linda and Pok to protect Maleea’s location and stop other sex workers from potentially bypassing them as intermediaries. Being bypassed in this way would reduce Linda and Pok’s influence in the market network, and limit their ability to manipulate or scam other network members through their strategic use of their position as a social bridge. Alternatively, while “picking up from Maleea’s” was the standard mode of operation during the period of this fieldwork, sometimes Linda and Pok would “get lucky”.

I couldn’t be fucked going all that way, man. Hopefully we’ll get lucky this time. (Linda commenting to Pok just before making the call to Maleea to score)

“Getting lucky” referred to the occasions when Linda and Pok called Maleea at a time when she was either at or about to leave her house to go shopping in central Dandenong. When calling at this “lucky” time, Maleea (or Lun) would instead tell Linda (or Pok) to meet them while they shopped at a public place, where Linda or Pok could score. For Pok in particular, the ease with which he could access these locations in comparison to making the short train journey to Maleea’s home often resulted in him jumping (quite literally) at these opportunities:

OK, I’ll be there in a few minutes. (Pok would often state when getting this good news)

This comment was immediately followed by bringing the money to Linda’s coffee table for a quick re-count, before rushing out the front door. He would walk the few minutes to either the supermarket where he would either look for Maleea and Lun waiting in their car in the carpark for him (and perhaps others) to score, or head inside the shopping centre where Maleea and Lun could be found in the food court.

A new flow of heroin and money on Curtis Street

The significance of this supply mechanism in the market's social organisation, } including Linda's position in the market, and the impact on daily lives of the markets members—was most apparent following the separation of Linda from Pok. While Linda continued to serve as a bridge between Maleea and Lun and the network members wanting to score from them, Linda's reluctance to make the short train journey to score resulted in a brief period where she either had to "get lucky" or seek out people to drive her to Maleea's house, which Linda thought particularly inconvenient. She began trying to convince Maleea to pass by her unit each day and deal to her there. Despite a brief period where Linda's addiction allowed Maleea to continue dictating the terms of their interaction and refusing Linda's request, the economic value of their association for Maleea and Lun prompted them to re-evaluate their practice in the network. Influenced also by a perceived decrease in the risk for potential police attention on their family home, this new practice of dealing to Linda at her unit developed into a routine, in which Maleea and/or Lun would stop by Linda's place at a pre-arranged time each afternoon. Here, Linda and Maleea/Lun now made their daily exchange of heroin and cash in the privacy and relative safety of Linda's residence.

News of this new arrangement quickly spread though the network, and some women began altering their drug use and sex work patterns so they could capitalise on it. The value of this new social pathway to other sex workers was that it allowed them to reduce and in some case bypass Linda and Kerry as bridges to good sources of heroin, which reduced Linda and Kerry's influence in the daily lives of women who relied on their connection to them to score, and allowed sex workers a higher degree of agency within the market's social network. Maleea also saw value in this new arrangement, as she was able to expand her client base and overall turnover in the market's social network, while continuing to operate in a private space away from her family home by dealing from Linda's apartment. Linda was also able to continue to benefit to some degree by requiring anyone who came to score at her apartment to provide her with a "chop out"; this helped her to mitigate some of the new risks she was exposed to as a sex worker without a spotter by reducing the amount of time she needed to spend on the street to satisfy her addiction. As I will discuss later in the chapter, this shift in the nature of the connection between Maleea and Linda had a significant effect on the network and the daily routines of its

members. As women began altering their patterns of sex work and drug use to ensure they had enough money to score by the 4 p.m. deadline when Maleea was expected to arrive at Linda's, the market became more active during the middle of the day as women began trying to capitalise on the often neglected "lunchtime rush".

Accommodation

Homelessness and unstable accommodation often provides significant challenges for people funding a high-cost addiction by participating in street sex work or other high-risk forms of commercial sex (Rowe 2006; Harding and Hamilton 2009; Miller et al. 2011). The marginalisation and lack of resources available to street sex workers often means that they are forced to rely on a range of short- and long-term accommodation strategies, most of which are unstable and place them in contexts in which they are exposed to significant harm (Harding and Hamilton 2009; Miller et al. 2011; Hanley 2004; Venkatesh 2013).

While typically considered secondary to the pull of heroin, a concern for most people selling sex on Curtis Street was finding and securing accommodation. Despite some enjoying periods of housing stability, most sex workers were couch-surfing, moving from place to place, or living in some other form of short-term, unstable accommodation. The following presents a range of the most commonly used accommodation options, and highlights people's reliance on their ties in the market's network and other high-risk connections to secure these options.

Boarding houses

"Gettin' a room" at a boarding house in Dandenong or its surrounding suburbs was one of the more secure and stable forms of accommodation obtained by women (and sometimes their male partner). While few were able to maintain accommodation in a boarding house for an extended period of time, most women either moved between boarding houses as the situation dictated, or sporadically used them as respite between periods of "crashing" at various other people's accommodation.

Long-term

Only one young woman whose street sex work was ongoing lived in the same boarding house through my whole 12 months in the field. This was Sarah (aged 21)

who shared a room with her long-time boyfriend Paul (aged 28), who also acted as her spotter. Both were on methadone programs to address their heroin addictions but were still regular users of heroin. Both also often (mis)used prescription medications such as “xannies” (Xanax) and “oxys” (OxyContin) whenever they could get them. Paul was also a heavy drinker and could often be found “at the pokies” in one of the local hotels. As a couple, they relied on their Centrelink payments, managed by State Trustees, to pay their rent and other basic living expenses. The drugs they used, and much of Paul’s gambling money, came from Sarah’s income from sex work, and thus, like most other relationships on Curtis Street, they were almost totally reliant on Sarah’s sex work for their survival.

Similar to Linda, Sarah used her nearby accommodation as an asset in her street sex work, which provided her some advantages over other women. Sarah not only used her accommodation as a space where she could take clients from Curtis Street, but also as a meeting point with regular clients and others who contacted her by phone. This latter practice was often considered beneficial to both buyer and seller as it removed all aspects of the arrangement from public view, which in turn reduced the risk of police intervention. Because of this, using her residence in her sex work practice allowed her to establish a greater regular client base than some of the other women, and reduced the amount of time she had to spend each day on Curtis Street. Sarah experienced these aspects as particularly beneficial. Although other women had been evicted after attempting similar practices while staying at other boarding houses, the apparently lax scrutiny at this one allowed her to continue without detection.

Short-term

In most cases, the turbulent lives of women selling sex in Dandenong coupled with the range of challenges that appear common to most people living in boarding houses meant their stays in these places were often short-lived. Many street sex workers (and spotters) complained about having to deal with the challenging behaviour of other tenants, negotiating sexual advances, experiencing ridicule and/or verbal bullying if “found out” to be a “working girl”, and being “surrounded by the shit” (marijuana, but particularly heroin) from other tenants using and dealing when trying to cease or minimise their own use. Even in female-only boarding houses, being ridiculed for being a sex worker, and being approached or even woken by

other housemates wanting assistance to “score” were routinely experienced by the few street sex workers who spent brief periods in these houses. Further, and consistent with many sex workers’ previous experiences in private rentals, an almost shared inability to budget effectively while maintaining a high-cost heroin addiction meant many soon fell behind in their rent, which often resulted in conflict with housing management or eviction. While boarding houses provided some women with medium- to long-term accommodation, the range of challenges experienced by women while staying in these environments meant their stay was often short-lived.

Motels

One short-term accommodation strategy used by women either negotiating a particularly dire housing crisis, in need of a stopgap when moving from one place to another, or when needing brief respite from a more challenging living environment, was to find accommodation in one of two low-budget motels in the suburbs surrounding Dandenong’s CBD. On most occasions these were only used for one- or two-night stints, but some continued their stay for up to four weeks. Although more costly than many other forms of accommodation (the standard rate at one of these motels was \$79 per night), their accessibility, ease of use, and even their relative anonymity (rooms are allocated and keys dispensed via a vending machine system), made them a popular option for workers in need of a solution to an immediate housing crisis. Consistent with most other elements in many of these women’s lives, a high degree of resourcefulness resulted in the use of a range of different strategies to secure “a room for the night”.

Paying from a ‘job’

I’m pretty much set for tonight now. I’ve just gotta get another job or two so I can get a room. (Kerry)

The most straightforward strategy used by street sex workers planning to stay in a local motel was simply to pay the nightly fee with money made from selling sex. Although expensive compared to other accommodation options, staying in a motel was often the preferred short-term option for sex workers whose intimate partner was also currently homeless. In one case, Abby continued to pay a daily fee of \$79 for four weeks while her partner found a better housing option. Whether living in an intimate relationship or only responsible for their own well-being, common to both

situations was a clear compartmentalisation of the money sex workers set aside for scoring heroin, and the money they needed to get a room for the night. In every situation I was aware of, a sex worker would make sure she had made enough money to “score” before “doing another job or two” to pay for her nights’ accommodation. Consistent with the lives of most women on Curtis Street, even when negotiating a particularly dire housing situation, their “need” to score and use was given priority above all else, including living necessities such as food and shelter.

Arrangements with staff

A rarer strategy, but one used on multiple occasions, centred on an arrangement with a regular client of the street sex market who worked the night shift in a local motel. Initiated by Kerry, but utilised by other women at various times, this strategy involved the trade of sex for one night’s accommodation in the motel where this particular client worked. For Kerry and others in need of a place to stay, one option was to call the client, Craig, and tell him that they needed a place to “crash” for the night. Due mostly to an increased tenancy in the motel over the weekends, most of these arrangements occurred during the week. Most stays lasted for one to two nights in exchange for the provision of sexual service to Craig and sometimes also to his friends. While this raised the cost of the arrangement in the eyes of the women using this strategy, most still considered it a beneficial trade, particularly for women with few other accommodation alternatives. After sex, Craig, or whoever else “got a job”, left the sex worker to stay in the room for the rest of the evening on her own. In the hours that followed it was not uncommon for other sex workers also with housing problems to arrive (typically after receiving a text message that she was now free) to share the more comfortable surrounds of the motel room—presumably without Craig knowing.

Clients and motels

Another common motel-based strategy was to request a client to “rent a room” for use during sex, after which the worker would retain access to the room. Differing substantially from the single men who lived in their own nearby accommodation where they could take the sex worker as part of the transaction arrangement, clients who booked motel rooms were often in intimate relationships, living in a shared

house, or with their family. In many cases, clients who booked motel rooms were the type of client who requested some type of sexual act that was outside those usually bought and sold on the street, and which could not usually be performed within the confines of a client's car. These requests ranged from forms of sexualised massage through to acts of bondage and sado-masochism. Despite each sex worker retaining a choice in whether participate in the various sexual acts sometimes required, these arrangements in themselves were often considered particularly beneficial. The participating sex worker not only gained the monetary benefit from the job, but also received a night's free accommodation in a setting that most considered more comfortable than many other alternatives. For a sex worker who was couch surfing, crashing at a client's place, or living in any other form of accommodation which they only experienced as tolerable, striking such an arrangement provided them with some much needed "time out" and a good night's sleep.

Crashing at a client's place

Clients with a private residence sometimes provided another source of short-term accommodation for women needing a place to stay. When working alone and knowing they had to find some form of accommodation for the night, some sex workers responded to this type of job request by suggesting a short-term sex-for-accommodation arrangement. In these cases, the sex worker typically gave the client the option of financial payment (as per her standard sex work practice), or the option of going to the client's home "and just crashing at your place afterwards" instead of financial payment. Some clients saw significant benefit in this as they not only received sexual service without making a monetary payment, but were often able to negotiate an additional sexual act in return for being allowed to stay the night. For a client with a low income, these arrangements were not only readily accepted, but were often sought out. A select few women suspected that some of their clients preferred this type of arrangement as it more closely resembled a non-commercial sexual encounter, providing them with a sense of companionship.

Like Glen, yeah? He's been calling me a bit lately ... usually like really late when he knows I'm pretty much done out here [on Curtis Street], and asks me what I'm doing. So, yeah, he wants a job an' all, and when he first started calling he used to want me to stay the night and shit. I needed a place to stay so I thought "well, fuck yeah. That works out pretty good for me". He's a pretty good guy and he even lets me sleep in and stay a bit after he's gone to work. I reckon he likes letting me stay over better [than paying an outright fee for sex] 'cos it's sorta like a bit more natural, ya know? (Kerry)

Some guys really like it. In fact, a few guys'll only do jobs with ya if ya stay with 'em. Sometimes they're a fuckin' pain in the arse, especially when I've got a place [accommodation] sorted, so I'll just tell 'em that I'll do it for about \$500 or something. But other times, you know like the other night when all that shit was going down at my place, I'm like "hell yeah. I'll crash at your place afterwards" Most of those guys are different to most of the guys out here [on Curtis Street]. These guys [on Curtis Street] just wanna fuck or get their dick sucked or whatever, but the ones that want to stay over, you know like Louis, they all want the whole cuddling, then watching TV together, and you know, sometimes they'll even have dinner for you [laughs]. It's sorta like a date ... you know, like a real date a bit, I guess. (Tracey).

Men who provide longer term accommodation

One of the most common strategies represented in relevant research involves vulnerable women and men participating in sex-for-accommodation arrangements as a way to negotiate their homelessness (Harding and Hamilton 2009; Robertson 2008; Clatts et al. 2005; Stoltz et al. 2007; Murphy and Venkatesh 2006; Venkatesh 2013; Rosen and Venkatesh 2008). While many women working on Curtis Street survived by employing various shorter-term accommodation strategies, the goal for most was to secure a longer-term form of accommodation. As most women had poor private rental histories that excluded them from that market, a common strategy was to draw upon their weak ties established in the market to engage in an ongoing sex-for-accommodation style arrangement with a man on the network's periphery whose accommodation was relatively stable. My connection to Kerry provided valuable research insight into two of her arrangements, each of which shared similarities with others I observed during the fieldwork. Because of their prevalence, and effect on the lives of many women selling sex on Curtis Street, I will discuss both of these in turn.

Devo Dave

After being evicted from a shared unit, Kerry began a sex-for-accommodation arrangement with a man she soon began referring to as “Devo Dave”. Devo Dave, aged 37, lived by himself in a unit managed by the Department of Housing. He was unemployed and had been for some time. Devo Dave said that he’d smoked a lot of “choof” (marijuana) when he was in high school while also experimenting with other drugs such as “eccys” (ecstasy), “shrooms” (magic mushrooms) and “smack” (heroin). It was also around this time that he began experiencing some psychological issues for which he began receiving both in-patient and out-patient forms of treatment. His drug use, coupled with continuing psychological issues for which he received various forms of treatment, continues through to the present. At the time Kerry moved into his unit, his main drug of choice was marijuana, from which he seemed constantly “stoned”.

The arrangement between Devo Dave and Kerry was initially quite simple, but increased in complexity over a short period of time. Much of this was as a result of their competing agendas and the desperation of both people as a result of their addictions, which fostered an intention to exploit their peers and position in the network as part of their seemingly endless pursuit for heroin. Following a job Kerry did with Dave at his unit, she told him she was “looking around for a place to crash”. Having been single for “a long time”, surviving on Centrelink payments managed by State Trustees, who limited the amount of money he could access, and seeming to desire ongoing physical intimacy, Dave proposed an arrangement:

Devo Dave: You can crash here for a while if ya want. My mate’s got a mattress he’s getting’ rid of. There’s enough room if we just put in on the floor near the back door over there.

Kerry: Yeah, OK. That’ll work, for sure What about rent and shit? I’m sleepin’ on the floor so I’m not paying too much.

Devo Dave: Nah, fuck off. Like I’m gonna rip you off ... [short pause] you don’t even have to pay me if ya don’t want ... you know ... just do, like, you know, a few jobs [sex work]).

Kerry: What? Like what?

Devo Dave: I don’t know ... three a week ... one every few days or so.

Kerry: Fuck off. I'm not doin' three jobs a week with ya just so I can sleep on the floor of this shithole I'll do one. And no fuckin' freaky shit either. Just, you know ... straight up shit.

Devo Dave: One?!? That's fuckin' nothing ... nah, two at least.

Kerry: Nah, I'm not doing two jobs ... How 'bout I do one, and I'll throw in a bit extra each week for some choof?

Devo Dave: [pause for a moment as he considers this deal] Yeah, OK.

(Conversation recounted to me by Kerry [15/10/2011])

With her accommodation seemingly sorted, her attention immediately shifted back to her need to generate an income. After getting dressed, she drove her car back to Curtis Street to “get a few more jobs”, while Devo Dave went to his neighbour’s to collect the spare mattress for Kerry to sleep on. When he returned, he simply dropped the mattress on the kitchen floor tiles where it then served as Kerry’s bed for the entirety of her stay.

After only two weeks of moving in, Dave’s marijuana use and instances of him stealing from Kerry’s “stash” provided the first points of conflict in the arrangement. While part of their agreement required Kerry to contribute “about 50 bucks a week” to Dave’s weekly marijuana use, Kerry grew increasingly suspicious that he was also “raidin’ me stash” (of marijuana) each time she left the unit to work on Curtis Street. He initially denied he was doing this when Kerry confronted him about it:

I haven't been near your stash. I've been in my room all day smoking my own shit. You probably smoked it and forgot about it or something.

However, Kerry’s suspicion and questioning continued, until after a number of heated arguments, he confessed:

Well, fuck. You haven't been, you know, doing what you're supposed to be doing [performing the sexual component of the agreement] so whatta ya fuckin' expect? It's only fuckin' fair, Kez. You're not living here fuckin' rent free, that's for sure ... and anyway, you've got fuckin' people coming here all the time crashin' on my couch and using all my shit. You've got the fuckin' heater going full blast all the fuckin' time. You have showers that last for fuckin' ever Who do you reckon's going to pay for that? So, fuckin' oath Kez. if I wanna few cones and I haven't got any, then fuck yeah, I'm gonna take yours. It's not like you don't fucking owe me, is it?

Although furious, there was little Kerry could do without risking Devo Dave kicking her out of his unit. To Kerry, while the loss of marijuana was less than ideal, she still considered it to be less of an inconvenience than having to find another place to live—at least at this stage of their arrangement. It also became apparent in this initial period of conflict that Kerry had not been providing Dave with the volume of sexual service originally agreed on in their deal, which reduced her ability to effectively challenge Devo Dave about stealing her drugs. It was with this in mind that she conceded that living in this arrangement meant accepting that Dave would “help himself to my stash” each time she left the unit. Although not formally agreed on, it appeared that an unspoken amendment to their initial rental agreement was made. Instead of providing Dave with weekly sex (which she appeared to have been avoiding in any case), allowing Dave to help himself to Kerry’s stash of marijuana was how she was to pay her rent. Although minor conflicts would occasionally erupt over the following four to five weeks, when Kerry accused Dave of taking more “choof” than she thought acceptable, the overall terms of this arrangement seemed to suit both parties. and therefore continued. Kerry got a place to stay while Dave had an almost endless supply of “choof”.

Piggy backing

A strategy used by Helen that capitalised on the strong tie she established with Kerry, and the resource(s) Kerry was able to mobilise through her strategic use of her connections on the market’s periphery, was often utilised by women in other strong ties across the network and commonly described as “piggy backing”. In this particular context with Devo Dave, Helen simply started “crashing” on the couch in the unit’s lounge after only a few days of Kerry establishing her sex-for-accommodation arrangement. Although initially sporadic, within a few weeks Helen had effectively moved into Dave’s unit without having established any sort of arrangement with him as Kerry had done previously. In this case, there appeared to be two key reasons why Devo Dave allowed this to happen without broaching the subject with Helen or Kerry. The first was that because the amount of “choof” being brought into the house by both women each night was greater than what Kerry was bringing in alone, he now had an almost unlimited supply from which he could simply take. Second, it became clear quickly that Devo Dave was attracted to Helen

and desired a non-commercial intimate relationship with her. Although this desire was not shared by Helen, Dave felt that he “had a shot with her” while she lived in his unit.

Fuck, you're hot, Helen. If I have any money left at the end of the week I'm gonna get a job off ya.

Hey Helen. What'ya reckon we go into my room for a bit of a cuddle?

With all the water restrictions and shit, maybe we should start taking showers together. What do ya reckon?

In most cases, Helen simply deflected Dave's advances rather than rejecting them outright, presumably through fear that he would either stop allowing her to “crash on the couch”, or would attempt to formalise a rental agreement that she would find costly. But over the following six to eight weeks, the emotional cost of deflecting Dave's advances appeared to outweigh the benefits of the accommodation he was providing her and she began responding more assertively. While her responses put an end to Devo Dave's advances, it significantly shifted the mood within the unit and spelled the beginning of the end for this arrangement. For Devo Dave, Helen's direct rejection of him was a catalyst for him to consider the costs of allowing Kerry and Helen to stay as outweighing the benefits, which had been reduced from a combination of sex and money for marijuana, to being able to “raid Kerry's stash” when she was away from the unit. This shifted the mood in the unit and contributed to the arrangement's demise.

The end of the line

Although the combined stressors of high-level drug use, mental illness, and economic hardship contributed to a growing level of tension between Kerry, Helen, and Devo Dave over the three and a half months they lived together, the demise of the arrangement was fast-tracked by the escalating tensions between Kerry and a woman living in the unit next to Dave's unit. Kelly used to work as a street sex worker in St Kilda to support a heroin addiction, but over the past “five years or so had started doin' the right thing, and really started getting my shit together”. Like Dave, she was currently an out-patient at a local psychiatric unit which had also assisted her to secure accommodation as part of a holistic treatment program. While she did “a bit of work every now and then” at one of the local brothels (as a sex worker) to supplement what she received from Centrelink, she now felt she was “on

top” of her heroin addiction and no longer had to work on the street, “like all those dirty fucking smackhead sluts like those two [Kerry and Helen] do”.

I'll have a little bit every now and then, but you know, now it's just like every few weeks or so ... just like a special occasion sorta thing. (Kelly)

Despite her previous experience as a street sex worker, she often levelled a range of insults at Kerry and Helen relating to their street sex work as they went to and from Devo Dave's unit. Each insult focused on what she recognised as a cycle of drug abuse and street sex work:

Ya off ta hock ya box again, are ya sluts?

You're fuckin' disgusting. Who'd pay for it with you? You look like a fuckin' junkie, man.

I reckon you should go for a check-up, man. You've got something [an STI] for sure.

Although these terms may have been also been applicable to Kelly in the past, her current status as an “indoor working girl”, and one no longer dependent on heroin, subjectively afforded her a higher social standing than “those filthy street whores” (directed towards Kerry), who she regarded as the “scum of the earth”. Although out of character from her quick-to-anger self, Kerry often restrained herself from responding, as she believed Kelly would “put Dave in for letting me stay in his unit” and put an end to what was, in comparison to many of her previous experiences, a relatively stable source of accommodation.

If she was my neighbour, fuck man, I'd fuckin' kill her I reckon But I reckon that as soon as I fuckin' touch her, she'll go crying to her worker or some shit, we'll all get kicked out on our arses. She fuckin' knows it too, man. That's the worst thing. She knows that I can't do nothin' ... 'cos if I do I'm fucked for a place to stay, aren't I? (Kerry)

However, Kelly's continual goading, coupled with an increase in stress stemming from an impending court date from which she thought she may have to “do some time”, soon saw Kerry's temper get the better of her, and she began responding to Kelly with a range of insults and threats. After only two days, this reaction resulted in a violent physical confrontation that produced the primary catalyst for the demise of the living arrangement for both herself and Helen.

'It's on, whore!'

What would become the key physical confrontation between Kerry and Kelly occurred on the morning Kerry was due to appear in court. Kerry was getting into her car as Kelly was walking to her letterbox at the front of her unit. As she did each time she saw Kerry, she levelled another derogatory comment at her:

Gonna hock your fucking box again are you, slut?

Kerry snapped. She slammed her car door shut, dropped her bag and ran directly to Kelly where they stood nose to nose in the middle of the road verbally inviting the other to physically respond.

Kerry: You fucking want some, bitch?

Kelly: Any fuckin' time ya' want, ya' dirty fuckin' slut.

Kerry: Go on then. Do it. Take a fuckin' swing.

Kelly: You'd fuckin' love that, wouldn't you, whore.

This went on for only about 15 seconds before Dave came running out of his unit, physically picked Kerry up and carried her towards her car while trying to calm her down:

What the fuck are you thinkin', Kez? Forget about her. She's just gonna call the cops and then you're fucked. You've already gotta go to court today. Fuck. Just settle down.

Still furious, but apparently recognising the potential risks that continuing with this confrontation could pose to her goal of evading jail time, Kerry got into her car and began to drive off. But Kelly was not finished with her tirade:

You're fucking lucky bitch. You get in my shit like that and I'll fuckin' kill ya! (Kelly yelled to Kerry while standing at her front door).

Kerry saw red and simply could not contain her anger. Her car came to a screeching halt in the middle of the road as she sprang out from the front driver's seat and again ran directly at Kelly:

It's fuckin' on, whore!

Kelly stood on her porch with her fists up indicating her intent to fight. When Kerry got to her, the pair collided on Kelly's front lawn and began trading blows. In

only a few brief moments the fight spread back onto the road where they wrestled each other to the ground before trading yet another round of punches. Responding almost immediately, Dave picked Kerry up from her position on top of Kelly and pulled her away as she continued kicking and screaming. Bleeding from her nose and mouth, Kelly got to her feet and tried to strike Kerry twice more while she was restrained by Dave, before Kelly backed off, seemingly changing her mind about pursuing the physical confrontation:

Fuck you bitch. That's fucking assault. I'm calling the cops.

As Kelly dialled and held her mobile phone to her ear, Kerry made yet another attempt to escape Dave's grasp so she could get at Kelly. Dave held on tight and continued to try and calm her down and entice her to get back into her car. With Kelly standing on her front lawn with her mobile phone to her ear after being placed on hold by police, Kerry seemed to realise the futility of continuing this confrontation. She finally got in her car and began making her way to court:

You're fuckin' lucky, scrag.' (Kerry yelled from her open car window as she drove off)

Although Kerry avoided a police charge from the incident, its effect on her living arrangement with Devo Dave was significant. The following morning Dave received a visit from police who asked him about the incident, as well as Kelly's claims that Kerry had been living with him. This was followed by a phone call from his housing worker asking to meet "for a chat", which took place the following day in Dave's unit. Here, the worker not only questioned Dave about the incident with Kelly, but expressed concern that he had been allowing both Kerry and Helen to also stay in the unit with him, which, of course, was in breach of his housing agreement. This "chat" contained an implied but clear threat that if he continued to allow Kerry and Helen to stay in the unit, he would be evicted. Further, his parents also became aware of his connection to people participating in high-risk drug use and urged him to "kick them out". Although seemingly concerned most about a reduction in the volume of "choof" available to him, he reluctantly succumbed and told Kerry and Helen they would have to find somewhere else to live. The pair seemed to have already recognised the signs of this arrangement's demise and had begun to seek alternative sources of accommodation.

Old Dave

Four weeks after leaving Devo Dave's unit and using a range of short-term accommodation options in the meantime, Kerry and then Helen entered into another sex-for-accommodation arrangement with an older male they'd formed a weak tie with over the previous 6–8 weeks, during which he had regularly bought sex from them both. This man's name was also Dave, but as he was in his early 60s both Kerry and Helen soon began referring to him as "Old Dave". Old Dave lived in a small townhouse he rented on the outskirts of Frankston by himself. I am unsure how long he had lived in this townhouse, but the amount of clutter suggested he had been there for a long time. He had married once but separated approximately 15 years earlier, and he did not have any children. He said he had done "all sorts of jobs", but most of his work involved driving trucks and buses. He described himself as "retired", but still appeared to be looking for work to earn extra money.

Like Devo Dave, Old Dave proposed an arrangement to Kerry at the completion of one of their jobs after Kerry mentioned her need to find "a place to stay". The proposed arrangement from Old Dave involved Kerry being allowed to stay in the furnished spare bedroom in his house in exchange for "two jobs per week". In contrast to Devo Dave, Old Dave was not a drug user and appeared to be motivated by a desire for sex and companionship only. While she described him as "totally disgusting" in the days leading up to moving in, her need for "a place to stay" and what she considered to be the relatively low rent of two jobs per week made Old Dave's proposition the best accommodation option available to her at the time. She accepted the offer and moved into the guest bedroom in his townhouse. In what now seemed a predictable pattern, Helen began accompanying Kerry back to her new place after scoring at the end of each night, where they would both "get on", after which Helen would crash on the couch. Sensing Helen was attempting to "piggy back" on his arrangement with Kerry, Old Dave acted swiftly and insisted that if she continued to "stay over" she also had to enter into an agreement with him. As Helen was only sharing a room that he was already renting to Kerry, she was able to successfully argue that her rent required only one sexual act per week during their negotiation. Although Helen despised Old Dave (particularly as he did not simply allow her to continue "crashing" at his unit without establishing some sort of agreement, as she had been able to do with Devo Dave), her desire to stay close to

Kerry— or more importantly, the heroin Kerry scored—still made Old Dave’s terms acceptable to her.

‘C’mon man. Can you help me out?’

Despite his apparent aptitude in negotiating sex-for-accommodation agreements, Kerry and Helen assessed Old Dave as vulnerable to economic exploitation, and began concerted ploys to extort money from him. Because of the combination of what both women assessed as Old Dave’s strong desire for companionship and a sum of money in a savings account he had “bragged” about to them, Kerry and Helen saw an opportunity to capitalise. Similar to their attempts with peers, clients, and other street sex workers, their efforts took the form of highly strategic, repeated calls for Old Dave to “help us out” when they were seemingly unable to earn enough money on Curtis Street. These strategies, of course, were framed in terms of “getting sick” and Old Dave having the ability to “save” them. Initially arising out of a reasonably genuine inability to get to Curtis Street on one particular occasion because Kerry’s car had broken down, the relative ease with which he gave them the requested amount of money (\$800, which while requested as a loan, Kerry and Helen considered a gift) spawned a systematic plan in which they would construct other fictional circumstances that impeded their ability to earn enough money on the street. Within each fictional account was a request for Old Dave to “save” them from “getting sick”, which he could do by lending them the money they needed to score the amount of heroin that would protect them against heroin withdrawal until they could get back out on the street.

Thanks heaps, babe. We’ll pay you back tomorrow, I swear. (Helen)

While Old Dave was never paid back in full, a key to Kerry and Helen’s strategy involved paying back just enough money to suggest that they were “trying”, and would pay him back the rest “when we can”. They hoped that this would be enough to give them at least some leverage for the next time they claimed extraordinary circumstances and asked him for money. To my surprise, their strategy was so successful that it became a significant part of their time living with Old Dave. Over the course of their three-month association, their use of this strategy cost Old Dave a significant amount of money—all of which was used to fund Kerry and Helen’s addictions to heroin.

Those two took me for about 12 fucking grand, mate. They're fuckin' thieves.
(Old Dave)

While I could not fully comprehend why Old Dave kept “lending” them money once their debt became significant, it was the calculative way Kerry and Helen continued to actively seek out Old Dave’s money after realising his dire financial situation that I struggled with the most. Even towards the end of the arrangement, after telling them that he could no longer “help them out” as his savings had run dry, Kerry and Helen encouraged him to sell his car and give them the money from that. Luckily for Old Dave, he decided this was too much to give and he refused. While understanding Kerry and Helen’s tactic of draining Old Dave’s savings was in response to his overly sexualised behaviour, I still found the apparent callousness in the way they strategically went about achieving this to be difficult to swallow. But in reality, this anecdote provides another example of the strength of heroin addiction that ties people to a cycle of drug use and sex work on Curtis Street, and the amorphous moral code that is shaped by a lack of resources and seemingly endless sense of desperation.

‘Old Dave’s a horny old bugger’

A common complaint made by Kerry and Helen about Old Dave was his sexual appetite and his constant attempts to increase the volume of sexual service provided to him within their accommodation agreement:

He’s pretty old, but fuck me, he’s always horny. It’s like he’s 20 or something. (Helen)

In the days following Kerry or Helen’s provision of a sexual service with him, Old Dave would often challenge the meaning of the previous encounter and request more sex. His argument, which increased in regularity as their association developed, was that their previous encounter was a product of mutual lust instead of the service payable to him as required as part of their accommodation agreement. While far-fetched, he usually held firm and threatened to kick one or both of them out if they did not comply. The lack of alternate sources of accommodation available to Kerry and Helen at the time, coupled with the apparent ease with which they were able to “scam” money out of him meant that while inopportune, they often reluctantly considered it as in their interests to comply.

When away from the unit Kerry and Helen would often complain of Dave walking around the unit naked, rubbing up against them while he was naked, and grabbing at their breasts or buttocks. Although present from the beginning of their arrangement, this behaviour intensified throughout the first few weeks of their living arrangement. Some of the more concerning instances included Old Dave getting into bed and fondling each of them while they slept. Helen experienced being woken by Old Dave as he sat on a chair in front of her masturbating as she slept on the couch. These incidents caused significant stress to both Kerry and Helen, and further fuelled tension between them and Old Dave and, in some ways, in their opinion further justified their attempts to swindle him out of his life's savings.

He's fucked, man ... a real dirty old bastard. Neither of us want to be there, but where else are we gonna go? (Helen)

Together, the tension caused by the large amount of money Old Dave lost through "helping them out", the conflict over the provision of sex in their arrangement, and Old Dave's overly sexual behaviour meant that the situation became unmanageable. With Old Dave refusing to "help them out" any further, most of the benefits associated with this connection were reduced to simply a source of accommodation in an increasingly uncomfortable environment, which Kerry and Helen assessed as no longer worthwhile. Similarly, the only benefit Old Dave saw in the arrangement was the sex he hoped for but no longer received. Three months after the arrangement began, Old Dave said to Kerry and Helen:

This is fucked. You two 'ave gotta find somewhere else to live.

Although the inconvenience of having to find another source of accommodation meant Kerry and Helen were initially "pissed off", they quickly moved into a similar arrangement within a couple of days. Drawing again on the weak ties they established on the market's periphery with clients, they were able to negotiate and establish another sex-for-accommodation arrangement with another single, older male with stable accommodation. The nature of their new arrangement was strikingly similar to their initial arrangement with Old Dave, and followed a similarly volatile and short-lived life course.

Marrying Indian men

Available and effective strategies for sex worker women to secure accommodation were very limited due to the lack of adequate accommodation, their network's isolation from the mainstream, and its members' reliance on a peer network and street code that restricts reporting illegal behaviour to police. However limited, there were still opportunities—some women took advantage of offers made to them by recently-arrived Indian men seeking marriage with an Australian woman as a way to gain Australian citizenship. Two of these arrangements occurred during my time in the field; another two were negotiated but failed due to both partners being concerned about suspected police knowledge of their plans.

The initial stages of these processes were similar in each case. Sunil, who used his connection to the market as a client to position himself as the key orchestrator of these arrangements, began shopping a newly-arrived Indian man around to women he considered to be receptive to a marriage-for-monetary payment arrangement. In most cases the total financial outlay offered was around \$30,000, with the sex worker required to marry and live with the man for five years.

While on the surface these arrangements appeared relatively straightforward, the reality was quite different. Confusion in the early stages of negotiations stemmed from the woman's assumption that the potential husband was to make a one-off lump sum payment on their wedding day, when in reality any figure suggested represented the financial contribution he was prepared to make to the couple's daily living expenses over the course of their marriage. The payment plan usually included a smaller one-off payment at the commencement of the marriage (\$2,000–\$10,000) followed by either a series of periodic payments, or the man taking responsibility for the couple's rent and bills throughout the course of the marriage. In most cases, it was the realisation that the bride would not receive the initially proposed sum as a one-off cash payment at the start of the marriage that marked the end of the negotiation. While potentially providing a solution to most people's problematic or dire accommodation situation at the time, the immediate motivation for most women considering such an arrangement was the amount of heroin they would be able to "score" from the payment, and how long the score would sustain them. The

realisation that she would not receive the lump sum anticipated immediately significantly reduced the value of these arrangements to the women. However, for the two sex workers whose street savviness often stood out amongst their peers, namely Kerry and Helen, their strong negotiation skills coupled with invariable self-interest eventually resulted in their acceptance of arranged proposals. Due to the significant role these played in the street sex market, I will discuss each one in turn.

Kerry and Mahesh: Love on Curtis Street

Kerry's marriage to Mahesh was the first of its type among the women working on Curtis Street. Mahesh sought out Sunil, who'd already established himself as a bridge between newly-arrived men from India and street sex workers in Dandenong, and expressed his desire to "marry an Australian girl" so he could live, work, and settle in Australia. Although Sunil initially "shopped" Mahesh around to two of her peers before introducing him to Kerry, their initial meeting went smoothly and they began making plans to formalise a marriage. While a total sum of \$30,000 was put to Kerry in their initial discussion, this amount was quickly dissolved into a combination of cash and accommodation as the negotiation progressed over the following days and weeks. Mahesh promised Kerry a \$10,000 payment on the day of their marriage, with an additional \$1,000 at the end of each year for the agreed upon five years. The remainder of the \$30,000 was an estimation of her half of the couple's rent and utility bills which were going to be paid for by Mahesh. As I would learn later, the majority of this money was given to Mahesh by his parents, who wanted him to marry and settle in Australia, just as they had done for his sister who was now married and living in Canada. After marrying a Canadian man and finding work, she routinely sent money back to her family in India; this was, of course, the intention behind her parent's decision to fund her journey to Canada. Mahesh was going to bear the same responsibility.

After coming to an arrangement with Kerry, Mahesh quickly went about finding a small unit in a neighbouring suburb for which he signed a 12-month lease. He also got a job in a local factory, which was widely known to provide cash-in-hand work to asylum seekers, refugees, and other recently-arrived people who want to work "off the books". Things moved quickly, and Mahesh and Kerry moved into this unit and were married just four weeks after being introduced. True to his word, he also gave Kerry \$10,000 on the day of the marriage, as per their initial agreement. Kerry

immediately cashed the cheque and bought enough heroin with it to give her two nights off working on the street. She purchased a car with the rest.

Kerry and Mahesh soon formed a sexual relationship and began demonstrating signs of intimacy such as holding hands, kissing and hugging, calling and texting each other when apart, and even telling each other they were loved. While contradictory considering the context of their meeting, Mahesh was soon troubled by Kerry's heroin use and street sex work. Her sex work made him jealous, and he became particularly concerned about the risks she was taking to her health with her heroin use. Despite acting as her spotter during the initial two to three weeks of their partnership (although he had no financial benefit in doing so apart from being bought a "Chicken Stunner Meal" from Hungry Jacks on their way home), his behaved jealously about the sex she sold to her clients and his concern for her health caused him to begin distancing himself from her sex work as a way to cope:

Let's go Kerry. You've got enough [money] for tonight.

I know she's got to do it or she'll get sick, but I still don't want to see her doing this to herself. (Mahesh, in a conversation with me)

Instead of "looking after Kerry" while she worked on Curtis Street, Mahesh soon began staying at home and getting stoned (by smoking marijuana). In some particularly stressful instances, he even began dabbling in various prescription drugs including "xannies" (Xanax) or the more generic "benzos" (benzodiazepine) which Kerry brought home after accepting them as partial payment for sexual service or as part of another deal. Although his use of drugs never appeared out of control, his use of any drug at all was a clear departure from his behaviour prior to his marriage to Kerry. The one drug he never touched, through fear that it would take hold of his life as it had taken Kerry's, was heroin.

I hate heroin. Look what it does to Kerry. She hates being out on the street but it's [her addiction to heroin] strong and makes her do it As long as I never try it then I think I will be OK. But if I try it then I will know what it is like. I'll always know. So no matter what I do it will always be there [in my mind] and I'll want to do it again. That's what makes me wonder if Kerry could ever really stop. She knows what it's like. It's part of her now and she'll never be able to forget it. (Mahesh in a conversation with me while sitting in my parked car in Curtis Street)

Despite distancing himself from most occurrences on Curtis Street, Kerry's heroin addiction soon had a direct effect on Mahesh's finances, and ultimately his quality of life. Much of this occurred through her repeated calls to him to "help her out", and the emphasis she placed on his ability to stop her from "getting sick" by "lending" her money. Mahesh was often torn between seeing the damage heroin was causing to his wife, and the more immediate effects of heroin withdrawal she was typically experiencing when she made the requests. Most of Kerry's calls to Mahesh to "help her out" were made in the early hours of the morning while still out on the street, and occurred as the negative effects of heroin withdrawal really started to take effect.

Please Mahesh. Can't you just help me out this one time? I've been out here forever and it's fuckin' dead. I've made a bit but it's nowhere near enough. Can't you just lend me \$100 bucks? Actually, not even that. If you've got \$70 that should be enough to get be through. C'mon, Mahesh, I'll pay you back tomorrow, I swear.

Fuckin' hell, Mahesh. You're supposed to love me and take care of me and shit. I know you've fucking got it. You've been workin' all week. C'mon, I'll pay you back tomorrow. What are you gonna do with it between now and then anyway?

You're fuckin' hopeless Mahesh. What sort of husband can't even give his wife 50 bucks? Don't bother fuckin' askin' me for money next time you want smokes or some shit, will ya?

And increasingly:

Thanks heaps, babe. I'll just give it another 10 minutes and see if I can get just one more job. I'll call past and pick it up on my way to see Tim [her dealer]. Love you, Mahesh.

Even though most of these "loans" were \$50 or under, the regularity at which they were given, and the low wages available to Mahesh, meant they were soon unable to pay their rent. After only three months they were evicted from their unit and moved into a room in a boarding house they shared with a man with whom Kerry established a sex-for-accommodation relationship. While troubling for Mahesh, it appeared as their only genuine option. This arrangement lasted only four weeks before the man providing them with accommodation was arrested and placed on remand, which, in turn, terminated his agreement at the boarding house and left

the couple homeless. It was at this point that a key decision was made in their relationship. Both were committed to their relationship and marriage, but realised they could not save the money they needed to re-establish themselves while Mahesh remained susceptible to Kerry's calls to be "saved" when unable to satisfy her heroin addiction.

I know it's bad man, but it's just how it is. Every time I know he's holding onto some money it just drives me fuckin' crazy. And I know that if I keep askin' him for it he'll eventually give it to me. But it's bad for us. I mean really fuckin' bad for us. It's why I can't keep a place of my own, yeah.
(Kerry)

To help alleviate their financial difficulties, they came to an agreement that, while remaining committed to each another, Mahesh would go to Perth with two other newly-arrived Indian men and work as fruit pickers to save money before coming back to Melbourne. While Kerry's sex work on Curtis Street would continue to pay for her heroin use, the money Mahesh made picking fruit would go towards their next bond and up to three months' rent for "a house around Dandy somewhere". Mahesh used the last of his money on a plane ticket to Perth while Kerry entered into the sex-for-accommodation arrangement with Devo Dave described earlier in this chapter.

While Mahesh was away, Kerry continued working on the street in partnership with Helen as she had been previously, but she stayed in regular contact with Mahesh; they spoke to each other on the phone at least three times per week. But it was also during this time that a police officer in Dandenong began following through with concerns he had about the legitimacy of their marriage. These concerns were quickly relayed to the Australian Immigration Department, who also began exploring the relationship in closer detail. Within only a few weeks, Kerry was asked to attend a meeting with Mahesh's case worker at the Immigration Department where, after telling the case worker of Mahesh's absence, their marriage was deemed illegitimate and Mahesh's presence in Australia illegal. The case worker then contacted the company Mahesh was working for and advised them of his status, after which he was promptly fired. He used most of the money he had saved to return to Melbourne to be with Kerry.

When he arrived back in Melbourne, Kerry convinced Devo Dave to allow Mahesh to stay with them until he could get settled. He agreed. Kerry also began

making arrangements to contest the decision made by the Immigration Department, but Mahesh's fear of being deported created a barrier that he could not successfully address.

It's no use Kerry. They're just going to arrest me and send me back to India.
(Mahesh)

Instead, Mahesh decided to simply let the allocated period during which they could contest the decision expire and to continue living in Australia as long as possible until deported home to his parents in India. But despite the apparent hopelessness of the situation, his commitment to Kerry and their marriage remained strong. He saw his future with Kerry, but recognised that everything in her life came second to her heroin addiction. The only way he thought they could live out the rest of their lives together was for Kerry to finally address her addiction.

'Why don't you come with me, Kerry?'

Aware that his time in Australia was coming to an end, Mahesh's attempts to convince Kerry to challenge her addiction intensified. While Kerry clearly recognised the harm and other "general shit" that she had to go through and live with on a daily basis because of her addiction to heroin, the grip it had on her and her seemingly endless desire for her next hit remained the central point around which her daily life revolved.

You don't understand Mahesh. It's not like I can just stop using. It's fucking hard, man. You've never been addicted to anything before so you can't know how hard it is.

With his marriage on the line and deportation looming, Mahesh upped the ante. After a few weeks of unsuccessfully trying to convince her to enter a local drug detox/rehabilitation centre, Mahesh proposed that they move to India together where she would be away from the people, contexts, and situations that she had explained, in preceding weeks, made it "impossible" for her to "get away from the shit" (heroin). Within this proposal, Mahesh had located an addiction treatment centre in southern India and told Kerry that if she committed to it he would work to save the money to pay for her treatment, along with their accommodation and airfares. During their time in India he committed to find work and financially support Kerry for "a year or two" until she was on her feet. Once "clean" and on their feet, he proposed to

take Kerry to meet his parents in Northern India where they would live and work on his family's farm, and maybe even "start a family". While clearly concerned about the prospect of ceasing her heroin use, her understanding of its destructiveness and her desire to be with Mahesh informed her decision to agree to the plan. Although no specific date was set, they agreed to a loose timeframe of three months, as this was the time Mahesh suspected it would take him to save the amount of money they would need. Mahesh moved into a shared house in a neighbouring suburb while Kerry entered yet another sex-for-accommodation arrangement. Although frustrating for Kerry at times, Mahesh also made a concerted effort not to "help her out" when she called him looking for money. Despite her annoyance on a few occasions when she was short of money, she knew it was in her best interest and therefore conceded defeat earlier than in past attempts when he refused to supply cash during her calls for "help" to him.

After two months, Mahesh had saved up enough money to purchase their airfares. He again checked with Kerry to re-access her current level of commitment:

Yes, Mahesh! I'm coming with you! How many fuckin' times do you want me to tell you! (Kerry)

Accordingly, he purchased their tickets. While Mahesh continued to save the money for their trip, Kerry's concern shifted to how she was going to deal with the 24-hour travel time before arriving at the treatment clinic in India. Apart from stints in jail during which she was placed "on the 'done'", the trip to India itself would be the longest she had been without heroin for almost 10 years.

One plan involved Kerry getting on a methadone program prior to leaving as a way of limiting the effect of heroin withdrawal she would inevitably experience on the journey. At this stage I had known Kerry for 12 months, and I had seen first-hand the erratic and desperate behaviour she often demonstrated during the early stages of heroin withdrawal. Within the close confines of an international flight, I suspected similar behaviour may carry the potential for disaster—not only for Kerry, but for those around her. Kerry was also acutely aware of how difficult this journey was going to be for her if she attempted to stop heroin "cold turkey", but she had a different plan. As their flight left in the early hours of the morning, Kerry intended to work on Curtis Street from the late afternoon until early evening where she would earn enough money for a "fuckin' big hit". She would then score from Tim "one last

time” before leaving for the airport. Then, at the last possible moment before she had to board the flight, she would find a place where she could “mull up” and “get on”. This, she thought, would at least “hold” her for the 17-hour journey.

True to her word, Kerry worked on Curtis Street right up until it was time to leave for the airport. After a quick detour past the “little place” where she scored from Tim, one of Mahesh’s friends picked Kerry and Mahesh up from Yarraman Station (a suburb neighbouring Dandenong) and drove them to Melbourne Airport. Upon arrival, they checked their luggage in before Kerry went back to Mahesh’s friend’s car parked in the public car park, “mulled up”, and “got on one last time” before she got on a plane to India, and ostensibly the final time for the rest of her life. Despite the many flaws I saw in this strategy, it had seemingly worked. Mahesh and Kerry got on their plane at Melbourne airport. After a long journey, including two stopovers, they arrived in New Delhi.

The departure of a key bridge

The mood on Curtis Street, as well as the routes of heroin and money into and out the network, was decidedly different almost as soon as Kerry departed. Kerry’s absence as one of key bridges between the network and key dealers sparked a period of tension as other network members jostled for power and to establish new social connections so they could continue scoring “good gear”. While Helen was given Tim’s number and permission to score for other network members, her reluctance to “help” her peers wanting to score significantly reduced the effect this trade route had on the network and on the street. Despite Linda’s reputation for stealing money or demanding an unreasonably large “chop out” from anyone she helped to score, most network members were left with no other option but to form an association with her for a reliable source of good quality heroin. For most, this meant altering their drug use and sex work patterns to ensure they had enough money to score, and to make direct contact with Linda when she met with Maleea to score. Unfortunately for Tim, Kerry’s absence as his only effective bridge into the market, and the consequent lack of direct connection to his clients on Curtis Street, significantly reduced his income and ability to fund his own addiction. In the past, he had actively used Kerry’s heroin dependence to control their relationship, and shifted much of the risk of dealing onto her. But in her absence, his dependence on his connection to Kerry and her position

as a bridging link to his clientele on Curtis Street became apparent. Luckily for Tim, and for other women selling sex on Curtis Street who had become totally reliant on their ties to Linda to be able to score, the period of relative disconnection in the network was only temporary.

The return of the Queen

Surprising everyone, Kerry returned to Curtis Street only three weeks after leaving for India. She was working on Curtis Street within hours of returning to Melbourne so she could score and get on. She immediately re-established her working relationship with Helen, and quickly re-connected with Tim, re-assuming her position as the bridge between the market's social network and his supply of good quality heroin. Kerry was again elevated to the top of one the chains of social connection on Curtis Street that led to the "good gear". Much of the negative talk about Kerry that ran through Curtis Street after her departure became silent, and was replaced by statements of gratitude as Kerry again began "helping" others score from Tim. While Linda tried to hold on to the power in the network she had gained in Kerry's absence, the reputation she developed over the previous weeks for "rippin'" (taking people's money with the promise to return with heroin, but never returning) and "divvying" amounts of heroin smaller than what the person had paid for, meant that she fell out of favour quickly. Within only a few days of Kerry's re-appearance, the chains of social connection that ran through the market and its social network were re-organised back into the two distinct trade routes that had shaped the market prior to her leaving. In Kerry's absence, most activity on Curtis Street occurred during the day into the early evening, but then spread more evenly through to the early hours of the morning as a result of Kerry's reliance on selling sex to the "late crowd" on the street.

'What happed in India, Kez?'

While Kerry's return had significant impact on both the structure of the street sex market and the lived experience of the people within it, it also provided her with a number of personal challenges. At first, she seemed nervous as she re-connected with people she had farewelled only a few weeks prior, as her reappearance represented a failure of her stated goal to "stop using and get off the street". While this was a point of discussion for some who wanted to discredit her among other

peers, most simply wanted to find out about her experience in India and why she had come back. According to Kerry, upon arriving in India her craving for heroin was so strong that she “made” Mahesh “go out and get some heroin”, which he purchased from the small cache of the money he’d saved while working in Australia.

Yeah, I got on. But I didn’t get stoned from it. It’s weak as man. It only really hit me how weak it was when I got on the first time after getting back [to Melbourne]. I only had a little bit and I was like, wow. (Kerry)

After only a few days when the money Mahesh had saved ran out from Kerry’s continued heroin use, she asked him to “set up a couple of jobs” for her so she could make some more money to score with and to pay for their accommodation. According to Kerry, men’s fascination with her white skin meant that jobs were easy to get and the fees for sex they were willing to pay were relatively high.

They fuckin’ love white chicks over there, man. To them it was like I was Elle Macpherson or some shit, you know, just ’cos I’m white. Like, they only see a few white people every now and then, and on TV and shit. So I’m like, all exotic and shit to them. Mahesh reckons he had a few guys ask him if I do jobs pretty much as soon as we arrived.

It seemed that as soon as the couple arrived in India, Kerry had fallen straight back into the pattern of heroin use and sex work she was trying to escape. Their initial plan to travel through New Delhi to an addiction treatment centre in southern India never made it past one of the first hotels they saw on the short auto-rickshaw ride from the airport to the city’s centre. From Kerry’s recounting of the story, it appeared as if both her and Mahesh realised the futility in their current situation almost as soon as she fell back into the pattern of heroin use and sex work, and they finally conceded to go their separate ways. Kerry called her mother, who bought a ticket for her to come home. Frustrated and disappointed, Mahesh saw Kerry’s immediate continued participation in the cycle of drug abuse and sex work in this new environment, and her desire to get back to Curtis Street where she felt more comfortable, as a clear indication that they had no future together. His words to me a few days before they left for India came to mind as Kerry told me the story:

I think that if I can get her away from here that she can stop using [heroin]. But if I just leave her here, I’m certain that she will just continue doing what she’s doing now until she dies So I think that by taking her to India she has a chance. There’s heroin there too, but it would be hard for her to find, especially because she can’t speak Hindi. So I think that as long as I

can somehow get her there, then maybe she can stop using and we can stay together Otherwise, if she stays here or starts using again [in India] then I think there's no chance ... she'll probably die out here. (Mahesh)

While making a commitment to remain in contact with each other, Mahesh caught a bus back to his parent's farm in Northern India after Kerry left on a flight back to Australia. Their "marriage" was over.

Helen and Sam

Due in part to the amount of time they were spending together at the time, Helen was presented with a similar proposition to the one Kerry previously negotiated and accepted with Mahesh. Despite wanting to slow things down so she could "see how Kerry's shift turned out first", Sunil persisted and soon convinced Helen to "at least meet" with a recently-arrived man from India who, he told Helen, was willing to pay her for marriage. Although I am unaware of exactly what went on at this meeting, Helen returned from it with news that she had accepted a proposal for marriage with a man called Sam, who was going to remunerate her through a combination of cash payments and accommodation.

When Helen accepted his offer, Sam was already in the process of applying for rental units in and around Dandenong, which he not only promised to furnish before their marriage, but for which he would also accept responsibility for the total rent through their arrangement. Some of Helen's additional requirements for the arrangement were that the unit not be "totally shitty" and that he furnish it with a "big flatty" (flat screen TV) and a Playstation 3 gaming system that were to be hers alone. In addition, Sam was to provide Helen with two cash payments: \$2000 on the day of their marriage, and a further \$5000 at the end of the five-year period. In return, Helen was to live in the unit with Sam and stay married to him for a period of five years. She was also required to convince her family that the marriage was genuine, and to take "lots" of photos of Sam with Helen and her family. As I would later learn, the ability to provide photographs documenting a relationship over time was a key tool used in the attempt to convince immigration officers that the marriage was "real".

Things progressed quickly. Within two weeks, Sam secured accommodation in a one-bedroom unit in Noble Park (a neighbouring suburb to Dandenong), and furnished it with a couch and queen bed, along with the "big flatty" and Playstation 3

as demanded by Helen. Although Helen did not move in straight away, she “crashed” there a few times in the first week, during which they made a point of taking a number of pictures of themselves as a couple in and around the unit. At three weeks she had moved in, but slept on the couch in the lounge while Sam slept in the only bedroom. Finally, after six weeks of living together, they made their way into the city by train where they were married at the Office of Births, Deaths and Marriages, and where, of course, there was an emphasis on taking photos in which Sam and Helen’s mother were included.

Both the relationship and arrangement began to break down almost as soon as their marriage was formalised. When they got back to Dandenong after formalising their marriage at the Office of Births, Deaths, and Marriages in the city, Sam told Helen that he was unable to pay her the \$2000 payment they had initially agreed on as a result of their accommodation and furnishings costing more than he had anticipated. Instead, he handed her \$500 in cash with the argument that he had provided her with the rest over the course of a few weeks when he had “helped her out”, by lending her money that she had not paid back. Furious, Helen insisted he pay her the remainder of the initial payment or she would tell the police about their arrangement.

I’m not fuckin’ playin’, ya lying cunt. Give me the rest of my money or I’ll put ya into the fuckin’ jacks [the police]. I don’t give a fuck if they get me. They ain’t gonna do much are they ... ’cos I belong here. But they’ll fuck you up big time. (Helen to Sam)

Sam took this threat seriously and promised he would get the remainder of her money to her as soon as possible. To at least some degree this satisfied Helen, but as the weeks passed it became clear that Sam’s employment (a cash-in-hand job with a local food distribution company) did not pay him enough to cover their living expenses and save the additional \$1500. While continuing to live together, the mood of their relationship and in their unit was extremely tense. From Helen’s point of view, she was doing a job for which she had not yet been paid. Further tension in their relationship developed as Kerry began letting other women “get on and crash” at their unit after getting back from Curtis Street. It was during this time that Helen established an authority relationship with Kerry, who was funding the majority of the pair’s drug use, and used this unit to provide accommodation to Kerry as a way to keep tabs on her income and control of the relationship. This increased the leverage

she already appeared to have in her tie to Kerry as a result of her strong need for an ongoing emotional connection.

C'mon, man. Just give us a taste [of heroin]. It's not like I'm makin' you pay me anything for stayin' here So fuck, man. It's not like you don't owe me, is it? (Helen to Kerry)

It soon became routine that Kerry and others working in partnership with the pair on any given night would go back to Helen's (and Sam's) unit after scoring, where the heroin they had purchased would be divided and used. After "getting on" most would simply crash on the couch or on the floor until morning. For providing a place to get on and crash, it was expected that each of her "guests" would give her a "taste" of the heroin they scored and used at her place. While Helen found benefit in this arrangement, Sam saw this only as costly and high risk. He not only considered Kerry's ongoing presence in the unit as inconvenient, but was concerned that their group's use of the unit as a place to deal and use heroin from would increase the risk of police attention, particularly towards their "arrangement" of marriage. Sam believed Helen and Kerry were now simply taking advantage of him. He was right.

What the fuck are you gonna do about it, anyway? Go on, ya little fucker. Go get the jacks to kick me out ... I'll tell 'em all about ya, mate. (Helen to Sam after he told her to get out of his unit)

While he continued to complain about Helen's use of their unit as a "drug den", the nature of his marriage to Helen placed him in a particularly vulnerable position, of which Helen and Kerry were aware and intended to exploit. They simply continued using the unit as they wished and demanded additional money and resources (the use of his car was perhaps the most common) from him, which he often gave them through his fear of them informing the police of the nature of his and Helen's marriage. Despite his frustration, his fear of police intervention rendered him powerless.

Finally, after almost six months of increasing tensions between Sam, Helen, and Kerry, and an increased police interest in the relationship, Sam conceded that his attempt to fast-track his claims for Australian citizenship had failed and he tried to terminate their arrangement. One evening as Kerry and Helen were working on Curtis Street, he packed up some of his belongings from the unit and left. Although not concerned about Sam's absence from the unit per se, Helen was infuriated that he

had left without paying her the remainder of the money she believed he owed her for her part in the marriage. She called him on his mobile phone as soon as she returned to the unit and realised he had left:

I don't give a fuck if ya wanna leave, but fuck man ... you think I'm just gonna let you walk away without paying me what ya owe me? No fuckin' way. I don't give a fuck where you go, cunt. You still owe me that money [the initial payment for their marriage] and you're gonna pay me, or I'll fuckin' find you ... (Helen speaking to Sam on the phone after finding he had left the apartment)

In the days and weeks that followed, Helen was questioned about her association with Sam. She told them of their arrangement but did not receive any charge. Shortly after, Sam handed himself in to the police and was deported back to India.

Dirty, cheap and nasty

The illegality of street sex work, the marginalisation of its participants, and widespread experience of significant hardship often observed in populations of street sex workers create a social context characterised by violence, abuse, and exploitation (Rowe 2006; Venkatesh 2013; Rosen and Venkatesh 2008; Williamson and Cluse-Tolar 2002; Marshall et al. 2008; Sanders 2001). As highlighted through much of this thesis, the endless sense of need and the relative poverty created through high-volume addictions to heroin fostered a shared sense of desperation in the network, and a sense of self that could often been seen as high-risk, ruthless, and highly calculative. Many of the internal stressors in the market's network were exacerbated by its relative isolation from the mainstream. Drug addiction, high-stress living situations, and even untreated mental illness often appeared to be at the core of much in-group stress, and these stressors manifested as vulnerabilities that other network members quickly identified and targeted for their own gain.

Suspicion, suggestions, or assertions that another sex worker was “dirty”, a “junkie” or “cheap” sparked the most heated confrontations among sex workers and spotters on Curtis Street. Insults and wars of words between network members usually revolved around the term *dirty*. Most often encapsulated in the highly stigmatising in-group labels “dirty whore” or “dirty slut”, being associated with the term “dirty” linked its target to a range of supposed practices connected to her sex work, drug use, and their sexual health that were considered both unhygienic and

self-effacing among their peers. The most common examples included accusations that a network member was selling unprotected sex, participating in stigmatised sexual acts, and even finding enjoyment in selling sex beyond the monetary gain.

Abby's a dirty fuckin' whore, man. This reggy [regular client] of mine just said that she let him and his mate tag team her without fuckin' connies [condoms]. (Linda)

Renea, man, she's different. Most of us are only out here 'cos we pretty much got no choice. But her, she likes it. If she got off the gear and got a fuckin' house and shit I reckon she'd still be coming out here. She's just a dirty fuckin' slut, man. She loves this shit. (Julia)

Similarly, despite widespread recognition of problematic illicit drug addiction as the force that binds people to this network, being labelled, called, or considered a “junkie” by peers was experienced by its target as particularly negative. Within the network, the term *junkie* was reserved only for people whose drug use actions stood out among other their substance-addicted peers as either extreme, high-risk, or even unethical.

I saw Jerry the other day. Remember him? He's staying somewhere in the city with this chick who, man, she looks like she hasn't eaten in a fuckin' month. Like, just fuckin' skin and bone, and that's it Both of 'em were just fuckin' hangin' out so we ended up scoring some gear from the bloke they reckon's got the best shit going around. It was alright, but I've had better. Anyway, we go into this two-storey carpark where they've be stayin' and we start mullin' up and shit and Jerry goes, “have you got any water?” I say “nup. I thought you guys'd have some”. Him and his missus just started flippin' out, man. I don't know what the deal was. I think they were just hangin' out real bad, but hey, you never know what you're gonna get with that guy. Anyway, we're like walking around the place looking for a tap or bottle of water or something and we can't find nothin'. Then his missus goes to him “give me the fuckin' fit”. So ends up taking it off him, and I shit you not, starts suckin' up water from this puddle in the corner of this carpark. Then she grabs the spoon and smack off him and just starts mullin' up, you know, like it's just standard shit. I couldn't believe it, man. I was hangin' pretty bad, but not fuckin' that bad, man. That's fuckin' hard core junkie shit. (Michael)

But it was suspicion, suggestion, or assertion of another sex worker “doing cheap jobs” that sat at the heart of the most heated confrontations between network members. “Going cheap” or “doing cheap jobs” referred to a sex worker lowering her fees in an attempt to generate more work on the street. Over time, an informal fee

structure had developing within the market's network, and provided a provided a pricing structure that all members were expected to adhere to while selling sex on Curtis Street. While women were free to seek higher fees for sex (this was often the case for women passing through from St Kilda, who were reportedly used to charging higher fees), accepting or actively reducing fees below accepted norms quickly sparked the ire of other sex workers, who were swift to issue sanctions:

You can't fuckin' do that shit man. It wrecks it for the rest of us. Fuck. They do all that shit all the time ... you know, saying that "so and so sucked 'im off for \$20 last week so we should do it for that price too" ... but you're just makin' it easier for 'em to say shit like that I'm fuckin' telling ya now: Don't fuckin' do that anymore. I don't care if ya fuckin' broke or hanging out, or what. Don't fuckin' do it again. (Comment made by one sex worker to another suspected of "doing cheap jobs")

As this statement made to a sex worker suspected of "going cheap" indicates, much of the negative sentiment associated with breaching this pricing structure stems from its use as a tactic designed to "steal jobs off other girls" ("jobs" could be interpreted as heroin), and the overall downward pressure it is expected to place on the "standard" sexual encounter fee available to sex workers in this market.

'But it's not like you don't do it, too'

Despite the high degree of negative sentiment and sanctioning attached to "going cheap", most women still reduced their fee in certain situations when out of ear-shot of their peers. The fee reductions occurred most commonly as an intermittent strategy during periods when generating an income on Curtis Street was difficult. Factors such as the number of street sex workers on the street at a particular time, the number of potential clients "driving around", the probability of police interference, the length of time the street sex worker had been on the street that day or night, the amount of money she has made, and her current state of drug withdrawal each contributed to the street sex worker's decision to reduce her fees in the hope of securing more work on various occasions. Common to all, however, were attempts to conceal their participation in these practices from peers for fear of being labelled a "cheap whore" by peers:

Don't tell none of the other girls [that I did a cheap job] will ya? Some girls do it all the time and they fuck it up for the rest of us ... 'cos those guys'll come back and expect us to do it for the same price. But I'm no fuckin' cheap

whore like them, man. I only did it then 'cos I only needed \$30 and can't be fucked waiting around for another job. (Tracey)

These three highly stigmatising labels came together in what became the most influential conflict among network members that I observed during my time in the field. Together with already escalating tensions between some of the market's key figures, and a shift in resources and power following Linda's breakup from Pok, these labels played a key role in a period of conflict that effectively split women selling sex on Curtis Street into those who worked the "day shift" and the "night shift".

'Have you seen that website where guys are talkin' shit about us?'

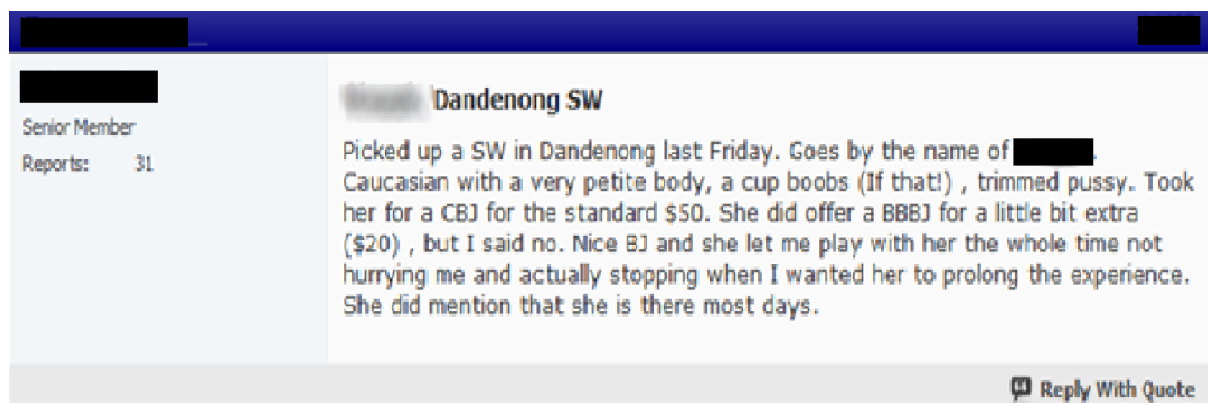
A currently small but growing body of research explores the effects the increasing use of information technologies in mainstream society have on the presence and practice of commercial sex (Giusta, Di Tommaso, and Strom 2009; Belza et al. 2008; Bernstein 2001; Peng 2007). While sex workers and businesses in some regions of the commercial sex sector have sought to capitalise on these advances, the lack of resources available to people selling sex in street sex markets has to date limited the effect of information technologies in the practice of street sex, at least in comparison to other types of commercial sex (Cunningham and Kendall 2011). In the last few weeks of fieldwork, a conflict among street sex workers spread, sparked by news of an online client forum, producing the most significant shift in the organisation of the market's social network and the practice of street sex work on Curtis Street during the period of research. Fuelled by existing tensions between Linda and Kerry (and Helen), and Linda's newfound vulnerability after separating from Pok, client critiques in an online forum that implicated both women in a range of activities considered discreditable by their peers—and attached to them the labels "dirty", "cheap", and "junkie"—provided the impetus for a conflict that effectively split the market in two. News of the forum made its way into Curtis Street after it was shown to Kerry by a client on his smartphone as he dropped her back onto Curtis Street after a job. She was initially bemused:

This guy just showed me some website bullshit that says all this fuckin' stuff about me. It's got my fuckin' name on it and everything. What the fuck, man? (Kerry)

She told a small group of other women who were working on Curtis Street at the same time about what she had been shown. By the time I arrived on the street later that evening, news of the site and its content about particular people on Curtis Street had already spread through most of the network.

Have you heard? Apparently there's some site there's some website or some shit where blokes are talking shit about us. (Tracey)

As I pulled up on Curtis Street, Kerry came over to my car and asked if I was aware of the site. When I told her I was not, she pulled out her smartphone and began reading through some of the initial posts. Embarrassed and furious, Kerry read the first post: a client's report about his recent encounter with her, and included quite specific details of her physical characteristics and the service she provided him:



This was followed by a request from another website user for more information on her location in Dandenong, and the report of another client's experience in Dandenong.

Senior Member

Reports: 81

Dandenong SW

Originally Posted by

Picked up a SW in Dandenong last Friday. Goes by the name of Caucasian with a very petite body, a cup boobs (If that!) , trimmed pussy. Took her for a CBJ for the standard \$50. She did offer a BBBJ for a little bit extra (\$20) , but I said no. Nice BJ and she let me play with her the whole time not hurrying me and actually stopping when I wanted her to prolong the experience. She did mention that she is there most days.

Any more details as Dandenong is a big place?

Picked up a couple of caucasians a few years ago in Dandenong. Great BBBJ but stopped visiting them at their private residence once I saw what looked like an sti.

Happy hunting

Last edited by

Reason: grammar

Reply With Quote

The reply:

Senior Member

Reports: 31

Dandenong SW

Originally Posted by

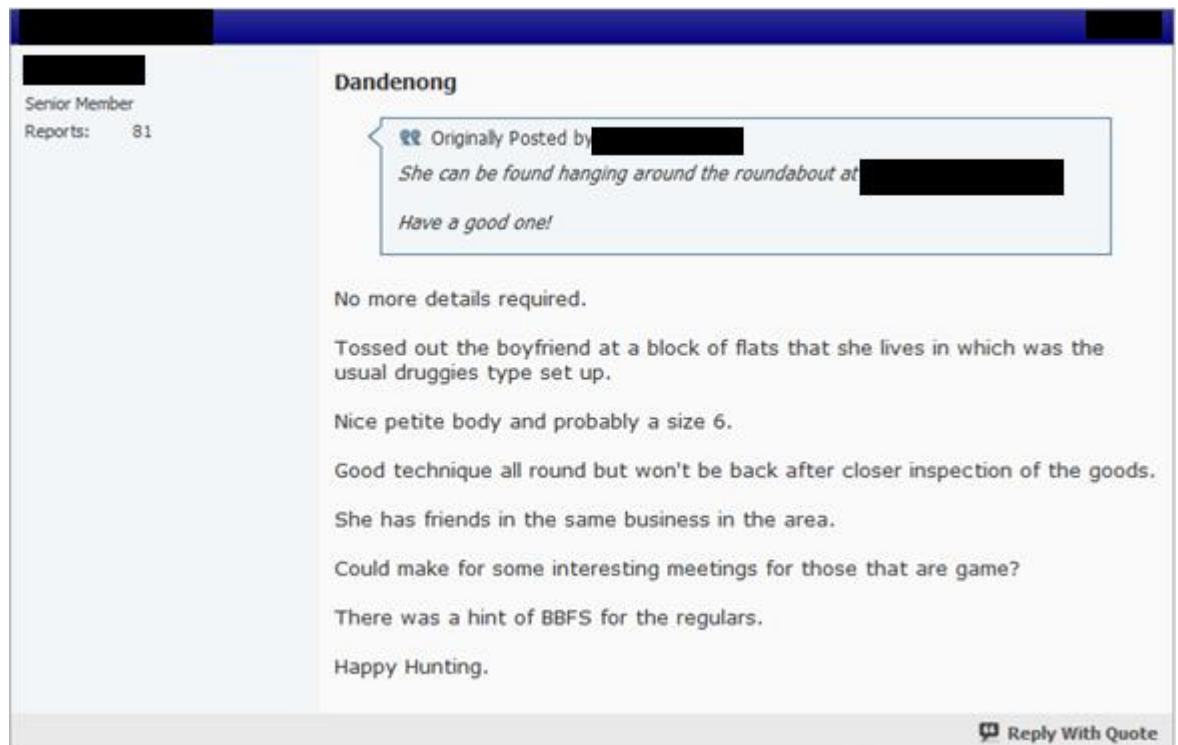
Any more details as Dandenong is a big place.

She can be found hanging around the roundabout at

Have a good one!

Reply With Quote

This was followed by another post where the client reported on an interaction with a street sex worker in Dandenong after being notified of the location of the street sex market by the original poster.



The thread continued, but it was the introduction of these initial online posts that sparked the most significant conflict among key members of the market's network during the research. News of the forum produced a generalised level of anxiety within the network, but particularly among those referred to directly. The key concern for people referred to in the posts was that it linked them to discreditable behaviours within the network. Kerry was "outed" for providing a BBBJ (bare back blow job: unprotected oral sex) to clients "off the street" and "giving clients more than they paid for" (in reference to the post indicating she let the client "play" with her while she performed oral sex on him). This latter point was associated with "going cheap". Helen was also implicated in an entry citing unique characteristics recognisable to peers, while also tarring her with one of the more potent and troublesome brushes in the social network: a sexually transmitted infection. The final post identified Linda and Pok, through its description of their living arrangement and Linda's use of her home in her street sex work. This post not only outed Linda as offering BBFS (bare back full sex: unprotected vaginal intercourse), but described her home as a "typical druggie set up" which inadvertently attached her to the "junkie" label. This allowed others she had previously criticised a tremendous opportunity for retribution in the days and weeks that followed.

A fractured social network

While fuelling a range of already smouldering in-group network tensions, the introduction of the forum into the social network played a central role in a series of divisive interaction within the network that effectively split the network and market in two. To extrapolate on how this fracture occurred, the following paragraphs turn to the evening Kerry was first advised of the forum.

After finishing their sex work for the evening, scoring, and going back to Old Dave's, Kerry and Helen spent the much of the night reading and re-reading through the forum's contents. While concerned about posts linking them to potentially discreditable acts, much of their focus was on the most recent contribution (at the time) in which a client described his encounter with Linda:

Helen: Typical fuckin' druggy set up [laughter]. Ah, I can't wait to tell her and fuck her up, man. She so reckons she's better than us 'cos she's got a place [a unit]. I'm gonna fuck her up big time on this.

Kerry: Fuck her, man. She's been on everyone else's cases calling 'em fuckin' dirty hos and shit cos she reckons everyone else has been lettin' blokes fuck 'em without condoms, and shit. But she's the one who's been doing it, man. I fuckin' knew it, but this is fuckin' proof ... big time.

When they arrived back on Curtis Street the following afternoon, Kerry and Helen made a point of reminding any network members they encountered about the forum—with a specific focus on the discrediting information posted about Linda. In what could be considered an attempt to shift the focus away from potentially discriminating information posted about themselves, they laughed and joked with others about Linda's unit being described as a "typical druggy set up", how she offered unprotected vaginal sex to her regular clients, and that the posting client had decided that he would not be a returning customer "after inspecting the goods".

After all the shit she's been givin' us, she's the one who's been letting cunts fuck her without a condom ... [she's a] fucking dirty whore, man.' (Kerry)

There's this cunt online that reckons her place is a "typical druggy set up". It's about her for sure, man. It even says that she had to fuckin' well kick Pok out of the place so they could do the job [laughs]. Fuckin' hilarious. (Helen)

Although Linda had already made the money she needed that day and had gone home, the speed at which information flowed through the network meant she soon

learned about the website, and Kerry and Helen's use of the information on it to discredit her within the network. Her response came the following day.

When back on Curtis Street, Linda adopted a similar strategy. Although most had now heard of the site (from Kerry and Helen), Linda got on the front foot by not only challenging the accuracy of the accounts made about her in the forum, but also by trying to refocus her peers' attention onto the potentially discriminating information posted about Kerry and Helen. Here, Linda focused on the clients' account of Kerry offering a BBBJ as evidence that she was a "dirty slut who blows anyone off the street without a condom", and on "letting her clients get more stuff (sex) off her than they pay for". She attempted to link this latter point to the negative sentiment associated with "girls who do cheap jobs" and the downward pressure that this is thought to place on the fee for sexual service, affecting "all us girls out here". She furthered her attack by citing information posted about Helen in which the client suspected her of having an STI. She drew on this client's post as evidence that Helen was "dirty" and "disease-ridden", citing these as reasons why she "makes less money than the rest of us girls on Curtis Street". Similar to the previous evening, this information travelled quickly through Curtis Street before making its way back to Kerry and Helen.

The fight that changed it all

Kerry and Helen were aware that Linda had been "talking shit" about them when they arrived on Curtis Street just after 4 p.m. that afternoon to start work that evening. While both appeared angry, it was Kerry who led the charge to confront Linda about the "shit she'd been spreading". The confrontation began as Kerry got within six metres of Linda and yelled:

What the fuck have you been saying about me, you little fuckin' skank?

Abby backed a few steps away, leaving Linda to fend for herself, while also signalling to Kerry that she would not interfere. Kerry continued her aggressive march into Linda's personal space where she pushed her chest and nose into hers, leaving Linda with little opportunity to avoid the confrontation, despite appearing as though she wanted to. Again, Kerry barked:

You wanna say any o' that shit now, ya little fuckin' slut?

The physically smaller Linda replied in a now timid tone:

What babe? I haven't said anything about you.

Kerry: Oh fuck off. You've been tellin' everyone about that site [the website] and that I'm a cheap whore and that Helen's got AIDS. Everyone's been tellin' me you've been saying shit about us behind our backs, so don't try and fucking deny it now.

Linda: But babe, it's not true.

While this was going on, Linda's eyes were darting around looking for a potential saviour while realising the true scope of her newfound vulnerability through her lack of connection to a physically dominant male spotter. Linda's only option now was to try to talk her way out of what appeared to be a dire situation. As Kerry continued pushing her chest and nose against Linda's, intimating that she would not be ignored, Linda continued to try to distance herself from the forum and from discrediting Kerry and Helen among peers.

Linda: Is this about that website you've been tellin' people about? I don't have anything to do with that. Fuckin' hell babe, I don't even know what it's called.

Kerry: Fuck off you stupid bitch. I know you've been on there and had a look at the shit those cunts've been writing about us. You've been telling everyone about it, and makin' up even more shit that's not even on there. Fuck man, I would've kept my mouth shut if I were you. They reckon you're just a fuckin' junkie lets guys fuck her without a condom. Fuckin' hell, you're a fuckin' dirty little skank aren't ya?

Linda: But babe ...

This was all Linda could get out before Kerry hit her with a right clenched fist to the side of her face, knocking her backwards. Kerry rushed at her again, this time pushing her in the chest with as much force as she could muster, causing Linda to lose her footing and land heavily on the footpath behind her.

Kerry: Keep ya fucking mouth shut, ya dirty fucking whore. If I hear any more shit I'll fuckin' kill ya ...

With that, Kerry walked back to the phone booth area where Helen was now standing. They shared a few comments while periodically looking back at Linda pick herself up off the footpath and dust herself off, before they began to slowly wander in the opposite direction. For them, their shift on the street had just started. For

Linda, even though she had not yet made sufficient money to purchase the amount of heroin she wanted, the implied threat of further physical harm from Kerry and Helen if she did not leave Curtis Street meant she had to end her street sex work prematurely. She would hope one of her “reggys” would call her phone to arrange a job, or she would have to hope that her dealer would “give us a bit more on tick” (more heroin on credit). If not, she would almost surely spend the rest of the evening “getting sick”.

A fractured market, a fractured market.

The effect of this split between Kerry and Linda had a significant effect on both the network of people selling sex on Curtis Street and the operation of the market. For Linda, with her smaller physical stature, the lack of other network members willing to stand up for her against Kerry, and her newfound status as a sex worker without a dominant male protector, her only real option for dealing with the threat of violence from Kerry and Helen was to avoid them while on the street. This meant working more during the daylight hours, where her client market was now almost exclusively made up of the “lunchtime crowd” and “guys just gettin’ off work”. Although Kerry seemed less concerned about encountering Linda on the street, her typical starting time drifted from 4 p.m. out to around 7 p.m., and sometimes even later. But beyond their individual differences, Kerry and Linda’s use of their social capital to position themselves as bridges between key dealers and other network members caused the outcome of their conflict to ripple through the rest of the network, and had a direct effect on other member’s sex work and drug use cycles. They all re-negotiated their positions in the chain of social ties leading to good dealers, and altered their patterns in accordance with the person they thought would help them score. The effect was a social network and market that was split in two. Women who wanted to continue scoring through Linda began selling sex during the day, forming working partnerships and other social ties with other people who had structured their drug use and sex work patterns to ensure they were in the right place and with the right amount of money when Linda contacted Maleea to score. Alternatively, people wanting to score through Kerry began selling sex later in the evening, often in partnerships directly tied to Kerry, in the hope of having enough money to score when Kerry eventually called Tim. For the rare few who continued on a relatively independent cycle of sex work and drug use, scoring heroin, even

with money in hand, became an extremely problematic and higher-cost process than it had in the past.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the thesis has moved into the lives of people selling sex on Curtis Street within an analysis of the market's social network. As often seen in other studies, most social organisation on Curtis Street develops out of pairings and partnerships either between sex workers, or between a sex worker and male partner whose drug use is also funded by their partner's sex work. Partnerships involving men were often characterised by violence, but partnerships between sex workers were also often highly exploitative and exposed one partner to significant harm. Social ties were typically organised around each person's participation in the market as a way to fund a high-cost addiction, and the need to establish effective social ties within this network to achieve this. Key heroin dealers reduced their risk of police intervention by limiting their ties to the market, creating structural holes within which two women mobilised their connection to each dealer and network members in ways that allowed them control over the flow of heroin and money into and out of the network. The isolation of local street sex workers increases their reliance their position in the network and their ties out through its periphery to access other key resources needed for their survival. One of the more common of these strategies involves establishing sex-for-accommodation arrangements with clients and men on the network's periphery. A similar survival strategy taken up by two women involved taking up opportunities provide to them by recently-arrived men from India, who saw their vulnerability and participation in an illicit network as a context in which their offers of money for marriage to bypass current immigration processes would be more likely to be accepted. Finally, the shared experience of hardship and lack of resources created through high-cost addictions to heroin foster a social context that is volatile and often violent. The most significant in-group conflict develops through the purposive association of one or more persons with negative in-group labels that link its target to stigmatising drug use and/or sexual behaviours. A person's standing among peers, and ability to mobilise social capital within the network, determines their degree of exposure to these negative associations by providing a pathway to recourse if attacked.

AGENCY AND SEXUAL CAPITAL ON CURTIS STREET

The previous chapters have provided accounts of the spatial practice of street sex work in Dandenong and the experience of people living in the market's social network. In this chapter, the agency of people using this market to sustain a problematic substance addiction are explored, along with the perceptions and experience of the men buying sex in this market. As discussed in the literature review, the agency of people suffering a high-cost, problematic drug addiction is highly complex. In this chapter, the thesis explores the agency of people selling sex on Curtis Street through the lens of the affective model of addiction advanced by Uusitalo, Salmela and Nikkinen (Uusitalo, Salmela, and Nikkinen 2013). Adopting this approach allows the thesis to consider people's experience of the affects of their addiction and how these constrain the context in which decisions about their participation in street sex work and other addiction-enforcing behaviours develop. The second half of the chapter discusses the perceptions and experiences of men who buy sex from women selling sex on Curtis Street. The information discussed through this chapter is taken from interviews conducted with nine men who buy sex from women on Curtis Street. Questions about these men's participation in street sex work in Dandenong are considered through the conceptual lens of sexual capital. Approaching the perceptions, experience, and connections of these men to this market prompts the thesis to delve into the reasons that shape their apparent preference for buying sex in this market instead of in other lower-risk contexts, and the value they place on the sexual encounters they are able to buy. This chapter presents the last of the empirical presentations of the practice of street sex work in Dandenong for this thesis, before these observations are considered in light of the research questions and previous studies in the final chapter.

The agency of sex work and addiction

I'm a fuckin' addict, mate. Doing this sort of shit out here [on Curtis Street] is just how it is. No one else is gonna pay for me gear, are they? (Julia)

As discussed in the literature review, most research exploring pathways and current experiences of people selling sex in street sex markets identifies a strong link between the experience of a highly-problematic substance addiction and a person's participation in street sex work (Nadon, Koverola, and Schludermann 1998; Lankenau et al. 2005; Potterat et al. 1998; Dodsworth 2012). People selling sex on Curtis Street do so because they consider it to be the only way they can generate an income large and stable enough to support a high-cost addiction to heroin. While people wanting to earn "fast, easy money" for drugs—such as ice, alcohol, or even "pills" ("benzos", such as Xanax, and "oxys" were some of the most common)—sporadically capitalised on the opportunities available in the market, it was an unrelenting addiction to heroin that ultimately tied people to the behaviours and people that shaped the market as a unique, macro-phenomena.

The heroin addictions of people selling sex on Curtis Street were often well-established, required high volumes of heroin (and therefore money) to maintain, and provided a focal point around which their daily lives revolved. While it was common for sex workers to describe earlier periods in their lives where they were able to fund their drug use through "burgs" (breaking into homes, businesses, and factories), dealing (sometimes heroin but more often "choof" or prescription medications), or "robbin' cunts" (usually through threats of physical violence), the probability of criminal charge and irregularity of income positioned these alternatives as less-than-ideal ways to negotiate the uncompromising demand of an out-of-control heroin addiction. Through existing familiarity with the area and/or other people who sold sex on Curtis Street, the recognition of the limits of other income strategies, and the worker's own transition from casual user to addict, conspired to position selling sex on Curtis Street as the course of action they considered most likely to allow them to satisfy their addiction to heroin.

It costs a lot to support a habit like mine, man. I mean a real fuckin' lot. Like, at least \$700 a day, and that's like the fuckin' minimum. Any less than that and I'm fucked ... big time. You can't get this sort of money doing burgs and shit. Not for long, anyway. If ya do that all the time then it's pretty much just a matter of time before ya get busted. But out here man, I mean it sucks ... you know, what we have to do out here, but you're pretty much guaranteed to get what you need. And the jacks hassle us a bit, but nowhere near as bad as if they thought you were doing burgs or stealin' cars or some shit. (Helen)

We're supporting pretty big habits, so we really need to be out here a lot We'd probably be OK if we got say \$250 or so, but really we're tryin' to get somewhere around \$500. That's for both of us. (Pok)

Street sex workers

Most women's decision to begin selling sex on Curtis Street was an outcome of careful consideration through which many appeared to prioritise money for heroin above almost anything else. While most describe disliking the practice of selling sex to men, and often comment on the risks and harms associated with doing so, their need for a relatively large income from which they can buy enough heroin tends to outweigh most of their concerns. What became abundantly apparent was that it was the effect(s) of a high-cost, out of control addiction that had conspired with people's psyche in ways that made selling sex on Curtis Street appear as if it was their only viable option for their continued survival.

You tell me somewhere else where I get this sorta money, you know, every fuckin' day and I'll do it ... there's just nothing else. If there was, I'd be doing it, believe me. But in the end, man, it's pretty simple. If ya wanna stay on the gear, you gotta be able to get money, quick. It sucks doing this shit out here [selling sex on Curtis Street], but I'll tell ya, you can get what you need out here, but you gotta be able to put up with all the shit that goes with it too, though. (Julia)

Nobody wants to be out here. But we don't really have a choice, do we? There's nowhere else I know where I'm gonna be able to work for a few hours and end up with 400 or 500 bucks. Maybe stripping, but even then you gotta be fuckin' hot, otherwise you pretty much come home with nothin. (Kelly)

A component of most sex workers' decisions to sell sex on Curtis Street specifically was an assessment of the economic options available in this market compared with other commercial sex options, such as other street sex markets, strip clubs, and regulated brothels. While the regulation of brothels and strip clubs was seen by most of these women to limit their access to these as viable economic options (having physical signs of IV drug use and working while stoned was frowned upon, for example), it was the increased competition among sex workers for client attention, and having to share their takings with management in these potentially safer contexts that reduced their value as viable alternatives to selling sex in the market on Curtis Street.

Brothels aren't bad. As long as you can get jobs it's good. You don't have to put up with as much shit as you do out here. Most of 'em are a fuckin' rort though. The house pretty much takes most of ya money. You end up getting less than half of what you should be getting, really. It's good cos there's usually security around all the time, so if blokes start getting out of hand or anything you just call 'em in and they take care of it. But in the end, you could be working for like 10 hours or something and only end up with a few hundred bucks ... not like out here. I don't reckon I've ever been out here that long. Out here it's just get your money and piss off There's heaps more shit you gotta deal with out here but fuck, man, I'd rather put up with a few hours of this than fuckin' blokes all day for just a couple a' hundred. (Julia)

It's hard, man. There's some real beautiful girls workin' in those places [brothels]. There's no way some bloke's gonna pick one of us girls out of a line up over some fuckin' hot skinny blond with big fake tits ... I've been there. Trust me. Just one after the other. Some bloke walks in. The head chick comes and tells us to come out and say hello [to the client]. He picks the girl that looks like she's out of a magazine or somethin' and we all go back to sitting on our arses until it's time to do it all again. It's not like out here, man. Pretty much as soon as you come out there's guys wanting something from ya. You can pretty much make as much as you want. It's just up to how many jobs ya wanna do ... most of the time anyway. (Tracy)

I used to do stripping before I started working out here. I made better money doing that than this [selling sex on Curtis Street]. If I had a choice I'd get back into stripping I had this problem with my bones and I had to have surgery on my hip and I got this huge scar that goes right up around here [she shows me a scar that runs around most of one of her hips]. That was pretty much when I started using [heroin]. When I wanted to go back and start stripping again they wouldn't take me back 'cos of the scar. They said none of the guys would pay me 'cos they reckoned it was gross I started using [heroin] more then, too, 'cos I knew some of the girls out here [on Curtis Street], I just started coming out here instead. (Linda)

Another key element in many women's decision to sell sex on Curtis Street was their consideration of the opportunities available to them in this market compared with other street sex markets, particularly St Kilda. In at least some cases, this assessment seemed both complex and contradictory. To begin with, it was common knowledge among women working on Curtis Street that the fees they were able to charge on the street in Dandenong were much lower than what they were able to get for the same service in the larger St Kilda street-based market.

Here, you get hardly nothin' Sometimes I go to St Kilda and man, there's no way I'd even have to think about doing a full job [vaginal sex] for \$50. No

one's [client] even tried to push me that low there. But here, you just gotta do it for that 'cos if ya' don't then for sure, one of these other girls will, and I'm just left standing here without any money. There's no choice here, man. It's full o' cheap cunts here. (Julia)

You can get heaps more money in St Kilda, man. There's so many fuckin' johns and they don't try and haggle with ya as much as they do 'round here. (Carly)

Further, some of the women working in Curtis Street would talk about the differences in the quality and price of heroin available to people working in Dandenong compared with the larger St Kilda market. There was a general consensus among the girls that the purity of the heroin available in St Kilda or Richmond was comparable to what was available in Dandenong, and was significantly cheaper.

Here, its kinda hard to get, and it's pretty much 300 [dollars] a gram no matter who ya get it from. But say, I drive down to St Kilda or even Richmond, then I wouldn't be payin' anywhere near that much ... probably 200 [dollars per gram] tops. (Helen)

Yeah, smack is real expensive round here. You pretty much can't get it for any less than 300 [dollars per gram] It's kinda weird cos it's fuckin' everywhere in Richmond and heaps cheaper too, and that's like, what, maybe 20 minutes drive from here? I've thought about it, believe me. I could just get a car, go score say a coupla grand's worth [in Richmond] and come back here and sell it to all these bitches out here, man. I'd make a fuckin' killing. (Julia)

Taken together, the lower fee per job in Curtis Street coupled with the higher cost of heroin in Dandenong would make selling sex on the street in Dandenong initially appear to be a lower value option than negotiating the same addiction on the streets of St Kilda. But while some women described periods of working and scoring in St Kilda, most women working on Curtis Street did so because they had a clear preference for participating in this street sex market instead of others. Key themes in many people's accounts were their familiarity with the people and processes of Dandenong's street sex and drug markets, and the effects these had on their daily negotiation of a heroin addiction.

St Kilda can get real bad. Like real bad. Me and Helen went up there a few times, and pretty much every time we end up getting in punch-ons. They're all fuckin' territorial and shit. Like you'll just be standin' there and

someone'll come up and say: "You can't fuckin' stand here. This is our spot. Fuck off." And if ya don't go, like right then, it's pretty much on. But here [on Curtis Street] is real different. There's a bit of shit that goes on, but no one's out here saying "you can't stand here 'cos this is my spot". We all pretty much know each other round here, but even when someone new comes along it's not like any of us are just gonna bash her for standin' here. We're all out here for the same shit. If anything we kinda stick up for each other, you know, 'cos we know what it's like to be out here doing this shit. (Helen)

Most of us girls have pretty much grown up around here so we all kinda know each other, you know, just through friends and shit. Before I even started doing this shit I already knew most of the other girls that were down here, so when I started it wasn't like, you know, what you hear about girls gettin' bashed or whatever. It was like "hey, I know you. What are you doing out here?" So in a way it's pretty friendly out here really. (Abby)

Nah, its good here. I used to work in St Kilda all the time and there was all sort of shit going on. The only thing you really gotta worry about out here are the johns and a few of the cops. But there [St Kilda], you're just walking around with eyes in the back of your head. Other chicks'll just fuckin' bash ya and try and take what you've got just 'cos they know ya don't know anyone else around there, so ya can't really do much. And even the johns, man, you get some real psychos. Sometimes you're unlucky out here [on Curtis Street], but the girls kinda stick together. I reckon 'cos there's not that many of us, we sort of look out for each other. If someone's driving around [a john] that's not right, most of us girls will tell each other so no one does a job with him or anything. (Emma)

Despite the perception of higher costs to sustain a pattern of heroin addiction by selling sex and buying heroin in Dandenong in comparison to St Kilda, it was a sense of familiarity with the area and other people selling sex in Curtis Street that made this market a most attractive one.

I fuckin' hate being out here, but you know, I know everyone, and you know, even if it's really shit I can still usually get what I need (heroin) out here. (Helen)

Stoned or hangin' out

Whether adopting the role of sex worker or spotter, all people connected to Curtis Street were there to earn money for heroin. But despite a desire to get stoned from the heroin they scored, a degree of tolerance to heroin developed over time, which coupled with its high cost, meant "getting stoned" did not occur as frequently as most would ideally like:

I use everyday man, but I haven't been high for months. My tolerance is too high now. All I get from it [the amount of heroin she scored] now is that it stops me getting sick. It's fucked. I'd kill to get stoned. (Helen)

Instead, the experience attached to heroin that drove most of the protagonists of Curtis Street to the work–score–get on cycle was the need to avoid the negative affects of heroin withdrawal, or “getting sick”. “Getting sick” and “hanging out” refers to the range of physical and emotional symptoms that develop as users try to adapt to a lower amount of heroin their body had become dependent on.

[Hanging out] ... it's the worst feeling ever. It's like the worst sickness you've ever had. I usually start getting all sorta cold and hot at the same time first. Then the headaches start and you've just got the feeling like you're gonna puke, but you sorta can't at first, but then if you leave it long enough you just start chucking your guts up. It's fuckin' horrid. (Mae)

It's bad man. Some people don't get it like I do, but I reckon one of the worst parts of hangin' out is that you've gotta shit really bad. Like, when you're on you just don't need to shit at all. But when you start hanging out your stomach starts rumbling and you better get to a toilet real quick. (Helen)

While some variation existed depending on the person's degree of dependence, most people with an ongoing presence on Curtis Street began experiencing the affects of “hanging out” and “getting sick” from anywhere between 2–10 hours after their last “hit”. Whether experienced once or numerous times per day, the significance of these effects in the daily lives of network members produced an ever-present sense of fear and desperation that pervaded each person's psyche, and bound them to a range of actions and interactions they may otherwise prefer to avoid. It was this feeling that most believed to have stripped them of any alternative but to go back onto the street and sell enough sex for another hit.

I'm sick as, man. I nearly threw up on that guy ... I just need one more job, maybe two, and I can get the fuck outta here. (Helen)

I never used to get sick like some of these other girls do, but lately, since I've been using more, I've been getting sick more and more. It's bad 'cos the only thing that makes it better is more fuckin' smack. So you just get into the pattern, yeah, where you start feeling shit, so you come out here and get some money, then you go get on and everything is all good for a while. But then after a few hours or so it's all gone [the heroin] and you start feeling like shit again, so you gotta come back out here and go through all this fuckin' shit all over again. It never ends man. Never! (Julia)

C'mon, babe. Just go back [up the street] for a bit. I'm gettin' sick as. (Mick)

The affects of addiction and survival through savviness

Fear of the effect of heroin withdrawal created an endless sense of desperation and shared psychological ethos that ultimately deemed daily life on Curtis Street as a case of “every man and woman for themselves”. This ethos not only played a dominant role in how people negotiated their everyday experiences, but effectively shaped the street sex market’s social network as unforgiving, calculating, and often brutal. At the micro level, people’s behaviour and their active participation in the market’s social network can be seen as a product of each person’s desire for money, and an assessment of the costs and benefits associated with particular actions or social connections. While friendship and general sentiment still remain influential, it is a desire for money above all else that ultimately shapes the actions and daily lives of people whose addiction has bound them to this market.

No one's getting a fuckin' thing until I get what I need [heroin] first. (Helen)

Emanating out of each person’s need to avoid the negative affect of withdrawal, and honed through the person’s ongoing exposure to the local street culture and economy, is a range of social learnings that, when used effectively, allowed the person to detect and capitalise on contextually different situations as they arose. For most people, street savviness was embodied where it produced a type of fluid ingenuity that ran through all aspects of their street sex work, drug use, and peer interactions. These embodied learnings provided individuals with a tool through which they could not only prosper in the unforgiving context of the street’s sex market, but also allowed them to sense danger or to exploit their less-hardened or educated peers for their own gain.

See, these girls out here don't understand. I mean, yeah, you can just fuckin' hock ya box or whatever for some money for smack, and you know, that's fuckin' easy, man. But if ya wanna be out here doing this shit day after day, then [you] gotta be fuckin' smart about it. The way these girls act, man ... someone's gonna fuckin' play 'em, for sure. (Abby)

It was most often the people whose embodiment of the “every women and man for themselves” ethos and street savviness was most developed who were more successful, in both their sex work and peer network.

No one messes with these old bitches, man. They've been out here forever, can pretty much know everyone, so they can fuck you over bad if they wanna. See, these little fuckin' girls over here, man? [points to a younger sex worker who'd only been selling sex on Curtis Street for the last few days]. She thinks she fuckin' hard ... like tellin' Sally she's gonna come after her and shit, but she's not. It's just a front, man. You wanna see hard? Have a look at Tanya and shit. They don't have to go round' mouthin' off like that ... they just know their shit, man. (Abby)

Alternatively, it was the sex workers and others whose addiction was not as well ingrained into their being, and whose ability to capitalise on opportunity or weakness was less developed, who were often targets of their more hardened, street-wise peers.

I kinda feel sorry for some of these girls when they first come out here. I remember when I first came out here. Everyone's just sizin' you up. It's bad, man, but it's just how most of these girls out here think. Everyone's just lookin' at that girl now thinkin' about scammin' her, or rippin' her or some shit. She probably doesn't even have any idea either. One of these other girls is gonna go an' be real friendly to her or some shit, saying "I'll look out for ya" or some shit, and she'll be fuckin' played before she knows what's going on. I feel sorry for her, man. But that's just how it is out here. (Julia)

As this suggests, the endless sense of desperation created by the high price of heroin, and the significance of the negative affects of an addiction-fostered social context, that required a significant degree of street savviness (or "hardness") for a person's continued survival. This is a theme that repeats continuously through the remainder of the thesis.

'This is just my lot, man'

You wanna know how bad this shit [heroin] is? I'll tell ya. See that little bit there? I wouldn't even feel that, now. It's fuckin' nothing to me, man. It wouldn't even help if I was hangin' out. But if I mulled that up and jacked it into you, you'd be dead, like pretty much straight away. That's how bad this shit is man. (Helen)

Seemingly inherent in the affective negotiation of addiction on Curtis Street is the recognition of the risks and harms associated with high-volume drug use and users' participation in related behaviours. While people often reflected on how their heroin addiction tied them to a range of practices that caused harm to their physical, social, and emotional well-being, what was most concerning was the almost blanket acceptance among people with a long-term connection to the market that their drug

use would almost certainly lead to ill-health in the future, and ultimately to their death.

We're all fuckin' addicts, mate. At some point ya gonna OD ... if no one's around, or if they shit 'emself like her bloke did, then you're pretty much fucked. Some people mightn't like to think about it, but really, everyone knows it. (Linda)

Do ya reckon ya can ever be alright again after doing all this shit? It's bad, man. It fucks with ya soul, I reckon. (Helen)

We use this shit [heroin] and we know that one day it's going to kill us. It's just how it is. (Rob)

This relative acceptance of the risks associated with high-level heroin use was most apparent in cases of overdose. The death of a young woman from overdose during the few months between my preceding Honours research and the fieldwork for this study produced a great deal of relevant discussion in my first few weeks back on Curtis Street. One comment in particular provided insight into the cultural psyche about the risks associated with high-volume drug use, and shed light on the ways people negotiated their heroin addictions in the context of the street sex market through the remainder of my time in the field:

It's bad [Amber's death] but it's not really surprising, is it? I mean, there's nobody out here [on Curtis Street] that really thinks they're gonna live to 100. At some point all this shit we're doin is gonna fuckin' get us. (Julia)

A relative acceptance of significant risks associated with drug use was also present in retrospective accounts of non-fatal overdoses. The following discussion with Linda and Pok the day after Linda “OD’d” (overdosed) from a combination of “pills” and heroin provides one example that is consistent with many others:

Linda: Did you hear? I OD'd last night just up near the Dandy Hospital.

Me: Oh, shit. Are you OK now? What happened?

Pok: It was bad, man. She just dropped. We'd just jacked up at a mate's place and started walking home. Then all of a sudden Linda's just dropped, like right beside me. She wasn't moving and she was like hardly breathing. It was lucky we were so close to the hospital or we'd be fucked. So I just picked her up and carried her straight into the hospital.

Linda: Yeah, I was feeling OK then it just hit me and I was fuckin' gone, man. I took a coupla pills a bit before, so I reckon it was them that fucked me

up. Heroin's like, if you OD with that it pretty much happens straight away, but this was 15 minutes later so I reckon it was the pills for sure.

Pok: It probably was but you shouldn't have said that to 'em. It fucked us up. [Turning to me] 'Cos of that the doctor ended up taking all our pills off her and even cancelled her script so we can't get any more. He was all: "Well, I've gotta take you off them 'cos you keep OD'ing on 'em." But fuck that, man. It's not fair. It's not like she's like some of these other girls out here [on Curtis Street] that are droppin' [overdosing] all the time. She's only OD'd, what, twice in the last two years? That's nothing, man.

Linda: [nods in agreement].

A similar theme, including reference to the action of her peers, was present in Tanya's account of her own overdose late one evening after she scored and got on with two of her friends from Curtis Street:

Fuck those bitches, man. Last night I fuckin' OD'd in Helen's car and they just fuckin' dumped me on the fuckin' footpath in front of my house. I guess I mighta done the same thing if I was in their shoes. I mean the last thing ya want is havin' to explain to the jacks how someone's fuckin' OD'd in the back of ya car, but fuck man. I could've died, man. They could've at least just dumped me up at Dandy hospital or somethin'. Or at least left me and called the fuckin' ambos or somethin' I dunno what time it was, but I must a' been out for a while. It was morning by the time I came around again.

Despite her disappointment at the way her friends treated her after her overdose, its effect on their relationship was minimal. All that remained was some jovial banter between the women the following day as they again worked on the street, scored, and got on together.

Emma: What are you going on about now? It's not like we left you in the middle of nowhere. We left ya right outside your place.

Helen: Yeah. It's not like you were gonna get raped or some shit. Well maybe Reg [Tanya's elderly neighbour] might a' felt ya up a bit, but he's too old to get it up anyway. See, we were thinking about ya.

Tanya: Fuck you bitches, man. I'm telling ya. If either of you two bitches OD I'm gonna bring ya straight down here [to Curtis Street] and just leave ya lying spread on the grass here so these blokes can just come along do whatever they fuckin' want with ya.

[All three women laugh]

The experience of overdose and the possibility of illness, injury, and even death from drug use sit within the psyche of most people on Curtis Street as an unfortunate, yet relatively accepted, part of life negotiating a problematic substance addiction.

On the 'done

In an apparent contradiction to the fatalistic acceptance of the affects associated with high-volume, long-term heroin use was the widespread use of methadone. Methadone is a drug prescribed by some doctors as part of a process that allows a heroin addict to stop using heroin without experiencing the often brutal effects of withdrawal. The daily doses of most people on Curtis Street ranged between 70–120ml, with the goal of most being to have their doses lowered over time as their dependence on the drug subsided. While some people used it as a way to move away from the practices required to sustain their heroin addiction, its most prominent use on Curtis Street was as an insurance against the negative effects of heroin addiction. Despite not having the same physical effect of heroin, its ability to reduce the affects of “hanging out” and “getting sick” still positioned it as a drug that had value for people reliant on the local sex and drug markets to maintain their heroin addictions.

Yeah, it's good. It doesn't really get you high or anything ... well, you can sorta get this weird kind of high from it if you have a shitload of it, but mostly it just stops you getting sick. (Paul)

While not everyone on Curtis Street maintained their place on a methadone program, many did. People's continued participation in a methadone program while using heroin was often a product of an earlier attempt to “get off the gear”, and a recognition of methadone as a less valuable but occasionally vital substance in their daily struggle against the negative effects of their addiction. At least some of the value attached to maintaining a position in a methadone program while continuing to use heroin was that it allowed the person to stay connected to a pathway out of the work–score–get on cycle to which they were currently bound. This struggle between wanting to “get off the gear”, and the pull of heroin addiction produced an inner tension that ran through the psyche of most people, as well as the market as a whole. Staying connected to a methadone program while continuing to use heroin was one way that people attempted to manage this tension.

I mean, cos I'm still using, I'm not really doin' myself any real favours or anything But at least if I stay on the 'done then I feel like I'm sorta headed in the right direction. I'm still fuckin' up with all this sort of shit [she points to the marks on her arm from IV drug use and then men passing by in cars while we sit on the kerb in Curtis Street], but if I said to myself tonight that, "right, fuck it, I'm not gonna do any of this shit anymore", then I could just do it ... you know, without havin' to go through the shit of havin' to find a doctor and chemist, and all that bullshit. (Tracey)

By far the most prominent role methadone played in the lives of people who continued selling sex and using heroin, however, was as an insurance against negative effects of their heroin addiction.

It's just good to have on hand, yeah. Even if I don't use it I still get it just so my script doesn't run out. Yesterday out here [on Curtis Street] it was dead, yeah. We only got, like \$200 between us, and that's fuck all. So when shit happens like that, having a bit of 'done just so you don't get sick is really good to have. I prefer some fuckin' gear man, but it [methadone] costs like what? Five bucks. Last night man, I was pretty happy I had it, otherwise I woulda been fucked big time. Don't get me wrong, I woulda preferred heroin if I could a got more of it, but the 'done got me through at least. (Helen)

Consistent with the idea of methadone as an insurance against the effects of heroin withdrawal, methadone became a resource that people not on a program were willing to pay for during dire situations when getting enough money on the street or scoring enough heroin was not possible. While its inability to produce a "high" like heroin kept its value much lower, the significance of the effect of "getting sick", and methadone's ability to reduce the severity of these effects, positions it as a commodity of high value in situations where a person's access to heroin is limited. In the right situation, someone willing to sell their methadone could turn their initial \$5 per day investment at the chemist into \$30 to \$50 cash payment, or more often, a high-value favour to be paid back at a later date. In other cases, methadone was given or traded among people in intimate relationships, particularly when only one member remained "on the 'done" (methadone for Xanax was a reasonably common trade). On average, males were more likely than their female partners to keep a prescription for methadone up to date, where it often appeared part of a strategy that allowed them to create a debt that the female partner had to make up at a later date—with heroin. During times when their partner was "hanging out", this strategy appeared particularly successful.

Methadone was also valuable to people with an upcoming court date, particularly when it was likely they would receive a custodial sentence. In these cases, being on methadone was considered a valuable source of supporting evidence that could suggest to a judge that a person had “started doing the right thing” while in the community, and therefore did not require a custodial sentence.

My lawyer said that I could get put away for a bit this time. I gotta get some money for me 'done, man. If I stop going, they cut me off and that'll look real fuckin' bad in court. (Emma)

What doctor do you go to, Helen? I reckon if my case gets heard and I'm not on the 'done or nothing they'll put me away.' (Tanya)

Even if the person was to receive a custodial sentence, there was still significant value in being on a methadone program. Here, already being on a methadone program allowed the person simply to continue receiving methadone from the start of their custodial sentence, and by doing so avoid the negative effects of addiction such as “getting sick”. Others not already on a program often had to experience the full effect of withdrawal as they had to wait up to two weeks before they could see a doctor and be “put on the 'done”. Similar to its use within the work–score–get on cycle while in the community, its role here was firmly attached to the significance of “getting sick” and the desire to avoid it at almost any cost.

I gotta get into a doctor, man. You don't understand. I gotta get on the 'done now! If I get locked up on Friday without a script I'm fucked big time. It can take up to, like, two weeks before they let you see a doctor after you go in [to jail]. By then it's pretty much too late, anyway. You've pretty much gone through all the withdrawal and detox shit. I fuckin' hate jail anyway, man. I don't wanna spend the first two weeks fuckin' sick as. (Helen)

Methadone not only plays a key role in allowing people to negotiate an inner struggle between “wanting to get off the gear” and the pull of heroin, but is also a highly valuable commodity that provides some insurance against the market's unpredictability and the effects of withdrawal. While not as valuable as heroin, its ability to mitigate the affects of “hanging out” and “getting sick” positions methadone as an asset that has significant value in the daily lives of negotiating their addiction on Curtis Street.

The discussion so far in this chapter has considered the affect of addiction as experienced by street sex workers on Curtis Street, and its role in their daily lives.

The attention will now shift on to the perceptions and experiences of the men who buy sex from the women working in this market.

Sexual capital and the value for authenticity

If you wanna really know about what goes on out here you should talk to the clients too. (Kara)

The body of research on sex market clients, particularly in illicit contexts, is growing but remains small in comparison to studies of other people selling sex (examples include: Sanders 2008b; Kingston 2010; Hammond 2010). Recently, concern at a unitary view of commercial sex produced by the strong academic focus on sex workers without developing knowledge of the people who buy sex from those workers has sparked a concerted push for an increased empirical focus on men who buy sex (Peng 2007; Earle and Sharp 2007; Hardy, Kingston, and Sanders 2010). For many, the inclusion of sex market clients in relevant research is considered to be the next necessary step in the development of a holistic account of commercial sex (Sanders 2008b; Hardy, Kingston, and Sanders 2010), and key to the improvement of policies and programs concerned with the welfare of the commercial sex sector's most vulnerable participants (Sanders 2006, 2008a; Hardy, Kingston, and Sanders 2010). The following discussion presents key observations from interviews conducted with men who buy sex from women soliciting on Curtis Street. These observations are explored through the conceptual lens of sexual capital, which prompts the thesis to consider these men's apparent preference for buying sex in this market instead of in other commercial sex markets, and how they think about the sex they are able to buy within this market.

At first glance, the immediate goal of men that drives their engagement with the street sex market is relatively straightforward. They want sex, and assess commercial sex to be the most appropriate option available to them. But their decision to buy sex from women working on Curtis Street rather than from other commercial sex options is not simply a product of convenience or chance. The most common theme to emerge in discussions with men who had bought sex from women working on Curtis Street was that they found its proximity to their home particularly convenient.

It's just easy, man. It's like five minutes from my house, and I can just come down here, see someone I like, and well, you know. (Elvin)

Men, or “punters” also described the familiarity with the practices of the Curtis Street market and the sex workers themselves as significant in their decision to buy sex from women working in this location. The men’s familiarity with the market and people of Curtis Street contributed to a sense of security for both their purchase and their physical safety. In discussion, distinctions were often made between buying sex on the street in Dandenong and what they had either experienced directly or heard from other men about buying sex on the larger and more widely-known street sex market in St Kilda:

I’ve been to St Kilda a few times, but it’s all fuckin’ chaos down there. This one time I had this girl in the car and she’s told me to drive into this sort of carpark thing that was like, in the middle of fuckin’ nowhere So we’ve parked and, you know, we’ve sort of started up, then I notice this bloke sort come out of nowhere. It was pretty lucky really, ‘cos’ I only just saw him coming up to the car in the side mirror. So I just thought, “fuck this, man”. I reckon this chick’s taken me to this fuckin’ real isolated park thing so her and her bloke can fuckin’ rob me. Fuck that, man. I just pushed her off me, started the car and just fuckin’ sped off out of there. He coulda been coming to stab me, for all I know. (Carl)

I just like it down here I guess. I pretty much know everyone around here and what goes on, and what not ...so I know no one’s gonna fuck me over or anything. (Rashid)

While proximity and familiarity were considered assets of buying sex on Curtis Street, most men considered the lower fee for sex in this market in comparison to other markets to be significant in their preference for buying sex on Curtis Street. Perhaps fuelled by the high number of working class and unemployed men that made up this client group, the ability to purchase sex for less money than it would cost elsewhere was considered by most clients as a key asset of the market.

Well it’s cheaper, for one thing. Here you can get pretty much whatever you want for about 60 or 70 bucks. At a brothel it’d be \$150 at least. (Carlos).

Nah I don’t go down to St Kilda.... A mate of mine picked up this chick down there and told me she wanted something like 120 bucks for a root. It’s nowhere near that high out here. (Shane).

A strategy identified in previous studies involves men’s use of gift-giving, favours, and other non-monetary forms of payment for sex as a way to negotiate their masculinity in a context in which their only sexual contact comes about through a process of trade (Ward et al. 2005; Atchison, Fraser, and Lowman 1998; Loebner

1998; Sawyer, Metz, Hinds, and Brucker 2001; Orchard et al. 2012; Sanders 2004; Bernstein 2001; Peng 2007). With a growing familiarity with one or many of the “girls” on Curtis Street, some men began buying gifts or trading other resources of value for sex instead of simply paying for sex with cash. Gift-giving was most common in ongoing arrangements between a sex worker and client. At least in some cases, it was a tactic men used to attempt to blur the lines between being required to pay for sex and non-commercial intimacy, however, determining the exact nature of each case was difficult. There were two key themes that shaped this behaviour. Firstly, some men had a preference for gift-giving as it moved them away from the what they saw as the highly discreditable association of “having to pay for it”. These men considered exchanging gifts for sex as different from street sex work, and allowed them to shift their use of commercial sex away from any challenge that “paying for it” has to their masculine identity. Secondly, some men also used gift-giving instead of cash payment as a way to connect with the sex worker in ways that more closely resembled non-commercial intimacy. Gifts from the client often became more personal as the association developed, and in some cases allowed these men an avenue into more private aspects of the sex worker’s life such as their friendships with other “girls”, boyfriends, and even family. For sex workers, while key to their establishment of a regular client base, the men who provided gifts were also often associated with increased pressure to provide unprotected commercial sex.

I don’t charge all my clients. Like, I’ve been seeing Rob for, what, two years at least? He just comes over when he wants. He’ll usually take us [and her partner Rob] to the Pancake Parlour for dinner, or sometimes he’ll just ask if we got any bills or anything and he’ll just pay ’em. (Carly)

I’m not like all these other guys who she makes pay through the nose just for a fuckin’ blowie [oral sex] or somethin’. See, with us it’s different. We’re not like boyfriend or girlfriend or nothin’. No way, I couldn’t handle it ... letting her fuck all these other blokes. But I just take her out for dinner sometimes, or sometimes I’ll buy her somethin’ she wants. Then it’s just sort of, well, what happens, happens. (Costa)

Trading resources rather than money for sex was most common in situations where the connection between seller and buyer extended into other, related, social networks. An example of this was when clients and sex workers already knew each other through their participation in other drug and non-mainstream networks. Some

of these trades involved accommodation, drugs, phones, iPads, and even participation in violent acts against other people:

That's Frank. He gives ya smack. It's fuckin' shit gear ... most of it's crushed up benzos or some shit, but it's pretty good for just one job. (Abbyny)

Fuckin' look at this, man. Gary just gave me his phone. Not bad, huh? He said he stole it from some bloke that had been staying at his house after he fucked him over with rent and shit. Not bad, eh? It's even unlocked and everything. I reckon I'll get \$200 at Cashies [Cash Converters] for that. (Julia)

This bloke just gave me a whole sheet of grey nurse [a sought-after brand of diazepam] for a job. Fuck, man. I wish I could get paid like that all the time ... I can probably get about \$50 each for 'em. (Tracy)

This ongoing social connection produced a context in which deals, arrangements, and money-lending between the sex worker and the customer were reasonably common. For male clients, lending money to street sex workers then later requesting the money be paid back in sex often appeared as the preferred method of payment. This allowed them to further blur the lines between buying sex and non-commercial intimacy with the sex worker, which increased the value men placed on buying sex in this market in comparison to regulated markets in which the process of buying sex appears more rigid.

It's not always just when I've got money either. Like a few weeks ago Sally called me wantin' to borrow 50 bucks. Then she kept tellin' me she didn't have any money to pay back ... so I finally said to her, "Well, if you're not going to pay back the money, you should be doing a job with me". (Carlos)

You know how I lent Tracey \$20 so she could get a gram of choof? Yeah, well I ended up getting a free blowjob out of it ... not free, but as payback for lending her the money. (Louis)

I don't want to be out here with these girls. It's just that I feel sorry for some of them and lend 'em money every now and then. When they can't pay me back, if I don't say somethin' like, you know, "you gotta pay me back some other way then" [with sex], then they're gonna think of me as some fuckin' bunny they can scam money off when they're hanging out. I ain't no-one's bunny, man ... especially not for any of these girls out here. (Reg)

Distinction between brothels and street sex work

The value of the sexual capital men attributed to the experience of buying sex in this street sex market was more than just a product of familiarity and price. At least some men who bought sex on Curtis Street were influenced by a preference for what they thought defined this market from other more regulated markets. Many of these preferences involved a general rejection of the structured processes experienced by men who had purchased sex in regulated environments:

When you go into a brothel, it's like going to Maccas. You just get handed this booklet thing that has all their services and other stuff in it and you choose what you want [from it]. Then she takes you to this little room where you've basically gotta strip down to nothin' ... then the chick puts on these rubber gloves and starts checking you over for STDs. It's bad, man. It's like you've gotta go to the doctor each time ya wanna root. (Shane)

Perceptions of brothels as highly-structured environments in which clients are required to undergo a pseudo-medical examination before being allowed to have sex (experienced by most as uncomfortable) was echoed by the majority of interviewees. Often contributing to the dislike of the more structured brothel experience was the demeanour and presented style of women working in these contexts, which most described as reinforcing the “staged” feeling of the brothel and as negatively affecting their experience. Here, being fake, “stuck up”, “done up” (particularly with a focus on make-up and hair), and watching the clock were expressions commonly used to describe women they'd bought sex from in a brothel, and all of these elements were described as detracting from their experience:

I don't like brothel girls. They're all fake, I think. (Ephran)

When they're in brothels, they all think they're the shit and start acting all stuck up. But out here ... they're not stuck up at all, and you can talk to 'em about all sorts a' shit. Those brothel girls don't give a fuck. All they're doing is waiting 'til your time's up so they can go back to sitting on their arses like they were doing before. (Louis)

‘It's just more, you know, natural’

When men talked about their preference for buying sex on Curtis Street, their discussion typically shifted back to a distinction between what many described as the more sterile/staged environment of a brothel and the more natural/realistic context of the street sex market.

That's why I like coming out here [to Curtis Street] instead. It's more natural. It's not like you're pickin' up at a nightclub or anything ... you're still payin' 'em. But, I don't know ... it's more, yeah, more natural. You're just driving around and you see a girl you like so you pull over and start talking to her. (Shane)

In addition to their perception of the street sex market on Curtis Street being closer to a more organic, non-commercial experience was both the relaxed style of dress and more genuine demeanour of the women who worked on the street.

The girls out here are different. They're natural beauties. Brothel girls have their hair and makeup done like they're going somewhere special. But these girls [street sex workers in Dandenong] just look how they always look. They don't need to do all those things to be beautiful. They just are. (Shahid)

As this comment suggests, it was the more “realistic” or “natural” context that many men considered more appealing than the commercial options available to them in other contexts. Despite being contrived, the market’s use of public space, coupled with street sex workers’ relaxed style of dress and demeanour, allowed some men to participate in a sexual encounter that may resemble a non-commercial sexual fantasy that they could envisage themselves experiencing as part of their everyday lives. This allowed participating men to mentally “buy in” to the experience of purchasing sex from a woman working on Curtis Street, rather than being a passive participant in what many described as a “cold, sterile” experience of buying sex in more controlled environments, such as brothels. For most of these men, it seemed that the women working on Curtis Street shared at least some similarity with women they’d otherwise perceive as potential non-commercial sex partners, and this was further emphasised by their more “down to earth”, personable attitude towards the client, their sex work, and their use of public space. Despite its illegality, it is this more organic or natural experience of buying sex from women working on Curtis Street that fills it with a higher value of sexual capital than other regulated commercial sex environments—at least in the eyes of some of its regular participants.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the thesis has explored the presence and use of agency in the daily lives of street sex workers in Dandenong, and how this is shaped by the affect of heroin addiction. While participants continue to chase the positive effects of

heroin, their often high degree of tolerance, heroin's high price, and the economic limits of the street sex market meant reaching the desired high from heroin was rarely achieved. Instead, it was the significance of the negative effects of heroin addiction that ultimately drove the most people to participation in the street sex market, and constrained the context in which its participants were able to maintain some degree of agency. Also discussed were the perceptions and experiences of men who buy sex from women soliciting on Curtis Street. Men interviewed for this research described a clear preference for buying sex in this market instead of in other commercial sex markets. While its proximity to their home, familiarity with the people and process of the market, and lower fees for sex on Curtis Street were described as significant in these men's participation in this market, it was ultimately their ability to purchase what men described as a more authentic sexual experience on Curtis Street that was considered this market's most valuable asset, and a key reason behind their preference for buying sex in this context. These men's experience of sexual authenticity of Curtis Street was described as a product of the market's use of public space, and the casual dress and demeanour of local street sex workers. This provided a contrast to the staged, sterile, experience these men associated with buying sex in a regulated brothel. This chapter concludes the presentation of empirical observation of street sex work in Dandenong in this thesis. In the following chapter, the thesis considers these observations in the light of findings from relevant and comparable studies, and the research questions.

THE FINAL WORD ON THE STREET

Previous chapters presented an ethnography of the street sex market in Dandenong. The focus of Chapter 3 was the geography of street sex work in Dandenong, while chapters 4 and 5 explored the social network of the street sex market on Curtis Street, the agency of people selling sex on Curtis Street, and the perceptions of men who buy sex from women in this market respectively. The second part of this chapter considers how an increased understanding of the people who participated in this study could influence a more effective community response to street sex work in Dandenong from community organisations. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study and areas where further research could aid our understanding of street sex work in Dandenong and, additionally, how such research may contribute to a targeted, contextually-specific response from the youth and community sector.

The geography of street sex work in Dandenong

In Chapter 3, Tanya provided an in-depth account of the market's spatial evolution and current settlement at the phone booth area on Curtis Street through her experience selling sex in Dandenong over the past 10–15 years. While unique, Tanya's description of the key factors that have influenced this market's use of public space over time shares many similarities with the highly contested spaces and complex relationships that shape the geography of street sex markets in other locations (Rowe 2006; Tani 2002; Koskela and Tani 2005; Cameron 2004; Draus, Roddy, and Asabigi 2015; Hubbard 2002, 1999; O'Neill et al. 2008). Tanya's description paints a picture of a market whose relationship to the local urban setting continues to evolve within an ongoing, highly-complex relationship in which the tensions between market participants, police, businesses, and the local community continue to play out on the street. The market's shift from one of central Dandenong's busiest streets to the less-densely populated Curtis Street has been a product of the desire of police and local government to at least conceal the presence of street sex work in the area, and to limit sex workers' use of a local hotel in the immediate vicinity as a spatial hub.

One of the more influential and certainly damaging effects of the current geography of this street sex market is the concentration of men wanting to buy sex being moved into the vicinity of young people placed at the youth accommodation facility nearby. Within the market's space of representation, a combination of factors—client preference for youth that is often observed among commercial sex clients (Ward et al. 2005; Waltman 2011; Atchison, Fraser, and Lowman 1998; Pitts et al. 2004b; Sanders 2004), similarities in clothing style between local sex-working women and younger women housed in this unit, and the strategy of local adult sex workers to move their sex work practice to a location where younger women could be found either soliciting or socialising—centralised what had been, until this stage, a spatially-fragmented market to the specific region around the public phone on Curtis Street. Over time in Dandenong, the territorial practices of police, local government, and business successfully pushed the market into this less-populated space where solicitation was less apparent to the mainstream public, but in turn presented greater risk to the young people placed in the nearby youth accommodation facility.

The relationship between the street sex market and the nearby youth accommodation facility that houses particularly vulnerable young people is a significant issue in the current context in Dandenong. To date, it appears to have played a central role in the development of a street sex market in this particular part of Curtis Street, and continues to play a key role in the market's reproduction in this particular space. This social and geographical relationship places at-risk young people who are in protective care in a geographical and social setting in which their exposure to processes of this market are likely. Strong associations are often observed between a young person's placement in out-of-home care and their participation in high-risk forms of commercial sex (Martyn, 1998; Hanley, 2004; Fitzgerald, 1997; Bruce and Mendes, 2008; Wilson and Arnold, 1986; Mitchell et al., 2010; Dodsworth, 2012; Nadon et al., 1998); most researchers cite the high degree of socialisation with other vulnerable young people already enmeshed in a street economy as an influential event in many young people's pathway into street sex work. On Curtis Street, the relationship between the street sex market and this youth accommodation facility created a social and geographical context in which vulnerable young people's exposure to the process of the market and its social network was common, and appeared to provide the strongest link for these young

people into the high-risk, illegal market practices. Social connections between young people housed in this unit and people participating in street sex work on Curtis Street developed out of their proximity to the market and similarities in the histories and current experience of young people and local sex workers, and these soon became the young person's link into the opportunities and resources available in the local street economy and the street sex market. These ties, coupled with some young people's increasing reliance on the market's network for access to drugs, protection, and occasionally accommodation, left many vulnerable to various deals and arrangements (such as the "finder's fee" previously described) in which their participation in high-risk forms of commercial sex became increasingly likely the longer the young person was housed in this facility.

The relationship between an increasing reliance on the market's network and participation in its high-risk activities did not only affect young women, but also young men. Their socialisation within the network provided many with opportunities to participate in many of the market's other economic activities, such as participating in various scams and deals, forming partnerships with sex workers where theft from clients or other network members was the goal, and market processes that paved their way to the role of a spotter. As I referred to in previous chapters, the current context on Curtis Street creates an almost perfect storm, in which vulnerable young people are brought into a social environment where their exposure to high-risk practices in the street sex market is probable. The high number of women and men currently connected to the market who described their time in this unit during their teens as a catalyst in their pathway into street sex work in Dandenong highlights the link between the facility and the local street economy. The facility therefore appears to play an unintended but significant role in the reproduction of harm in this space.

Good cop, bad cop: the approach of police

A central feature of the street sex market on Curtis Street was the regular but unpredictable levels of policing at varying degrees of intensity. Consistent with Lefebvre's focus on tensions between agents of the dominant space of representation and people and groups appropriating spaces as site of representation, and observations of ongoing tension between police, sex workers, and clients in other street sex markets (Draus, Roddy, and Asabigi 2015; Hubbard and Sanders 2003;

Waltman 2011; Lutnick and Cohan 2009), police intervention appeared to play a significant role in the daily lives of sex workers and the market's spatial practice. Throughout the period of fieldwork, police implemented a range of strategies which often reflected those described in existing literature (O'Neill et al., 2008; Hubbard and Sanders, 2003; Hubbard, 1999; Sullivan, 2007b): harassment through periodical stops and questioning, instruction to leave the area, searches of people and their property, threats to report violations of court orders, and various forms of assertive crackdown. But it was shifts in their front-line approaches from constrained tolerance to blitzes that provided the most insight into their effect on both the market's use of public space and in the lives of the people who sold sex in it.

Regulated tolerance is often seen as an effective way for police to constrain the harms inherent in illicit street sex markets while remaining mindful of the well-being of the people selling sex (O'Neill et al., 2008; Hubbard and Sanders, 2003; Hubbard, 1999; Sullivan, 2007b). For much of the time during research fieldwork, the focus of local police appeared consistent with this approach as they attempted to limit the market's impact on the broader community instead of criminalising sex workers. This approach permitted some individual police to build relationships with people on Curtis Street in ways that allowed them to provide direction, advice, and to even intervene in some high-risk situations. At least part of the police strategy involved an attempt to minimise the market's effect on the broader community by concealing its presence. The result was an informal and uneasy truce between sex workers and police, in which most sex workers' generational distrust of police rubbed up against their desire to "keep the jacks happy" so they did not intervene in the market and "ruin it for all of us".

In what seemed to be a counter-productive strategy, much of the trust and goodwill developed between the sex workers and some police was undermined by the forceful, judgemental, and criminalising behaviours of police during the periods of a blitz. Periods of blitz provide the clearest example of police attempts to enforce central Dandenong's representation of space, and its relationship to the market as a space of representation in which people sold sex to fund an addiction. As has often been observed in other street sex markets, periods of blitz had little effect on the market's operation apart from increasing tension between local sex workers and police (Brants, 1998; Hubbard, 1998a; Rowe, 2003a). Instances on Curtis Street not only provided clear examples of the ineffectiveness of criminalising people whose

addictions tie them to street sex work, but showed how destructive these approaches are to the relationship between police and the highly vulnerable networks of people who sell sex to fund an addiction. In contrast to a context where police were able to subtly work with individual sex workers to reduce their exposure to harm, a police blitz simply pushed the spatial practice of the street sex work further underground where the already marginal network of people selling sex on Curtis Street were forced to negotiate an inflated risk of violence and exploitation as a result of having to operate further away from mainstream forms of support. The message of these relatively drastic swings between a focus on relationship-building through to a blitz reinforced the generalised distrust of police among people selling sex on Curtis Street, and simply served to increase tensions within a potentially transformative relationship that could both reduce local street sex workers' exposure to the range of harms associated with street sex work, and provide diversions and exit points by serving as a bridge between the market's social network and the range of potentially-beneficial youth and community programs.

A concealed market

The pressure from police to conceal the process of the market from mainstream view creates an image of this market's front-line that contrasts with accounts of most other markets, where sex workers rely on a sexualised style of dress and demeanour to draw the client gaze (Goldenberg et al., 2011; Cameron, 2004; Tani, 2002). This, in turn, produced a number of unique effects, at least some of which incidentally undermine the police's efforts to reduce the market's effect on the broader community. The most notable and risk-producing of these was the intensified gaze on non-sex working women as they used or moved around Curtis Street. Kerb-crawlers, and their gaze on non-sex working women, are often cited as primary antecedents to a particular space being labelled as a street sex market and being associated with danger, dirt, and disease (Hubbard and Sanders, 2003; Hubbard, 2002; Koskela and Tani, 2005; Tani, 2002); this appeared the case for many female residents, employees, and other women passing through the space. The most significant effect of this characteristic of the market was felt by young women housed in the nearby youth accommodation facility, who were routinely mistaken by the market's clients to be sex workers, and were often approached with requests to sell sex. This directly increased the young women's (and some young men's)

exposure to many of the risks of the market as part of their daily experiences in this space, even for those who resisted the opportunities presented to them through their ties in the market's social network. While an unintended outcome of the desire to conceal the presence of the market, these policing practices appear to have contributed to the current context in which already vulnerable young people are placed in a living environment where their exposure to street sex work is probable.

Sites and strategies of violence

Street sex markets are often described as highly-volatile spaces in which sex workers must continually negotiate the potential of client-initiated violence (Sanders, 2001; Shannon et al., 2008c; Quinet, 2011; Sanders, 2004; Church et al., 2001; Raphael and Shapiro, 2004; Williamson and Folaron, 2001). My concerns about the potential severity and volume of violence experienced by women working in this context increased after first learning just how isolated were some of the commonly-used public sites to which women selling sex directed their clients. While violence certainly occurred, I was relieved to find that most sex worker–client interactions progressed without incident. Most violence between sex workers and clients on Curtis Street developed out of the space created by the high-risk yet common practice of requesting payment after sex. Leaving payment until after sex is a well-documented, unfortunately common practice that exposes street sex workers to exploitative clients and volatile interactions that can lead to conflict, violence, and physical injury, and is often addressed in the harm minimisation approaches of relevant youth and community programs (Sanders, 2001; Shannon et al., 2008c; Quinet, 2011; Sanders, 2004; Church et al., 2001; Raphael and Shapiro, 2004; Williamson and Folaron, 2001; Moore, 2009). The reasons for its prevalence on Curtis Street—even in light of most sex workers' recognition of the risks associated with the practice—is difficult to determine, however, the vulnerability of women as they moved away from the security of the market's network seemed to play a key role. For example, while sex workers are able to use their peer connections and knowledge of the market to control most of their client interactions on Curtis Street, they became acutely vulnerable as soon the interaction moved out of the relative security of the market and its social network, and into the more isolated spaces for sex. The power within the interaction thus shifted from the sex worker to their client, and higher-risk practices, such as withholding payment until after sex, therefore

developed. Intervention into this practice, as well as into sex workers' use high-risk spaces in this setting, could have a significant, beneficial effect on sex workers' exposure to client violence and exploitation in their daily lives.

The relatively few instances of client-sex worker violence, and the relatively minor injuries sustained in conflicts that did escalate, point to the efficacy of the risk-reduction strategies that had developed into key processes in the market's spatial practice. Of these strategies, the use of the spotter, and their role in the illusion of an ever-present eye on the client, was the most widely used and effective. As documented throughout the thesis, the ties between a sex worker and male spotter were among the most common—but also among the most complex, violent, exploitative, and fragile—within the network of people selling sex on Curtis Street. While much of a spotter's value in the eyes of individual sex workers and in the network of people selling sex on Curtis Street was a product of their reputation for violence and the effect this could have for the sex worker attached to them, it was their ability to help create the illusion of an ever-watchful eye over their partner as she solicits and sells sex on the street that most sex workers considered to be their primary asset. Most sex workers' reliance on that illusion of an ever-watchful eye of one or more potentially violent men with an interest in their physical safety on the street was juxtaposed with the shared belief among sex workers and spotters that clients were less likely to pull to the kerb to negotiate a job if her spotter was in the immediate vicinity. The progression of the contrasting images of the potentially isolated and vulnerable sex worker as she solicits on the street through to her attempts to reveal to the client the presence of a potentially violent male figure lurking in the shadows, just before he leaves Curtis Street with the sex worker, is ultimately dependent on the element of surprise and the suggestion of a concealed network of people concerned with the sex workers well-being. The result was a type of charade designed to illuminate the sex worker's isolation on the street, which local sex workers considered key to their ability to attract prospective clients while in this space.

Surviving Curtis Street: heroin addiction and the value of peer connection in an endless struggle for survival

The preceding chapters describe the market's social network as a small, bounded group that is organised around each person's use of the street sex market on Curtis Street to fund their addiction. Granovetter's (1973) theory of strong and weak ties allowed the thesis to consider how the lack of connection between this social network and the mainstream increases people's reliance on their ties within the network and their position in its chains of social connections, not only to be able to access key drugs of dependence, but also for other resources required for their ongoing survival. Similarly, Burt's (1992) theory of structural holes provided an insightful way to think about how some network members use their social capital to position themselves as bridges between other network members and key sources of heroin, and how this contributes to the dynamic, and often volatile, nature of the market's social network.

As has become apparent through the ethnography, most network members' long-term and often all-encompassing experience of addiction had stripped them of any meaningful social ties that were not directly related to their sex work or drug abuse. This left most people surviving on Curtis Street isolated from any effective ties or resources outside the market, and almost solely dependent on their peer connections for their safety, their drug consumption, and their ability to access key resources such as accommodation. But while camaraderie and friendship certainly existed in the network, the shared experience of addiction and seemingly endless sense of need created a context that required a high degree of ingenuity from its members just to survive. These key forces acted together to create an exceptionally harsh, dynamic social environment, in which social connections were often reduced to people's assessment of their value in their daily lives.

Burt's (2004, 1992) theory of structural holes provides an interesting and insightful way to think about how most network members' lack of direct ties to a "good" heroin dealer, and Kerry and Linda's use of their social capital to provide a bridge between dealers and people wanting to score from them, affected the market and the organisation of its social network. As highlighted in the previous chapters, despite the key role that heroin played in the lives of people selling sex on Curtis

Street, “scoring” heroin was a highly-volatile process that required the strategic manipulation of peer connections and social capital. Perhaps I was initially naïve, but as most people’s lives revolved around their heroin addictions, I initially expected each person to have a strong tie to at least one dealer with a steady supply. Instead, access to the two “good” sources of heroin within the network were mediated by Kerry and Linda, who both used their existing connections to these dealers to position themselves as bridges between Curtis Street and key sources of heroin. Their strategic use of social capital not only positioned them as key figures in the market’s social network, but created a highly complex situation for all other network members whose access to heroin was dependent on their position in a series of cliques and social connections organised around individual relationships to each of these key women and their patterns of drug use.

The volatility of these channels of drugs and money, and their effect on the market and its social network, became most apparent in the aftermath of the conflict between Linda and Kerry. Despite the tension being isolated to the two key parties, their positions as bridges to the key heroin sources produced a period of dynamic change within the network, as its members were forced to re-assess the instrumental value of their peer connections and their relation to the channels of heroin into the market. This shift in the network’s re-organisation as a result of the conflict not only provides another example of the role heroin plays in the lives of people selling sex on Curtis Street, but also highlights the role that peer connections play in a person’s negotiation of a high-volume illicit drug addiction.

Money, power and the tenuous position of the abusive spotter

The lens of network theory, and the concept of social capital in particular, provides an insightful framework through which to consider people’s participation in street sex worker–spotter relationships and the working partnerships between sex workers on Curtis Street. The network theory lens also has the ability to provide insight into the ways some sex workers are able to maintain control over the parameters of their connections to male spotters, even in a context of violence and exploitation. The account of Linda and Pok’s partnership provided a relational archetype for Curtis Street that highlights both the calculative approach to social

connection common to this partnership style, and the violence often experienced in it. Much of the value Linda placed on her connection to Pok was a result of his reputation for violence and the added security this afforded her on the street and in the market's network. However, in an almost inevitable situation, it was his escalating violence towards her that produced some of the most serious harms she experienced, and this was the primary reason she eventually terminated their connection. This often-accepted violence occurred in most relationships, and was attributed to the spotter's stress about drugs, his tenuous connection to the market, and his jealousy about his partner having sex with other men. Spotters often placed women in an almost impossible position where she had to fund the escalating drug use of both people by selling a range of sexual services significantly restricted by the spotter's jealousy. The spotter's inevitable suspicion of his partner, combined with drug use, often manifested as some of the most significant violence that the sex workers experienced. Like Linda, the typical response of most street sex workers experiencing significant violence in their relationship was to establish another high-risk, often dependent, connection to another man on the network's periphery, who would ultimately be responsible for removing the sex worker's problematic partner. While providing sex workers a way out of particularly violent connections, the process of partner replacement in a context fuelled by high-volume illicit drug use contributed to a seemingly endless cycle of violence that appeared inherent in sex worker/spotter connections.

I've got your back: emotional need in a context of exploitation

Initially, the shift to working partnerships appeared promising as it reduced the amount of time each woman spent selling on the street, as well as reducing the likelihood of sex workers experiencing violence. Nevertheless, when looking at some worker-spotter ties, I often struggled to understand why some women stayed in these partnerships when it was apparent their partner was exploiting them. It was only when I began to consider most sex workers' isolation from mainstream ties as a result of their addiction and resulting lifestyle, and their strong need for an emotional connection—preferably with someone who could empathise with their current situation—that I began to understand why some women chose to continue working

in these partnerships. The all-encompassing nature of long-term, high-volume heroin addiction left most sex workers and spotters with very few social ties not directly related to their drug use, which increased their reliance on the market's social network for their access to key resources and, importantly, for a sense of belonging. The effect on Curtis Street was a highly complex social context. Strong, ongoing ties, such as sex worker–spotter connections and partnerships between sex workers, were formed through a combination of the instrumental value each person had on the other person's ability to score and survive, and through most sex workers' desire for a meaningful social connection to someone who accepted and understood them. In both relationship styles, highly intense, volatile social connections were produced, and often rendered the partner in particular need of an emotional connection vulnerable to exploitation. As became most apparent in Kerry's connection to Helen, it was often this strong need for an ongoing emotional connection, and inability to maintain strong ties to people who were not negotiating a significant addiction to heroin, that appeared to keep people bound in these high-risk and exploitative social peer connections.

Fieldwork from the 'pimp' mobile: an affected market

As also highlighted in the previous chapters, the shift to working partnerships between sex workers had the potential to significantly reduce many of the harms experienced by sex workers, not only by reducing the number of jobs they had to complete each day, but also by limiting their exposure to the violence present in many sex worker–spotter partnerships. I suspect the shift from sex worker–spotter partnerships to working partnerships between sex workers on Curtis Street was influenced by my regular presence in the market, and the sex workers' manipulation of this as part of the illusion of a dense network of potentially-violent people with a direct interest in the well-being of the women. I assume my continued presence on the street, and some women's manipulation of this in the market's space of representation, reduced the value most sex workers placed on maintaining a strong socio-economic connection to a male spotter as a way to reduce their exposure to client violence on the street. It became apparent through the middle stages of the fieldwork that at least some clients saw my continued presence in the market's space

and connection to people in its social network as evidence that I was a spotter or pimp. Some sex workers began using my ongoing presence to create an illusion of ever-watchful eyes of potentially violent males over the women selling sex on Curtis Street, which for some made the position of the spotter on the street almost redundant. I suggest that my position in the network as an accepted mainstream figure contributed to some women's increased sense of security and also decreased spotter-initiated violence, most notably as people expected me to call the police rather than respond to violent incidents with violence of my own (as was expected of other in-group members). Sex workers were therefore able to manipulate my presence as an accepted outsider, and they created a bridge that linked the isolated, self-reliant, network of people selling sex on Curtis Street to some mainstream resources, such as police intervention. This is evidence of the potentially positive effect such bridges could have if reflexively managed within a committed community program over the medium to long-term.

Survival and accommodation: the instrumental use of emotional connections for a place to stay

Consistent with observations made in other networks of people surviving in illicit street sex markets (Rowe 2006; Moore 2009; Miller et al. 2011; Harding and Hamilton 2009), securing appropriate accommodation was a key and often ongoing issue for people selling sex on Curtis Street. Also consistent with other studies was the strong reliance local sex workers on their peer connections and other high-risk relationships with people on the network's periphery for access to key resources such as accommodation (Rowe 2006; Moore 2009; Miller et al. 2011; Harding and Hamilton 2009). Like most ongoing connections within the network, many of these relationships and arrangements developed out of a complex interplay between the instrumental value for both members and, in some cases, a desire for an emotional connection. The widespread use of sex-for-accommodation arrangements among sex workers on Curtis Street provides an example of their strong reliance on these types of connections for their survival. The case of the two Daves, presented in earlier chapters, highlights key differences between the way women negotiated arrangements with men external to the network and on the market's fringes. Arrangements with men such as Old Dave, who shared little in common with the

women to whom he provided accommodation, were almost solely based on the instrumental value each person saw in their connection to the other. The arrangements were therefore often highly volatile sites of struggle, where both parties tried to exploit the other until their association came to an inevitable end. Arrangements with men with existing ties to the network, such as Devo Dave, initially developed out of the sex worker's need for accommodation. Similarities in their histories and current experiences of hardship and addiction often fostered a degree of mutual regard that often lasted longer, and in some cases appeared as friendship.

The effect of these different types of social tie on the progression of sex-for-accommodation arrangements, and the presence of harm in them, was significant. Similarities in the experiences of hardship, drug addiction, identification with the local street sex and drug markets, and a strong desire for an emotional connection from both sex workers and participating men, fostered a context in which these arrangements often lasted longer, was more cordial, and presented less risk to the sex worker than in arrangements with men whose lives were vastly different to those of sex workers. This contrasts with similar arrangements with men with few ties to the local street economy, who not only felt empowered by their relative wealth, but also through the knowledge that the sex worker had few options for seeking mainstream support; at least some men took this to mean they could act towards the sex worker with relative impunity. It was this latter type of tie in which the significant harms and strategies of exploitation borne out in many existing studies of accommodation styles of highly marginal people and sex workers (Rowe 2006; Moore 2009; Miller et al. 2011; Harding and Hamilton 2009), were most apparent within the network of people selling sex on Curtis Street.

Marrying Indian men: meaningful connections with instrumental origin

Another practice developing out of the distance between mainstream support and the market's economy, and out of the multiple poverties of women selling sex, were the opportunities provided by recently-arrived Indian men seeking marriage as a way to bypass standard immigration processes. Little academic research exists on the practice of some foreign men using financial incentives to entice vulnerable

women into arranged marriages, so its presence on Curtis Street was unexpected. The presence of these arrangements appeared to eventuate after the sex workers were identified as potentially responsive targets, due of their dire economic need and participation in illegal sex work, which the organiser thought would make them more receptive to financial incentive and less likely to go to the police after being approached. Sunil's initial connection to the market developed out of his ongoing participation as one of the market's clients, which he then used to position himself as a social bridge between the newly-arrived Indian men seeking marriage and the women selling sex on Curtis Street. While its overall impact on the market was minimal, the opportunity for sex workers was ever-present and had a significant affect on the lives of the two women who accepted the offers for the apparent solution they offered to their unstable accommodation problem. Many of the differences in the paths of Kerry and Helen's marriages to Mahesh and Sam respectively were products of the meanings that each couple attached to their marriage. Helen and Sam's business-like approach to their marriage produced a cold, unemotional, volatile partnership in which both continually tried to push the boundaries of the partnership and exploit the other for their own gain. In contrast, while Kerry and Mahesh's marriage was also the product of a money-for-marriage arrangement, their treatment of the marriage as a legitimate emotional commitment to each other appeared to allow the relationship to develop into something that appeared genuine. Informed by Mahesh's cultural approach to marriage, and its ability to provide Kerry with an ongoing emotional connection to someone outside the network—someone without an addiction or direct interest in her income—allowed her to experience the relationship as more authentic than most of the others available to her in and around the market on Curtis Street. Kerry's arrangement provided her with a social connection that she came to consider as so valuable to her that it endured even after their marriage was annulled and Mahesh deported. In an unfortunately complex twist, the relationship ended with the couple's realisation that the strength of their commitment to each other was no match for the strength of Kerry's addiction to heroin.

A different type of connection

The effect of online technologies on commercial sex markets is the focus of an increasing amount of research, with many suggesting it will eventually reduce high-risk, highly-visible forms of commercial sex, such as street sex work (Harding and Hamilton 2009; Collins 2012; Cunningham and Kendall 2011). On Curtis Street, while most women considered their mobile phone as key to their ability to maintain a regular client base, it was not until awareness grew of the online client forum during the latter stages of the fieldwork that the internet appeared to play any role in how people sold sex on Curtis Street. Its introduction caught most women selling sex in this context off-guard. It not only provided the catalyst for a period of extreme volatility in the market's network, but signalled a shift in the flow of information about street sex work in Dandenong away from the market's network and into the hands of its clients. None of the sex workers on Curtis Street had actively sought to capitalise on the concentration of prospective clients online in ways often described in other commercial sex contexts (Cunningham and Kendall(Collins 2012)l, 2011). Consistent with observations in other street sex working populations (Cunningham and Kendall, 2011), the lack of information technology used by women selling sex on Curtis Street appeared to be a product of their lack of resources, education, and living conditions in which their access to the internet was limited.

Agency and sexual capital on Curtis Street

The addictions and agency of sex workers

Uusitalo, Salmela and Nikkinen (2013) indicate how the affects of addiction and their role in the construction of a context in which a person's continued drug use—and participation in high-risk behaviours linked to their continued drug use—appears rational to the person in the moment. As is commonly observed in other street sex markets (see Cusick 2002; Deering et al. 2011; Goldenberg et al. 2011; Degenhardt et al. 2006; Roxburgh et al. 2008), it was a high-cost, problematic addiction to heroin that tied sex workers and spotters to a cycle of sex work and drug use on Curtis Street. For most, the strength of their addiction and their increasing tolerance to heroin created an almost impossible situation in which the market only ever seemed

to give them enough to hold off the effect of heroin withdrawal until the following day, when they would return to the street and begin the cycle again.

Similarly, many women described a preference for selling sex on Curtis Street instead of other in other illicit markets, such as the streets of St Kilda,. This observation was somewhat surprising given the reportedly higher fees for sexual service available to street sex workers working in St Kilda, the reportedly lower price of heroin in and around that suburb, and the relatively small distance between St Kilda and Dandenong that would allow local sex workers to sell sex in St Kilda while travelling to and from Dandenong. On the surface, these may suggest that local sex workers may be better served to make the short journey to St Kilda to sell sex and buy their heroin, where they could perceivably get more value in regards to negotiating the affects of heroin addiction. Thus, the decisions of local sex workers to continue operating in the street sex market on Curtis Street, despite the increased volume of sex work required to abate the negative affects of addiction, highlights the value people attribute to proximity and familiarity to this market and their position in its social network, through which they are able to access key resources such as accommodation, security, and heroin. The value attributed to network membership by local sex workers, and its role as an integral component in the survival strategies of people selling sex on Curtis Street, is repeatedly evidenced through all stages of this thesis.

Bound to Curtis Street: Spotters

A similar framework can be used to provide insight into the market participation and behaviours of men who fill the role of spotter as a strategy to satisfy their addiction. The account of spotters on Curtis Street presented in this thesis shares some similarities with existing accounts of pimps and other third-party males with a direct interest in their partner's sex work evident in other research (see Faugier and Sargeant 1997; Staiger 2005; Ralph 2009; Williamson and Cluse-Tolar 2002). However, the representations in this ethnography—particularly that of Pok—highlights the tenuous connection this position offers men to this market, and ultimately to a source of income that allows them to negotiate their addiction. As they are not prepared to sell their own sex, their participation in the market, and access to an income large enough to allow them to successfully negotiate the effects of heroin addiction, is dependent on their connection to local female street sex

worker. Like sex workers, men filling the role of spotter for a sex worker were also tied to the processes of the market by their addiction(s). On Curtis Street, the spotter role provided the only position on the market's supply side that enabled men to continue satisfying their addiction without experiencing significant ridicule, sanction, and probable violence from other network members and people in the local street economy. While sex workers were able to independently satisfy their addiction through the money they earned selling sex on the street, spotters were ultimately dependent on a sex worker's acceptance of them as a worthwhile physical protector not only for the drugs needed to negotiate the effect of their addiction, but also often for key resources linked to their survival. This dependence on their connection to a woman selling sex on Curtis Street, and their relative inability to support their current lifestyle without this connection, often created highly complex, emotionally-charged social connections. The meaning that spotters gave to their relationship with a particular sex worker became wrapped up in the seemingly endless sense of need and desperation created by their experience of the effects associated with their addiction, and their need to rationalise their dependence within a street-informed masculine identity. While often the source of the most significant violence inflicted on sex workers during the period of my fieldwork, the spotters' inability to fund their addiction independently of their connection to a sex worker ultimately positioned them as marginal, largely disposable figures who were quickly pushed to the network's periphery when they became either ineffective or too problematic for their sex working partner.

The reason clients buy sex on Curtis Street

The body of research on sex market clients, particularly in illicit contexts, is growing but remains small in comparison to studies of people selling sex (exceptions: Ward et al. 2005; Pitts et al. 2004a; McCabe and Xantidis 2000; Bernstein 2001; Sanders 2008b; Kingston 2010; Hammond 2010). When considering existing studies of commercial sex clients prior to interviewing men in this study, I expected the men buying sex on Curtis Street to cite the lower fees for sex in this market compared to brothels as one of the key reasons they bought sex in this specific market. Their description of the "authentic" commercial sexual experience available in this market, due to its use of public space and more realistic demeanour

of sex workers, and their consideration of this as unique sexual capital that motivated them to buy sex in this market instead of others, was therefore unexpected. An insight not discussed in other research was provided in one of the reasons some men continue to buy sex in illicit street sex markets despite the potential risks; a distinction was made between what they saw as the staged, sterile experience of buying sex in a brothel, and the more “natural” experience of buying sex from women working on Curtis Street that they considered to be a form of capital specific to this market. This observation may be specific to the regular client group in this market, or a characteristic of the men interviewed in this study, and therefore requires further study or comparison with clients of other street sex markets in order to assess its position in our existing knowledge about street sex work clients. Regardless, its presence on Curtis Street is interesting (even if only in the small sample of men interviewed in this research) as it not only provides insight into the preferences of these men for less-regulated forms of commercial sex, but also of their perception of female beauty, sexuality and risk. The desire for more “natural-looking” women contrasts with dominant images of female beauty often held up as desirable in the context of commercial sex, and therefore paints a different picture about what these men want from the sex they buy. At least for these men, they wanted to be able to relate to the women from whom they bought sex, and to be able to see them as real women. This was contrasted with how they perceived many women in regulated environments to present themselves in a “plastic” way. While further research is required, this perception and preference for “natural” beauty and “authentic” experience in street sex markets may contribute to the continued demand for street sex markets, even when lower-risk and perceivably more attractive commercial sex options, such as regulated brothels, are available options.

A model of engagement

The focus of this thesis on the daily lives of people selling sex on Curtis Street provides insight into a number of key areas where increased involvement of youth and community organisations could have a positive effect in the lives of people who are caught in a cycle of drug use and street sex work in this area. In this section, I discuss how the findings and methods used through this research may inform an effective community response. Consistent with my experience conducting research on Curtis Street, and with sex workers' current reluctance to engage with programs and services that take them away from the cycle of sex work and drug use, I argue that any effective community response would need to develop from a model of assertive outreach that focuses on establishing relationships with sex workers and spotters, and that it needs to have an ongoing, predictable, presence on the market's front-line.

A front-line approach

Developing trust with sex workers and spotters was integral to my engagement on Curtis Street, and I expect it also will be required for local community workers. I found being transparent with sex workers and spotters about my role and responsibilities in the field was central to my ability to establish trust with a group of people who are typically untrusting of outside figures. This approach of transparency provided people with the information they needed to assess my position in the field and make their own decisions about the nature of their connection to me. It is an approach that I believe would be required as part of an effective model of organisational engagement on Curtis Street. Also influential in the development of my connection to people on Curtis Street was my ability to negotiate and identify a way to have some utility in people's daily lives. I learned quickly that most people on Curtis Street were so consumed by the cycle of drug use and sex work that without being able to identify some degree of my purpose in their daily lives they would have little reason to engage with me. Because of the illegality of their drug use and street sex work this was particularly challenging, but the high regard most sex workers and spotters had for the people working at the local needle exchange

gives some insight into ways an effective front-line intervention could occupy a position with utility in the lives of people selling sex on Curtis Street. For example, an organisation could use its additional resources to build upon the success I had by providing a needle bin, drinks, and snacks: for example, by providing resources such as clean FITS, condoms, and increased access to problematic client reporting programs such as the Ugly Mugs, which would be consistent with a harm minimisation approach. Finally, any organisational response would need to develop within a highly reflexive model that can shift and change its approach in accordance with shifts in market and the needs of people in its social network. At the time of writing, the times that most sex workers are active on the street may provide one of the bigger logistical challenges to an organisational response. Most of my engagement with people on Curtis Street, particularly during the early stages of fieldwork when I was ultimately reliant on their presence on the street, occurred between the hours of 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. on weeknights. Due to this market's small size, a front-line approach that is only active during standard business hours will have limited ability to engage with people selling sex in this context, and it will be difficult to reach some of the market's most vulnerable women. An effective organisational response would need to consider these factors as part of their front-line strategy.

Barriers to service use and violence on and off the street

A barrier that limits a service's utility to some of the market's most vulnerable women is related to the spotters. Some male spotters' perceived they were judged negatively by an organisation or individual workers, or they were not included in their service delivery model. With this in mind, I suggest that an effective organisational response would also actively need to build relationships with spotters as a way to establish a strong relationship-based presence in the market's network, and ultimately reach some of the market's most vulnerable women. Beyond simply allowing community workers to establish a strong presence in the network from where they can reach the market's most vulnerable members, building relationships with the group of male spotters may decrease sex workers' experiences of violence and exposure to risk in a number of ways. First, direct engagement with this group would allow community workers to work with male spotters to address potentially violent behaviour in the relationships, or to gain more control over their addiction to

stop them using all together. This could take place in an ongoing context of counselling or motivational interviewing between spotter and community worker on the street, where links to drug treatment programs and other potentially relevant services could form part of a treatment response. Second, by establishing working relationships with this population, community workers are able to eliminate much of the social isolation and relative invisibility that allows some of these men to commit violence or exploit their partners in the knowledge that they are relatively immune to criminal charge or organisational intervention. This aspect of the intervention could be supported by the establishment of stronger reporting protocols to police, and referral pathways to programs designed to deal with abusive or violent men. Community workers could further support these strategies by providing abused sex workers with a range of options that most women currently believe to be ineffective because of a lack of evidence, and could provide a stronger deterrent to potentially abusive males in the market's social network.

My potential role during my time in the field in the shift of sex workers away from relationships with spotters to new working relationships between sex workers provides another example of the positive effect that an ongoing, predictable, relationship-based approach to community work can bring to this network. As already discussed, my ongoing presence at the market's coalface as an accepted outsider appeared to reduce the value that many women placed on maintaining a connection to a spotter in order to reduce their exposure to violence or exploitation on the street. The result was a reduction in violent sex worker-spotter connections, and as a corollary, the reduced exposure to violence for workers on the street because of the approximate 50% reduction in the amount of sex work they had to do each day or night, as they no longer needed to raise extra funds for their spotter's needs. While more accurately thought of as a by-product of an increasingly accepted mainstream presence on the street, this observation begins to hint at the effect that an increased organisational presence could have for people selling sex on Curtis Street, simply by building relationships with sex workers and establishing an ongoing presence.

Another area where an effective community response could reduce exposure of sex workers to violence is through the establishment of more effective police reporting protocols. In the current context, the apparent reluctance of police to take action on most sex workers' claims of violent assault, robbery, or harassment from

their clients or other abusive third parties contributes to a context in which many abuses are currently ignored by authorities, or simply are not reported because the victim considers the process futile. Establishing stronger reporting protocols, and following reports through with victimised sex workers, would both demonstrate a degree of organisational care about these women which is currently lacking, and would reduce their exposure to client victimisation by making their abusers more accountable.

Harm minimisation

Beyond violence, this thesis highlights a number of key areas in which a contextually-specific community response could have a positive effect in the lives of people selling sex in this context. The identification of heroin as the drug that ultimately drives the participation of street sex workers and spotters in the market, the presence of high-risk commercial sex practices, and risky injecting practices all provide areas where effective interventions could reduce workers' exposure to risk, harm, and injury. Some of the risks associated with heroin addiction, sex work, and injecting drug use are currently addressed by the local needle exchange and primary health clinic, whose non-judgmental, relationship-based approach informs their strong reputation within the market's network. Most people selling sex on Curtis Street consider their access to the clean FITS and condoms provided during standard business hours an invaluable resource that reduces their risk of sexually-transmitted infections and blood-borne viruses. A more effective front-line community response could build upon this success by incorporating these programs into an after-hours assertive outreach model on the market's front-line. While a mobile outreach needle exchange program already services this area, the scope of their work means access to clean needles or condoms can be between 20– 40 minutes away. As I saw repeatedly during the fieldwork, this wait was often too long for most people selling sex on Curtis Street. An after-hours, front-line, contextually-specific response could increase the access and speed of provision of clean FITS and condoms to people at times when their access is currently limited, which, in most cases, was when the most high-risk commercial sex and injecting practices occurred.

A front-line relationship-based approach could also provide education and support about safer commercial sex practices, drug use, and injecting practices to members of the market's social network. While needle-sharing was rare, other high-

risk injecting practices were common and often formed part of a person's or partnership's drug use ritual. Of these, using un-sterilised equipment, poor vein care, and repeatedly re-drawing heroin from the same spoon in a group setting are among the most pressing concerns, and these appeared to be the result of widespread misinformation about safe injecting practices. Misinformation was also often evident in some women's participation in high-risk sexual practices in the market. While a sense of desperation created by a heroin addiction often played a key role in people's participation in high-risk sexual practices, the high prevalence of unprotected oral sex, unprotected sex in ongoing sex worker–client relationships, and sexual health assessments based on a client's appearance are common. All of these could be addressed through the educational component of a front-line relationship-based program and increased access to a sexual health nurse based in the nearby primary health clinic. A front-line relationship-based community response containing an educational component focused on reducing instances of high-risk sex and drug administration practices among people on Curtis Street could significantly reduce women's exposure risk.

One of the most immediate needs in the lives of most people attached to this market is accommodation. A relationship-based community response has the potential to reduce the reliance of sex workers and spotters on their peer connections for accommodation, and could therefore reduce exposure of women to risks common in dependent relationship styles. As previously described, most sex workers on Curtis Street rely on sex-for-accommodation style arrangements as their primary source of accommodation. These can be highly volatile situations in which the women are exploited, or exposed to violence and high-risk sexual practices. The lack of appropriate housing available to spotters also has a direct impact on the experience of sex workers. Most spotters are acutely aware of their reliance on their partner's income to support their addiction, but also to pay their rent. As seen most clearly in the relationship of Linda and Pok, in some cases this reliance fuelled an increase in the spotter's attempts to control the relationship through violence, abuse, and manipulation—particularly if they see the partnership begin to disintegrate. Therefore, increased accessibility to public housing and crisis accommodation could reduce the reliance on peer connections for accommodation, and therefore reduce the range of risks and harms that sex workers are often exposed to in these situations. While public housing resources in Melbourne at present are notoriously scarce, a

relationship-based approach on Curtis Street could at least result in some sex workers and spotters “in the queue” where there is a potential end date on the range of high-risk practices and unhealthy peer connections that most people must negotiate just for somewhere to stay.

The challenge for policy makers!

While a community intervention concerned with relationship-building and establishing an ongoing presence in the market has the potential to reduce some of the harms experienced by people selling sex in this context, one key structural issue that needs to be addressed is the relationship between the street sex market on Curtis Street and the nearby youth accommodation facility. An association between a young person being placed in out-of-home care and their participation in high-risk forms of commercial sex, such as street sex work, is well documented (Martyn 1998; Hanley 2004; Fitzgerald 1997; Bruce and Mendes 2008), however, the close proximity of the facility to the sex market on Curtis Street, and the high degree of socialisation between adult sex workers and young people staying in this unit amplifies the strength and effect of this relationship. Although not the direct focus of this project, a strong case could be made that the practice of placing vulnerable young people in a context where their connection to adults selling sex, or to people providing inducements for them to sell sex, probably actively contributes to the cycle of harm that their placement in this facility is attempting to address, or at least provide respite from. Answering questions of the financial and logistical viability of either relocating this unit or moving the street sex market to another location are beyond the scope of this thesis, but the harm to which the current situation exposes both young women and men housed in this facility suggests that such a radical change in this context needs to be considered.

Beyond any physical relocation, an effective organisational response to the connection between a young person’s placement in this youth accommodation facility and street sex work on Curtis Street would need to recognise the role that the social connections can have in an at-risk young person’s pathway into high-risk forms of commercial sex, such as street sex work. With the aim, of taking steps to either limit or negate the market’s effect on young people in this context. Reducing the number of young women housed in this unit would presumably reduce incidents of financial inducement and reduce their ties to the market, but the high number of

young men who take up other roles in the market suggests it would continue to put young men in harm's way, and these young men may, in turn, place other young women at risk. Interventions in the current context would need to work with these young people to either limit or reduce the effect of their almost inevitable connection to the network of people selling sex on Curtis Street, potentially through a process of education and the establishment of healthier structures around the young person. To support this, a harm minimisation approach would need to be developed to reduce the risks to young people who, despite these strategies, become enmeshed in the social network and processes of the street sex market. At that stage, an appropriate community response may simply fit within the same relationship-based, harm-minimisation approach that targets adult sex workers and spotters with an ongoing connection to the market.

Looking to the future

This thesis presents an ethnography of the micro-world of the street sex market in Dandenong. It asks questions of its culture, its evolution and how this study's findings can shape a more effective response from the youth and community sectors. While the answers to these questions provide insight into this issue, they also demonstrate other areas within this context that require further research. First, a deeper insight into the lack of engagement among people selling sex on Curtis Street, and the apparent association between a young person's placement in the youth accommodation facility on Curtis Street and their participation in the sex market's activities, are among the most pressing issues that require further research. Previous research based on other locations cites strong links between a young person's placement in out-of-home care and their participation in high-risk commercial sex practices (Bruce and Mendes 2008; Fitzgerald 1997), however, the spatial proximity between the youth accommodation facility in Curtis Street and the street sex market produces a context that requires particular attention. Second, a general lack of service engagement among street sex workers in other contexts is also evident (Martyn 1998; Hanley 2004; Fitzgerald 1997), yet the relative vulnerability of most people selling sex in the context discussed in this thesis, and their position in a space marked for urban renewal, suggests that further examination of Dandenong's street sex market and its unique contributors is required. Finally, limited research exists on the people who connect themselves to sex workers to fund their own substance addictions (exceptions: Williamson and Cluse-Tolar 2002; Norton-Hawk 2004; Faugier and Sargeant 1997; Kennedy et al. 2007). This research provides some insight into the motivations and actions of non-commercial sexual partners of street sex workers, however, the significance of their role in the daily lives of people selling sex, and their role in the reproduction of this particular market, suggests more in-depth explorations of the factors surrounding these men would provide a valuable contribution to existing knowledge on the experience of women selling sex in street sex markets, and on the risk-producing processes in this market in particular.

Shortcomings and limitations

Despite providing a detailed ethnography of the street sex market in Curtis Street, the research presented in this thesis is not exhaustive. Ethnography is an inherently incomplete, interpretive process that develops from the researcher's exposure to the people and cultural markers in the context they are exploring. The data presented in this research needs to be considered as a product of my exposure to the people and processes of the street sex market and my interpretation of it. It is firmly situated in the street sex market and therefore does not provide a detailed account of the experiences of people on the market's periphery, or of other marginalised people who participate in more informal forms of commercial sex, trade sex for other items of value, or work in brothels. I also rarely followed the experiences of women who moved through or left the market during the fieldwork, and so the research provides little insight into people's pathways away from street sex work in Curtis Street.

The study would have also benefited from increasing its focus on people under the age of 18 who move through the social network and participated in the market. While the street sex work of younger people appeared limited, incorporating this group in the research may have produced a deeper understanding of the association between placement in the youth accommodation facility in Curtis Street and a young person's participation in the range of high-risk activities made available by their proximity to this particular street sex market. This appears as a key element in the market's current reproduction in this space, and therefore requires concerted attention.

Finally, the contextually-specific nature of street sex markets, and the fluidity of cultural life over time, mean the data presented in this thesis is specific to the street sex market on Curtis Street during the period of fieldwork. This thesis provides a much needed contribution to the currently under-researched issue of street sex work in Dandenong, but is not intended to be generalisable to other commercial sex settings. As presented throughout the thesis, the street sex market in Dandenong appears to have a number of unique characteristics that are specific to the practice of street sex work in this area.

A final word

This thesis leaves little doubt that the people selling sex on Curtis Street are some of the most vulnerable, marginalised, and socially-isolated people in our community. Their participation in the market and their daily lives are driven by the need to fund an addiction, usually to heroin, that engulfs their lives and leaves them in a state of perpetual poverty and need. Life on Curtis Street is harsh and unforgiving, and requires participant to coldly calculate their social connections to ensure their access to the in-group resources required for their ongoing survival. While sharing many similarities with street sex work in other locations, the street sex market on Curtis Street has a number of unique characteristics borne out of the local environment and the actions of its participants. Conducting this research has been a challenging process, driven by an internal sense of duty to highlight the lives and experiences of a group of people whose voices, to this point, have been largely ignored or overlooked. My hope is that this research at least sparks debate within the local community sector in Dandenong about the most appropriate way to respond to the current challenges faced by people on Curtis Street, and that this ethnography provides a platform for further research in this area. While perhaps biased, I consider a continued research focus in this area to be central to the development and implementation of a community response, with the potential to reduce the risks the current situation presents to participants of all ages.

It is only fitting that the last words of the thesis are those of the women and men attached to the street sex market on Curtis Street:

They'll [a local community organisation] talk to ya if ya go in and see 'em and shit, but they never come out here. There was this one guy that came out here a coupla times about two or three years ago, sayin' that they're gonna do all this shit for us. But I reckon he was here maybe two times, and then we never fuckin' seen him again. Why'd he even bother comin' out here in the first place? (Kerry)

Someone needs to come out here and start lookin' at all the shit that goes on out here. Even if it was just, you know, like to just talk to us and shit. It's like they know we're fuckin' out here, but unless I'm gonna say some shit like "I wanna do a detox or rehab", they just don't care. Someone needs to come

out here like you do. I mean you don't do anything or nothing but it's good to have someone to talk to about all this shit. It helps, man. (Tracey)

Someone's gotta do somethin' about that place [points to the youth accommodation facility on Curtis Street]. I wouldn't want my kid gettin' put into that place, man. They all end up out here doing shit like that [selling sex on Curtis Street]. (Julia)

In St Kilda they've got people who'll just walk around and talk to ya' and stuff, and give ya FITS or whatever, like all the time. I don't know why they don't do that out here. There's heaps o' girls out here doin' some really risky shit. They need someone to come out here and tell 'em, you know, "don't be gettin into cars with heaps of guys", or telling girls not to be doing jobs without condoms and shit. At least there'd be someone out here looking out for us. (Emma)

A more effective community response to the harms and abuses experienced by people selling sex on Curtis Street is well overdue. It is time we moved beyond talking or monitoring the situation, and started taking active steps to show that we “give a shit”.

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