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UNIVERSITY OF WITWATERSRAND

MIGRANT WOMEN IN SEX WORK: TRAJECTORIES AND PERCEPTIONS OF ZIMBABWEAN SEX WORKERS IN HILLBROW, SOUTH AFRICA

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A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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DECLARATION

This work is submitted for the Masters Degree in Forced Migration Studies, in the School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree in any other university.

Signature ……on the ….....

Barbra Nyangairi

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ABSTRACT

The economic and political collapse of Zimbabwe resulted in the movement of women and men beyond their borders in search of better economic opportunities. The movement of Zimbabwean women has been accompanied by an outcry in neighbouring countries about their involvement in sex work. Contrary to the sensationalised views in the media and the public health discourse, this work highlights the experiences of Zimbabwean sex workers in South Africa, to understand how they engage with discourses in sex work and sexuality given the norms and mores that govern sexuality in the African context. The aim of this study is to bring to the fore trajectories, experiences and perceptions of migrant sex workers in Johannesburg.

Using postmodern feminism as a theoretical resource, the study is qualitative and employed ethnographic methods for data collection. The research was conducted in Diplomat Hotel, a hotel turned brothel on the periphery of Hillbrow, a residential area in Johannesburg. Using observation and informal interviews, the study explores Zimbabwean sex workers trajectories and perceptions of sex work.

Findings suggest tensions and contradictions as women negotiate, challenge and resist the binaries of good woman/bad woman. It is clear that women view prostitution as work as it provides a livelihood for them and their families. However, there are times women embrace the shame and stigma society accords to sex work and self degrade. This reveals the fluidity and tension in their perceptions as women negotiate the polemic debates between the abolitionists and sex work advocates. Women have found ways to navigate the precarious sex work industry and retain their autonomy through the use of humour, a veto of certain clients and re-appropriation of the whore label.

The study brings to the fore gender inequalities that keep women poor and predicate entry into sex work. The gendered nature of sex work and how most female work is unrewarded and unrewarding are exposed given the options open to women in the sex industry such as domestic work or the service industry. Zimbabwean sex workers have created their own social networks

outside the accepted networks to deal with the everyday challenges of sex work. The study highlights systemic gender inequalities at the root of women's entry into sex work. Finally, the study reveals that migrant women in sex work are propelled into sex work not by traffickers or pimps but structural gender inequalities embedded in marriage, the general disregard for feminised work and sexual inequalities in society.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this report to my late Aunt, Ellen

ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
COYOTE	Call Off Your Tired Ethics
ECP	English Collective of Prostitutes
HIRE	Hooking Is Real Employment
HIV	Human Immune Virus
HU	Hookers United
WHISPER	Women Hurt in Systems of Prostitution Engaged in Revolt
SWEAT	Sex Worker Education and Advocacy Taskforce
STD	Sexually Transmitted Diseases

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

"The whore is despised by the hypocritical world because she has made a realistic assessment of her assets and does not have to rely on fraud to make a living. In an area of human relations where fraud is regular practice between the sexes, her honesty is regarded with a mocking wonder" (Angela Carter)

1.1. Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to the questions that I have sought to answer in this study. This study explores Zimbabwean migrant women's pathways into the South African sex industry and their perception of their involvement in sex work in contrast to health discourses and the criminality of sex work.

I explain the theoretical resources, mainly postmodern feminism, I employed in the production of this work. This theoretical framework is a critique of essentialism which has resulted in polarized views between abolitionists and advocates of sex work who view sex work as inherently immoral, exploitative and liberatory respectively.

In order to give a background to the study, I provide a brief synopsis of the debates in sex work but a comprehensive discussion of these debates will be found in the next chapter. In situating

the study, this chapter describes the research site to provide a better understanding of the context of sex work and justify the choice of Diplomat Hotel, a brothel in Hillbrow.

1.2. Background

The global debates in sex work have been in two main domains, the abolitionists discourse and the sex worker revolution. These two discourses have been polemic with the former's focus on exploitation and disease and the later on the rights of women. The term discourse in this study is used to explain the "institutionalized way of talking that regulates and reinforces action and thereby exerts power" (Wodak and Meyer, 2009, 35). In speaking of discourse, I draw on Wodak and Meyer's analysis that discourses are performative, constructing individual subjectivities, through positioning of individuals.

Sex work has been viewed differently by different people depending on beliefs and values ranging from abolitionists and advocates of sex work. I will briefly discuss the two discourses that have informed research on sex work inter alia; the abolitionists' discourse which espouses a number of activists in the anti-trafficking and health advocates and the sex as work discourse with its focus on rights and recognition of sex work as work.

The abolitionists discourse stems from as far back as 1300 DC where prostitution is viewed as the most extreme moral depravity a woman is capable (Sanger, 1858; Clarkson, 1939; Primoratz, 1993). These views emanate from religious, moral and ethical measures used by society in the characterization of sex work. This school of thought viewed sex work as repugnant and intolerable and therefore all efforts had to be made to eradicate this "evil" (Clarkson, 1939).

Thus with this persuasion of sex work as morally depraved, efforts were made to "save" women from this depravity. In addition, the health dimension to sex work is not recent as prostitution was prohibited as women in sex work were viewed as diseased and men needed to be kept safe from the dangers brought on by these women, hence the drives to convert and abolish prostitution.

Within the abolitionist domain, one also finds the anti-trafficking discourse which seeks to protect women from sexual exploitation by eradicating sex work. According to these institutions, "all" women in sex work have been trafficked, deceived and coerced into the sex industry. This has led to a number of rescue initiatives by NGOS such as New Life and Home of Hope in South Africa and Women Hurt in Systems of Prostitution Engaged in Revolt (WHISPER) in the United States and governments which have constructed women as vulnerable, victims and helpless to the whims of men who traffic and exploit them in sex work. While the existence sex work is acknowledged, the issue of migrant sex work however gets conflated in the anti-trafficking discourse. My argument is premised from the fact that the anti-trafficking discourse does not provide insight into the migratory experiences of women and their entry into sex work (Agustin, 2006; Busza, 2004).

These views come strongly in media reports and in documents of international organizations that deal with female migration. A lot of attention has been given to sex work and trafficking in South Africa, especially in the context of the impending 2010 World Cup which has reawakened sex work debates as policy makers attempt to find ways of handling sex work. There are fears within the anti-trafficking camp the World Cup event will increase trafficking of women for the

purposes of prostitution. This has led to debates on whether to decriminalize or continue with the criminal regime for sex work. The South Africa Law Reform Commission requested submissions from interested stakeholders to give views on whether to continue with the criminalized regime or decriminalize sex work. These debates are characteristic of the discourses in sex work and the contestations between the abolitionists and the sex as work revolution which I will discuss briefly below.

According to abolitionists, sex work typifies an evil that must be cleansed from society (Sanger, 1858; Clarkson, 1939, Doctors for Life, 1997). While Clarkson problematises sex work, he also shows resignation about the possibility of ever eradicating sex work. He accepts that "it will never be totally eradicated, still more; we must try to limit its extent and its dangers" (Clarkson, 1939, 300). Earlier work on prostitution has represented it as a social problem to be resolved (Jenness, 1990, Clarkson, 1939, Doctors for Life, 1997, O'Connell Davidson, 2002). While their intention was to protect women, these views have worked to increase stigma associated with sex work in all spheres and the criminalization that plagues sex work evidenced by laws such as the Contagious Diseases Act of Britain the 19th century, South Africa's Sexual Offences Act (Section 23 of 1957) and Zimbabwe's Sexual Offences Act of 2000. These pieces of legislation criminalize selling sex and all related activities.

The sex as work revolution, though more recent than the abolitionists discourse emerged from feminist proponents of choice with strong inclinations towards liberal feminism. This was

signified by demonstration by sex workers in Europe in the 1970s arguing that sex work is a freely chosen occupation and that as women they had a right to their bodies (Beaulieu and Girard, 2002). These movements gave rise to the formation of sex worker groups to advocate for the rights of women in sex work. Thus, the sex as work revolution emerged as sex workers began to speak for themselves about their profession. The sex worker revolution focused on the need to recognise sex work as work and accord it the same status as all other work. Within this camp, sex work is recognized as a multi-billion dollar industry that have allowed some women a livelihood as shown by Agustin (2006) and Busza (2004). Sex as work advocates argue that the criminalized context of sex work is the root of all the problems women experience. Their argument is premised on the fact that if sex work was not criminalized and accorded the same rights as other work, the lives of women in the industry would be much better. Consequently they advocate for rights and not rescue contrary to the abolitionists camp.

The sex worker revolution is made up of a number of organisations that support the cause of sex workers such as Sex Worker Education and Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT) in South Africa, SISONKE an organisation run by sex workers for sex workers in South Africa, Sexual Health Rights in Zimbabwe and English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP) and Call Off Your Tired Ethics (COYOTE) in the United States of America.

While studies of sex work done by Fick and Gould (2008) on South African sex workers focus on problems faced by sex workers, there is dearth of studies that explore how women in sex work navigate debates in sex work and how they perceive their involvement in sex work.

I am looking at the issue differently by focusing on how women in sex work perceive their involvement in sex and how they engage with discourses that surround sex work. I will discuss these debates in more detail in the next chapter.

1.2.1 The Zimbabwean crisis and women's migration

South Africa, particularly, Johannesburg, became a magnet for migration after democracy in 1994, attracting migrants across the width and breadth of Africa. Since then, migration issues became topical and ways of managing migration have been in policy and in academic agenda (Kok et al, 2005; Adepoju, 2005; Anderson, 2005; Crush, 2005). With the political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe, Zimbabwean men and women immigrated to neighbouring countries and South Africa was a popular destination for Zimbabwean migrants as it was viewed as a place with endless opportunities for a better life (Crush, 2003; Polzer, 2008; Polzer, 2009).

Zimbabwean migrant women engaged in sex work across borders and became an object of sensationalized attention in the media. This popular belief that Zimbabwean women have increasingly become involved in sex work is shown in newspaper articles for example by

Clayton (2007) entitled "No one wants to be a prostitute." The spokesperson of Zambia's Immigration Department also observes "we have had numerous reports and concerns over Zimbabwean women engaging in commercial or illicit sex" (Irin, 2007, 1). Palmary (2009) observed that media articles on migrant girls centred on their engagement in sex work which demonstrates the currency of the phenomenon.

Research on migrant women in South Africa has focused largely in the public health dimension and viewed women as vectors of disease for example a study conducted in Hillbrow of sex workers revealed that 45% of sex workers tested positive to HIV (Stadler and Delany, 2006). The public health discourse has focused on sexually transmitted diseases and women's risks of infection (Dunkle et al, 2005; Legget, 1999; Wojcicki, 2002, 2003; Campbell, 2000). A notable exception has been the work of Richter (2008) which has a public health view but emphasizes that conditions in which sex work occurs increases risk of infection for women shifting the focus from individual pathology to the society. While these studies have been informative, they did not show pathways into sex work and how women perceived their engagement in sex work.

1.3. Rationale

Studies of sex workers in South Africa done by academics such as Dunkle et al (2005) Leggett (1999), Wojcicki (2002, 2003) and Doctors for Life, 1997) have fallen within the public health sphere pathologising women in sex work as disease carriers and danger to society. Work by Campbell (2000) though focusing on condom use shows how women in sex work have devised creative ways to deal with risk and the social networks they have created which could be used for

health promotion. Work by Richter (2008) is also notable exception that highlights how criminalization increases vulnerability of sex workers and advocates for the legalization of sex work. While studies in the public health discourse have brought valuable insights in understanding sex work, they have homogenized the experience, an aspect this research intends to rectify by providing insights into the complex lives of migrant sex workers. In addition, many studies have not disaggregated women by migration status and sex workers have been treated as a homogenous group even in studies carried out in Hillbrow, which has significant migrant population which alters the landscape of sex work.

Migrant women pathways into sex work is an area that has not featured much in research as there has been an over generalization that migrant sex workers have been "coerced, deceived and trafficked" (Busza, 2004, 232). There has been a fixation with "why" women enter the sex industry and my research asks "how" women began sex work a gap in much literature except a few as studies by Busza (2004) and a recent study by Mai (2008) of migrant women in UK's sex industry.

Through the use of postmodern feminism as a theoretical resource, this work explores how women navigate discourses in sex work, and how they engage with discourses of sexuality. The study is also borne out of the fact that sex workers are not a homogenous group. Parsons (2006) and Agustin (2007) who observe that sex work varies with context and the circumstances of sex workers are as different. Parsons (2006, 1) highlights that sex work "greatly differs across

culture, so do the challenges, objectives and experiences of people within the industry." Thus the study seeks to understand Zimbabwean women experiences of sex work in South Africa and how their immigrant status affects their condition of work within the sex industry.

1.4. Research question

How do migrant Zimbabwean women in sex work perceive involvement in sex work and how do they engage with the discourses that surround sex work?

1.5. Objectives of the study

***The objectives of this study are*:**

1. To explore Zimbabwean women's migratory trajectories and pathways into sex work.
2. To understand ways in which migrant women in sex work perceive their work and explain choice of sex work among other alternatives.
3. To explain ways in which sex workers view sexuality and how they engage with the norms and social issues that govern sex in the African context.
4. To explain how women in sex work engage with popular discourses surrounding sex work such as views of abolitionists, feminists' debates and advocates for the professionalization of sex work.

1.6. Key research questions

The study aims to answer the following questions:

1. How have women's migratory experiences shaped entry into sex work and the choices available to them?
2. Were they sex workers before immigrating to South Africa?
3. Do they describe what they do as sex work?

i) What is the relationship between sex work, sex and work to them?

4. How do migrant women in sex work explain their choice to enter the sex industry?

1.7. Scope of the study

The study focused on Zimbabwean, Shona speaking women in sex work at the Diplomat Hotel. While there are other sex workers such as Ndebele speaking Zimbabwean women and South Africans, I focused only on the experiences of Zimbabwean Shona speaking women. I was limited by my inability to speak Ndebele or other South African languages used in the bar. While this was a limitation, I able to interact with Ndebele speaking women who spoke Shona and who had strong interactions with Shona speaking women. I also focus on women providing indoor based sex work therefore I did not seek the views of Zimbabwean women in street work and these have implications for my findings as I will explore at the end of this dissertation.

The Research Site: "Hillbrow, a place of honey, milk and bile" (Mpe, 2001)



Figure 1: Snippets of Hillbrow

I conducted the research at the Diplomat Hotel, a hotel situated at the periphery of Hillbrow. Diplomat Hotel is home to more than 80 migrant women from Zimbabwe engaged in sex work. The site was chosen due to the large number of Zimbabwean women working in the area. Hillbrow, a residential suburb in Johannesburg, is home to a significant population of migrants especially from Zimbabwe. It is an area with an interesting history and where currently a number of sex work initiatives are taking place hence the need to bring a different perspective to sex work research. The metaphor of Hillbrow as a place of "honey, milk and bile", signifies the contradictions inherent in Hillbrow as a place where one can find the good and the bad all in one place.

In the 1970s, Hillbrow was designated under the groups areas act as "white" area and no other racial group was allowed to live in the area (Sithole, 1991). Hoad (2006) observes that Hillbrow,

in the apartheid era, was the destination of every teenage runaway, a lively haven of drugs, dreams and discos with its high rise buildings, abundant shops and restaurants. Thus its history of permissiveness dates back to the apartheid period.

However, Hillbrow soon became a "grey" area as a number of different ethnic and racial groups moved in (Sithole, 1991). The majority of people now resident in the area are Black South Africans and local migrants from rural areas, townships as well as international migrants from various parts of Africa including, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Congo, Nigeria and Mozambique among others. Leggett (2001) estimates that 30% Hillbrow residents are migrants and they constitute 3% of the South African population which shows that Hillbrow is the focal point of migrants. The increase in the black population in Hillbrow led to the exodus of the white middle class population in the 1980s (Sithole, 1991). The departure of this middle class also resulted in the decay of buildings as most landlords neglected maintaince work on buildings let out to black residents. To date it is viewed as a "no go area" for respectable white people, tourists and most people are warned against even driving through the streets of Hillbrow in travel guides (Hoad, 2006).

Hillbrow is characterized by high levels of unemployment which has resulted in a vibrant informal trade and high crime levels. While this picture constructs an unsavoury picture, Hillbrow is an area of paradoxes. Mpe (2001) characterizes the area as a place of danger and excitement. He also views it as a place of "honey, milk and bile", which shows the place as a

paradox representing all three attributes which do not sit comfortably together, yet are characteristic of Hillbrow (Mpe, 2001, 45). Hillbrow has been depicted as an immoral place, full of drug dealing, murderous, sexually loose and money grabbing people (Mpe, 2001). Yet in this heterogeneous space there is a market for many goods and services including sex. In the very same place, Zimbabwean women found a livelihood and were able to save their families in their home country through remittances from sex work.

Mpe (2001) noted that one aspect that made Hillbrow attractive for migrants is that it is an area full of strangers. Mpe (2001) describes it as a place of permissiveness, freedom from censor and full of strangers. In line with this, Griffiths and Clay (1982) concluded that Hillbrow is characterized by the concept of "don't give a damn, do your own thing" which shows the liberal, uncensored and unrestrained air of Hillbrow.

Since, the failure by the apartheid government to control who lived in the area, it became the place where "makwerekwere basked" (Mpe, 2001, 20). Mpe described Makwerekwere as a word derived from "kwere kwere, a sound that their unintelligible foreign languages were supposed to be making according to the locals" (Mpe, 2001, 20). The word "kwerekwere" has derogatory connotations for foreigners as outsiders and outcasts from the mainstream South African society.

In addition, Hillbrow is also described as a place of danger, full of whorehouses and dingy pubs, Mpe (2001) also speaks of the bizarre sexual behaviour of Hillbrowans. Media reports are full of

the crime and grime in Hillbrow mostly blamed on foreigners who are also blamed for moral and physical decay of Hillbrow. The media caption below from IOL news provides media and public opinion of Hillbrow:

> Dozens of gangs are using Hillbrow as an international headquarters of a multimillion rand drugs and crimes business that is fuelling an entire "second economy". Everything, from hard drugs, white collar crimes, prostitution to foreign currency exchange is driving this burgeoning economy, analysts and police say. And, according to researchers, many of the crimes are committed out of overcrowded, dilapidated hotels. This, coupled with the fact that there are more than 34 nationalities living in Hillbrow, is making crime fighting an arduous task in the area (Rondganger, 2006)

Thus Hillbrow is popular for the number of hotels turned brothels in the area. It is known for notoriety and Legget (2002, 1) labelled Hillbrow "a den of iniquity." Once the hotels in the Hillbrow ceased to be used for accommodation purposes by travelling business people, the same owners converted the hotels into brothels where migrant women from South Africa and outside South Africa live and engage in sex work.

The Diplomat is one such hotel that has ceased to be used as an accommodation establishment for travelers but has been converted into a brothel where Zimbabwean women who sell sex operate from. It lies on the lower end of the sex work class as women's charges are low compared to other more "sophisticated" brothels in the area. The women pay a daily rental of R100 to the owner and they solicit for clients in the bar area in the hotel for a charge of R50 for five minutes of sex[1].

[1] Interview with Chipo aged 23 in Diplomat Hotel (July,2009)

1.8. Theoretical Resources: A Postmodern Feminist Approach to understanding sex work

This study was exploratory and interpretive, so, I used postmodern feminist theoretical framework which allows for complex and diverse sex worker perspectives (Paul, 1993; Marchand and Parpart, 1995; Forro, 2005; Baber and Murray, 2001). While postmodern feminism draws on feminist principles, it is important to note that feminism is not a unified philosophy but has three main kinds which I briefly summarize. Liberal feminism focuses on the individualistic emphasis on equality characterized by women occupying positions of power. On the other hand, socialist feminism emphasizes that true change for women can only be achieved by fundamental structural changes to society built in capitalism. Radical feminism is similar to social feminism in that emphasis is on effecting dramatic structural changes in society if women are to achieve equal status to men. Some radical feminists believe that men and women need to maintain separate institutions and relationships. These are the branches of feminism that inform the emergence of post modern feminism, a decision to focus on methodological practices that critique the notion of grand narratives of women as either only oppressed and helpless.

This framework arose as a critique of grand narratives and privileged discourses that silenced and denied opposing discourses (Marchand and Parpart, 1995). These silences are common in sex work between the abolitionists' views who have concluded that sex work is exploitative and no women can willingly practice it and sex worker activists who have viewed sex work as liberatory. The salience of this framework for this study lies in postmodern feminism acceptance of varied ways of "perceiving experience" (Forro, 2005, 05). This allowed me to bring to the fore, the many ways, sex workers perceive their experiences.

I also found the theory useful as it allowed many ways of knowing and knowledge being viewed as "partial, fragmented, and incomplete" (Baber and Murray, 2001, 23). Therefore, this framework allowed me to tap into experiences of sex workers without taking anything for granted. In relation to sexuality, postmodern feminism posits that sex is "complex" and "fluid" and sexuality is constructed in "relation to" and in "interaction with" historically and culturally variable practices such as religion, education and marriage (Baber and Murray, 2001, 24). This is relevant as sex workers' experiences do not happen in a vacuum but are a function of history, education, health, place and culture. This framework enables exploration of migrant sex workers' experiences in a holistic way.

As postmodern feminism draws attention to the various ways of perceiving experience, I was not looking for true or false stories but women's reading of their experiences, thus no single interpretation was read as correct. The framework rejects the "objective construction of experience' and embrace the subjective as it is neither "unified nor fixed" (Weedon, 1987, 22). The framework's utility lies in its ability to embrace all women's experiences regardless of "race, class, culture or nationality which embody and define the female experience" (Forro, 2005, 12). However, concerns have been raised on the risks relativism since all views are accepted, an aspect I discuss below.

Postmodern feminism posits that "no experience is universal or correct" (Baber, 1994, 52) which provides for multiple realities and truths. Hence its relevance in the study of sex work that has

been fraught with studies that sought to find a "universal experience" for all sex workers (Forro, 2005, 14). The theory stresses that "individual choices, perceptions, and lives are influenced greatly by society and individual subjectiveness" which has great currency in studying migrant sex workers (Paul, 1993, 107). This helped me to navigate problems of agency which will be discussed in later chapters. I draw on Baber's assertion that postmodern feminism offers a unique opportunity for exploring ambiguities and complexities of migrant sex workers lives.

Marchand and Parpart (1995) and Paul (1993) suggest that the strength of this framework lies in attention to language; discourse and its impact on the way people understand and assign meaning to their lives. This is an important aspect to my study as language used in sex work such as *prostitute, whore, fallen woman* impact on the experiences of women in sex work and shape how they understand and assign meaning to their work. The study explored the use of language and the constant negotiation for meaning, highlighting tensions and contradictions in women perceptions of involvement in sex work.

The framework is also useful for this study as it rejects universal definitions of social phenomena which serve to essentialise reality and can fail to reveal the complexities of the lived experience (Marchand and Parpart, 1995; Paul, 1993; Ebert, 1991). This is especially useful for the study of sex work has been prone to essentialisation by the various protagonists that seek to understand the phenomenon.

My interest in the study grew as a result of many anecdotal stories of how all Zimbabwean women in South Africa were viewed as engaging in sex work. My position as a Zimbabwean migrant woman allowed me a particular reading of women's experiences. I also came to this study with a concern about the generalization of sex work as exploitative and a violation against women (Agustin, 2006; Sanders, 2006; Bindman, 1997). This analysis seemed to me not to take account of the local, specific, historic, informed analysis grounded in a specific spatial and specific context which would bring more insights into sex work because it silences others and silences other realities. This also shown by Mohanty (1988) when she shows the hegemonic portrayal of the " Third world woman as an image which appears arbitrarily constructed but nevertheless carries with it the authorizing signature of western humanist discourse…" (See, Marchand and Parpart, 1995; Agustin, 2006; Busza, 2004). The tendency to essentialise distorts lives and experiences of migrant sex workers as they are depicted as only ever trafficked and only ever victims coerced into sex work with no agency of their own, hence the adoption of the victim label that appeals to policy makers and sex worker rescue missions.

Postmodern feminism as a framework seeks to overcome "otherness" that contributes to marginalization of groups that are seen as abnormal or deviant. The framework emphasizes the recognition and celebration of diversity (Marchand and Parpart, 1995; Ebert, 1991). Thus, the usefulness of this framework lies in its focus on difference, hence legitimizing the search for voices of displaced, marginalized, exploited and oppressed, under which we can categorize migrant women selling sex (Marchand and Parpart, 1995; Paul, 1993). Ebert (1991, 30) suggests that postmodern feminism awakens the suppressed and concealed "other" often "subjugated by the dominant modes of knowing." It seeks to rewrite the unsaid, providing a voice for the "other"

displacing the dominant logic thus dislodging its hegemony and demystifies naturalness (Ebert, 1991). This is especially useful for my study as I seek to challenge popular notions of sex work by bringing out experiences of migrant women in sex work.

Postmodern feminism allowed me to critique popular notions that sex workers are poor, vulnerable, and powerless, as emphasized in works by many writers, (see, Jenness, 1990; Doctors for Life, 1997) an analysis I argue distorts multiple realities existent in sex work. The framework also challenges existing knowledge about "normal" sexuality while acknowledging the role of power and privilege in sexual experiences (Baber and Murray, 2001).

Contextuality is another aspect of postmodern feminism that provides currency to this study. The emphasis on the role of place and location in the construction of identities and differences, as spatial context influences lives of women selling sex are important in understanding sex work. Illustrating the importance of context, Baber and Murray (2001) stress that sexuality can be best understood in the environment they occur as sexuality is episodic, not continuous, influenced by the current environment and social prescriptions. Thus postmodern feminism offers fresh ways of studying women in sex work and accommodates difference even within migrant women in sex work.

While postmodern feminism is relevant for my study it has been critiqued for relativism and its rejection of grand theory (Baber and Murray, 2001; Paul, 1993; Ebert, 1991). While there is the risk of relativism, drawing on Baber (1994) I argue that the diversity of migrant sex workers experiences and perspectives could not be explained by one standpoint theory hence the utility of

this framework. In spite of this, it remains the most useful framework for my study as it challenges the concept of an objective and universal experience as Thorbek (2002,1) argues that "the differences in the experiences of sex workers are vast." I began the study with a desire to explore migrant sex work given the reports that pathologised migrant women in sex work as diseased and victims of exploitation. Consequently, the framework accommodates complex, varied and even contradictory individual experience and also representation and not trying to develop a new grand theory (Marchand and Parpart, 1995; Paul, 1993; Baber and Murray, 2001).

1.10 The organization of the study

In **Chapter Two,** I explore the debates and discourses in sex work. Sex work is discussed within two major discourses which include the public health sphere which resonates well with the abolitionists and the sex worker revolution which informs my thematic analysis and the three main vehicles through which sex work has been understood. I discuss women's sexuality especially African sexuality and the historical western preoccupation with African sexuality as they inform debates on the practice of sex work. The feminization of migration has been acknowledged in literature as a reality, in this regard I provide a reading on the literature on women and migration.

In **Chapter Three,** I explain the process of data collection and the methodological complexities inherent in collecting data of hidden and criminalized populations such as sex workers. I provide a rationale for the choice of qualitative methods and how I accessed the Diplomat Hotel. I also

provide an explanation of the categories I observed and the nature of interviews conducted in the study.

In **Chapter Four** I present and discuss of findings from the study. I explore ways in which women navigate the debates in sex work and how they engage with the norms of sexuality. I present the unique and multiple ways in which women negotiate and locate themselves within abolitionists discourses that emphasize exploitation, risks and dangers of sex work for women and society and the sex work as work discourse that holds a polemic view of sex work and see it as work. I also explore ways in which women view sexuality and how they at times resist and accept hetero-normative views of sexuality.

Chapter 5 provides an exploration of pathways into sex work and notions of agency for women in the study. The chapter provides the various ways in which women find themselves in sex work. I also discuss how the organization of work, marriage and sexual relations interact in women's trajectories in sex work. The role of networks as a predicator for entry into sex work is also discussed and the various ways in which women use social capital to get by and get ahead in sex work. I also highlight the risks that confront women in sex work.

Chapter 6 serves to conclude the study and provides an overview of findings and opportunities for further research.

CHAPTER 2

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE: DISCOURSES AND DEBATES IN SEX WORK

2.1 Introduction

After briefly introducing the discourses that shape discussions of sex work in the last chapter, I want to explore these debates in more detail and highlight the gaps in the literature. The review includes a discussion of African sexuality and the feminization of migration in order to show how these debates have shaped our understanding of women in sex work.

Sex work is an arena of social contestation and has generated heated debates in academia and other circles. The prevalence of prostitution has been an undeniable reality though there has not been consensus on how to handle the practice. Clarkson (1939) highlights that "prostitution" was prevalent even in biblical times. However, the existence of sex work is not the point I would like to dwell on, instead I focus on pathways into sex work and how Zimbabwean sex workers perceive and make sense of their engagement in South Africa's sex industry.

There have been a few studies of sex work without a health focus in Africa including a study by Ssewakiryanga (2001) which focuses on how sex workers create an identity in Uganda. Studies

by Magaisa (2001) and Muzvidziwa (2001) show how Zimbabwean sex workers can be equated to entrepreneurs. Similarly, Gould and Fick (2008) provide an analysis of the conditions of sex workers in Cape Town, South Africa. Fewer social sciences studies exist of cross border migrant women in sex work, most research work on migrant sex workers in Africa focused internal migrants, mostly rural to urban areas and had a health focus (see Hunter, 2002; Richter, 2008; Campbell, 2000; Dunkle et al, 2005; Wojcicki, 2002 and 2003; Doctors for Life, 1997). The few studies that focus on migrants have focused on migrant women as vectors of disease (Dunkle et al, 2005 and Pettifor et al, 2000).

One of the criticisms of sex work research has been the one dimensional focus on disease without an analysis of the context in which sex work is done (Richter, 2008; Agustin, 2006). Campbell (2000,479) argues that portraying women as powerless regarding disease as shown in the public health discourse is "is unduly simplistic and fails to take account of the range of coping strategies and social support networks that women have constructed to deal with their day to day life challenges."

As a result, shortfalls exist in the literature of migrant women in sex work as most studies have portrayed them as helpless victims forced into sex work (Agustin, 2006; Aquan –Asse, 1991; Busza, 2004). While medical research provides insights into sex work, its narrow focus on disease neglects other aspects that would make it more robust. Advocates of sex work have criticized such work for promoting "othering" of women in sex work as carriers of disease, fallen and victims (Richter, 2008; Campbell, 2000; Dunkle et al, 2005; Leggett, 1999; Wojcicki, 2002 and 2003; Doctors for Life, 1997) and in Britain these views led to the creation of the Contagious

Diseases Act a long time ago. This act continues to justify the punitive focus on sex workers (Weeks, 1989).

There has been an apparent lack of sustained long term interest in sex work research and Ssewakiryanga (2001) and Agustin (2006) observe that sex work research is still viewed with raised eyebrows and academics are hesitant to embark on such research. Agustin (2006) presents a fundamental point, important for my study; she suggests that migrants who sell sex have been neglected in migration studies due to what she terms shyness or delicacy or just disqualification yet much effort has been made to study migrant women in domestic or care work. This scholarly reluctance could be explained by the dominant discourses around sex and sex work which have condemned sex work and confined sex to the marriage institution. These discourses have viewed anything outside this institution as unacceptable and therefore the silence.

2.2. International debates of sex work

2.2.1. Sex worker revolution

While sex work research was dominated by people outside the industry, especially men, since the 19th century until the 1980s (Clarkson, 1939) and was tainted with moral lenses for the most part, the voice of sex workers remained silent in these debates. Since then, there has been growth of sex workers defending their rights and demanding recognition of selling sex as work. More sex workers have organized to protect and advocate for recognition and claims to rights and dignity

(Aquin-Asse, 1993; Ava Caradona, 2008; Busza, 2004). The sex workers' revolution began in the North but has spread to Africa. Sex workers and those sympathetic to their cause began mobilizing as early as the 1970s. Sex workers in the North[2] and in Africa have claimed a space to speak about their trade and issues that affect them (Sanders, 2005).

The sex worker movement led to the emergence of organisations such as Hookers United, Call Off Your Tired Ethics (COYOTE), The English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP), Hooking is Real Employment (HIRE) and South Africa's Sex Worker Education and Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT). Ditmore (2002) and Brussa (2002) write on the rights of migrant women in sex work and argue that illegality of sex work poses problems for women such as police harassment and abuse by clients. Richter (2008) and Kempadoo (2003) advocate for the rights of sex workers and argue that the illegality of sex work in many countries is behind exploitation and abuse faced by sex workers.

According to Forro (2005) the sex worker movement was given impetus by some feminists' perspectives which were viewed as unsupportive of sex workers. Recently, in an attempt to redefine the sex worker experience, liberal and existential feminists show sex work as defiance of patriarchy (Forro, 2005). The term sex worker was coined by sex workers remove stigma and shame attached to the label prostitute label (Bindman, 1997).

[2] The North represents sex workers in Europe, United States of America and Australia.

Hunter (1989, 110) highlights that the sex worker movement has evolved from an "apologist stance" characteristic of the early years to a more aggressive movement it has become today. Sex worker organizations such as COYOTE in the United States and SWEAT in South Africa argue that criminalization of sex work has increased vulnerability of sex workers and resulted in exploitation by police, clients, employers and the general public.

Sex worker advocacy has converged on four fundamental points that will be discussed below. The main arena of mobilization for sex worker organization is law reform. Sex as work advocates have argued that law reform is essential as selling sexual services remains illegal in most countries including many in Africa (Aquin-Asse, 1993; Agustin, 2006; Hunter, 1997). Richter (2008) has cited criminalization as a significant cause of violations suffered by sex workers as it places them outside the law with no recourse (Anderson, 2002; Agustin, 2006; Aquan-Asse, 1993). Sex as work advocates argue that the state has no business regulating the sexual behaviour of consenting adults (Ava Caradona, 2008).

Recognition of sex work as work and the ability to work wherever they wish has been a point of agitation (Aquin-Asse, 1993; Brussa, 2007, Hunter, 1997; Jenness, 1993). The argument put forth by O'Connell Davidson (2002) is that sex workers are economic actors and should be treated with dignity and respect. The economic argument was also highlighted by Agustin (2006) who claims that the sex work industry is a billion dollar industry that has allowed women to live above poverty yet these facts rarely make news headlines, only exploitation makes front page news. In addition, Bindman (1997) argues that if sex work is accorded the same rights as

provided in national and international protocols, discrimination would be eradicated and sex workers will enjoy rights they deserve.

Sex workers have also refuted the victim label associated with the abolitionists and argue they have agency (Gangoli, 2001). They accept that some women are coerced into the industry, a situation not to be condoned (Hunter, 1997) but they acknowledge the presence of exploitation inherent in sex work. They challenge this view claiming that exploitation is at the heart of many low skill jobs and that choice of women in sex work need to be respected. Ava Caradona (2008, 1) claims that "there is nothing exploitative about consensual sexual behaviour regardless of its motivation." Nevertheless, advocates of sex as work argue that law makers and campaigners choose to ignore that many women in the sex industry choose to be there and are not coerced (Agustin, 2006). As a result sex workers have been at the forefront calling for the decriminalization and professionalization of sex work.

Bindman (1997) and Sanders (2006) agree that sex work is just as exploitative as other services dominated by women such as waitressing and domestic work which though, degrading, do not carry same stigma accorded to sex work. While rights of domestic workers for example are limited, they are still recognized as work before the law and have a semblance of legal protection.

While abolitionists have argued that sex workers sell their bodies, sex work activists deny that women in sex work sell their body, they argue that, women in sex work sell a commodity, as

happens in any commercial transaction (Ava Caradonna, 2008; Aquan-Asse, 1993). According to sex worker activists, the client does not own the woman but pays for the ability to have a temporary affective relation (Ava Caradonna, 2008; Aquan-Asse, 1993). This argument has caused heated debates due to the intimacy of sex work as argued that women "sell their body" which makes it somewhat different from other labour such as domestic work and waitressing though all these demand women's emotional labour (Ava Caradona, 2008, 2). In defence, they argue that sex work is just as emotional as other labour such as waitressing, domestic work and nursing which have not been stigmatized but which require women to be affective (Agustin, 2006; Jenness, 1990).

While most research on sex work has focused on push and pull factors into sex work, research by advocates of sex work such as Bindman (1997), Sanders (2001) Agustin (2007), Fick (2006) and Gould and Fick (2008) have sought to explain conditions in which sex work takes places and risks associated with these working conditions. Most of these studies have focused on sex work conditions in the West and few studies focused on the working condition of migrant sex workers in Africa such as the study by Gould and Fick (2008) which provides an in depth analysis of sex work in Cape Town, South Africa. Thus a gap exists in African literature on migrant sex workers. Consequently, findings of western studies do not reveal experiences migrant sex workers in Africa in which the context differs significantly, hence the need to do research on migrant sex workers in South Africa a prime destination for migrants in southern Africa.

2.2.2. Abolitionist views

Research on sex work that began in the 19th century sought to explain characteristics of women in sex work (Bullough and Bullough, 1987). Bullough and Bullough (1987) observe that studies of sex work in the 19th century revealed that most women in sex work were in their early twenties, illiterate, and poor, from broken families. Other writings on sex work sought to find the history of prostitution. The study by Sanger (1858) attempts to trace the history of sex work finding its origins and trying to understand the identity of women in sex work and why they chose this work. He concluded that women in sex work were poor, illiterate and from broken families which has implications for the pathologised view of women (Sanger, 1858). In his book, in 1858 he noted that efforts to eradicate sex work would be futile and a waste of policing services. However, he still emphasized the importance of efforts to stop women from entering the trade and rescuing them.

Similar to Sanger's views, Clarkson highlights the three perspectives that have attempted to control sex work which remain solid to date though methods have been modified. He rationalizes the "moral teacher" must strive to reduce this "vice" hence growth of the "rescue" industry for the "fallen woman" such as WHISPER (Women Hurt in Systems of Prostitution Engaged in Revolt) an American organization that works to rescue women in sex work (Agustin, 2007, 44) and New Life in South Africa a non-governmental organisation whose objective is to protect commercially sexually exploited women and children which includes sex workers. New Life provides peer education programmes to women in brothels and attempts to persuade them to leave the profession hence their emphasis in on the hazards and exploitation in sex work.

Another dimension that has controlled sex work is the legal framework. Clarkson argues that "law giver" must prevent the crime which illustrates the criminal lenses through which sex work is viewed (Clarkson, 1939, 301). According to Sanger (1858) and Clarkson (1939) the lawgiver would prevent sex work by passing laws that make sex work illegal. The implications of these views have been the manner in which sex work is criminalized in almost all countries in Africa except Senegal where sex work is legal in specific red light districts. Lastly, the moral teacher would deal with converting sex workers and persuading them to live different lives which fits in with views of "rescue" organisations such as New Life and Home of Hope in South Africa which seek to convert women from the "bad" to a new life.

Clarkson observed that attempts to eradicate sex work are as old as the trade itself. Clarkson (1939, 300) highlights that in 1751 Maria Theresa of Vienna imposed "fines", "imprisonment", "whipping" and "torture" for violation of the sex work prohibitory laws. Dress was controlled and short dresses were banned in order to eradicate sex work. Sangers (1858) and Clarkson (1939) admit that in spite of these punishments, attempts to abolish sex work were futile. He points out that "all alike know that they will never fully attain their goal but they pursue their work in the conviction that he who does little well yet does a great service to the weaker men" (Clarkson, 1939, 299).

Abolitionists within the medical sphere strongly emphasize the link between sex work, sexually transmitted disease and damage to women's mentality as Doctors for Life emphasize (Doctors

for Life, 1997). In speaking to the damage to women's mentality, Anderson (2002) argues that prostitution is damaging for women as "dominance and submission, oppression and victimization" are built into the practice of prostitution. Indeed, the public health discourse has provided the strongest arguments for abolitionists calling for the eradication of sex work (Ramjee and Gouws, 2002; Dunkle et al, 2005).

Abolitionists are predominantly social and religious conservatives who advocate for sex work to remain illegal. Bullough and Bullough (1989, 3) clearly bring out the argument put forward by some abolitionists that "prostitutes undermine the social institution of marriage and exploit women; it also poisons the country's moral climate."

The rescue industry has a long history as Clarkson (1939) observes that canonists encouraged sex workers to reform and marry or become nuns. As a result, a number of "religious sanctuaries" were constructed to house "rescued" sex workers who wanted to quit the profession (Bullough and Bullough, 1989, 5). The rescue industry has fought for abolition and organisations such as (WHIPSPER) emerged as a counter voice to the sex worker revolution which will be discussed below. WHISPER embracing the abolitionists' stance refuses the term sex worker insisting calling women prostitutes, as they feel to call it work dignifies it.

The rescue industry is premised on the assumption that sex work is damaging and those who say it is not damaging have internalized the damage or have been brainwashed by patriarchy. The excerpt below illustrates Anderson's views on the damage caused by prostitution;

> I think that prostitutes experience a specific inferiority. Women in general are considered to be dirty. Most of us experience this as a metaphor… but the prostitute lives the reality of being a dirty woman…She is perceived and treated as vaginal slime, she is dirty, a lot of men have been there, her anus is torn from anal intercourse, it bleeds…her mouth is a receptacle for semen, that is how she is perceived and treated (Anderson, 2002, 753).

Inevitably, one of the underlying arguments for abolition is that prostitution is a creation of patriarchy and constitutes an abuse of women which is different to the moral and health discourse and highlights the diversity within the abolitionists' camp. Furthermore, abolitionists argue that sex work is a human rights violation as they feel no woman can "genuinely" consent to sex work (Bindmen, 1997, 67). This has been critiqued by Agustin (2006) and Sanders (2004) who dispute that sex workers have agency however constrained, thus have chosen sex work among limited and equally bad alternatives.

Another segment of abolitionists have drawn on the recent attention to trafficking to advocate for the eradication of sex work. In this thinking, women have been coerced and forced into selling sex in other countries (Busza, 2004; Agustin, 2006). The prevalence of the trafficking discourse has been critiqued for making little research efforts to investigate migrant women pathways into sex work (Agustin, 2006; Busza, 2004). The trafficking debates emphasize the exploitation in sex work and argue that many trafficked women are absorbed in the sex industry and that to prevent trafficking, sex work has to be eradicated (Bindman, 1997). This argument favours the criminalization of sex work as the sex industry fuels the trafficking of women and children.

Busza (2004, 232) observes that within the trafficking discourse all migrant women in sex work outside their countries "deceived, abducted or otherwise exploited" a view, she argues ignores

the agency of some migrant women who travel out of their countries to sell sex. The trafficking discourse has also been used in a bid to keep sex work illegal in South Africa in debates as the country prepares for the World Cup in 2010. South Africa is currently grappling with how to manage sex work, organisations such as New Life propose that making sex work legal or decriminalizing it will increase trafficking of women for the purposes of sexual exploitation as "making sex work illegal will result in more women being trafficked into the sex industry of South Africa as demand increases" (Field notes, New Life, 20/07/2009).

The abolitionists' camp is made up of a strange mix of some feminists, some right wing conservatives and medical professionals claiming objectivity. Consequently, abolitionists have influenced the state to abolish sex work by punishing those that benefit from the proceeds of sex work. These arguments have been used by the state in the African context to keep sex work illegal. Migrant sex workers are confronted with these schools of thought, the stigma and shame attached to sex work, hence, the need to explore how they engage these polemic views.

2.2.2.1. Feminist debates on sex work

The primary goal of feminism has been to contest patriarchy in sites of culture and has increasingly interrogated power and knowledge relations. The thrust of feminism is intervention and social change. Ebert (1991) explains that feminism "in its most productive sense is a cultural critique and practice of social change that seeks to transform those relations of power namely patriarchy…" Consequently, feminism seeks to expose the gendered nature of society and the creation of difference that has led to different privileges and opportunities for men and women.

In the same vein, feminist work has also sought to understand sex work and differences in feminist approaches have been evident in the different ways they interpret sex work. Feminists' debates on sex work have been heated with varied positions taken on sex work. Sex work has always been a dilemma for feminists as they have not been able to agree on one position (Jenness, 1990; Scoular, 2004; O' Connell Davidson, 2002).

Scoular (2004) highlights that some feminists alongside the abolitionists have condemned sex work as an extension of patriarchy and exploitation of women for the pleasure of men. According to feminists who subscribe to this view, sex work is a violation of human rights (Scoular, 2004; Hunter, 1997; Anderson, 2002; Jenness, 1990). Their main argument is that sex work can never be classified as real work in the conventional sense of the word as "the existence of prostitution depends on the existence of inequalities in social and economic power between the sex worker and their customer…"(Anderson, 2002, 752). They argue that sex work is violence against women and framework has been used to build a case for the prohibition of sex work (Agustin, 2006; Doctors for Life, 1997; Jenness, 1990) who claim that it reduces women to a commodity. As a result, reinforcing the dominance of men over women for example Forro (2005, 6) terms it the "subjectification" and "subordination" of women for the enjoyment of men. From this perspective sex work is seen as both an indicator and cause of this subordination. Consequently, research used by this group has shown the ills of sex work have highlighted the severity of the problems faced by women in sex work (Anderson, 2002; Agustin, 2006; Doctors for Life, 1997).

Anderson (2002) brings another angle to support abolition of sex work, which is the concept of sexual autonomy. He argues that prohibition of sex work promotes sexual autonomy, which is crucial for the achievement of women's equality with men. This perspective posits that regulation of sexual behaviour protects sexual autonomy and puts a barrier between sexual activity, production and commerce (Anderson, 2002). Advocates of prohibition argue that male misogyny is expressed in the act of buying sex. Thus the brutalities and suffering of sex workers are emphasized in this school of thought (Anderson, 2002; Doctors for Life, 1997; Agustin, 2006; Jenness, 1990; O'Connell Davidson, 2002).

Feminists of this persuasion, emphasize, dominance, submission, oppression and victimization and abolitionists have been critiqued for ignoring the agency of women in sex work, for example, O' Connell Davidson (2002) highlights that after conducting field research, none of her findings made her want to celebrate the existence of a market for sex. This view was then countered by Agustin (2006) and Ava Caradona, (2008) who argued that there are many such occupations that do not inspire celebration such as domestic work, sweeping streets or cleaning public toilets and yet they are recognized as work.

On the other hand, concurring with the violence against women framework, are feminists that view sex work as an extension of capitalism and class inequalities on women. They argue that capitalism has implications for sex and gender which perpetuate oppression of women. Forro (2005, 8) argues that "capitalism + patriarchy =oppression." This view is based on three claims; firstly, that the good purchased from the sex worker is her "degradation" (Anderson, 2002, 752).

Secondly, that prostitution exists because of social and economic inequalities in society and thirdly that prostitution then reinforces these inequalities (Anderson, 2002). Tong (1989) has critiqued this view arguing that it does not take into account lesbian and gay sex workers, who sell sexual services to other women or men. In addition, feminists who subscribe to this view argue that the fact that there is supply of sex workers reflects entrenched injustice in society.

While these feminists have a point to make about the abuses prevalent in sex work, others have pointed out that most sex work is done within a structure that is criminalized and which exacerbates the problems faced by women in the industry (Agustin, 2006; Scoular, 2004; Anderson, 2002). This is not to deny that sex work has dangers and can be exploitative but they argue that an emphasis on the dangers without focusing on the structural environment in which sex work takes place results in incomplete analysis that ignores risks created by illegality (Richter, 2008). The environment and the structural factors within which migrant women sell sex is an aspect my research seeks to explore and how these factors impact on the experiences of these women selling sex in a foreign country.

Contrary to the views highlighted above are feminists who support decriminalization of sex work. Some have argued that sex work can be empowering for women and may reduce economic dependency. They advocate for reforms to make sex work safer for women and that criminalization has contributed significantly to problems faced by sex workers (Anderson, 2002). Tong (1989, 212) argues that "prostitution can provide the woman with the kind of liberty that is immediate, affirming, and temporally rewarding". While Tong views sex work as providing

some kind of liberation, Agustin (2006) counters arguing sex workers are women with economic strategy for survival.

Feminists of this persuasion, maintain that sex work serves a useful social function by providing sexual services to the "disabled, elderly, people with chronic or terminal illness and the sexually dysfunctional" who would otherwise not find partners (O'Connell Davidson, 2002, 89; Sanders, 2005). This view has been critiqued by Doctors for Life (1997) who argue getting sexual relief from sex workers will not solve these problems but rather compound them.

Feminists pro reforms of sex industry argue that sex work, like any other paid labour involves transfer of power to command over a person (Gangoli, 2001; Busza, 2004). Inspiration for this position is derived from Marxists thinking that a person's labour whether "sexual, emotional, mental or manual" is an inalienable property of the person (O'Connell Davidson, 2002, 85). This framework therefore propose that sex work should be recognized as work as there is a contract between the sex worker and client that delimits acts the sex worker can perform for the client. Proponents for reform argue that violations in sex work have been the result of the legal and social construction of women who sell sex as deviants rather than workers (Brussa, 2007; Jenness, 1990)

In addition, they insist legal and social binaries used to classify normal/abnormal, healthy/unhealthy and pleasurable/unpleasurable as factors responsible for "othering" and the

resultant exclusion and exploitation that perpetuates violations of women who sell sex (O'Connell Davidson, 2002).

In response to feminists opposed to sex work, scholars such as Scoular (2004) and Agustin (2006) argue that denying sex work the status of labour, does more harm than good as it leads to more abuses of women such as lack of protection before the law and unfair labour practices since women have little recourse to labour protection laws. Furthermore, Agustin (2006) reasons that this outlook has contributed to the criminalization of sex work and added to stigma faced sex workers.

These are some of the debates within the feminists' discussions that inform abolitionists, reformists and sex was work stances which reveal the complexities, fluidity and tensions in sex work. It is important to understand that these positions are not as clear cut as presented above but are rather complex. This study seeks to show where sex workers situate themselves within these debates and how they perceive their engagement in sex work.

2.3 Reflections on African sexuality

Sex work is a contested form of sexual expression, thus it is critical to have a discussion on sexuality as this is shaped by assumptions of hetero-normativity. Debates on sexuality help explore the basis for the stigmatization of sex work, a critical aspect of my study. The study of sexuality has interested researchers in the West for decades (Weeks, 1989).

Writing on African sexuality, Caldwell (1987) asserts that Africans do not place aspects of sexual behaviour at the "centre of their moral and social systems nor sanctioned chastity". In his writing, he concludes that there is permissiveness on sexual matters in Africa which is not found in western countries. This has led to debates on African sexuality demonstrated by studies by Ahlberg (1994) who argues that Eurocentric views of Caldwell did not take into account that different contexts have different sexual norms and that sexuality in Africa was governed by these norms before the colonial authorities changed them and imposed their own mores. In the same vein, Heald (1995) also argues that the Eurocentric contrast between sexuality made by Caldwell is misleading. She asserts that the views by Caldwell that "sex in Africa is free" is inaccurate as evidence shows how efforts have been made to control sexuality in Africa especially female sexuality.

Arnfred (2008) argues that sexuality is constituted differently in different contexts and it is misleading to speak of an African sexuality as Eurocentric writers such as Caldwell (1997) have done. While Caldwell's writing on African sexuality have been critiqued as Eurocentric, they provided a critical tool for emerging debates on African sexuality (Heald, 1995) as sexuality in the African context has been informed to a great extent by colonial ideas of what is normal and abnormal. Caldwell in (Heald, 1995) seems to view African sexuality as uninhibited and sex being free and Heald (1995) argues that these views of African sexuality were racist and resulted in "othering" of Africans as promiscuous while showing whites as pure and moral.

This has resulted in the recreation of the authentic African-ness which romanticizes of a past that was moral and pure and an immoral present which has been the result of modernity. This nostalgic thinking has resulted in the labeling of sexual practices such as homosexuality as western. Epprecht (1998, 631) observes that "many Zimbabweans believe that homosexuality was introduced to the country by white colonial settlers…'. In this view all these practices were brought by the colonial master and did not exist prior to colonialism which does not depict the realities in African sexuality.

Analysis of sexuality is important as sex work inherently challenges notions of sexuality that are deemed normal shown by attempts to control sexuality by criminalizing sexual acts that are deemed abnormal. Weeks's work on sexuality is important for this research as it brings out the dynamics and complexities inherent in the study of sexuality. His work also provides parallels that can be used to view sexuality debates in Africa. Weeks (1989) observes that sexuality has been shaped by a mythical division into the private and public sphere, the private sanctioned by marriage and regarded as the model and pure and the public the space of prostitution. He argues that sexuality became institutionalized in marriage during the industrial revolution and anything outside this, was unacceptable and immoral. In the same way, the colonial era brought the formalized institution of monogamous marriage to Africa and anything outside this framework was unacceptable.

African sexuality has been viewed mainly through colonial lenses which have been criticized as racist, as most research conducted on sexuality during the colonial era such as the work of

Caldwell generalized most sexual practices in some African countries such as Mali as commercial when he argues that;

> Sex is seen as a service which women render to men in return for cash and support. It is because sex, whether inside or outside marriage, is seen in such terms that it is difficult to recognise prostitution in Africa in the same way as in the West. Sex in Africa always has a potentially 'commercial' aspect, so no sharp divide can be drawn between the prostitute and the 'respectable' woman (Heald, 1995, 490)

Sexuality continues in the literature on transactional sex to be viewed through the Christian lenses which perceived many African sexual practices as unacceptable as they did not conform to biblical norms of acceptable sexual behaviour. Christian views of sexuality have significantly shaped ways in which sexuality is viewed in most parts of Africa and women who deviate from this norm have been labelled prostitutes. The early colonial master was shocked by activities such as polygamy and incomplete, non-penetrative sex practiced and labeled these immoral (Ahlberg, 1994).

The views of Weeks (1989) on sexuality speak to issues that include: sex as a simple source of pleasure, as a key to the glorification of erotic arts, as a source of danger and taboo and finally as a mortification of the flesh that are relevant to African thinking of sexuality. Principles of hetero-normavity show that heterosexual sex in married couples is the most acceptable form of sex and one in which sexual pleasure should be expressed. Other sexual practices such as sex work and homosexuality have been labelled unacceptable as they do not fit in the framework of hetero-normavity. Sex in sex work has been viewed as a source of danger especially by abolitionists with emphasis on diseases and moral corruption. The views of Weeks (1989) though western generally summarize issues that surround sexuality in the African context as depicted by Arnfred

(2005) when she revisits African sexuality and claims that it is difficult to speak of a distinct African sexuality as practices are diverse and vary by context.

Moreover, sexuality is gendered and racialised with proscribed behavour and expectations ascribed to women and men (Thorbek and Pattanaik, 2002; Helle-Valle, 2005). Heald (1995) argues that sexuality is defined differently in different cultural contexts, in order to understand African sexuality, contextualization is important. Heald's point is fundamental in this study as there are myths that surround sex work with regard to sexual pleasure and sex work. Helle-Valle (2005) speaks of similarities and differences among Africans in so far as sexuality is concerned which makes it problematic to speak of an African sexuality. These differences can be glimpsed in sexual practices such as female circumcision performed in Senegal and other parts of Africa but not in Zimbabwe (Arnfred, 2005).

However, some similarities can be glimpsed across cultures such as transfer of knowledge on sex and sexual practices from elders to younger people. Arnfred (2005) points out that different social contexts involve different rules and taboos associated with sex, which makes it impossible to have a definite African sexuality as thought by Eurocentric writers such as Caldwell.

Magaisa (2001) observes that sexuality is premised on traditional norms and values. According to Magaisa (2001, 107) a woman "must be married to one man, bear him children, work for the home and be a good wife." Similar to studies done by Helle-Valle (2005) and Magaisa (2001) highlights the single status for females is stigmatized and in most cases they are labeled

"prostitute" yet a single man is exempt from such labels. While the regulation of sexuality exists for men and women in the African context "men have more latitude to explore their sexuality" while women are more restrained in their exploration of sexuality (Helle-Valle, 2005). This is similar to the Weeks' views on western sexuality which highlights similarities between Western and African views regarding male and female sexuality.

Similarly, Magaisa (2001, 107) reiterates that in Zimbabwe efforts are made to censure female sexuality, yet men are "allowed sexual variety" through polygamy and promiscuity which is a part of the culture of masculinity in Zimbabwe. For women, sex is licit when done in marriage and for teenage girls sex is taboo until married, these views of sex are taught to African girls from the onset of menstruation as symbolized by virginity testing for teenagers an activity significantly influenced by Christianity values of purity and chastity. This shows that one cannot untangle what is African and what is western. Haram (2005) highlights paradoxes in sexuality, which are important for this study that when a man has many partners he is viewed positively as virile and a man of wealth yet when a woman has many sexual partners she is labeled "prostitute" (Haram, 2005, 211).

Nagel (2000) highlights an important point for this study, the notion of sexual monogamy. Sex work has been under attack partly because it challenges the expectation of monogamy especially among women who are expected to be chaste or at least be faithful to one sexual partner (Nagel, 2000). My study seeks to explore how women in sex work deal with these entrenched notions that affect relations between them and society and have resulted in the label *pfambi* (prostitute).

Sexuality in Africa has been regulated and female sexuality has been regulated to a larger extent with values placed on virginity and celebrations that go with marrying a virgin bride (Heald, 1995). Dominant debates on sexuality and sex in Africa, particularly in Zimbabwe have focused on the reverence of virginity, the virtue of abstinence for women, sexual restraint and modest dressing (Magaisa, 2001 and Muzvidziwa, 1997). Thus sexuality has been regulated "formally" and "informally" through the church, the state, and the regulation of marriage, divorce, illegitimacy and incest (Weeks, 1989).

Sprey (1969) proposes that sexuality is becoming institutionalized in its own right and not in the institutions of reproduction and childrearing. Furthermore, Sprey argues that scholars have failed to explore the analytical and theoretical implications of sex apart from marriage and reproduction (Sprey, 1969; Weeks, 1989). The linkage of sex and marriage and reproduction has resulted in the control and regulation of any sexual behaviour that happens outside these boundaries.

As a consequence, female sexuality is defined within a social and economic framework of marriage and reproduction. Labels "the virtuous woman" and the "fallen woman" arise from sexual activity that either complies or is deviant to defined social parameters (Weeks, 1989, 14). While male sexuality has been regulated in as far as some activities such as homosexuality are frowned upon, female sexuality has been regulated in more ways as Weeks (1989, 40) illustrates a denial of female sexuality as "the best mothers, wives and managers of households know little

or nothing of sexual indulgence". By implication, females are there for the pleasure of men in marriage and not expected to find pleasure in sex for themselves.

Magaisa (2001, 103) writing on prostitution in rural Zimbabwe concurs that "male prostitution is tolerated in Zimbabwe; female prostitution remains a contested form of sexuality." Haram (2005) and Magaisa (2001) demonstrate that there has been a shift as women have taken charge of their sexuality and defied societal views of what is licit or illicit.

Weeks (1989, 35) observes that society has had numerous periods of moral panic and sexuality has been central in these with "sexual deviants" such as sex workers being "scapegoats" for broader social problems. This study focuses on the manner in which migrant women in sex work define sexuality. Weeks (1989, 81) alludes to the existence of two frames of reference, mainly the "private" and "public" with regard to sexuality. The private perceived as the "nest of domestic virtue and the public an arena of prostitution" (Weeks, 1989, 81).

Weeks (1989) and Agustin (2006) discern the existence of double standards in society when men though often buyers of sexual services are not labeled or stigmatized and women bear the brunt of the moralizing. Weeks (1989) claims that there is tolerance of sex work for most of the time until a moral panic erupts and there are cries to do something about prostitution.

Nagel (2000) highlight the existence of ethno-sexual frontiers that can be created between different ethnic groups, racial groups or nationalities that seek to control sexual activities between these groups. In this view, "foreign" women and men are seen as a danger to host societies and having sexual relations with these groups is unacceptable. This will be discussed more in the section on migration. The moral panic against sex work is also interlinked to the panic against migration as ethno-sexual frontiers are created in host countries. This discourse has resulted in legislation that regulates sexuality by making sex work illegal in many African countries including South Africa and Zimbabwe. Khana and Price (2004) argue that the desire to eradicate sex work is an extension of efforts to regulate female sexuality and not male sexuality as illustrated by criminalization of selling sex and not buying sex in countries where sex work is illegal. In the same way sex work is censored, other minority sexualities such as homosexuality are not exempt, viewed as western decadence, "unAfrican", a result of colonization. This brings to the fore that there are specific, gendered and racialised discourses of sexuality that transverse both western and African contexts despite them being manifested in ways that are contextually specific issues such as patriarchy, heteronormavity, monogamy, male sex drive discourses and the regulation of sexual practice.

In addition, the advent of AIDS has altered ways in which sexuality is viewed; sex has been linked to death within HIV and AIDS awareness campaigns (Posel, 2002). This view has dominated in studies that investigate sexuality and sex work, mostly found in the medical sphere. The advent of HIV/AIDS has strengthened the voices of abolitionists in calling for the eradication of sex work as they are viewed as "diseased" and responsible for the spread of HIV

to “clean” societies. In light of HIV/AIDS sex has become a source of danger and sex workers a danger to society.

Sexuality in this study is a “relational concept” and is developed by interaction with other social axis of “gender, age, ethnicity, religion, familial expectations, and notions of love which give meaning to particular notions of sexuality” and which has implications for women and men’s experiences (Spronk, 2005, 268). Thus, I draw from the idea of sexual scripts as defined by Baber (1994, 60) as “implicit rules that individuals develop for themselves regarding who, when, what, where and how of their sexual behaviors and activities.” In this way sexual scripts are developed in the context of societal values and norms about appropriate sexual conduct and these reflects cultural messages from parents, friends, religion and media to mention a few (Baber, 1994). Consequently, this study seeks to explain how women negotiate issues of sexuality with boyfriends, clients, family, culture and religion.

2.4 Women, Migration and sex work

This project explores migrant women’s trajectories into sex work, thus a discussion of women and migration is imperative. Zimbabwean migrant women have been chosen for the study, as they have recently received media attention for engagement in sex work across their national borders.

While a number of studies have been done on migration, there are still few studies that focus on women migrants, more so migrants in sex work, hence the need to close this gap. Chant (1992, 19) points out that although sex has been recognized as a variable in migrant "selectivity", female migration has only begun to be recognized in the rubric of migration studies. Only in the 1970s did studies on women and migration begin to emerge. Since then a number of studies have been done to investigate what INSTRAW (2007) terms the "feminization" of migration. Before this, women migrants were treated as dependents, wives joining husbands or mothers. In addition, Phizacklea (1983) observed that migrants were treated by researchers as sexless units. Sudarkaso (1977) emphasizes that given the predominance of males in migration, most migration studies focused on men. This has resulted in a dearth of systematic research about women migrants in general and migrants in sex work in particular especially in Africa.

In recent years, Dodson (2000, 120) highlights that independent female migration has become visible with female migrants in other countries working as "traders, domestic workers, prostitutes, waitresses." She also highlights that female migration into South Africa from other countries saw an increase since 1994. Indra (1999) argues that female migration has not increased rather it has become recognized yet Dodson (2000, 123) argues that female migration remains hidden from "history" and from "policy." In addition, studies on female migration have sought to characterize women who migrate and the preponderance of studies revealed that the majority of females that migrated were "separated, divorced, widowed and abandoned" (Dodson, 2000, 133; see also, Chant, 1992; Sudarkaso, 1977). While these descriptions are useful, they are too general and lack of analysis on meanings and implications of these categories for women who migrate.

Migration is not a new phenomenon for Zimbabwean women, in colonial times; Zimbabwean women migrated from rural to urban areas for a number of reasons which included reunion with husbands and seeking economic opportunities for themselves (Hungwe, 2006). Mobile women who migrated to urban areas independent of men were often labeled "prostitutes" and this label extended to women who engaged in cross border trading in South Africa (Hungwe, 2006 and Muzvidziwa, 2001, 78). This label is not unique to Zimbabwean women who migrated to urban areas but was also bestowed on women in West Africa who migrated to urban areas independent of men (Sudarkaso, 1977). The independent migration of women has been viewed with skepticism in the Zimbabwean context as shown by Muzvidziwa (2001,78) who observes that some Zimbabwean men did not allow their wives to engage in cross border trading as it was thought to be done by women who did not have husbands and who were "prostitutes" so that migrant women have always been conflated with the prostitute. In this thinking, a husband was setting themselves for failure if they allowed their wife to travel and work in South Africa. Cross border trading was considered only appropriate for single women and there were stories and myths about the moral decadence of women who engaged in cross border trading.

Agustin (2006) challenges research done on migrant women who sell sex. She notes that the preponderance of studies has represented them as forced and coerced. This research relies on the trafficking discourse for strength. I suggest while some women are trafficked, not all migrant women in sex work are trafficked; most travelled out of their choice and joined the sex industry. Thus I find intellectual alignment with Agustin (2006) 's discussion of the volition and agency of

migrant women in joining the sex industry as it pays more and they are able to make money within a short space of time.

Research on migrant sex work has also been preoccupied with the numbers of migrant women in sex work, aspects that will not provide an exploration of their experiences in sex work (Agustin, 2006; Busza, 2004). In addition, in the few times that migrant women were researched, they are shown as disease carriers who pose serious danger to host communities. Such research also dwells much on the problems faced by migrant women who sell sex thus perpetuating the victim mindset (Agustin, 2006).

However, despite these denigrating views, female migration increases "options and opportunities for self-improvement even though unskilled …it was so much that they were able to have control over the fruits of their labour" Hungwe (2006, 2). Hungwe (2006) and Muzvidziwa (1997) demonstrates sex work was a strategy employed by migrant women as many did not possess the qualifications to enter into professions such as teaching and nursing popular for women at the time. Cross border migration for Zimbabwean women began in the 1980s, when women seasonally migrated to South Africa to sell hand-crafts and engage in domestic work. The numbers of Zimbabwean women that cross borders has risen in recent years; there are a few studies that explored migratory experiences.

South Africa has been a major destination for many though statistics of female migration have not been accurately compiled. Outcries in the media about Zimbabwean migrant women in sex

work shows that some women have taken sex work as an alternative among limited and equally bad choices such as domestic work and waitressing. Nagel (2000) highlights an important point of ethno-sexual boundaries that can be used to explain the outcry about Zimbabwean sex workers. Nagel (2000) refers to the existence of ethno-sexual frontiers, an important issue in this study which might provide an explanation for the outcry in South Africa and other countries about Zimbabwean women selling sex. She argues that these frontiers are policed, surveyed, supervised, patrolled, regulated and restricted to protect local men from these women from across the border, however people still manage to circumvent them (Nagel, 2000). Ethno-sexual frontiers might also account for much research in the medical arena on migrants and HIV/AIDS. The ethno-sexual frontiers argument allows me to explore the experiences of Zimbabwe women in sex work and how migrant status impacts on their work in South Africa. It is important to note that there are many ethno-sexual frontiers such as race and ethnicity that can be created that are beyond the scope of this study.

Sudarkaso (1977) also underscores that female migration is founded on perpetuating the exploitation of women in global capitalism. She observes that female migrants continue to do women work as domestic workers, waitresses, nannies and sex workers which shows the "gendered work experiences of migrants" (Instraw, 2007, 2). Premi (1980) agrees that gender cuts across other forms of oppression to facilitate economic exploitation of women migrants and their relegation to servile (domestic workers) or despised (sex worker) status. A study of Cambodian women that migrated to Spain reveals that gender norms, inequalities, and discrimination inform women's migratory experiences (Pedraza, 1991). Women migrants

experience the double difficulty of being female and being foreign which leads to more discrimination than male counterparts, hence limited choices in host countries.

Furthermore, Phizacklea (1993) brings out the problems faced by migrants in destination countries. She highlights that language barriers; cultural preference and lack of recognized skills are often used to explain female migrants' subordinate position in the labour market. She admits that while these are valid, they are used as tools of exploitation not only by indigenous employers but also by male migrant employers. Consequently, these problems limit choices and options available to migrant women hence entry into sex work which does not have as many barriers and endowments with language and educational capabilities are not essential.

This study finds strength from Dodson (2000) and Chant (1992) who notes that female migration is a response to difficult situations in countries of origin. This is especially true for Zimbabwean women who have migrated since Zimbabwe became a failed state. Therefore, migration and even sex work is a "temporary' and "expedient" coping strategy to a difficult situation (Chant, 1992, 23). While much literature on women and migration has explained problems faced by migrant women in host countries, very little literature explains how women's migratory experiences inform pathways into sex work even when they acknowledged, migrant women's engagement into sex work (Agustin, 2006; Busza, 2004). Literature on women and migration has been rather descriptive and weak on analysis (Chant, 1992; Dodson, 2000). While rural to urban migration for Zimbabwean women has been documented (Hungwe, 2006; Muzvidziwa, 2001, 1997) there

is little of literature that explores Zimbabwean women who cross borders and enter the sex industry except for the media attention they receive.

A methodological critique of studies on sex work

An analysis of the methods used in sex work research has revealed the complexity of researching sex work. While studies with a health focus such as those by Stadler and Delany (2006), have used quantitative methods, the questions I sought to answer could be adequately addressed using qualitative methods of ethnography and informal conversations such as those used by Sanders (2006) in her study of sex workers in a brothel in London and Agustin (2004) in her study of migrant sex workers in London. Another African study of relevance is by Sswakiryanga (2001) which informs the debate on identity formation among Ugandan sex workers which is closely related to the questions I ask on how migrant sex workers perceive their involvement in sex work. Sswakiryanga (2001) uses observation and informal conversation to respond to questions of how the different elements of power structures create identities of women in sex work. This exploratory study provides insights into methodological complexities one encounters in the study of sex work. Of value is the methodological contribution made by Sanders (2006) that researchers in the sex industry constantly struggle with the unknown sample and boundaries of the population which leads to queries about sample representation, an aspect I encounter as I collect data from the Diplomat Hotel.

Summary

This review revealed the lack of literature on migrant women in host countries and how migration is linked to vice and sex work as a vice that accompanies migration. The debates on sexuality reveal that sex work is contested form of sexuality viewed as deviant from what is believed to be normal sexual behaviour for women. In addition, the review exposed inconsistencies in the regulation of male and female sexuality and the ways in which female sexuality is controlled, hence the whore stigma attached to sex work.

International debates on sex work have been ongoing and there are no signs of consensus between the abolitionists and advocates of sex work. Yet the sex worker revolution has significantly changed the landscape of sex work as demonstrated by decriminalization in a number of countries, something under debate in South Africa. Given these debates on sex work, the study explores how migrant women in sex work negotiate for meaning and where they situate themselves and choice of sex work. The next chapter will provide a discussion on the methods used to collect data for this project.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

In the preceding chapter I discussed the debates that characterize sex work. This chapter highlights the process of data collection for this study. I provide justification for the research design I chose given that the study was qualitative and interpretative. I discuss the complexities inherent in sex work research as I explain how I resolved dilemmas encountered in observation, translation and being reflexive in the research process.

The study drew intellectual inspiration from postmodern feminist theory, which values multiple realities, multiple voices and multiple truth claims as well as accommodating contradictions and tensions in women's experiences and encourages the use of qualitative methods (Baber, 1994). The postmodern feminism theoretical framework influenced the choice of qualitative methods such as observation and what I will term indirect interviews (Forro, 2005). Other studies of sex work have used a variety of methods, predominantly qualitative to study the specific experiences of women (Shankar and Apte 2007, Parsons, 2004, IIkkaracam, 2000). Studies of sex workers in United Kingdom (UK) Turkey, India and United States have used ethnographic techniques such as participant observation, in-depth interviews and key informant interviews as the methods provided more nuanced and rich data on the lives of sex workers (Sanders, 2001, Ssewakiryanga, 2001, Agustin, 2006). Ethnographic methods also reveal the role of the researcher in knowledge

creations through reflexivity and reflections on power relations in the field. The use of these methods depends on the context and the different ways in which sex work is organized. In this study, in depth interviews were not possible as women worked 12 hour shifts and did not have time to sit with the researcher for a long time except for cases when they indicated they did not want to work on a particular day.

Qualitative research was most appropriate for this study given that it is interpretative and focuses on the complex, creation and maintenance of meaning (Liamputong and Ezzy, 2005). As a result I spent three months in Diplomat Hotel, observing and having informal conversations with women who identified as sex workers working in this hotel. This study sought to understand how women in sex work situate themselves within the discourses in sex work inter alia the abolitionists discourse and the sex worker movement. Sex work is complex and qualitative techniques such as observation were essential in unpacking such phenomena. Qualitative techniques allowed for contextualized experience and action which led to a thick description of sex work in Diplomat Hotel (Liamputonng and Ezzy, 2005).

The study sought to understand migratory experiences as well as perceptions of involvement in sex work and qualitative techniques such as observation and informal interviews allowed me to capture their lived experience of the sex industry and meanings women give to their experiences. Qualitative methods allowed me to highlight the world from the point of view of the people being studied rather than from the perspectives of the researcher (Liamputong and Ezzy, 2005).

As I was interested in the way women in sex work made sense of and gave meanings to sex work, qualitative techniques provided insight into how women in sex work made sense of experiences in ways that could not be easily provided by quantitative methods (Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2005). However, I was conscious of my position as a researcher and how this affected my worldview of participants, an aspect I discuss later in this chapter as I reflect on field work.

Sex work involves multifaceted interrelationships between women in the trade, clients as well as families and partners. Qualitative research revealed these interrelationships and provided the context for the behavior (Family Health, 2006; Liamputong and Ezzy, 2005). It was only through qualitative research that I was able to expand knowledge and understanding the world of sex work for migrant women. This study was part of a broader study that analyzed migrant sex work in three brothels in Hillbrow.

3.2. Access to Diplomat Hotel

To gain access to respondents the researcher began by working with "New Life" an organization that provides condoms, education and support to women in sex work in areas around Hillbrow and inner city Johannesburg. While New Life provides these services to sex workers, its main mission is to 'rescue' women in the sex industry as they view them as sexually exploited and insist on calling the trade prostitution, a topic to be dealt with later on. After attending two feedback sessions at New Life's offices, I went out into the brothels with peer educators. We visited four brothels and three bars. At all these venues peer educators were not given time to

talk about their 'rescue' programme. They were simply told to leave condoms in the bar and leave as the bar employees did not want to reduce their sound systems and disturb their clients.

After this we went to Diplomat bar where peer educators were openly instructed just to leave condoms. This showed me that working with New Life would not allow me to observe sex work in the way I desired and I would not have been able to have conversations with women in the bar. At this point I had to change the strategy for access as I realized that working with New Life would not allow me to collect rich data. This revealed to me the constraints of access mediated by an agency and how it may compromise ability to collect data.

At entering the bar, I felt overwhelmed by the environment as I was confronted with women scantily dressed and I felt overdressed and an outsider. The women in the bar were quite puzzled by my presence and a few asked me what I was doing in the bar. I explained that I was doing a study on migrant women "in business" and that I wanted to observe them at work. Here I was confronted another dilemma I will explain later in this chapter, how would I refer my study to them, for New Life it was prostitutes, I wanted to use the term sex worker but I was not sure if they would be offended to be called sex workers either. I could not say that I was explicitly interested in sex work and instead used the phrase "women in business", a phrase I had heard at New Life. They looked puzzled and wanted to know if I had a camera and wanted to take their pictures to Zimbabwe. This was a logical fear as they had been many media comments about

Zimbabwean women in sex work across borders and some women did not want their family to know the nature of work they were involved in outside their borders.

I had to decide on the most appropriate role to adopt to facilitate acceptance and rapport. Since I was dressed in the most conservative of clothes, the women did not see me as a threat or a rival who had come to sell sex but the questions they asked showed me they felt I was an invasion to their privacy. The intensity of competition between women in the bar meant I had to be as unthreatening as possible and demonstrate that I did not have intentions of becoming a sex worker. This helped in building acceptance and rapport. In terms of protecting their privacy, they wanted to see my phone as evidence that I could not take pictures of them and send them to Zimbabwe. I showed them my phone, to show that I would not be able to take any pictures and I also assured them they need not tell me their names. Access to the site was made easier as I was a woman, often perceived as wishing to learn sex work by the guards and men in the bar or as a sex worker looking for a room at the brothel.

A number of factors made rapport easy for me with women in Diplomat. These include that I am a woman, Zimbabwean, black, and Shona speaking. Language particularly, provided common ground between me and the women. I also had to demonstrate that I was not judgmental about sex work as Hubbard (1999) and Sanders (2005) observed that one can only get access, if the research will reduce the stigma associated with sex work, if the researcher demonstrates insight into sex work, if the researcher recognizes sex work as legitimate work and if there is a belief

that health and safety risks will be reduced. While I could not speak directly to the reduction of health and safety risks, I was able to show that I understood sex work as work and was not there to stigmatize it. While rapport was established, I encountered a number of barriers such as the coded language women in the bar which I only got to understand after a period of close interaction with women.

3.3. Observation

I borrowed heavily from ethnographic techniques and used observation for this study. Liamputong and Ezzy (2005) classified observation an unobtrusive method. Observation allowed me to "see through the eyes of the subject" in order to "describe" the details of their everyday life (Brymen and Burgess, 1994, 45). Sanders (2006, 463) emphasizes that ethnographic techniques are the "most fruitful route into the sex work setting" as they produce high quality in depth accounts of this sometimes secretive world.

Observation necessarily requires interviews but of a different nature in informal and everyday settings. The informal interviews served to fill in gaps gleaned during observation. Sanders (2005, 205) confirms that multiple methods "increases the abundance of data" for the researcher. Denzin in Patton (1987:61) contend that "each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality" thus multiple methods were used. I used observation to understand the context in which sex work took place in Diplomat Hotel.

Observation is defined as a process in which the researcher establishes a many sided, long term relationship with groups or individuals in their natural settings for the purposes of understanding individuals and groups (Family Health International, 2006). Using this method, I was careful to observe the following categories: Appearance: clothing, age, physical appearance. Clothing was especially important for me to observe as Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) maintain that clothes talk and have meaning which largely depends on context and situation. Some women in the bar wore very revealing clothes such as miniskirts, very short dresses which revealed their cleavages and thighs. I also observed variations of dressing between younger and older women in the bar; older women wore revealing clothes more while younger women did not reveal their bodies more. Watching these variables allowed me to understand women and begin to appreciate how women deciphered their involvement in sex work.

I also observed verbal behaviour and interactions. I observed who spoke to whom, for how long, who initiates interaction, the language spoken, and the tone of voice. These allowed me to see the multiple roles of women in sex work play as the seductress, as a confidante to friends who would have had a rough day and as what they termed "normal woman." All these will be discussed in later chapters. I also observed physical behaviour and gestures. Under this category, I was observing what sex workers do, who does what, who interacts with whom and who is not interacting.

I was careful to observe personal space in the bar. I was keen to see the distances between people as they speak to each other. I keenly observed human traffic into the bar. I was concerned about how many people enter, leave and spend time at the research site. It was useful as it revealed a rhythm of sex work and patterns of work in the site. People who stand out were another important category I observed during field work.

> I had been to the bar a few times but this was the first time I had seen a woman I later knew as Grace. As she entered into the bar, all attention seems to revert to her, she was tall, wearing high heels, light in complexion, she was wearing a short demin dress and her cleavage was almost falling out of her dress. As she entered, she greeted the men sitting at the benches by "hi honies". After this she went straight for a man who was looking much cleaner than most of the men I had seen in this bar, she spoke only English and not a word of Shona. It seems all women were also looking at her, some eyes envious and some with humour.

This was particularly important as it showed the kind of people who received attention from women and men in the research site (Family Health international, 2006). People especially men who appeared in ill health also received attention from women in the bar, an aspect I will discuss later. New women who came into the bar also received attention as women were protecting territory and one woman shared that:

> Men like new faces and so if we see a new woman we need to know where she is coming from and what her business is in this place.

Attending to this body language alerted me to the competitive nature of sex work and the forms of surveillance present that watch out for competition. Observation was especially useful for my study since I sought to examine complex social relationships and intricate patterns of interaction that takes place in sex work. I recorded observations in order to understand the universe occupied by respondents (Patton, 1987).

Observation also provided a number of other benefits for my study. I was able to observe the behaviour of my respondents in ways they would never have described to me. In addition, my participants did not need to sacrifice their time to speak to me. The "social environment" in the bar was not disturbed by my presence (Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2005). While I take cognizance of reflexivity, observation was useful for me as most of the time; my observation stimulated a reaction as women in the bar teased me by repeating taboo words once they noticed my discomfort. I was embarrassed and I am sure this showed though I was not aware of this reaction and women asked me if I was embarrassed to hear them use these words. Women were also keen to see how I reacted to advances from clients. In the first days, they would listen attentively when a man asked to go up to the rooms with me, after sometime, they began to respond on my behalf that I am was not selling.

Observation is time consuming and given the nature of my study, I could not write notes while in the brothel given the noise in the place and the suspicion this would raise, thus I had to rely on memory. The bar was very noisy and the context of the bar does not allow for a person to have a pen and a paper, it would have made participants uncomfortable and I think would have altered the environment. I thought having a pen and paper in a bar of this nature would have drawn unnecessary attention to me and thus create distance between participants and me. Observation also relies on discipline and diligence. I had to work hard at being consciously objective in order to remove my own biases and prejudices. In addition, I also had to be in the field very often thus I started field work in June and completed at the end of August. Given the scope of the study, I

subjected participants to my presence almost on a daily basis until they got used to my presence in the bar.

While observation has been the most popular method in investigations of sex work, there are still questions regarding what observation is without participation. However, Adler and Alder (1994, 380) argue that the researcher is only required "to interact closely enough with members to establish an insider identity without participating in those activities constituting the core of the group membership." While I was not able to gain the insider identity with women in the bar who perceived me as a "decent" woman, I was able to gain acceptance and rapport with women without participating in their core activities.

3.4. Interviews

I was not able to conduct formal interviews with women in Diplomat as the environment was not conducive and women were working and so any interview would be disrupted when they went to their rooms with clients. Some scholars have argued that ethnography is a series of interviews (Liamputtong, 2007; Marshal and Rossman, 1989; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Instead of formal interviews, I had conversations with women and I had to be aware of my research questions in my conversations with women. The purpose of these conversations was to collect data from sex workers on their trajectories and experiences of sex work. Their particular knowledge and understanding based on experience and practice provided insights on lives of migrant sex workers in indoor based sex work.

I had conversations with many women, sometimes one on one, sometimes in groups. This scenario allowed me to access a variety of people with different orientations which allowed me to compare and contrast experiences of sex work in Johannesburg. This method was especially suitable for the study given the need for more information on experiences and perceptions of migrant sex workers.

While clients are not a significant feature of the study, informal discussions were done with clients in order to assess representations of migrant sex workers and draw how they perceive migrant sex workers and what they feel are motivations of women in sex work as they either reinforce or oppose public discourses of sex work. These conversations were especially useful since they provided the how and why of what happened in sex work (Cresswell, 2003; Bailey, 1987).

I was able to interact with a lot of women through these informal conversations, as a result found rich data. I interviewed women who had begun sex work in Johannesburg and those who had been sex workers in Zimbabwe. I also spoke to women from rural and urban backgrounds. I also had women of various ages and this resulted in rich data. The fact that women were from various backgrounds allowed me access to various perspectives.

These interviews were a useful tool in this study as they allowed for understanding the experiences and actions of each individual's experiences. Interviews provided an opportunity to probe respondents' in ways that were not possible to plan in advance. Finally face to face interviews were a vital opportunity to observe non verbal behavior as women revealed different emotions during interviews, at times discomfort, laughter or silence which revealed tension, ambiguities and contradictions in sex work. Like any method of inquiry, these conversations were not without costs and problems. Interviews were intense given the nature of the topic and at times I felt overwhelmed by the language and the sexualized nature of the environment.

Good interviewing requires expertise and experience, ability to plan. I had to improve my interviewing skills to make the most of the limited time participants gave me. I also had to be careful not to pathologise women in sex work in my writing and so the language I used had to be sensitive to prevent the risk of "othering" that has been done in writings of sex work research (Agustin, 2006). While I strove not be judgemental, the use of crude language and expletives in the bar made me very uncomfortable. The incident I when I went up the rooms with one of the women in the bar and found her roommate having sex with a client comes to mind as very discomfiting and upsetting. I was not able to understand how the roommate managed a conversation with Farai, the woman I had gone upstairs with while she was having sex, it brought to the fore some of my moral values and what I assumed was normal behavior during sex.

3.5. Narrative Inquiry

According to Danzig (2007, 118) narrative research is an overarching category that includes auto/biographies, personal accounts, narrative interviews, life stories." Labov (1972) defines a narrative as a method of recapitulating past experience. Narratives are viewed as social products that are produced by people in the context of specific social, historical and cultural locations. I had chosen observation over interviews but I was able to ask questions such as how women began sex work, which provided opportunities for women to give accounts and in these accounts they were able to represent themselves and their worlds to themselves and others, hence their utility for this study.

I was interested in personal accounts of women in sex work on how, when and why they joined the sex industry in South Africa. Narratives were particularly important for this study as Kiguwa (2006) argues that narrative allows us to reflect on events and how we react to them, thus narratives were useful in bringing to the fore trajectories of women into sex work. Kiguwa (2006, 15) emphasizes that "the act of recounting one's personal experience provides a useful way to represent oneself….enables one to reflect and make sense of these experiences". Narrative techniques allowed me to understand how women in sex work made sense of their identity and experience.

People produce accounts of themselves which are storied and the social world itself is storied providing people a means to construct personal identities and narratives. As women gave

accounts of their experience of sex work, they were able to link the past to the present. Narratives also served to reduce tension as women struggled to navigate the stigma and shame in sex work by giving accounts which justified choice of sex work. They also worked to resolve dilemmas and they allowed us to deal with and explain mismatches between exceptional and the ordinary. Narratives also allow women to re-cast chaotic experiences into causal stories and to make sense of them and render them safe (Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2005). For example, the way one participant recounts her divorce after an extra-marital affair using humour which made it less traumatic and disturbing.

However not all narratives in the bar were verbal, some of them were non-verbal. The bar was organized in such a manner that men sat on benches arranged in an L- shaped way, while women stood at the bar looking directly at men which allowed women to wink and use non verbal signs to attract men in the bar. The dressing of women in the bar provided a narrative of sex work as women wore very short and revealing clothes, which showed most of their cleavage and other body parts to attract the men in the bar. The touching, pushing and caressing that took place in the bar was also a narrative which served a number of purposes such as showing availability and eagerness to engage in sex.

Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) argue that to tell a story is to take a moral stance. Toolan (1988) and Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) agree that narratives are never ethically neutral and narrative identity is normative and evaluative in its claims. Telling a story about oneself involves telling a

story about choice and action which have moral and ethical dimensions. Thus, narratives sit at the intersection of history, biography and society and sex work in particular is a sector so shrouded by moral anxiety. Consequently, sex worker narratives were shaped by sex work experience and responses of people to sex work. Narratives also allowed the construction of meaning and identity.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990, 25) emphasize that, "humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and collectively, lead storied lives." Narratives also allowed respondents to make sense of disruptive events in their lives and construct meaning. It is partly through narrative discourse that we comprehend the world and present our understanding of it to others. Narratives were particularly important for this study as they presented the most attractive and vivid representation of experience through language (Labov, 1999). Toolan (1988) also shows that narratives have trajectories and they usually go from somewhere, with some development and even a resolution. When asked how women began sex work, women gave narratives of their initiation into the world of sex work and through language women were able to give stories of how they began sex work and their understanding of the trade.

3.4.1. Positioning myself in the brothel

Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005, 43) stress that qualitative research should be reflexive, as a result, I needed to be reflective on my position as a researcher and the impact my presence would have on participants and subsequently the effect on data collected. Researching sex work is a delicate

endeavor as the subject is filled with anxieties and so I had to situate and locate myself in this research. Palmary (2006, 37) observes "one of the issues central to how the "Other" is represented is that of locating ourselves within the process of knowledge production." This meant that I had to constantly take stock of my actions and my role in the research process and subject these to the scrutiny (Palmary, 2006). Being a black, Zimbabwean and Shona speaking woman resulted in certain reactions from women in Diplomat who were mostly Zimbabwean, Shona speaking and doing sex work in South Africa. Power relations form an important component of research and my position as a researcher in knowledge production.

As I entered Diplomat Hotel I was taken aback by the state of nakedness of women in the bar. This emphasized my place as an outsider. It was clear from the start that women saw me as the "other" as they called me "a normal woman" and I had to be conscious that I would not speak or conduct myself in a way that would "other' women in sex work as this has been the root of stigma and discrimination in the sex industry. My ability to do this was tested during times men propositioned me and I had to refuse their offers in ways that would not degrade women selling sex. For example;

> One afternoon I was sitting in the bar and chatting to a few women who were standing next to me, a man came heading straight in my direction and asked how much I wanted, not expecting this, I was a bit shocked and I felt all women's eyes on me. I told him I was not selling and was visiting my friends, the women laughed at me after this man had left…

The revealing clothes worn by the women in the bar made me uncomfortable, I felt over dressed and out of place. Palmary (2006) maintains that the researcher has to be conscious of how their identities are hidden or brought into the open through the research process. My identity was fluid

as women referred to me as "normal" and "decent" at other times and sometimes allowed me an inside view of sex work and their experiences.

I was confronted with another difficulty regarding the language used in this setting. It felt uncomfortable to taboo words such as "Kusvira" (fucking), "mhata" (cunt[3]), "beche" (cunt) "mboro" (cock[4]) spoken in Shona and the use of the crudest of words and the description of female and male genitalia used very frequently in the bar. These words made me uncomfortable and when women in the bar saw my discomfort, they teased me and used them more, perhaps to shock me. While the taboo words used in the bar environment shocked me, they also served to introduce me to the environment of sex work in Diplomat and allowed me to reflect on my moral assumptions that would otherwise be taken for granted. As time went on, I was not so shocked and I got used to hearing these words, though I was not able to use the words myself in my conversations with women in the bar which was another point of difference between women and myself. Language is critical for the construction of meanings and since I sought how women situated themselves within the discourses in sex work; the language used in the bar became a significant component in the analysis of perceptions of sex work.

[3] The words "*beche*" and "*mhata*" are used interchangeably in shona as a deragotory word for vagina but the word vagina almost sanitises the meaning as intended by the women when they use the word. The word "cunt", a deragotory word for vagina provides a better meaning for the words.

[4] While the word *mboro* is translated to cock which is a derogatory word for penis in English , the word penis does not bring out the embarrassment one feels if they use the word in Shona .For lack of a better English word, I will use the word *mboro* when the women used the word and when I translate it to English I will use the word "cock" which highlights the taboo nature of the word.

The researcher is part and parcel of the context, the setting and culture they are trying to understand and understanding self and identifying the discourses which have impacted on the lenses through which the researcher views the world and participants (Liamputong, 2006). Reflexivity is part of the post modernists' conceptualization of rigor, and I tried to reflect on the effect my presence, my attitudes, biases and the view expressed by one of the participants who called me a "normal woman" had on the participants and their behavior in the bar. This is something I reflect on further in my analysis in later chapters.

The fact that I was doing research for my Masters degree placed me in a certain position in the eyes of women in the bar, hence during the first days of observation, a number of women professed how they hate sex work and how they would want to leave it and pursue their education. I downplayed the importance of my education and as rapport was build, the narratives changed and conversations about how they hate sex work changed and I did not hear the victim discourse as women were more open about their trajectories and perceptions of sex work. While in the beginning of data collection, the women sought to portray themselves as helpless and in sex work because they had no other choices, but these stories changed as I spent more time with women and they revealed their agency. This will be reflected on more as the analysis develops.

3.4.2. Translation dilemmas

While in the field I was confronted by yet another dilemma, the translation of women's stories from Shona to English. As a Shona speaking person, I was able to converse with women in my home language but I had to translate those conversations into English, this is where I confronted a number of problems. Functional equivalence was what I strove for as I translated conversations from Shona to English.

The statements of Sechrest et al (1972, 41) provide a summary of the problems I faced in translation

> Vocabulary equivalence must take into account language as used by respondents and the possibility of terms lacking equivalents across languages. Equivalence in idiom and in grammar and syntax may be important, but equivalence in terms of experiences and concepts tapped is probably most important of all. Direct translation cannot be assumed to produce equivalent versions of verbal stimuli.

In some instances, I could not find English words that provided the same meaning as the Shona equivalents I was trying to translate, thus in the process of translation, some of the meaning and intensity of what was said lost. There are words like "*Kusvira*" (fucking) which women used to entice men and also in their everyday lingo, I had difficulty finding the English equivalent that would bring out the crudeness of the word. To translate the word "Kusvira" to sex does not bring out the crudeness of what the women were expressing. English taboo words such as such "fucking" might be closer to bringing out the meanings of the word. When women referred to the female reproductive organ as "beche", translating this word to vagina did not bringing out the rawness intended in the communication. In this regard I could identity with Behar (2003) when she observed that the stories she recorded were born again with an alien tongue. I also felt that through translation, I might be "cutting the tongue" of the teller and my tongue be put in place

instead (Behar, 2003, 4). As a result, I have made attempts to find the English equivalent of taboo words used by women in the brothel but I am conscious of my tongue doing the telling.

In the beginning, my embarrassment at taboo words used so freely in the bar resulted in my omitting them in my field notes. However, I realized that such action meant I would be guilty of what Behar (2003) terms "watering down" of the meanings of what women conveyed to me. My challenge was to tell women's stories in ways that would not "demean them, water down or sensationalize what they told me" (Behar, 2003, IVV)

3.4.3. Sex worker, whore or prostitute

Names have significance and are value laden. I had to decide how I would address women in Diplomat. Exposure to "New Life" made me realize that they insisted on the term prostitute like most activists within the abolitionist camp. This carries resonance with their ideology together with many others in the abolitionist camp who insist that the sex work is undignified and they do not recognize it as work.

While in Diplomat, I discovered that the women referred to each other as "whore" and I was equally uncomfortable with this label. The women also made it clear from the onset that they did not expect me to refer to them as whore as I would be insulting them since I was not in the trade myself. This was one of the times when they made me feel like an outsider yet there were times

when they treated me like an insider especially when we spoke about the problems women experienced with men and in marriage. The use of the word "whore" is an aspect I discuss later in the next chapter when I discuss the use of language.

I decided to use the term sex worker; the problem with this term is that it is a label that women in Diplomat did not identify with; they said it was a label for South African women, something that I will interrogate in later chapters. Given the contradictions I faced, I decided that in this project I will refer to women as sex workers, but when I translate conversations and texts I will use the term "whore" which they use to refer to themselves and others in the bar.

3.5. Data analysis

Data analysis is the way in which a researcher moves from a description of what is the case to an explanation of why what is the case is the case. Marshal and Rossman (1990:11) observe that data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data. Qualitative data for the study was analyzed using content analysis. Festinger (1966) defined content analysis as a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication (Festinger, 1966, 130). Codes were applied to the data to enable sorting and collection devices. A code was created for each category.

3.5.1 Thematic Analysis

During the process collecting data through observation and the informal interviews with women, I wrote field notes at the end of each data collection session. I used of thematic analysis to

analyze data collected in the field. Anderson (2007, 3) defined thematic content analysis as "descriptive presentation of qualitative data" while this is helpful, it does not fully explain all the techniques I used in analyzing data.

After preparing all data, I developed codes or categories based on the words used by women more frequently and the themes that seemed to come out during these conversations. For every code I made I placed all the excerpts from the data that fell into that category as shown in the table below.

In drawing out the themes, I conducted an analysis of the language women used in the bar and noticed that some words were used more than others in their narratives. I focused on the language used by women as language provided a system of meanings and practices that construct reality. Ryan and Bernard argue that words that occur a lot show their salience in the minds of research participants and in this research women used words like, decent, indecent, sending money, whore, family, children, better life, money and disease.

Table 1: Description of coding used in data analysis

Code	Description	Examples
Language	Use of crude language to entice men Use of language to defy stereotypes Use of language to resist stigma Language used to accept stigma Language and meanings attached to sex work	" ino inzvimbo ye mahure" (this is a place for whores) "Yes, I am a whore cant you see I am selling" *Huya tisvirane(lets go and fuck)* *varikutsvaga mwana akaita hure, manje kana munhu avebonga, hamumbogona kumuchinja, bonga I bonga"* (she must be looking for a person who has become a prostitute but once one has entered the trade one cannot get out, you cant tame wild cat once its in the bush). life ***ye chihure(of whoring)*** is bad and painful
Social capital	Women in the bar as a family Unity in times of trouble Social networks to get by Networks to get ahead in sex work	Rudo says "even when we do not like each other much but when one is in trouble we help each other". She tells me that the same solidarity is also found when a woman is attacked by a man; all women will rush to help defend the woman even if they are not friends, but we look out for each other. *Mahure nembavha dzakabatana.(whores and thieves are united)* Stokvels: money saving strategies employed by women to save for the future as they cannot open bank accounts due to their immigration st*atus*
Survival and sex work as a livelihood strategy	Income from sex work and family responsibilities they have Sex work as a better alternative compared to domestic work and waitressing for some women Migrant women as women with a plan.	I ask Fungai how much money she makes in a day and she tells me that they make good money. On a bad day she said she makes R300 and on a good day she can make a R1000. Mahure arimuno anezvinhu zvavo, sista" the prostitutes in this place have property, we send money home and take care of families except for those stupid prostitutes that waste money on groceries only and not buying things.
The varied and multiple trajectories into sex work	Come to sa to look for better opportunities in sex work Started sex work in SA Friend introduced woman to sex work	**Maria**: She had come to South Africa and had gone to Cape Town where she had worked a real as a waitress but the money was too little and so she had come to Joburg and started sex work. **Rudo**: Rudo also told me that she had come to South Africa and had gone to a brothel that had many white girls

	The role of networks in entry into sex work	and people there made a lot of money like R450 per round but they want very slim girls and she had got fat and they had chased her away. At that place she said she would get clients because of her nice breasts, which are tattooed and exposed today as she is wearing a boob tube.
Agency of women in sex work	(rules and regulations) Sex work at diplomat is subject to a number of rules and regulations for contact with clients set by women	Dorcas told me they have rules they have set here and the differences with other brothels and the are rules: • No kissing, I don't kiss these men from here • No anal sex • No oral sex "We have to abide by these rules because if one of us breaches them then all the clients will go to that person and not to us. These things are done in other brothels such as Hillbrow Inn and Summit Hotel"
Relationships outside sex work	Most women I had contact with had relationships they call normal outside sex work	**Rudo:** Her boyfriend asked her to stop sex work and be good so that he can marry her, He went out to the lodge with her for the whole night and I was afraid that he would not pay me for the night. The man insisted on protected sex as I told him that I may have left sex work but it's possible that I could have diseases so we need to use protection, my boyfriend agreed with me and we had sex the whole night and used protection. I had lied to him the flats where I was living so that he would not know that I was still doing prostitution.
Double life of sex work	At times women's partners are not aware that their women are in sex work	I had a lawyer boyfriend that care here and I accompanied him to OR Tambo there I cried and he was embarrassed. After this he told me that if there is something that he hates is a woman who does prostitution, Rudo says I agreed with him that there is nothing as bad as prostitution. He told me that he would rather marry a witch than a prostitute. He does not know that ndinokwirwa 24/7 kudiplomat.he was glad that I was working.
Meanings of sex work	Self degrading Legitimating sex work Accepting stigma and shame	Rudo: you know you can find love in the dustbin; whatever you say about this girl I don't care, I am in love with a bitch so what. At least my girl is selling but I am in love with her, so what. Every woman is a bitch, He went outside and he got a girl who he proposed to and had sex with right away. This shows that every girl is a bitch.
Retaining autonomy and control over working environment	Ability to choose clients and refuse some Use of humour in the bar	Choice and agency when it comes to the choice of clients "handisvirwe nemunhu akadayi, charamba akaimba kuti mukombe uyu ngaundipfuure,"

	Mocking of men in the bar	Portia told me that they do not like Park Royal hotel, because the men that come there want oral sex (*vanoda kudyiwa*) and here we do not do that.
Perceptions of sex work Culture Information management	the role of culture family views hiding their activities from family and friends in Zimbabwe the feeling of being far from home and so being far from censure and control The desire to hide nature of work from family and friends and partners at times. Good mothers take care of their children and family	**Memory** : said that she does not want her ex-husband to know that she is in prostitution, but she wants to do well and let him think that she doing well from a job that pays well not sex work. in response to this one of the girls, said she would actually tell the father of her child that " *it's the beche (vagina) that is feeding his child"* **Rudo**: This life is hard and I don't want my niece to do this I want her to have a good life. It's this (mudhara duzvi) Mugabe that has led me to do this, I have just started. "Chihure chakaoma" being a prostitute is hard, and if she had gone to school she would not been here but "takatema mateacher nerekeni" this is an adage that means we did not take school very seriously and so we failed. A neighbor came from home and told me that my brother wanted to come to SA and he wanted me to look for a job for him before he came. I had told this man that I could not look for a job, I would have to leave Joburg if my brother came to Joburg because I did not want to spoil the relationship between me and my brother. I called home and my brother told me that he had been told that I am staying in a bad place for prostitutes. I told him I don't know about this and it was nonsense. You know when people know that you are doing prostitution in SA, whatever the value of things you send to them become meaningless but I have to take care of my child and my late brother's child who is home.

In addition to the coding of themes that emerged, I realized that women used metaphors and analogies in their speech. For example, when speaking about their fear being infected by HIV infection, they used the metaphor "*kunyudzwa*" which translates to being drowning in English. I drew out meaning and perceptions using the metaphors women used as these revealed thoughts, behavour and experiences. In drawing themes, I also used discourse analysis through the

deconstruction of texts. Using the deconstruction methods, I sought to find the tensions and contradictions within texts. I also looked for what texts presented as normal, natural and apparent. This analysis was in line with Burr 's assertion (1995,145) that " once we take up a subject position in discourse, we have available to us a particular, limited sets of concepts, images, metaphors, ways of speaking and self narratives …" Consequently, women represented themselves to offer explanations, excuses, making justifications, apportioning blame and making accusations.

Using discourse analysis, I looked the discourse of negation and devaluation. I also looked for evaluative statements and power dynamics that were portrayed in the texts (Van Peer, 1991). In additions to these, ideological positions as well as texts that showed social values as women interpreted them. Thus thematic analysis makes use of a number of techniques all which help to enrich the data analysis process.

3.5.2. Narrative analysis

Since I used narratives in the collection of data, narrative analysis was used to further analyze data. Liamputong and Ezzy (2005) show that narrative analysis involves reduction of data and re-interpretation to present an analysis of issues under investigation. Dramatic analysis of grammatical resources is another way that will be used to analyze data and this perspective focuses on the "act, scene, agent, agency, purpose" (Liamputong and Ezzy 2005, 131). This analysis was most useful in narratives of women's pathways into sex work. As I asked women

how they had began sex work, the stories narrated brought out the actions of women and their purposes.

Narrative analysis has a number of benefits that I tapped into, it allowed me to see ways in which people make and use stories to interpret the world (Shaw and Gould, 2001). The method was also useful for this study as narratives are not treated as stories that transmit facts about the world, and I was not interested in true and false stories, but rather women‘s accounts of their experiences as they perceived them.

Narrative analysis is an important tradition within discourse analysis as it deals with the most pervasive genre of communication through which we enact important aspects of our identities and relations with others (Labov, 1972). It also conceptualizes stories as wholes, reducing the decontexualising and fragmenting effect of other methods. It explicitly incorporates moral and political dimensions of its framework (Limputong and Ezzy, 2005).

However, it has some limitations as some aspects of narrative analysis cannot be codified and systematized because it is focused on the ambiguity of meaning and interpretation. The method also required high investment in time and energy because of the careful focus on meanings and interpretations. I was limited in the sense that I captured snippets of stories rather than whole life narratives given the frequent disruptions in the bar as women left me when they had clients and returned later to continue with the story.

3.6. Ethical issues in the study

A number of ethical issues came to the fore in the execution of this study. Sex work research needs to be managed in the context of confidentiality, harm and informed consent. Sex work research is sensitive research as Liamputtong (2007, 5) observes that "it requires disclosure of behaviors that would be kept private and personal" hence the need for careful consideration about ethical implications. In addition, the politics of the topic makes ethical principles essential.

Migrant sex workers are a doubly hidden population as their work is stigmatized and illegal. One of the ethical challenges I faced was to study an illegal activity and do nothing about it. In order to protect the participants from harm, I did not take participants outside their location, thus protecting respondents by not exposing them to unfamiliar environments.

Observation as a methodology brought complexities in seeking informed consent. Getting informed consent in the conventional way of signing the form was a problem due to the length of time the researcher spent in the field and it was not possible to get informed consent every day, or from everyone. For example, I was not able to get informed consent from men I observed in the bar and they could not choose to withdraw from the study. These issues also raised questions of privacy and confidentiality which are critical in research (Shavers, 2005, Sanders, 2006, Ssewakryanga, 2001). Some of the respondents did not want their identities known, so the researcher assured them that pseudonyms would be used. This problem was further solved as

women revealed to me later that the names they had given me were not their real names and they used this in the bar. In order to protect their identities, I used my own names for the women to increase confidentiality and privacy.

Researchers of sex work encounter a number of real life dilemmas that are specific to the sexualized, suspicious and volatile nature of sex work (Sanders, 2005, Agustin, 2001). Managing the researcher identity, the emotional consequences of investigating sensitive and sexual topic and the potentially dangerous nature of the research sites are some of the issues the researcher had to deal with in this study (Sanders, 2005). I was careful not to draw attention to myself and I always left the field when I felt overwhelmed.

Sex work has been prone to moralizing language, using words that are foreign to women or stigmatizing labels that exacerbates stigma. In order to avoid stigma, I avoided asking questions that contribute to stigma by being sensitive to the needs of the participants and following their leads. I tried as much as possible to record interviews and observations as accurately as I could.

The presence of the researcher, whether male or female needs to be managed, at the same time reflexivity has to be analyzed (Agustin, 2006; Sanders, 2005). Male researchers witnessed hostility when studying female sex workers who resented the intrusion into their space. (Ssewakryanga, 2001) and Sanders (2005) observe that being a woman does not make it easy either. The fact that I was female meant that there were times when I was seen by men in the bar

as a sex worker, some of the women in the bar also viewed me as competition hence suspicion. I had to assure the women that I was not competition and that I was doing research. I had to be firm to men that wanted to buy sexual services from me that I was not in business, without condemning the women in business. The way I handled the men who wanted to buy sexual services helped in building rapport with participants as illustrated in the extract from field notes below;

> As I was sitting on a bar stool, making conversation with some women, one man approached me and said he wanted to go up with me (rooms were upstairs). I looked at the man and told him I was not selling. I could feel the intensity of the women's eyes on me as they wanted to know how I would handle this man. The man was apparently irritated with me and asked me in a harsh voice what I was doing in a bar for prostitutes. I told him I was visiting my friends. He tried to touch my private parts and by impulse I was quick to cover myself with my hands. He left laughing and the women with me laughed with me but I felt as if I had passed one test with the women. That I was not selling and did not have any intention of selling. From then on, when asked by men for sexual services, the women would answer on my behalf that I was not selling.

This intense and emotive research experience was overwhelming and uncomfortable. I was particularly disturbed by one incident when one of the women asked to accompany them to their room, only to get there and find that her roommate had a client and were engaged in sex. I only discovered this after entering the room and this incident made me uncomfortable. The women did not show any discomfort but the incident made me realize my own moral judgments of what I perceived as the right and wrong conduct during sex. I realized that I also used binaries of normal/ abnormal in my judgment of this incident.

In addition, the security of the researcher is an issue in sex work research. In order to ensure my security, I got access to Diplomat through New Life Centre in Hillbrow, which has regular and

clear access and are recognized trusted by hotel owners. However, I realized that being identified with New Life could coerce and diminish the autonomy of sex workers. In order to avoid coercion, I explicitly explained to respondents that they were free to refuse to participate in the study.

3.7. Summary

This chapter highlighted the methodological complexities of researching sex work. I explain dilemmas I confronted at different times in the course of data collection. In this discussion, I highlighted ways in which sex work can be researched in order to collect rich data. More significantly, I show that sex work research methods should be contextualized and flexible depending on the setting of sex work. In the next chapter, I present and discuss findings of the study. I explore the unique ways in which women navigate the debates in sex ways in ways that reveal complexities in sex work.

CHAPTER 4

NEGOTIATING DISCOURSES OF SEX WORK

4.1. Introduction

Chapter Three provided a discussion of the research design and the methods used in this study. In this chapter, I discuss findings of the study and draw themes salient during the analysis of data. The chapter will highlight tensions and contradictions brought to the fore as women navigate discourses of sex work. The study revealed a multiplicity of ways used by women to engage with the discourses of sex work. At times sex work is legitimated as work, at times resistance and other times women self degraded and embraced stigma and shame abolitionists have accorded to sex work. It is from these three broad themes that the discussion will be based.

Sex work is a complex phenomenon riddled by competing debates; Women navigate the various discourses that dominate the study of sex work in unique ways. Findings reveal the difficulty of placing women within either the abolitionists' debates which emphasize stigma and shame or the sex worker revolution which seeks recognition of sex work as work and emphasizes rights. At different times women subscribe to, conform with or resist the different discourses in sex work. This confirms Agustin (2006)'s argument that women in sex work have an ambivalent view of themselves which they have been socialized by society and while at times they accommodate stereotypes, they have also developed mechanisms for fighting and resisting these stereotypes.

The upcoming, World Cup hosted by South Africa in 2010 has seen an increase in debates sex work with sex worker advocates rallying for decriminalization and the abolitionists fighting this motion. The South African Law Reform Commission requested all interested parties in government and the non-governmental sector to make submissions on their views regarding the four options presented inter alia; legalization, decriminalization, criminalization and total criminalization. The former Chief of Police Jack Selebi began the debate when he made the statement that sex work should be legalized for the coming 2010 World Cup so that police services could focus on more serious crimes. This was met with mixed responses as proponents of the trafficking discourse argued that legalizing or decriminalizing sex work would increase trafficking of women for the purposes of sexual exploitation. On the other hand, sex workers and organizations that advocate for the rights of sex workers welcomed the decriminalization move. There does not seem to be consensus between these protagonists on the best way to deal with sex work.

I will focus on three narrative themes drawn on by women in Diplomat which include representations of sex work as legitimate, sex work as work and sex work as degrading and demeaning. I match these narratives to the discourses that dominate discussions of sex work in order to illustrate how women negotiate these discourses at different times and the contradictions inherent in these negotiations for meaning. Far from trying to establish which is right I am concerned with the contradictions that come to the fore as Zimbabwean women navigate the sex industry in South Africa.

4.2. Legitimizing sex work

There are times when women legitimized sex work by portraying it as an activity that has done their families well and has allowed them to pass a difficult phase. In these instances sex work is portrayed as having allowed women to get ahead and acquire material possessions they would otherwise not acquire. Emphasis is placed on the material possessions they have acquired since they began sex work, as illustrated by Fungai aged 23;

> *Sister, mahure arimuno vane zvinhu zvavo, tinotumira mari kumba, tichichengeta vana asi pane mahure ano pedza mari achitenga chikafu chete vasingatenge zvinhu*
>
> Sister, the whores[5] in this place have property, we send money home and take care of families except for those stupid whores that waste money on groceries only and not buying things

This is meant to legitimize sex work as women portray themselves as good mothers, sisters, daughters and children who send remittances home and take care of families. In this case, women justify doing sex work because they have a responsibility to take care of families and children they left in Zimbabwe. This representation of women reveals the value society places on women who take care of families and who are responsible. In fulfilling the role of good parents, women also gain self respect for themselves (Arendell, 1999). Women draw on the good mother discourse that emphasizes the role of the woman as a carer for her children, whose efforts and energy are focused on the care of children, self sacrificing as they find themselves in sex work for the sake of their children (Arendell, 1999). Youngleson (2007) and Oyewuni (2003) confirm

[5] Women in the bar use the word "*Hure*" a Shona word which was probably derived from whore in English to refer to themselves and others in their trade. Hure is a derogatory label for referring to women in sex work. There are polite words in the Shona language that describe women in sex work such as "*pfambi*" meaning one "who walks around" but women in Diplomat use this derogatory word instead. I will use this word when I translate conversations with women.

the women‘s beliefs that motherhood has come to occupy a central place in African culture and good mothers are selfless and self sacrificing, almost laying down their lives for their children. Consequently, women justify their engagement in sex work as an activity that has allowed them to be good mothers. This is quite contrary to the essentialised notion of good motherhood, which portrays a good mother as heterosexual, married and monogamous; women in sex work have claimed and modified the good mother discourse (Arendell, 1999).

In addition, Fungai’s statement reveals the gendered measures of success used by society and how these also apply in sex work. Women measure their success by material wealth they have acquired such as consumer durables, cars and houses they have acquired in their work. So there is a sense of pride in having acquired material possessions they would otherwise not have acquired in alternative work they are qualified for. Acquiring material possessions was especially important for the women given the economic crisis in Zimbabwe and the sense of security these assets gave to women which is a privilege a few women have. This is also confirmed by Bujra (1975) in her study on what she termed “women entrepreneurs” in Nairobi, while this study was done in the 1970s it provides useful insights into sex work relevant to this study. Bujra argues that while women were, in a sense, forced into sex work by economic necessity, the women turned the situation into one of economic advantage. Thus women turned what was a crisis into an opportunity and sex work has provided for them and their families a livelihood.

At times they even see themselves as sacrificing their lives for the sake of their families as shown by Joyce aged 30 when she says:

> We are soldiers fighting the war with poverty and sending money home to parents and siblings. We are war veterans and we are soldiers. When soldiers go to war they are prepared for anything even death.

Portraying themselves as soldiers serves to show them as heroes and brave women. Their enemy is poverty and the economic crisis in Zimbabwe. They have managed to overcome it through remittances sent home. This representation serves to justify involvement in sex work. In this way the woman locates herself as an actor whose actions are morally justifiable. There are also times when women point out that they are like every other woman. This contradicts instances when they have labelled other women as decent women "*madecent*" and the times they refer to other women as "normal women." More of the degrading discourses are discussed below.

Expanding on the "good mother discourse", there were times when they represented themselves as better than most women since they get paid for what other women give for free. This was illustrated by Tsitsi aged 35, when she says: "Most women do not get anything for sex; they also do not use protection and get HIV." Sex workers are part of everyday life and are aware of what people think of them and so they recreate identity in the framework of the discourses that have been created about them. Thus in instances when they see themselves as better than most women, they perceive themselves as heroes who have sacrificed everything to take care of children, who are in a risky occupation to save their families. The statement also serves to justify their actions and minimize stigma in that they openly sell sex yet they feel most women are hypocrites who sell sex without conceding that they are selling sex.

As a result, women navigate the different debates on sex work in different ways at times by defiance, at times by complying and accepting the stigma and shame. I argue that it is not as

clearly cut as the literature suggests. At times women have represented themselves as go getters, women with a plan, thus conforming to the sex worker revolution which emphasizes ways in which sex work has empowered women and taken them out of poverty (Agustin, 2006). This positional disclosure is dependent on a number of factors such as the monetary and non-monetary remittances they send to their home (Zimbabwe). It is also based on the measures of success society uses such as consumer durables acquired, the ability to own a car and the ability to own fixed assets such as houses or land.

4.2.1 Retaining autonomy in sex work

Women in Diplomat Hotel maintain their autonomy in the sex industry in various ways. I view autonomy as the ability to remain in control of one's working environment. This contradicts much literature on sex work that has casts women as victims and vulnerable to the client, the trafficker and the pimp. This is not to say there are no sex workers who are vulnerable to these forces but most of the women in my study were relatively in control of the activities that took place in their lives. One way women in the bar used to retain autonomy was by a veto on clients. There are some clients that women in Diplomat will not take for a number of reasons. The excerpt below illustrates:

> I am sitting in Diplomat on a bench and a man comes to sit next to me. He asks if I am selling (selling sex), to which I respond no and he continues to ask if I am on the waiting list for a room. I tell him, I am not selling, he then tells me he is drunk and in his mind he wants to get a girl but he knows he will not get an erection. He points at Rumbi and tells me she charged him R100 for one round, he says she kept telling him that his time was up and that he would have pay more. After this Tatenda came where we were sitting and I told this man that he can take her and Tatenda says " handimude ini, one hour haapedze" (I don't want him, he takes a long time to ejaculate). (Field notes)

This incident shows how women maintain their autonomy by refusing certain type of clients because they either take too much of the women's time when they could be making more money or because they do not like his physical appearance. Rather in this case, women also retain autonomy by not pretending intimacy with clients and maintain the sexual exchange as a business transaction, guided by rules of engagement. If a man wants to have more time they have to pay for more time. This impersonality contradicts some literature of sex work that show women in sex work creating or performing some kind of intimacy with clients, an aspect Agustin (2005) terms emotional labour. Women maintain an impersonal relationship between clients and themselves. This impersonality allows them to have more intimate relationships outside of work with partners as illustrated by Farai when she said "I do not kiss men in this bar, I save that for my boyfriend." Women see their engagement with men as a business transaction with limits, without any pretence of intimacy such as cuddling and touching and they have boyfriends and partners they reserve such intimacies for. The distinction between sex for work and sex for pleasure is made real by the way women differentiate monetary payments.

In addition, Dorcas gave me a list of the rules of engagement with clients set by women in Diplomat which include: no kissing, no anal sex and no oral sex. Thus by holding out on certain sexual acts women retained their autonomy in the exchange. This autonomy to some extent seems to contradict abolitionists' literature that has portrayed women as victims and disempowered and shows complexities as women co-opt men's positions and try to re-write sexual scripts.

In addition, women have devised ways to make the distinction between sex for work and sex for pleasure. One of them is by not showing the client that they are enjoying sex and not showing when they climax as shown by in the excerpts below;

> When I am with a client and I come, I try not show it by telling the man to hurry up as his time is up.
>
> The other time I was with a client and I came as soon as he had started, he told me that he had felt it and he was not going to pay because I had enjoyed myself and I shouted at him and asked him what was so special that he had done to make me come so fast.. (Laughing)
>
> There are times when I wish the man would not stop as I will be having much fun but I can't show it much.

This shows how women try to make the distinction between sex for work and sex for pleasure though these excerpts show that it is fluid and many a times they fail to draw the line. Women also keep it businesslike by not using their real names in the bar and using pseudonyms with men so that they are not able to track them. I also noticed that women in the bar rarely gave their correct mobile numbers to men except for regular clients and they reserved this privilege for boyfriends.

Women also refuse clients who appear to be ill. This incident shows how women in Diplomat use men's physical appearance to profile clients they perceive to have sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

> The women were sitting in the bar when a tall man with red lips, walked into the bar. Tatenda, Mercy and Joyce, looked at him and looked at each other. Tatenda shouted a comment to the other women, "*Ndiani akaruma polony"* (who is this man biting polony). I will not have sex with this man, he looks sick. (A burst of laughter) (Field notes)

The phrase "*kuruma polony*" (biting polony) was a euphemism for red lips which they perceived as a sign that he was ill. Sanders (2004) describes this as a coded joke that takes place while

clients are there, without them knowing. In Zimbabwe, unnaturally red lips are perceived as one of the symptoms of HIV and so women aware of the symptoms also do their profiling. Amongst themselves, women decided they will not have sex with clients that look sickly. Women used their eyes to screen men and would not take men that seemed likely to have disease. Consciousness about HIV/AIDS was high among women and so they accepted some clients and refused some clients on the basis of perceived health or ill health of the man.

Women also retain autonomy by exposing the inadequacies of some of their clients as shown by Fungai's story:

> Having sex with 20 men is not easy my sister. I had just started work at A Inn when the manager asked me to go have sex with him, I had thought I had found a man. When we went upstairs, I discovered that all his private parts were rotten, he had warts. I could not keep it to myself and I told all the women in the bar, I was chased away.

The fact that she then told everyone about the manager's diseased body parts could be seen as her way of mocking male sexual superiority. Fungai also speaks in third person when she declares "whoring is hard; to have sex with twenty men is not a joke." In a way she distances herself and generalizes before she narrates her personal encounter and reverts back to the first person.

Women also retain autonomy through making fun of clients. Sanders (2004) shows that women use private jokes to ridicule clients. As most of their clients are South African men who cannot understand the women's language, women usually make fun of men in the bar.

> Loyce and Mercy tell him that he is looking very smart today. He is happy to hear this but one can tell that the women are pulling his leg. They begin to ask him how much the clothes he is wearing cost. He responds, the suit was for R4000 and the "cow boy hat"

> cost R799. But the girls tell him that his tie is dirty. He gets annoyed at this and tells Rudo that she is wearing a perfume from Discom worth R4.99. Rudo responds that at least she is wearing a cheap perfume but he is wearing a dirty tie.

During this exchange there was a lot of laughter as women were mocking the man. Laughter served a number of purposes in the bar. During the times when business was low, laughter served to diffuse frustration as women made jokes out of men in the bar and calling them "*mboko*" [6](dimwitted). Frustration was high during the times when there was a soccer match on the television in the bar and men were watching soccer instead of buying sex. At these times women would shout at men and call them "*mboko*" (dimwitted) and this would invoke a lot of laughter from the women as some shouted that they should go and watch soccer in their homes not in the bar and as they had not come for soccer but for women.

This is confirmed by Sanders (2004) in her work, on managing sex work through humour, in which she notes that, women used humour to relax, to mock clients and to reassert their independence. Other studies also support that humour is an integral component of sex work (O'Neill, 1996; O'Connell Davidson, 1995). Sanders argues that humour is often used as a coping strategy in the workplace. She asserts that women manage relationships between themselves and clients through joking relations. In addition, humour acts as a window of friendships dynamics of women in the sex industry. Studies of humour in the workplace have shown that jokes serve to relief tension, fear and remove inhibitions and they also act as a safety valve for difficult subjects and feelings. This is illustrated by the incident in my research when Mary narrates how her husband divorced her after she had an extramarital affair and she laughs

[6] Mboko is a Shona word used to insult someone who is perceived to be useless, without financial resources but the word dimwitted does not clearly bring out the severity of the insult.

about how she now makes him pay for sexual services. Mary uses humour to "reinterpret the event and reframe" this distressing episode to make it light (Sanders, 2004, 274). Women also use humour in the bar to cope with difficult relationships and conditions and this is confirmed by findings of research in coalmine workers, departmental stores and industrial shop floors (Sanders, 2004). Women laughed at me when men propositioned me and I said my excuses about how I was in the bar to see a friend and was not working. They also laughed at how men always spotted a new woman. In a way it provided the women an opportunity to observe me as I was observing them (Sanders, 2004). It was also an opportunity for them to see how I would refuse men without demeaning them and their work.

Sanders (2004) argues that humour signifies group membership and this is evidenced by the private jokes made about clients when describing their private body parts for clients they have shared or when a woman gave a regular client to a colleague in the bar because she did not want to have sex. Women in the bar made fun of men's physiological features and sexual performance especially those that either took too long or ejaculated after a short while. These private jokes were derogatory and were aimed at ridiculing the client behind their back.

Private and crude jokes about clients allow for a reversal of stereotypes and depict men who are clients as weak (Sanders, 2004). Sanders (2004, 278) observes that;

> Sex workers adopt masculine traits through sexualized gestures, obscenities and perpetual mocking of the male sex drive. To manage client contact, women hijack traditional joking characteristics of sexual innuendo, gregarious mockery and endless sneering. Masculine joking traits are a form of resistance against the stigma of prostitution and the lack of recognition and legitimacy of sex work and can be sharply contrasted to the expected mannerisms and vocabulary of women.

This analysis also resonates with the views of Skeggs (1994) when she examines the rap lyrics of a group called Bytches with Problems (BMW) and they "speak that which should not be spoken by women." Skeggs posits that these lyrics challenge the fraudulent myths of male sexual performance and in the process talk back and speak against the silencing of women's sexuality hence upsetting power relations. It was my discomfort with the language used in the bar that informed my reading and moved me in this direction of analysis.

4.2.2. Language and meanings attached to sex work

Language provides meaning and also works to bring out how women in sex work perceive their involvement in this work. Women in the Diplomat called each other "*Hure*" (whore). It was interesting to note that they felt that the term sex worker applied to South African women and not them. Charity explained that she would only accept to be called "*Hure*" (whore) by another sex worker or a client but not an outsider. She reported that she would be offended if I addressed her as a whore.

> Seeking to problematise the word sex worker and whore, I ask why they call each other *hure* and she told me that they do not mind calling each other *hure* but they would feel angry if someone else they do not interact with called them "hure". South African women refer to themselves as sex workers but we do not use this word it's for South African women. To call someone *hure* is insulting.

It seems the word whore takes on a new meaning when they use it to address each other but is insulting if someone who is not a sex worker or a potential client. By using the word whore (*hure*) to address each other, women express defiance and normalize the term. This resonates with literature that has revealed that only the in-group has the privilege of using the derogatory label and an out-group is not allowed to use it as shown by the outcry when Mexican Singer

Jeniffer Lopez used the word “nigger” in her lyrics. Critiques have argued that this shows double standards. This is in line with literature about the term “nigger” which has been reclaimed by Afro-Americans but still remains derogatory when used by white people (Young, 2007; Goodwin, 2003; Kennedy, 2000). Women in sex work have been stereotyped and the term whore is derogatory and abusive and is meant to demean them. Language plays a central role in transmitting and maintaining stereotypes. In its general usage the word whore evokes negative associations and evaluations of women (Macrae et al, 1996).

However, I realized that when women in Diplomat used the term whore, it was not meant to criticize and insult each other but functioned as a joking and affectionate way of addressing a good friend. This is illustrated when Melody commented to her colleague that “this whore is getting many clients these days.” This was not insulting but friendly way of telling a friend that she is doing good business.

Macrae et al (1996) explains that use of derogatory words could be used to signify independence, power and self determination of women. In this case, women could also be refuting the vulnerable and victim labels that have been used to describe women in sex work. Referring each other as whore allowed women to show solidarity and exclude others who do not use the code. Thus within this subculture, the use of the term whore carries covert prestige as shown by Fungai when she tells me “*Sister, mahure arimuno anezvinhu zvavo* (sister, the whores in this brothel are well to do).”

The use of the term “hure” (whore) was used to accept that they are women that sell sex but at the same time resisting the stigma associated with being called a whore by others outside their reference group. In agreement with Hendricks and Oliver (1999), I argue that by reclaiming the term “*hure*” (whore), women make the label non-derogatory. Reclaiming serves to take away the weapon from those who have power and empowers those who were once victims as the term whore or prostitute has been used by moralists and abolitionists to emphasize the low status of women, the degenerate nature of sex work, and that a woman in sex work deserves to be treated badly. Words are weapons and by using the category whore on themselves they soften the intensity of distress caused by others using the category on them.

This is in line with work on social identities and stigmatized groups that has been done by Galansky et al (2003) and Schippers (2002) on derogatory labels and reclaiming where a stigmatized group revalues an externally imposed negative label by self-consciously referring itself in terms of that label as women in this study referred to each other as “whore.” Galansky et al (2003) argues that when dominant groups in society give labels such as whore, these labels serve to strengthen and justify inequities in status, that is, keep the labelled person in a subordinate position. The term whore is meant to show women in sex work as dirty, of loose morals and not worthy of respect yet women in the bar resist these stereotype. In contrast, use of the term by members of the out group which includes those who buy sexual services from women and those who are not sex workers is meant to hurt and humiliate the groups.

Labels are meant to provide insight on the construction, maintenance and alteration of social identity (Galansky et al, 2003). Women in Diplomat by re-appropriating the term "whore" and using it on themselves have rejected the bad connotations of the label and have converted the label into a badge of honour (Galansky et al, 2003). Labels are powerful and meanings are subject to change and can be negotiated and renegotiated. Reclaiming serves a number of functions for women in Diplomat, when they call themselves "whore" it shows empowerment, it also represents agency and not subjectification. Consequently, the term "whore" when reclaimed becomes not just a neutral or acceptable meaning but has a positive meaning of someone, who has agency and who is in control of the situation.

Women in sex work are stigmatized and stigma is an attribute that discredits and reduces a person from a whole to a tainted and discounted one (Galinsky et al, 2003). Stigma brings with it burdens that women in sex work have to contend with. The categorization "whore" serves to define the woman's place in life and also allows for "othering." Re-appropriating the whore label is a method used by women in sex work to overcome the negative implications of stigma. Thus by self labeling, women deprive out-group members of a linguistic weapon (Galansky et al, 2003).

De Clerk (1992) observes that taboo words are culture specific. Such words are avoided in everyday usage since they are considered inappropriate and carry affective meaning. De Clerk argues that women aspire to be ladylike and uphold these taboos and avoid the use of dirty words. However, this assertion does not seem to reflect the language used by women in

Diplomat. There are some words that are taboo words in the Shona culture and while people know them, usage of them is limited. Thus, other than "*hure*" (whore), women in the bar make use of taboo words and expletives frequently. Words such as "*Kusvira*" fucking, "*Mboro*" (cock), "*beche*" (cunt) are words not commonly used in everyday talk but the incident cited below illustrates the ease with which women use taboo words in daily interaction with one another:

> I am sitting next to two women in the bar and one of them buys fresh chips. The other woman stretches her hand to begin eating, the other girl asks her *"hauna kumbobata mboro here"* (did you not touch the cock today?) the other girl responds "*handina kumbosvirwa nhasi"* (I did not fuck today). As I listen to this conversation I show embarrassment and one of the girls begins to laugh at me, she asks me if am embarrassed and she adds by saying "*mboro nemachende zvese zvinokwana mumaoko angu*" (the penis and testicles all fit into my hands).

While at times the use of taboo words was meant to shock me and embarrass me, I argue that there could be other reasons associated with the use of taboo words in this context. The use of taboo words could reflect that women feel they have transgressed all social norms and may feel they have nothing to lose by use of such language.

Additionally, women in sex work develop their own subculture and within that, they have language unique to their environment. Diplomat bar provides space and the freedom to use taboo words without fear of overstepping cultural boundaries of what can be said and what cannot be said. Language used by women in the bar enhances perceptions of sex as a commodity and their body as an instrument of work that men are free to touch and "sample." The reference to the organs of pleasure often augments that specific body parts are for sale.

These findings are confirmed by Burr (1995, 145) who observed that:

> Once we take up a subject position in discourse, we have available to us particular, limited sets of concepts, images, metaphors, ways of speaking, narratives. This also entails an emotional commitment on our part to categories of person to which we are allocated and see ourselves as belonging.

The same can explain the metaphors women in the bar used to construct their world. When referring to getting infected with HIV, women used a metaphor such as "*kunyudzwa*" (being drowned). This metaphor served to show the risk of HIV transmission women face in their work. Women did not refer to men who came for sexual services as clients but called them "*Mhene*" a word which is translated to mean a wild buck. *Mhene* (wild buck) is a slang word that means someone who is rich, commonly used by Zimbabweans in the informal trade to mean an affluent customer. I am not sure as to the origin of the word.

Finally, the use of taboo words in the bar symbolize what Skeggs (1994, 106) has classified as "an all out battle in sexual politics" as women use words perceived unacceptable for a respectable woman to speak. Women resist the discourse of honour and shame through the use of taboo words (Skeggs, 1994). This can be interpreted as resistance to domination of male sexuality and voicing the sexual silences expected of "respectable women." Thus, when women in the bar mock men's sexual organs and laugh about their sexual performance, they are reconstructing another identity of women in control of their sexuality and reversing the power dynamics in sexual relations where women are silenced by discourses of politeness, respectability and responsibility (Skeggs, 1994)

4.2.3. The role of money in making the distinction between sex for work and sex for pleasure

Money plays an important role in making the distinction between sex for work and sex for pleasure. In the sexual economy, money works to create and maintain distinctions that matter sentimentally to women. Zelizer (1996) argues that in order to make sense of their chaotic lives and chaotic social ties, people differentiate currencies to bring different meanings to various exchanges.

When they charge R50 for a round of sex (usually five minutes according to the women), they see this money as compensation for sexual services they provide to the man. In this case, R50 implies an equal exchange of values and distance between woman and client. While R50 paid by a client symbolizes a business relationship between the clients and the women, the same R50 given by a boyfriend is viewed as a gift. Mary confirmed this when she confided in me that:

> *Mukomana wangu wandiri kusvirananaye mazuva ano anodriver Bhazi, saka tichaenda kumba tose otakura grocery rangu*
>
> The man I am fucking these days drives a bus and we are going back home together and he will carry my groceries.

In this instance, she has differentiated the fact that the boyfriend will carry her groceries for free and that she will not pay for the travel, in this case these are seen as entitlements from the relationship yet when a client pays R50 it is payment for services she will render. The purchaser is obligated to pay the seller for what is bought but paying ends the obligation and dissolves the relationship. The buyer and seller owe each other nothing and can each go their separate ways which shows the impersonality in sex work.

In this way, women in the bar also recast sexual scripts about love and money that have never been resolved. The distinction for sex as work was made by payment, yet in a private relationship women accepted treats from their boyfriends such as dinners, clothes and other favours as exchanges outside work.

4.3. Root of stigma and shame in sex work

Research on sex work has focused on the stigma and shame associated with sex work. These are some of the discourses that this study sought to interrogate. Scambler (2007, 1080) offers a list that seeks to explain the sources of stigma and shame in sex work, according to him, sex workers' offenses against gendered norms of honour/dishonour include:

> Having sex with strangers, having sex with multiple partners, taking sexual initiative and control and possessing expertise; asking for a fee… being in the company of supposedly drunk and abusive men whom they either handle …vectors of disease, source of transmission into respectable community of heterosexual families of sexually transmitted infections(STI)including HIV/AIDS…

These are some the reasons that have lead to "Othering" and stigma of women in sex work. This section seeks to illustrate instances women embrace stigma of sex work.

4.3.1 Embracing the shame and stigma discourse

"You can find love can be found in the dust bin"

The "dust bin" metaphor came to the fore when Joyce aged twenty seven told me that love is everywhere and men can find love in the dust bin even with a whore (*hure)*[7]. Joyce was telling me how all women are "bitches" and how even men are able to find love with sex workers. Yet her equating women in sex work as "dustbins" revealed a derogatory way of self representation. This perhaps reflects a tragic attempt to present a positive view of herself. She is degraded but in a very sexist way argues that all women are bitches and so her degradation is no different to that of all women.

> Joyce: your appearance gives away that you are a whore
>
> Tendai: My boyfriend's friends are telling him that I have speed and that I am a bitch. His friends are telling him that I am a bitch and he said bitch or no bitch what is your problem. It feels very nice to be defended by a boyfriend even though you know you are whore.
>
> Joyce: my boyfriend told his friends, you know you can find love in the dustbin; whatever you say about this girl I don't care, I am in love with a bitch so what. At least my girl is selling but I am in love with her, so what. Every woman is a bitch, He once went outside and he got a girl who he proposed to and had sex with right away. This shows that every girl is a bitch.

The fact that Joyce's boyfriend equates her with a "rubbish bin" which is a place people discard things they no longer want demonstrates to some extent the way men label women in sex work. The important aspect is also the way she took on the dust bin label as a description of herself. The "dust bin" metaphor shows the dirtiness that is associated with sex work. The man identifies his girlfriend as belonging to the dustbin, which provides insight into masculine views of women

[7] The women in the bar referred to each other as "hure" which is translated to mean whore and this word will be used in the translation from Shona to English in this discussion.

in sex work. In addition, women also use the general sexism prevalent in South African society to bolster their own self perception.

The fact that Tendai derives pleasure from being defended by her boyfriend reflects a normative assumption that men do not defend whores in the same way they do girlfriends. It also shows that normative gender relations are ones where men defend women's honour. Sometimes women reinforce the stigma and shame associated with sex work by accepting that they are dust bins but they also minimize the shame by labeling all women "whores." Joyce finds comfort in that she is openly "selling" as she puts it while most women sell (sex) without being open about.

Women self degrade in order to defend their relationships outside of sex work. The conflation of all women as "bitches" also serves to justify relationships they have outside the sex industry. It seems that women also self degraded when they spoke about relationships outside sex work such as family and their boyfriends and ex husbands for example when Joy aged 29 remarked that "…she does not want her niece to do this (sex work).." It is in relation to relationships that women see themselves as transgressors of societal norms and values.

At times some partners know that their women are engaged in sex work and others are not aware. I found out that when they are aware of the woman's engagement in sex work, they also amplify stigma associated with sex work for instance, Charity aged thirty four narrated how she feels that " whoring is not work and my boyfriend refuses to use any of my money saying he does not eat pussy money." She narrates how she is tired of whoring and would like to look for a 'real'

job. His refusal to use any of Charity's money is symbolic of the fact that he sees her money as less in value because of the way she acquired it. The refusal by Charity's partner to use money earned from sex work contradicts the popular view in western research of men (pimps) who benefit financially from the earnings of women in sex work (O'Neill, 2001). While I cannot generalize this, it seems that women in Diplomat have economic independence on use of their earnings. Findings did not show evidence of the pimp arrangement common in western literature on sex work, women are self employed, and they pay rent to the owner of the brothel and manage their income.

For those women whose partners are not aware of their involvement in sex work, women live a double life as they seek to convince their partners of their fidelity. Joyce recounts an experience when one of her partners was not aware that she was involved in sex work and how she sought to deceive him:

> I had a lawyer boyfriend who was in Johannesburg on business, I accompanied him to OR Tambo airport and as he was about to leave, I cried so hard that he was embarrassed. After this he told me that there is nothing he hates like women who do prostitution, I agreed with him that there is nothing as bad as whore. He told me that he would rather marry a witch than a prostitute. He does not know that I have [sex] 24 hours over seven days (*ndinokwirwa 24/7 kuDiplomat*). He was glad that I was working as I had lied to him that I am waitressing.

Women in sex work are influenced by the media, what people around them think of sex work and culture provides various influences that assail them. There were times when the moral stance they took about sex work echoed the moralists and the abolitionists. In these instances, women highlight difficulties of sex work and how they find it difficult to have sex with so many men. Fungai brings out the moral stance by saying:

> My sister, whoring is hard, to [sleep] with twenty men in one day is not a joke. I solve this by being drunk and I smoke dagga too. Dagga is my problem sister and also I cant

> keep secrets, let me tell you this story, when I first arrived in SA, the manager of Hillbrow Inn asked me to be his girlfriend, I thought I had found myself a man but when we went to have [sex] I found that he had genital warts and his private parts were rotten. I refused to have sex with him, but I could not keep this to myself and I started to tell everyone in the bar, I was chased away from there sister"

The issue of disease correlates with abolitionists' views such as Doctors for Life (1997) that see the sex worker as exposed to disease therefore her body a site of all illness. Moralists' sentiments come to the fore when women argue that they would not like their children or relatives to be involved in sex work. These sentiments are also echoed by Joyce who says she would not like her niece whom she pays school fees for, to be a sex worker but to do "well" in life. This stance is also emphasized when women in sex work perceived themselves as different and other women as "normal." This incident illustrates the binaries of normal/abnormal used by women:

> I was in the bar one evening when two women came to sit next to me. They asked me if I was lost and who I was looking for. I told them that I was waiting for someone. They laughed and told me that the person who had told me to wait for them in Diplomat was cruel as this was not a place for **normal** women like me.
>
> Sitting in the bar one evening, a woman I later knew to the name of Chipo[8] sat next to me and asked me if I was selling (selling sex). When I responded that I was not selling, she looked at me with a sardonic look and asked me if I was preserving myself for one man, I did not know how to respond to this and so I just laughed. After this she had told me that this was a place for whores and whoever had told me to wait here was very cruel.

Women seem to oscillate between the various debates confirming and refuting them, making it very difficult to place them within one particular debate. When Mary talks about her marriage before she started sex work she describes herself as a "**real woman**." Such sentiments augment

[8] All the names of women used in this study have been changed to protect their identities.

the abolitionist views that sex work takes something away from women and they are no longer "real women" after involvement in sex work (Anderson, 2008).

The need to use alcohol and dagga by Fungai illustrates her embracing the discourse of shame and how she feels that the work she is doing is degrading hence the need to use alcohol and other drugs. A number of women in the bar professed that they needed to be drunk in order to work. Women in the bar drink as they work and at times I wondered why they drink alcohol a lot. Curious I asked one of the women why she was drinking all the time and she said:

> If I am not drunk, I am not able to do this work, I need to be drunk to do away with the "*nyadzi*" shyness. If I am sober, I would spend the whole time sitting and not doing anything. But I am afraid; I am becoming addicted because I drink alcohol every day. But I do not do "Broncho" like the other girls

"Broncho" is a cough syrup (Histalix B) with high concentration of alcohol that intoxicates women quickly and is cheaper than buying beer. Maria also confirmed that she uses drugs as she also needs to be drunk to work. Such actions show the stigma and shame attached to sex work and how women seek to minimize it by being drunk and not in control of their actions.

The notion of embarrassment to do sex work and the use of alcohol shows how at times women embrace the discourse that sex work is humiliating and demeaning for women and no woman chooses to be a sex worker. The use of drugs and alcohol is explained by Diaz (2007, 54) in his study of Latino homosexual men, he argues that:

> The problem is not so much that that they have been told time and again.. that their homosexuality is shameful and dishonorable to their families…these problem is that these sentiments are experienced as deeply felt shame and guilt.. and experienced as an internal sense of dirtiness that … can be alleviated only by using psychoactive substances during homosexual encounters…

However, not all women in the bar felt the need to be drunk to work. Tatenda for instance feared being addicted and she did not smoke or drink alcohol. She preferred to be sober while working and drank alcohol only occasionally.

The desire to keep their involvement hidden from relatives also revealed how women perceived their involvement in sex work as demeaning. Hiding their work from friends and relatives is meant to protect women from moral judgments and condemnation which they know accompanies such revelations (Sanders, 2004; Sanders, 2005; Busza, 2004). Most women expressed the desire to keep this away from ex-husbands whom they wanted to show that they could do well without them. Ruth illustrates this when she says:

> I don't want my ex-husband to know that I am a whore now, but I want to do well and let him think that I am working and doing well from a job that pays well not sex work. In response to this one of the girls, said she should actually tell the father of her child that "*Ibeche ririkuchengeta mwana wake*" (it's the *cunt that is feeding his child)*

In the first instance, she shows that she does not view sex work as work as illustrated by the statement that she wanted him to think that she was doing some other work that paid well. This view is in line with societal values of what is constitutes work and sex work has not been able to be recognized as work in spite of lobbying for work status. On the other hand, while there is agreement among the women that sex work is not work, they show resistance and pride when they insist that it is sex work that is providing income for his child. There is also lots of other work that is not counted as real work and is equally gendered such as domestic work which is both unrewarded and unrewarding (Baber and Allan, 1992). The housework women do in the home and caring for the family is not regarded as work and when it is paid for attracts low rewards. Charity's narrative also reinforces the contradictions inherent in sex as work. In this

example, the boyfriend also reinforces what is work and what is not work and sex work does not fit his definition of work. Charity also contradicts herself when she says she will be going to work yet at the same time asking "is this work?" The conflicting views of sex work reflect the tensions women face in attempting to classify sex work as work and bring to light the contradictions they struggle with.

> She told me she is looking for a job as she is tired of this. She says "ibasa here iri, harisi basa iri" (is this a job, this is not a job). She tells me that her boyfriend in Hillbrow always laughs when she tells him she is late for work; he says "selling pussy is not work." She tells me it is more difficult to get clients and she gets tired of pulling at men who tell her wait a bit they will be back. She also reveals that she prefers SA men than Zimbabwean men. She feels that Zimbabwean men are rude and they say hurtful things when they take you. She also says SA men are more polite and refer to them as sex workers yet men from Zimbabwe call them "mahure" (whores).

This view resonates with debates that do not recognize sex work as work. At times women's partners reinforce that sex work is not work as Charity's partner refuses to recognize sex work as work and tells her that "selling pussy is not work." Charity's narrative shows inconsistencies and therefore contradictions as she oscillates between viewing sex work as work or as a degrading activity she has found herself in out of desperation.

Women also portray sex work as difficult and risky and show the other side of the coin which I will discuss in the next chapter. While sex work has provided a livelihood for families, not all experiences are pleasant for women. In such instances they draw attention to the dangers inherent in sex work such as disease and death. Peggy aged thirty nine shares that:

> Sometimes the condom breaks and your heart feels very sick as you begin to think that you have been infected. At times you have sex with men who have genital warts and what can you do. Your heart just bleeds but you still do it. You can also be killed by clients. A girl they were working with at the hotel that was killed by a client and put in the tub. They found her the next morning and the client had gone. Now they have

> devised a new system where the client leaves their ID if they are staying the night. Hotel management also comes in the morning to find out if all the women are fine.

Such views show risks associated with involvement in sex work which echo some of medical debates in sex work, that emphasize risks and exploitation in sex work (Doctors for Life, 1997; Dunkle et al, 2005 and Leggett, 1999). However, while they are aware of dangers and risks in sex work, there seems to be an acceptance that risks are an occupational hazard and that some occupations are more risky than others.

At times they portray themselves as immoral especially in the cases when they would like to keep their activities hidden from family and friends. In these instances they represent sex work as immoral as Chipo shows:

> If my parents know that the groceries and money I have been sending them is from prostitution, they will not want to receive anything from me, the value of all I have done will be eroded, so I want to keep it from them

This illustrates what Castillo et al terms the tense and bitter renegotiation of acceptable roles in the community. It also shows how women have accepted the strictures of the dominant culture's moral rhetoric which condemns them as immoral. These results in the management of information sent to parents and relatives on the kind of work women are involved in.

The above discussion shows how women have internalized the surveillance placed on their sexuality and become monitors of their own behaviour thus labeling sex work as outside the boundaries of normal sexuality. Teunis and Herdt (2007) confirm that stigma is relational, historically constructed and strategically deployed in the production and reproduction of social inequality that results in the discrimination of women in sex work. This is illustrated during

times women embrace binaries of normal/abnormal, decent/indecent, but when they resist them by arguing that all women are "bitches."

Summary

This discussion served to highlight the complexities in sex work and the ways in which women therein construct an identity given their location between and within the discourses of good and bad women (O' Neil, 2001). While abolitionist debates hold the extreme view of exploitation and the sex worker movement emphasizes choice, this discussion highlights tensions, contradictions and paradoxes prevalent in how women engage with these debates. The reading of findings shows the complexity of sex work and the ambivalent and fluid way women engage with debates in sex work. The next chapter provides a discussion on women's pathways into sex work and the role of networks in pathways into sex work.

CHAPTER 5

TRAJECTORIES AND EXPERIENCES OF MIGRANT WOMEN IN SEX WORK

5.1 Introduction

This chapter has three goals; firstly it highlights different trajectories of women into sex work. Secondly, it provides the role of networks in pathways into sex work. Finally, I also seek to show the complexities of sex work through a discussion of how women understand disease and risk of disease in sex work. Migration is an important variable in this study, in this regard I highlight the different ways in which women experience migration, and how it has been an empowering force and the problems attendant to their migrant status as women experience the sex industry.

5.2. Pathways into sex work for migrant women

Trajectories and pathways of migrant women into sex work was one of the key questions this study sought to answer. While sex work has featured in medical and criminal research, the western picture of trajectories of women into sex work has not always reflected the realities of African women's trajectories into sex work (Potterat et al, 1998; O'Neill, 1997; Sanders et al, 2009; Agustin, 2006; Gangoli, 2001). The preoccupation with pathways into sex work needs to be problematised further as there seems to exist the notion that there is not a "natural progression" into sex work but one has to already be labeled "deviant" in some way to enter sex work.

Western studies of entry into sex work have portrayed abuse of drugs, broken homes, and running away from home as predicators for entering sex work (Potterat et al, 1998; O'Neill, 1997). There is emphasis on women being sexually abused as children and this does not seem to tally with my findings on women's pathways into sex work. For example, O'Neill (1996, 135) writing on entry into sex work for women in the United Kingdom states that:

> Some young women who drift into prostitution on leaving care because of financial problems and their association with street culture, others are clearly pimped and coerced into prostitution …all these young women have profoundly sad backgrounds; child sexual abuse, physical or emotional abuse; family breakdown and multiple placements in care.

The association of women in sex work with dysfunctional families, victims of sexual abuse and other such classifications dominate western studies of pathways into sex work. This analysis seeks to move beyond internal characteristics that associate background and entry into sex work. Findings from this study do not agree with the above profile and pathways of women into sex work will be discussed below.

Trafficking has been highlighted in research on migrant women in sex work outside of western contexts but my findings of Zimbabwean women in sex work do not reflect the coercion and force emphasized in this discourse. This is not to deny that some women are forced into sex work, but that women in this study do not fit into the definition of trafficking which emphasizes the habouring of persons through deception and force for the purposes of exploitation (Palmary, 2009). Findings confirm that the trafficking and drug abuse discourse do not fully explain the realities of Zimbabwean women pathways into sex work in South Africa. Instead, findings indicate that there are varied experiences and multiple trajectories into sex work. Conversations

with women revealed a number of narratives of how they began sex work in South Africa. While some of the women began sex work in South Africa, the preponderance of women began sex work in Zimbabwe.

Through conversations that took place in the bar and in women's rooms, I was able to get stories of how women started sex work. Mary narrates how she began sex work:

> I was once a married woman, **a real woman** and my husband was having sex with many other women. I decided to also have sex outside marriage and he caught me. He went with me back to my parents' house where he told me that he did not want me any more and that "he would not be able to tame a wild cat like me" after that I became a whore and now I am used to selling and he (the ex-husband) still wants to sleep with me when he sees me but now because I am used to selling sex, I also make him pay. (she laughs)

Mary's narrative brings to the fore a number of issues embedded in cultural practices that have served to oppress women. Teunis and Herdt (2007) note that culture means understanding how social class is lived as an embedded set of beliefs, assumptions and social practices related to life, sex, gender, family and community. Mary equates herself to a "real woman" when she talks about her married state which shows how marriage is the central and most respected and strongly supported sexual institutions (Primoratz, 1993). The fact that she saw the married state as what makes a woman **real** speaks to the cultural norms and values that view single women as incomplete and therefore according to Mary "unreal". Thus Mary draws on the discourse of marriage that is perceived as necessary in the achievement of "true womanhood" (Baber and Allan, 1992, 31). This phenomenon is confirmed by Magaisa (2001) whose work on sex work in Zimbabwe that found that the single status for women is stigmatized and yet the same does not

apply for men. In this way, Mary demonstrates that "culture is power, practiced and built slowly into a seamless image of person, selfhood, gender and sexuality" (Teunis and Herdt, 2007, 107).

This excerpt also brings to the fore the unequal expectations about her sexuality and illustrates double standards that govern women and men's sexuality (Teunis and Herdt, 2007; Weeks, 1989; Heald, 1995; Magaisa, 2001). Sexual inequalities have been defined as the forms of indignity, social disadvantage, stigma and discrimination caused by sexual orientation or conduct (Teunis and Herdt, 2001). Mary's husband is unfaithful but expects fidelity from her. This depicts the desire by men to control women's sexuality yet exempt themselves from the same standards. This also reveals that the opportunity costs of infidelity are greater for women than men (Thorbek and Pattanaik, 2002; Jankowiak et al, 2002). The fact that Mary is not able to "take him back to his family" as he does with her when he discovers her infidelity shows power relations between the wife and husband and emphasize sexual inequalities existent in the marriage institution. This is confirmed by Helle-Valle (2005) who asserts that in this double standard of sexuality, men have more latitude to explore their sexuality yet they control women's sexuality.

It seems that sanctions for being unfaithful are only applicable to the woman and the man in this context remains unscathed. Gender roles are a product of culture, religious beliefs and societal values and attitudes among other factors and in the Zimbabwean context, men have more

freedom to explore their sexuality but the same does not apply for women (Magaisa, 2002 and Muzvidziwa, 1996).

While unequal expectations of her sexuality should result in conformity, the fact that she goes into sex work may be taken for resistance as sex work negates gender norms of monogamy expected of women or that she may have given up trying to gain respect from anyone. This is unlike the narratives of victimhood and force that have been documented in the media but show that there are more subtle and different kinds of coercion that predicate entry into sex work. While there is no pimp or trafficker, there are more structural gender inequalities which implicate families, husbands, and extended families with all associated meanings attached to these groups. It is important to note that these are not dysfunctional families but the kinds of families that society celebrates and sees as the model yet gender inequality is often seen as a good thing in these contexts.

It also seems that women's partners and family are dominant actors responsible for much of the stigmatizing as shown by Mary's husband who calls her a "wild cat." Teunis and Herdt (2001, 1) show that;

> Stigma is deployed by concrete actors to legitimize their dominant status within existing structures of inequality and the ways in which social inequality is exercised in order to produce and reproduce forms of sexual legitimation and exclusion.

By labeling his wife a wild cat for the same act he did, he legitimates his infidelity and produces unequal sexual expectations for him and a different set of standards for his wife.

Findings showed that most women in sex work reported economic prospects as the main reason for being in sex work; yet the media in South Africa, Botswana and Mozambique represents them as victims. The newspaper article below shows this representation of women in sex work;

'No one wants to be a prostitute but we have no choice' (Clayton, 2009)

> It is not quite what Joanna had in mind when she graduated as a primary school teacher five years ago. Instead of teaching Zimbabwean children basic skills she finds herself hanging out at the dimly lit entrance to a rundown block of flats - one of dozens of young professional Zimbabwean women who slip across the country's border to work for a few days or weeks as prostitutes. "We just come over for a little time. I need something, anything to take back that side," she says in a whisper, gesturing in the direction of the nearby Zimbabwean border. "I stay for ten days and then go home for a week or two before coming back." It is late, dark and dangerous in the side streets and alleyways of Livingstone, a small town better known for its location on the Zambian side of the world famous Victoria Falls. The "clients" from a nearby dingy bar can be drunk and violent. "Sometimes they try not to pay ... at times, the police chase us away and the local girls fight us too. No one wants to do this work, but we have no choice, it is so bad there now," she said. "As soon as there is peace back home I will not come here again." Joanna, a 27-year-old mother of two, stopped teaching in 2007. …..These women tell their friends and family back in Zimbabwe that they are making money by buying and selling cheap clothes and other items. "I told them the first time I had sold my mobile phone to buy this and that and get started ... There is nothing there and we have no choice. The only good thing is that we stick together and help each other. This is not the only place I go, I have been to Botswana and Mozambique too," said Laetitia, a 29-year-old friend from the same area of Zimbabwe. The women face many hazards. Most have been harassed and even deported. The locals charge above the going rate for rooms and food and evict them quickly or report them to the authorities if they fall behind. …..When I remember my school and the children, I can't believe what I am doing. It was another world," Joanna said quietly, a small tear trickling down her cheek. (*The Times, January 27, 2009)*

In this article, women are presented as victims and they also present themselves as victims, lacking in agency and helpless. The moral judgment runs through this article as illustrated by the statement "no one wants to be a prostitute," depicts sex work as unacceptable and self degrading as she reminisces on her teaching days and the work she is doing now. This has been a popular representation of women in sex work in the media and other circles were sex work is discussed. Thorbek and Pattanaik (2002) argue that women have been seen as deserving of sympathy and understanding as long as they are portrayed as victims either of circumstances or desperation and they argue that women adapt the image of victimhood for their own purposes. This explains some of the women's narratives when I began field work and how they reported that they do not

want to be sex workers but there was nothing else they could do, a narrative that changed as rapport was built with women. After "there was nothing I could do" phase, women reported that they had tried other work such as domestic work and waitressing and sex work paid more.

I concur with Gangoli (2001) who argues that social stigma gives women the impulsion to cast themselves as innocent victims to avoid further ostracisation. Women have knowledge of societal views of sex work as immoral and degrading and this denotes that sympathy will found in casting oneself as a victim and explaining one's engagement in sex work as a result of no other alternative, an aspect I gleaned in the brothel. They knew they had a few choices such as waitressing and domestic work and some women had explored these options only to be dissatisfied with them, an issue I will discuss below.

Women's narratives of pathways into sex work portray different entry points and Joyce's narrative does not conform to coercion and force:

> I came to South Africa and went to Cape Town where I worked as a waitress but the money was too little and so I came to Joburg to join a friend and began whoring.

When she left Zimbabwe for South Africa, Joyce might not have had the intention of joining the sex industry but a combination of low income and exploitation in the restaurant sector led her into sex work which paid relatively more. She made a decision to join the sex industry once she left Cape Town for Johannesburg guided by economic reasons which formed the main basis for entry into sex work. This resonates with Sanders et al (2009) who asserts that for many women

the decision to enter sex work is based on limited options available for women because of the low skills; consequently they can only access lower paid work. As a result, this makes it difficult to place women on a forced/unforced binary.

We also find women like Tendai who came to South Africa with the intention of selling sex. Tendai explains how she joined the sex industry in South Africa:

> When I first came to South Africa, I asked friends about brothels. I started in a brothel where they were many white girls and we made lots of money as we charged R450 an hour, but they want slim girls, I got fat and was chased away as I was not bringing in lots of money (she laughs as she says this). At that first brothel, I would get many clients because of my nice breasts (she shows me her breasts which have a tattoo and which are already exposed. (Field notes)

Tendai came to South Africa with the sole intention of selling sex. She also reported that she had been a sex worker at home and she wanted to make more money. Complexities and examples of how sex work indeed draws on the gendered stereotypes in the sex industry such as the importance of appearances such as slim body, nice breasts and light skin. She also found her way to Diplomat through a friend as one needed to know someone in Diplomat to be able to get room.

Melody like Tendai also travelled to South Africa with the intention of selling sex.

> I began prostitution when I was 18. Now I am 23. I had started sex work in Harare under the mentorship of a woman named Pretty. My mother and father tried to take me away from this business but they failed. Pretty was like a mother to me. She taught me how to save money and plan for the rainy day. I started by doing street work in an area called the Avenues in Harare. The streets here in Joburg are cold and dangerous but not the Harare streets. Pretty taught me all I know about prostitution. All the money I had got from whoring I had bought clothes and food until Pretty had told me that I needed to save and buy things that could be sold to care for medical bills if I got sick. Pretty also encouraged me to get a passport so that we could go and sell sex in Botswana. We went to Botswana once but Pretty's health was failing so we came

> back. Pretty began treatment and was prescribed ARVs. I stayed with Pretty until the end as she was like a mother to me.

This suggests women's migration for sex work into other countries such as South Africa is largely driven by economic considerations and the search for greener pastures in the same way most forms of labour moved during the economic crisis in Zimbabwe. It also shows the depth of networks and relationships among sex workers. Findings reveal that networks are important for women in sex work, an aspect I will discuss later as I focus on the quality of network, what they do and do not do for women, which will be discussed in more detail below.

In addition, the excerpt depicts the temporality of sex work to women, an aspect that was salient and seemed to run in most conversations with women. Temporality is a function of many factors in sex work, it can be age as women expressed that men like young women and when one is old, and it is difficult to get clients. Temporality is also made real by diseases such as HIV/AIDs and one's ability to remain HIV free. Women recognize the limitations of their profession and the hazards of HIV/AIDS, an aspect I will discuss later in the chapter.

It seemed that those that had started sex work in South Africa were reluctant for their families to know that they were selling sex in South Africa, hence the need to manage information received in the home country.

> When I arrived in South Africa, my mother, a cross border trader had found work for me and I worked for a while. But… I had problems at work and I quit, I started whoring and if my mother knew that I what I am doing she would kill me and she would not eat the food I am sending her…

> Aby shared with me that she had started sex work in Zimbabwe. She had come to South Africa because economically she would make more money here. She called her friend who was already here and doing sex work and the friend stayed with her until she was able to fend for herself. She has three children and the last child is two years old. She had her first child at the age of sixteen (16).

Aby is typical of most Zimbabwean women in sex work who made a rational but constrained decision to migrate to South Africa to fend for families. The constraints emanate from the structural barriers that inhibit them from entering other professions such as lack of educational qualifications and their immigration status. Most women in this study had no educational qualifications as most reported that they had failed Ordinary Level and some had only gone as far as Zimbabwe Junior Certificate (ZJC) and some had dropped out of school. She explained that she sent groceries and money home every month and sex work has allowed her to provide for her family in Zimbabwe which depends on her for their livelihood. She also brings to the fore the role of social networks as she had a friend who was already in South Africa who provided initial accommodation and food until she could stand on her own.

While some women had experiences of sex work in their home country, Zimbabwe, there are those like Tandi who began sex work in South Africa. When the Zimbabwean economy hit rock bottom and inflations was in quintillions, Tandi decided to move to South Africa as working in Zimbabwe did not provide value for her. She hoped to get a job, like most women she had been told jobs are plentiful in South Africa. A conversation with Tandi exposed yet a different pathway into sex work.

> Tandi: you look new here, are you selling?
>
> B: No, I am not selling but I am doing research on women in business, how long have you been here?

Tandi: I started last year, so it's a year now; I was working at the Reserve Bank after I had replaced my father who had retired. I used to clean and serve tea there...

B: So you decided to come to South Africa?

Tandi: The money was not worth anything any more, at some point I could hardly go to work because all the money would be finished after paying rent. So I decided to come to South Africa after my friend invited me.

B: eh

Tandi: I came to South Africa and my friend told me she was selling (she gestures to her pubic area), I did not want to do that so I looked for a job as a waitress, it was hard to find one, but eventually I found one.

B: eh

Tandi: I saw that my friend was sending money and food home and I was getting very little money, I could not send anything yet people from home expected me to help them, I asked my friend to teach me and I started. I am happy I have been able to send money and groceries home at least. I have also bought property for myself, are you sure you do not want to learn?

B: (laughing) I do not want to learn but if I wanted to learn what will you teach me

Tandi: I would teach you how to put a condom on a man (she bursts into laughter)

Narratives of women selling sex at Diplomat Hotel do not show migrant women as victims and vulnerable but rather depicts them as women with a constrained plan which works in the confines of structural barriers such as lack of education, unequal sexual and gender relations and the general disregard for female work. Findings show that while economic considerations were a major determinant for entry into sex work in South Africa these were shaped by gender norms, unequal work and gender and marriage which breed conditions that led women into sex work. Findings also reveal that women came from different backgrounds and most of them came from working class backgrounds.

Most women in sex work have little formal education and sex work provides one the few occupations where they can make more money. This shows the few choices available to women and how sex work presents itself as a viable option open to women (Archavanitkul and Guest, 2006). Findings are confirmed by O'Neill (1997) who argues that women have many different reasons for entering sex work, beginning work through different circumstances as shown by the multiple pathways into sex work. The primary reasons for entering sex work are economic (Gangoli, 2001; O'Neill, 1997; Sanders et al, 2009). This depicts another form of gender inequality that affects women's decision which is low pay attached to most "women's work" as she says the money in waitressing and domestic work was not enough to live on. Consequently, sex work is only one part of a broader feminization of the workplace that pays less.

While the section discussed pathways into sex work, research findings took me beyond individual pathology such as the history of child abuse and dysfunctional family to more systemic gender inequalities and the pressure to conform to the institution of marriage and the good mother discourse that upholds taking care of one's family, the kind that is celebrated in society as predicating some women's entry into sex work.

5.2.1. Bounded Agency

The above discussion shows how the issue of agency also comes to the fore in the ways they make decisions to engage in sex work. It shows the complex web of decisions that women make in the process of making their choices and strategies (Kabeer and Mahmud, 2004). While the

abolitionist discourse seeks to show women in sex work as victims, vulnerable and lacking in agency, narratives of women have not conformed to this view. The portrayal of women in sex work as victims, objects of men and vulnerable (Sanders et al 2009; O'Neill, 1997), this has resulted in a stilted analysis of pathways into sex work. Instead, I chose to see the journey by women into sex work as a quest for change in their lives and a search for economic opportunities (Kabeer and Mahmud, 2004).

Findings show how women's choices were constrained by gender norms that bring with them unequal expectations for men and women. These inequalities manifest themselves in number of ways that I show below. Unequal sexual expectations favour male sexuality at the expense of women's sexuality as shown by Mary's excerpt above, when her husband divorces her for being unfaithful yet he had been unfaithful as well. Gender unequal work has also constrained women's choices as women's work is undervalued and underpaid. On arriving in South Africa, some women did work such as waitressing and domestic work which did not provide a decent wage and this predicated entry into sex work.

O' Neill (1997) shows that women have many different reasons for entering sex work and do so under different circumstances, a close analysis of these circumstances provides the interface between agency and coercion and what Agustin (2006, 34) terms the "conundrum of agency." This "conundrum of agency" shows the tension, dilemmas and challenges faced in looking and choice and force. As Agustin (2006, 45) shows that:

> Many, many migrants doing sexual jobs do not describe themselves as "forced" or as having no other options in life. They may well have fewer options and fewer agreeable options than some other people, but they have them. Moreover among those who suffer

> poverty, bad marriages and the entire array of possible root factors, not everyone opts for sex work, just as not everyone opts to migrate. …while every choice is influenced by questions of class, gender, ethnicity, economic level and present social conditions…actions occur within the geopolitical and economic structures and dynamics….

In the same way, these many factors influenced women's entry into sex work. The women in this study were aware of the structural constraints they faced in terms of educational levels, limited job opportunities available to them, their migration status and the economic situation in Zimbabwe.

In order to understand the agency I am referring to, Sanders et al (2009) explanation is useful. She asserts that "agency refers to the woman's free will and their ability to make decisions about their circumstances and how they will use their body" (Sanders et al 2009, 23).While some critics of choice such as O'Neill (2009) have found the use of the word "free will" problematic, they counter that free choices are available to few women given the structures of race, gender, class and sex that determine what one can do. However, it seems that women in sex work are aware of their constraints and findings confirm Sanders et al (2009)'s argument that there are certain conditions through which women are sustained in sex work and for some women sex work makes sense given their limited educational, economic, social and material conditions.

As a result, the agency of women in this study is understood against the structural background of their situation in the home country and in the host country. It would not be truthful to emphasize choice and agency without mentioning various ways in which women are constrained by structures in their environment. Most women in my research had limited educational

qualifications which are structural factors that limit the choice of employment open to them. In addition, most of the women's migrant status is irregular and those with temporary permits are not allowed to work in South Africa hence the only work open to them would be domestic work and waitressing which most women felt paid very low wages compared to the income they could earn in sex work.

While the trafficking discourse and the abolitionists emphasize force and coercion of women in sex work, the language of force was limited to structural limitations such as the collapse of the Zimbabwe's economy and the subsequent increase in poverty dominated narratives of women in this study. Findings also show that unequal gender relations in sex, marriage also worked to keep women poor. Consequently, while I acknowledge women's agency I also take cognizance of the fact that their choices are constrained by these structural factors. As a result, I call it bounded agency; an approach which allows acknowledges the agency of women while also aware of the structures in which these decisions are made. Those opposed to sex work and who view it as an oppressive institution refuse to see agency in entry into the sex industry and to them agency is resisting oppressive institutions and not entering them (Jeffreys, 1997)

Jeffreys (1997) brings in an interesting perspective in her discussion of choice and decision to enter sex work. Instead of the word choice, she prefers the word decision a word that demonstrates the difficult task women have in an area of few alternatives where all them are undesirable in that domestic work and waitressing were equally exploitative and degrading to a greater or lesser extent. This is apt for women in sex work who could have been waitresses or

domestic workers all which are equally exploitative, low paying and demeaning for women thus difficult decisions had to be made.

More importantly, the point I make is that pathways into sex work are a function of socio-economic and the geo-political space in which women find themselves in. The constraints faced by women in sex work are not the most obvious ones such as trafficking or the presence of a pimp but are rather hetero-normative inequalities that shape sex, marriage and work and the links between them.

5.3. The role of social networks in pathways into sex work

Due to the criminalization of sex work in South Africa, the role of social capital for women becomes more important. Putman (1995, 664) defines "social capital as features of social life, networks, norms and trust that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives." Findings suggest that women were assisted by a friend or relative someone already in South Africa in their migratory journey. These networks included friends and relatives who were already settled in South Africa first. These provided the first point of call for women coming from Zimbabwe. There is agreement with Archavanitkul and Guest (2006) and O'Neill (2001) who show that these networks at times facilitated induction into sex work.

O'Neill (2001) states that young women find themselves in sex work through peer association. These networks are important for all categories of women, that is, those with sex work

experience from their home country and those who started sex work in South Africa. South Africa was new terrain for women who had experienced sex work in Zimbabwe and they needed someone to help them navigate. However, networks were more important for women who began sex work in South Africa as friends and relatives already in the trade taught them the ropes, that is, how to get clients, save money and navigate the sex industry. Findings are confirmed by studies by O'Neill (1996, 135) who notes that:

> Some young women who drift into prostitution on leaving care because of financial problems and their association with street culture…

However, while this is true for migrant women in sex work, some of my findings contradict O'Neill (1996, 135) findings that:

> Others are clearly pimped and coerced into prostitution …all these young women have sad backgrounds; child sexual abuse, physical or emotional abuse, family breakdowns and multiple placements in care

Neither of this literature allows for more analysis of structural constraints facing women's work and the limited alternatives they refer to, they refer to their financial problems but the situation in Zimbabwe cannot be attributed to individual financial problems rather it was the massive economic meltdown that affected the whole country and literally made everyone except a few destitute. Most literature on sex work instead problematises the individual, the sex worker, pimps or families and does not seem to analyze the role of gender expectations, unequal pay for feminized work and the global economic inequalities.

Findings suggest that for migrant women networks were necessary for entry into sex work; they also allowed women to get ahead, finding better economic opportunities in the sex industry.

Women in the study observed that the brothel allowed them to make fast money but for one to get a room, one needed to know someone already living there. As Sara aged thirty observed "…There is quick money at in this hotel that is why there are many girls[9] in this brothel…" The hotel owners also used these networks to accept women into the hotel as shown by Martha aged forty that:

> The hotel managers would want to verify if you are good person to put into their hotel, so… they would ask you whom you know who stays in the hotel. When you say a name, they call that person and ask them if they know you and if you work well with others; if the person you knew was liked by the managers you would get a place even faster…

While women in the Diplomat Hotel work independently of the hotel managers, there exists a complex relationship between the hotel management and women who work from there, which cannot be easily classified into a pimp relationship as depicted in western literature on sex work. The hotel managers lay down the rules that women have to abide by such as prohibition of fighting, drugs and stealing from clients. These rules are meant to reduce police attention and unnecessary scrutiny from the outside world. While this is meant to safeguard the interests of the hotel management as sex work is illegal, it indirectly works to increase the safety of women in this establishment. Women solicit their own clients in the bar area and complete the transaction and are obliged to pay the daily rental of R100 to the hotel which is very high given the state of the accommodation. Thus there are mutual benefits for both the women and the hotel, the hotel provides a relatively safe space for work and the women pay a rental for security and accommodation services provided by the hotel. Women build social capital with the hotel in the same way the hotel has to build a good reputation for security or women move to other hotels in the area that provide the same services.

[9] Women in the bar refer to each other as "vasikana" translated to mean girls which is common in the Shona language for women regardless of age to call each other "vasikana" girls

These social networks are governed by all components of social capital such as norms and values, expectations and sanctions. Norms and values may not be written but they include aspects such as helping other women difficult times as said by Tatenda aged 34;

> Whores and thieves are united. Where there is a whore there is a thief. We have a society through which we help each other. There were these girl named Memory and her friend and they were working at another brothel in Hillbrow and they were taken by this Nigerian man. We could not find them for days but the DJ in the bar had been the last person to see them and he could not remember the men who had taken them. We went to the police after that to report them missing. After while, they were found dead and one did not have eyes and her facial skin had been removed. We had to raise money to take back the two bodies back to Zimbabwe. We helped the family with the burial. We pay R200 every month into the society.

The social networks provide networks of assistance in times of despair and even death. The dangers inherent in sex work and its illegal nature makes it necessary for women and petty thieves to look after each other. The fact that women in sex work are not able to create other networks in South Africa due to the criminalized nature and the stigma of their work, they have created their own networks based on reciprocity and trust. The society of "women in sex work and thieves" has a membership of more than 300 people which include women in other brothels. there are other savings club within bars outside this bigger association for example one group in Diplomat has a membership of 10 people who contribute up to R300 daily and makes an amount estimated at R90 000 a month. This means there is has to be trust among the members and the people given the responsibility to safe keep the money. While women have found ways to save money as the majority reported that they could not open a bank account. However, these contributions put women under much pressure to work given other expenses they have such as rent and food hence most reported working a 12 hour day Sunday to Sunday. It is also ironic that thieves would be associated with trust as a group of people in the club has custody over contributions.

Social capital of women in sex work transcends friendships or enemies as illustrated by this conversation:

> We whores in this bar are like a family, even if we do not like each other, when one of us has a problem such as ill health or experiences a death in their family, we all help each other…

These networks based on reciprocity and the unwritten norms are such that one is assured that should they encounter misfortune, there will be someone to help them. The networks are also governed by trust as someone within the group is tasked with the role of keeping money safe and account for it to the members at their meetings.

Women in sex work also look out for their friends and relatives in sex work. Findings reveal that women keep track of the welfare of their relatives in sex work. This excerpt of a conversation between two women reveals this:

> Martha: I hear your daughter (niece) is not well and that she is taking drugs
>
> Maggie : I hear that she is not eating well and that her health is deteriorating …but she is a big girl, she has to take care of herself…I tried, I brought her here and she ran away from me as soon as she was feeling better..If she is working then she is fine
>
> Martha: but mama… Try and find her and talk to her.
>
> Maggie: One day I will look for her and put her on the bus to Zimbabwe. I will find big men who will accompany her until she is home and they will not let her out of their sight…that is what she wants…they will even accompany her even to the toilet …she (the niece) should learn from her friend who died of meningitis because she was not taking her medication (ARVs). She died and we had to contribute to make R15000 to take the body home, for burial.

Social capital also is strengthened by common values of women, they migrated to South Africa to work and so the common goal is to work and remit to their families in Zimbabwe.

Like any community, women in sex work have rules which are unwritten but which women have to comply with and there are sanctions for non compliance with these rules. Rules on engagement with clients are specified as shown below;

> Here we have rules and these are different from other brothels, No kissing, I don't kiss these men from here, No anal sex, No oral sex. We have to abide by these rules because if one of us breaches them then all the clients will go to that person only and not to us. These things are done in other brothels.

These rules allow women to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives. The rules of engagement are clear to all women but there are times when women breach these rules. Such behaviour results in sanctions from other women. The sanctions are not formal but they take the form of gossip about the woman, her reputation is destroyed and/or direct attacks from other women. An incident that happened one Saturday afternoon demonstrates the nature of the informal sanctions used in the bar;

> One day I entered the bar and as I greeted the women I could sense the tension in the bar. Women standing near the door were shouting insults that seemed to be directed to someone in the bar but which were randomly said. The women I was sitting with were responding with insults which also seemed to be directed at no one in particular, I asked one of the women what this was about. She pointed to a woman wearing white tight shorts that she called Mai Harare, who she said was the source of the conflict. She alleged that Mai Harare was having oral sex in her room and Nyasha had seen her and asked her why she was doing this. In response, Mai Harare had asked if it was any of her business and threatened Nyasha with violence. As women are not allowed to fight on the premises, they wanted to go out and fight it out. One group of women was on Nyasha's side and the other on Mai Harare. The women who were accusing Mai Harare for breaching the terms of engagement by having oral sex, wanted her chased out of the bar and as she walked around in the bar, one could see the hate stares women directed to her and other women scowled at her.

While the sanctions of non compliance are direct and indirect, the incident also brought to the fore the cliques and different groups that exist among women in the bar. While at times women want to show a united front, this incident revealed some cracks in the relationships.

5.3.1. Giving each other clients

Networks of friendship played a significant role in the sex work business. Friends would occasionally transfer a former client to their colleagues if they did not feel like having sex or if they had someone already booked.

> I was standing next to Tendai and Mary. Tendai asks Mary about the client she spent the night with and Mary responds that the man gave her R500 for the night but "mboro yake ihombe" (his cock is big). Tendai responds that she knew that and that is the reason did not want him but referred him to her. Mary then asks Tendai (what is wrong with his cock, it looks red everywhere) "mboro iya yakaita sei, inenge iri red kwese". Tendai responds that "it was not like that before, maybe he is sick now".

While networks are used to refer clients to friends, they also serve other purposes to protect women from unruly and violent clients. Networks are also used by women to screen clients, those that pay and those that do not pay, those that take too long and those who are rude. Women in the bar exchanged information on clients and they helped to look out for each other against bad clients. At one point they told me that if one man becomes violent towards one of them, they all rally and attack that man to protect a colleague.

5.3.2. Social networks and knowledge transfer in sex work

Women in sex work use networks to transfer knowledge and skills to new entrants in the sex industry. Women in sex work who are new to the trade are taught the value of saving and buying property by those that have been in the trade for longer. Younger women are also taught to use condoms and protect themselves against diseases. Older women also teach new entrants how to find clients and how to protect themselves from dangers in sex work.

> When I arrived in Joburg, I joined my friend who had told me to come and try to find work here. After working as a waitress for a few months, I was not able to send anything home, and my friends were laughing at the small money I made at work, the money was too little, my friend asked me if I wanted to join her, I was scared at first but I decided to try, so she taught me how to find men and how to demand money from men before or after sex. She also taught me how to save money and buy things to send home…

Knowledge about the norms and values of sex work is transferred through these networks as women take younger ones or friends under their wing and teach them what to do. The social networks that can be gleaned in the study illustrate the social networks to get by and get ahead, all which come out of the trajectories of women in sex work.

These findings are confirmed by the work of Sanders et al (2009, 26) who discovered what she termed "buddying systems" among women in sex work:

> The creation of buddying systems took place between experienced workers and novices as individuals would become self appointed trainers who would teach novices how to keep safe and deal with clients.

The study also revealed that some Zimbabwean women are driven by strong cultural norms and strong economic need to provide for families left in Zimbabwe and so they remit large amounts of their earnings. Economic factors provided the major motivation for migration and women suggested that it would be foolish to be in work that did not provide economic satisfaction and sex work paid relatively better than other alternatives they had tried. Even those engaged in sex work prior to migrating to South Africa, the friendship networks had spread word that they could make more money in South Africa hence the decision to migrate.

Research on sex work has shown the exploitation of women who sell sex through pimps. Findings show that women in Diplomat are independent of pimps and work on their own. They

charge and keep their money on their own but the rental payments they have to pay to owner of hotel are high and the owners act more as an institutional pimp. They have savings clubs within the brothel and this pool of financial resources allows them to remit when they withdraw their savings at the end of the month.

5.3.3. Migration offering a free space for women in sex work

One of the questions of this research was to explore how migration and migrant status impacted on conditions of work for migrant sex workers. This section seeks to illuminate the experiences of women as they relate to their migrant status. The main finding is that migration offers a space for women in Diplomat to do sex work without facing the attendant stigma and moral sanctions they would be subjected to if they were in Zimbabwe. Sex workers are generally mobile and rarely do women practice sex work in areas they grew up in (Wolffers, 2002 and Agustin, 2006). In this way, South Africa provides a haven far from home where women can freely engage in sex work with relative anonymity although an occasional neighbor or relative sometimes strays into the hotel. In this sense the lack of "traditional" networks becomes an asset for women.

While migration offers a free(er) space to work, it also creates different working conditions for women. Women in the brothel reported that while in South Africa they work harder than they would in Zimbabwe. They work a 12 hour day, seven days a week, yet in Zimbabwe sex work is done mostly in the night until the early hours of the morning. The pressure to work hard and remit pushes women to work longer hours and make more money in order to cater for family and responsibilities in their home countries.

Migration has also allowed women to recreate a different identity and remake their story for family and friends back in Zimbabwe. As Chipo reports:

> I called home on day and my brother told me that he had been told that I am staying in a bad place for prostitutes. I told him I don't know about this and it was nonsense. I told him that I am a waitress. You know when people know that you are doing prostitution in SA, whatever the value of things you send to them become meaningless but I have to take care of my child and my late brother's child who is home.

Women reported that they tell their families and friends they work as waitresses or domestic workers while in fact involved in sex work. Distance provides safety for most women though they have had incidents when their relatives and neighbours have come to Diplomat and they had to evade them. One can see that even though distance offers women the opportunity to manage information received at home, they still grapple with the discourses of good and bad ways of earning money. While society values responsible parents who take care of their children, the same society condemns ways of earning money such as sex work as unacceptable.

In the end the above narrative then works to explain her involvement in sex work as she emphasizes that she has a child and other relatives to take care of, so what can she do? The statement "but I have to take care of my child…." serves to justify actions and also highlights the complexities experienced by women involved in sex work as they negotiate the notion of good mothers who take care of their children in ways that have been stigmatized by society.

Migration has been used by women as a livelihood strategy. Walker et al (2001) defines a livelihood strategy as an organized set of lifestyle choices, goals, values and activities influenced

by biophysical, political, legal, economic, social, cultural and psychological components. The key goal of a livelihood strategy is to ensure household economic and social security. The study shows that migrant women have used migration and sex work as livelihood strategies to provide economic and social security for families. Livelihood strategies have also been defined as activities undertaken to provide a means of living. Thus migration and sex work have been employed as strategies to earn a means of living for women.

> Joyce tells me that she has one child aged nine in Zimbabwe. However she has a huge extended family that she takes care of: her elderly mother, her late sister's three children, her father, her child, her young sister with one child whose husband died last year. All these look up to her and she has to send groceries every month but she does not send luxuries just basic goods such as washing soap, sugar, cooking oil, flour, rice and food for children to carry to school.(Field notes)

Women in Diplomat reported they migrated due to economic difficulties and social insecurity in Zimbabwe as the economic crisis deepened. This excerpt shows that;

> The whores in this place have property, (*Mahure arimuno anezvinhu zvavo, sista*), we send money home and take care of families except for those stupid whores that waste money on groceries only and not buying real things (property).
>
> You see that woman, almost every day that woman counts R1800 and she has built a house for herself and one for her parents. She bought car which she left home. Clearly Fungai is impressed with the money that woman was making.

Consequently migration is a response to an external crisis and migrating offered a viable economic option that has enhanced the economic and social security of families. Women have been able to use all their resources to build themselves and their families something most people who stayed back in Zimbabwe were not able to do.

Findings suggest that migration and the migratory process have empowered women in sex work. Piper (2005) shows that migration can be empowering for women, as they are able to carry out mothering roles across borders through instructions on how the money they have spent should be used and redistributed. They are also able to participate in decisions on family matters while far as they consulted though telecommunications. Literature on gender and migration has evidence that migration both a cause and consequence of women's empowerment.

Women have been able to beat the economic crisis in the country and their families have survived the crisis through remittances they send home. Some women have also been able to acquire assets and property such as land and consumer durables such as cars they would otherwise not afford had they remained in Zimbabwe.

5.4. The other side of the coin: Risks and dangers of sex work

While migration has offered women immense economic opportunities, women in sex work have also encountered a number of problems due to their migrancy. The problems encountered by migrant women in sex work are also due to the structural problems in sex work such as the criminalization and so South African women in sex work are also victims of the same problems. As sex work is illegal in South Africa, women have encountered abuse and their migrant status and the illegal nature of sex work has meant they have not had recourse before the law. Maria aged 36 revealed some of the violence women face when she explains:

> You can also be killed by clients. She narrates a story about a girl they were working with at the hotel who was killed by a client and put in the bath tub. They found her the next morning and the client had already left.

This incident happened three years ago and since then, the hotel has put in security measures to ensure that women are safe. One of them includes searching men for weapons when they enter the brothel. The other is for a man to leave his identity documents at the reception when he spends the night in the hotel with a woman.

In addition, women in Diplomat are also warned not to steal from clients as some violence is retribution from men when some women stole from them in previous encounters. As illustrated by the story told of a sex worker who stole some money from a client one afternoon and thought she had gotten away with it. The man had returned the next day and asked her for services again and she thought he had not noticed his missing money, but when they got to the room he injected her with poison and left her to die. Her roommate found her dead later when she went to provide services to a client. This resulted in police investigations which brought unwanted attention to the hotel, hence the rule in the bar that women will be expelled from the hotel if they steal from clients.

Sometimes violence is random as shown by this excerpt;

> Pretty shared that violence by clients can be experienced sometimes and she points to me a girl who had an incident just this afternoon. She tells me this girl had found a client whom she had gone upstairs with, the client had said he wanted to smoke, after smoking they began the act, during the act, the man strangled the woman and took money that was in her bra. She could not scream and the man had left the room while she was trying to get dressed and recover. The girl had a swollen eye as the man became violent and he left with all her day's takings. (Field notes)

While migration offers women a number of benefits, most women in sex work across borders have visitors' permits and some have no legal documents that allow them to be in South Africa. The routine checks by the police on the streets and clean up operations that sometimes take place in Johannesburg central has resulted in more Zimbabwean women engaging in in-door based sex work. Ironically, their immigration status means they enter the safer side of sex work as the weight of literature in sex work has shown that indoor based sex work is relatively safer than street based sex work. But there are some like Chipo who have done brothel work, street work and hairdressing work and seem to vacillate between these without settling on any one (Agustin, 2006; Sanders et al, 2009; Gould and Fick, 2008). Women's migrant status plays a significant role in determining the type of sex work they will engage in. Paida reports that:

> I tried street work when I arrived in South Africa but the dangers were too many for me. The police would target us, the criminals would also be there and so I left and found a room here (Diplomat).

Zimbabwean women in sex work face a double jeopardy, firstly, they are unable to work legally in South Africa and secondly sex work is illegal in South Africa. Therefore, for Zimbabwean women in Diplomat, indoor based sex work provides a conducive atmosphere for them. The fact that they work indoors in a hotel managed by men does not have anything to do with women needing a male figure to protect them but is the result of a rational decision taken after assessing other alternatives. Proponents for decriminalization have argued that criminalization of the sex industry results the industry going underground, reducing the choices of where women work and making it more dangerous for women in the sex industry. Consequently, supporters of decriminalization, argue that the move will open up the industry and provide more choices for women and not restrict them to particular spaces that are relatively safe and hidden.

Women in Diplomat reported that street based sex work is dangerous and these views are based on personal experiences and/or friends' experiences. Fear of street based sex work also stems from lack of familiarity with the South African environment, one woman expressed that "what if a man takes you away and dumps you somewhere." Reluctance to do street based sex work is also based on fear of violence and death. In a group one day, I asked women if they have done street work and all of them strongly refused that they had never done street work in South Africa. One woman shouted that

> "What if a client takes you and killed you, who would know that you are dead, no one..."

For women in Diplomat, they find safety in numbers as they are able to look out for each other. Men do not take women away from the hotel but women use their rooms to offer sexual services to clients. While Diplomat is relatively safer than street work, this is not to say women do not experience violence in the brothel. Sanders et al (2009) confirms that women working in indoor establishments are more likely to be in control of their working and personal lives.

Violence is experienced by women at different levels and research on sex work has in some cases exaggerated the violence to make a case for the abolition of sex work. Weitzer (2000)'s analysis provides a nuanced analysis when he argues that different kinds of sex worker experiences have varying degrees of violence, victimization, exploitation, agency and choice which highlights the complexity of sex work. Women are also vulnerable to psychological violence when men insult them and call them "whore." While women in Diplomat have re-appropriated the word whore for themselves, they find it insulting and unacceptable for others to call them whores.

This depicts the ways in which women are aware of the problems inherent in the sex trade but find ways of navigating this terrain in order to yield economic benefits from it.

5.4.1 Sexual health: HIV and AIDS

Sex workers have been constructed as a danger to public health, hence the panic about sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS in recent years (Sanders, 2009 and Doctors for Life, 2001). Women in the brothel showed a high awareness of HIV and strong intentions to practice safe sex. The public health discourse has labeled them as vectors of disease (Doctors for Life, 1997) and this approach has resulted in the "othering" of women in sex work as the drivers of HIV/AIDS yet they in fact fear being infected by their clients.

Women in the bar reported practicing safe sex as much as possible but they also acknowledged their inability to demand condom use from their boyfriends in the way they did with clients. The irony of this is that they are more at risk from socially sanctioned relationships of their boyfriends and husbands than from stigmatized ones with clients were they can demand condom use. This highlights unequal gender relations between women and their intimate partners. Inability to demand condom use from their boyfriends denotes unequal power relations in intimate relationships. This is confirmed by Diaz (2007) who argues that transmission of HIV/AIDS is to some extent shaped by forces of social oppression but I would emphasize that the construction of love relationships are as much, if not more of this kind of oppression than sex work relationships.

Due to the stigma and discrimination that come with HIV, there were silences around discussion of HIV. The following excerpt is an example;

Chipo: I have been preparing so that I leave my children well off when I die

B: when you die, why are you thinking of dying, you are still very young

Chipo: you know, in this work, you can die, you can't be too sure

B: what kills people in this work?

Chipo: people die from diseases and there are many

Until the end of our conversation, Chipo did not mention the word HIV or AIDS; she assumed I knew about the diseases she was referring to. Instead women in the bar devised euphemisms for speaking about HIV. For example, when discussing a woman who was having sex with her boyfriend without using a condom, they said "*ari kutonyudzwa*" (she is being drowned). To talk about some of the symptoms of AIDS such as unnaturally red lips, they described them as "*akaruma polony*" (biting a slice of polony).

The knowledge and desire to practice safe sex was high among women in the bar, evidenced by the number of women who moved around the bar with condoms hanging out of their bosoms in places where men in the bar could see them. While this show of condoms could be interpreted in a number of ways, such as showing preparedness for sex, I thought it worked to show the client that condoms were a priority.

However, risk of infection in the bar was associated with the use of alcohol and Anna shows this:

> Last night I drank a lot and when I went up with a client for the night, I am not sure if I used a condom, but I can't be tested, I am so afraid.

Thus under the influence of alcohol, the risks of engaging in unprotected sex increased. The fact that she noted that "I can't be tested" which I associated with fear of knowing her HIV status, could be read as another silence.

In the bar, HIV status was a matter for gossip and this correlates with Diaz (2007)'s findings on Latino gay men. Melody suffered from shingles and while she was taking treatment, I visited her, she told me:

> Barbra, the women in this bar are bad, can you imagine, they have been telling clients that they should not have sex with me because I had shingles and they are saying its herpes and that I am HIV positive. Do you think shingles are the same thing as herpes, my doctor told me I had shingles not herpes…

The discrimination, rejection, stigmatization and alienation that accompany HIV are glaring in this excerpt. Suspicion that she might have HIV is enough to encourage alienation from potential sexual partners and "othering" by other women in the brothel. Diaz (2007, 54) supports that HIV positive people are "blamed for their infection, seen as morally deficient people, responsible for their own infection and the spread of the disease," which explains the silences that accompany the disease.

Summary

The discussion highlights the various trajectories of women into sex work and the systemic gender inequalities that lead women to sex work. This chapter reveals the role and importance of networks and migration for women in sex work. While some had experienced sex work in

Zimbabwe, a number of women began sex work in South Africa after an assessment of alternatives available to them. While the decision to enter sex work is not as easy one, findings point to a number of structural factors such as gender inequalities, sexual inequalities and economic inequalities caused by the devaluation of women's work which have predicated entry into sex work. Migration and the pressure to remit to families are used to justify entry into sex work which provides a relatively decent income compared to other work. Findings suggest the importance of networks and how migration offered women the space to work outside censorship of family. A number of women were initiated to the trade by a friend or a relative who was already in the sex industry.

Trajectories into sex work reveal that it is not possible to profile women in sex work as coming from one particular background as this profiling has led to "othering" and the subsequent discrimination and stigmatization of women in sex work. Women in sex work come from different backgrounds and have diverse experiences on entering the sex industry.

This chapter also highlighted complexities of sex work as women represent themselves in a number of ways which do not confirm victimhood but as individuals with agency though constrained, who actively engage with their situation to their advantage. This chapter leads to the final chapter which concludes by providing a summary of claims I make in this study. I also point towards areas for future exploration and show methodological insights gained in the course of this study.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1. Introduction

This conclusion serves a number of purposes. I revisit the goals of the research; summarize observations and findings, interpretations as well as insights gained from the study. I step back and reflect on methods used and the problems encountered in the course of the research. I highlight the complexities and paradoxes inherent in migrant women's experiences of sex work in South Africa. In the process an attempt is made to show the importance of understanding their unique experience without essentialising it as only ever exploitative or empowering. I discuss the main findings of the study and how they impact on my views now and make attempts to point to the direction of future work.

The research sought to answer a number of key questions regarding migrant women in sex work. How women engaged with the discourses in sex work mainly, abolitionists and the sex as work debates? How women perceived their involvement in sex work and engaged with norms that governed sexuality? Women's pathways into sex work was an important question explored in this study.

The process of collecting data illuminated a number of methodological issues that provide more rich data for sex work research. Ethnographic methods were productive in the collection of data

as sex work is a sensitive field in which I discovered women were not comfortable discussing what they do with strangers. It is important to note that interviews, or what I term conversations, occurred after I built rapport with women. Another methodological dimension that emerged in this research is the need for the researcher to embed themselves in the setting by subjecting respondents continually to their presence. The data collection process revealed to me that sex work research requires investment in time, resources and patience for one to grasp the diverse realities and experiences of sex workers.

The use of postmodern feminism as a theoretical resource allowed me to accommodate contradictions and dialectical tensions which stretch beyond the essentialised views of sex work. Observation and conversations with women based on the principles of postmodern feminism allowed me to deconstruct traditional thinking about sex work. Hence, this framework provided a "unique perspective for exploring the complexity and ambiguity" of the lives of sex workers. (Baber and Allen, 1992, 52).

The research process revealed the need for flexibility in sex work research. When I began field work, I intended to conduct interviews but the realities in the research setting soon revealed that formal, structured interviews would not be feasible. I had to revisit the design and used informal conversations instead. I was careful to keep the research questions in mind as I engaged in informal conversations with women.

In the process of conducting this research, I encountered a number of dilemmas such as the translation of conversations from Shona a vernacular language for some Zimbabweans to English. While English equivalents were found, the problem was finding English words that provide the meaning intended by the speaker. In order to overcome this, I decided to maintain the use of some Shona words. Other ethical problems faced concerned getting informed consent when observing men and some women in the bar who were not aware of this study.

Analysis unveiled the tensions and contradictions women faced in navigating debates in sex work. Women oscillated between viewing sex work as work since it provided a livelihood and sex work as immoral and unacceptable. At times women legitimized sex work as it had allowed them to provide for their families and provided economic security. While women legitimized sex work as work, they also lived with the stigma and shame associated this work. In trying to negotiate the stigma, women at times accepted the stigma and self degraded yet there were times they equated all women to "bitches" and felt they were no different to other women. This illustrates that the experiences of sex workers are more complex than abolitionists and sex as work discourses have shown. Drawing from the postmodern feminism, which rejects grand theories, this study shows that simplistic views that show sex workers as a homogenous group deny specificities of their daily existence.

In negotiating with the discourses in sex work, women represented themselves as heroes at times and victims at other times, revealing the tensions in engaging with the good woman/bad woman binaries. While debates in sex work have been polemic, the reality of migrant sex workers cannot be dichotomized as discourses of sex work have attempted to do. Hence women's

perceptions are fluid and not as static as the debates. Instead, systemic gender and economic inequalities inherent in society experienced by women were highlighted as my analysis moved beyond the pathological representation of sex workers in medical research.

The analysis showed that the conflation of all migrant sex workers as trafficked silences the voices of some women who made rational but constrained decisions to enter sex work (Thorbek and Pattanaik, 2001; Palmary, 2009). Analysis points to the diverse experiences of women in sex work which provided a nuanced analysis of sex work that did not universalize sex work as being only exploitative or liberatory (O'Neill, 1997). Findings do not confirm the hegemonic representation of sex workers as victims, powerless, sexually harassed and oppressed, instead findings point to the agency of women though constrained. The agency of women in this study was demonstrated in a number of ways which include the creation of alternative social capital to get by and get ahead in the sex industry. In addition, the re-appropriation the whore label to make it less derogatory and the creation of safe working conditions for themselves by choosing indoor sex work point to their agency.

In explaining choice of sex work, women drew on the good mother discourse and the need to provide for their children during the economic crisis in Zimbabwe. Findings show how women re-appropriated the good mother discourse to portray themselves as heroes who have sacrificed their lives for their children and families. This brings out the complexities involved in the choices of migrant women in entering sex work (Thorbek, 2002).

Gender hierarchies and structures of inequality came to the fore, more in the analysis of pathways into sex work. These were revealed in the power relations that govern sexuality and the prevalence of the double standard in society that privileges male sexuality above female's sexuality. Thus, women in sex work were resisting sexual scripts of what is sexually acceptable and unacceptable for women (Baber and Allan, 1992).

While abolitionists' literature has pathologised women as carriers of diseases such as HIV, findings show that women in sex work also feared contamination and infection from clients. Thus while the work of Doctors for Life (1997) has emphasized that women in sex work spread diseases, women are equally fearful of being infected by clients. Analysis showed that women found it easier to demand condom use and practice safe sex with clients than with intimate partners where they could not negotiate for condom use. This showed that sex workers are equally vulnerable to infection from socially sanctioned relationships such as husbands and boyfriends.

Findings of this study emphasize heterogeneity of sex workers and therefore the need to desist from universalizing their experiences as either only exploitative or romanticize their experiences as liberatory (O'Neill, 2006; Thorbek and Pattanaik, 2002). The research reveals how women also draw on the prescribed value of societal institutions such as marriage as providing respectability for women hence seeing themselves within binaries of good/bad women (Baber and Allan, 1992)

Migration is a unique experience for women which provided a livelihood strategy for them during a time of acute structural difficulties in Zimbabwe. It was also an empowering experience which provided some women financial security they would otherwise not have, had they remained in Zimbabwe. In as much as doctors, nurses and other types of labour migrated for greener pastures during this time, sex workers also migrated in search of better opportunities. This was a common narrative from women with experience of sex work in Zimbabwe. More importantly, migration also provided a freer space which allowed women to manage information sent to home country about their activities in South Africa. Consequently, migration allowed women to remake themselves.

However, for some women, the sex work experience has not been without risks. A reading of women's narratives revealed ways in which women have learnt to maneuver and mitigate dangers in the sex trade. Violence against sex workers has been a focal point in abolitionists' literature but did not feature much in the lived experiences of sex workers in this study. This is not to say violence was not experienced at all but that it was not as central to the experiences of these women. The role of social networks assumes much importance as women navigate the unknown terrain of South Africa's sex industry. Social networks are used as a source of information about sex work, networks also provide multiple benefits including finding a place to work from, getting clients and having emotional and material support when misfortune strikes.

I claim that the problem focus of sex work research provides an incomplete understanding of migrant women trajectories into sex work. It does not explore how women perceive their engagement in sex work, but rather increases their "othering", exclusion and marginalization. The poignancy of this study can be found in the production of knowledge and increasing our understanding of the diverse experiences of some migrant sex workers. The study provides a platform for a segment of Zimbabwean sex workers to be heard and their views on their engagement in sex work. Sex work research has fallen with the public health sphere, the abolitionists' debates and the sex as work framework and this research offers a different perspective to the study of migrant sex workers. The study portrays realities of the experiences of migrant sex workers and their negotiation of identity in a stigmatized profession.

Findings revealed that choice is shaped by a number of factors which include, migrant status, sexual double standards in society, the gendered nature of work and the unrewarding and unrewarded nature of women's work. Gender inequalities become very important in pathways into sex work evidenced by the low pay for most feminized work. The overrepresentation of women in unrewarding and unrewarded work was emphasized as women's only other job options were low paying and equally unrewarding work in the domestic sector and service industry (Agustin, 2006; Gangoli, 2001). The study points out the segregation of women in low paying and low status jobs and the need for structural changes in bringing gender equality in work. Consequently, this study revealed the gendered nature of labour not only sex work but also domestic and care work (Ava Caradona, 2008). Women used a number of ways to negotiate, challenge and resist these gender inequalities.

More importantly, this study reveals that there is a force that propels women into sex work but it does not lie within the trafficking framework or with the pimp but within institutions that society applauds such as marriage with its attendant gender inequalities. A subtle force also lies within the gendered nature of work and the general disregard for women's work. Thus, this is a nuanced and empirically grounded picture of the tensions and contradictions experienced by migrant sex workers without claiming any truths, as there are many and multiple truths (Baber and Allan, 1992). Analysis shows that choice is complex than often reflected in the literature on sex work.

How women engaged with sexuality was an aspect I hoped to explore in this study, however, I did not get to the level of engagement with women that allowed a thorough discussion of sexuality and issues of pleasure. Thus, there is need for research in sexuality and how women in sex work navigate the norms of sexuality in the African context. In addition, further research needs to explore social capital in sex work and how it works for women. Comparative studies could be done across countries to draw on differences and similarities on the experiences of women in sex work in different contexts. Research work can be done to examine the impact of the 2010 World Cup on sex work in South Africa as currently; there is no evidence of research that has preceded major sport events in Africa.

Finally, I do not claim to have found answers but the study provoked more questions than answers about the organisation of sex and gender in society. The findings of this study cannot be

generalized to all migrant women in sex work but the reading of this work is partial and not exhaustive (Palmary, 2006).

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Appendices

Agenda for a meeting at New Life

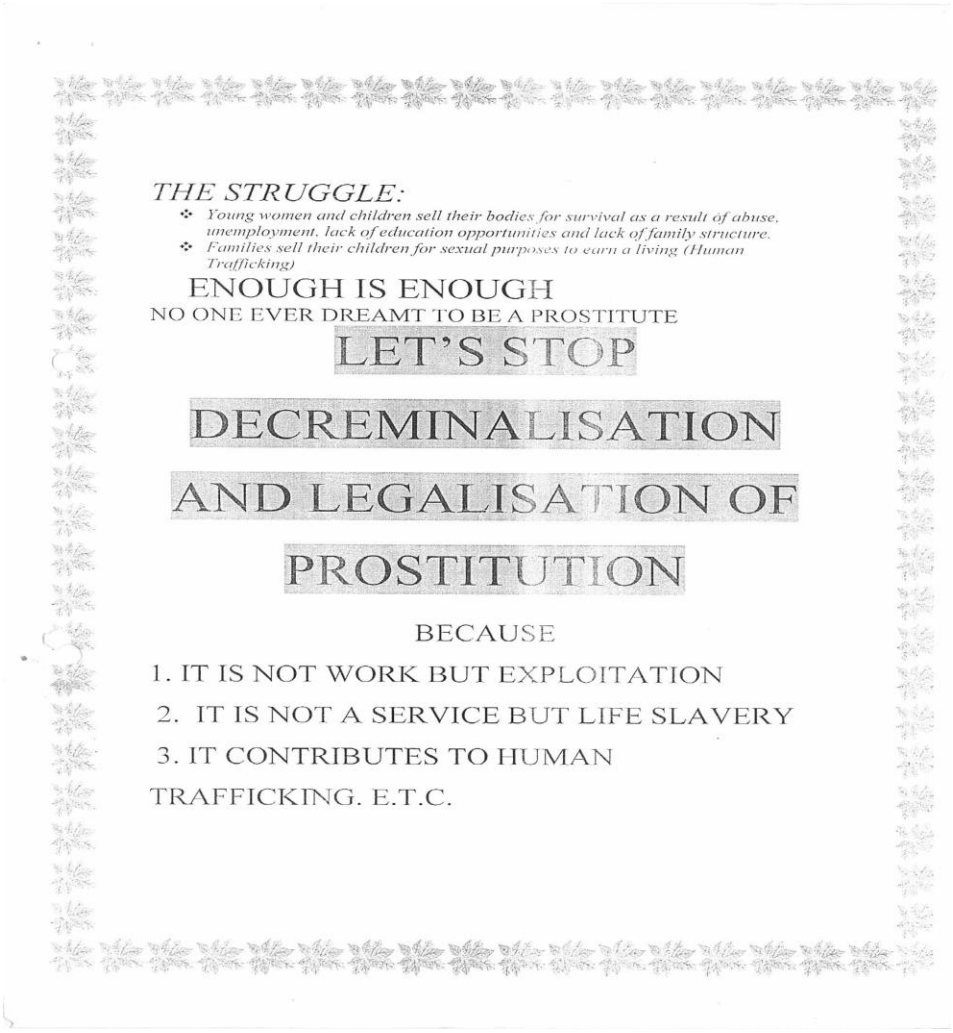



Figure 2: A woman soliciting in the night

Figure 3: Hillbrow in the night





Figure 4: The decay in Hillbrow