

Factors Associated With Entry

Into Female Prostitution

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Chapter I: Introduction .....	1
Review of Literature .....	7
Conceptual Framework .....	35
Definition of Terms .....	37
Research Question .....	38
Chapter II: Methodology .....	39
Design .....	39
Sample .....	40
Setting .....	45
Ethical Considerations .....	46
Data Collection .....	49
Instrument Development .....	49
Interview Process .....	50
Reliability and Validity .....	57
Data Analysis .....	59
Chapter III: Findings .....	61
Definition of Terms .....	61
Sample Description .....	62
Findings .....	66
Summary of Findings .....	93
Chapter IV: Discussion .....	98
Summary of Discussion .....	112

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Chapter V: Conclusions and Reccomendations .....	115
Limitations .....	116
Nursing Implications .....	119
Research Implications .....	123
References .....	125
Abstract .....	129
Appendices .....	132
Appendix A: Flyer to Recruit Volunteers .....	132
Appendix B: Formal Consent from Agency .....	134
Appendix C: Consent Form .....	136
Appendix D: Referrals .....	139
Appendix E: Researcher's Interview Guide .....	141
Appendix F: Participant's Written Survey .....	153
Appendix G: Participant's Interview Guide .....	157

LIST OF TABLES

	<u>Page</u>
Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants Prior to Entry into Prostitution .....	63
Table 2. Characteristics of Participants Prior to Entry into Prostitution .....	67

## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

Estimates of the number of female prostitutes throughout the United States varies. An association dedicated to facilitating transition out of prostitution, Women Hurt In Systems of Prostitution Engaged in Revolt (WHISPER), estimates that 500,000 to 1,000,000 adult females are currently involved in prostitution in the U.S., with 16 years being the average age of entry (Wynter, Grossman, & Major, 1988). Another source estimated 600,000 adolescents to be prostituting in 1982 (Deisher, Robinson, & Boyer, 1982).

The meaning of female prostitution is controversial. This is due not only to varying beliefs about motivations for entry, but also to different definitions and meanings assigned to prostitution. Currently prostitution is illegal in all areas of the United States with the exception of a few counties in Nevada (James, 1977). Organizations such as COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics) have advocated for the decriminalization of prostitution, that is, to remove it from control of governmental regulation and



authority (Haft, (1974). According to James (1976) this differs from legalization, which would enable government control, licensing, and regulation. James advocates decriminalization as a provisional solution until the root causes of prostitution can be dealt with; that is, the societal and traditional inequalities that exist between the genders: "As long as women are socialized into the traditional female role and see their alternatives limited by that role, prostitution will remain an attractive occupational option" (p. 196).

In similar efforts, the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union), women's movements, legislators, and others have challenged laws that are enforced only against the seller and not the buyer or promoter (pimp) of prostitution, and that violate the individual's right to control her/his own body without governmental interference. These organizations contend that the government is legislating morality by outlawing prostitution and by punishing only the prostitute. Prostitution is defined by these groups as a victimless crime which is a private act between two consenting adults. That is, there is no complainant. Other examples given by James (1977) which are also

victimless crimes include vagrancy, gambling, pornography, homosexuality, and public drunkenness.

"With prostitution the only person who files a complaint is the police officer who, in passing as a customer, has been solicited by a prostitute. There is no victim; the customer actively seeks the prostitute's service, and she willingly agrees to sell" (p. 421).

In contrast, others believe that prostitution is harmful and abusive to women who are the victims of its abuse. Interviews with 17 teenage prostitutes done by Gray (1973) found that few women were able to avoid violence either from their customers or their pimps. Hence, many believe that prostitution is not a viable career choice or a matter of sexual freedom, but a form of coercion and violence against women. A former prostitute talked about freedom of choice in this way as reported in a newspaper:

I don't think any woman ever chooses prostitution. She doesn't have any choices. There are circumstances on the outside, telling her she doesn't have any choices. She feels that's where she's worth the most, doing the only thing she knows how to do (Hochman, 1989).

The themes of abuse and subjugation are echoed by a former prostitute who was interviewed in a film produced as a special project of WHISPER (Wynter et al., 1988).

In my ten years of prostitution...from penthouse madames to massage parlours to the streets, I never met a woman who was not used, abused, exploited, or who did not feel in danger for her life....[The portrayal of] prostitution as an upper class career choice [is not accurate], I've never seen that.

Some of the controversy surrounding prostitution has stemmed from the inequalities that exist between males and females in our society. These have carried over into the unequal enforcement of prostitution laws, as it has been more common in the past to arrest sellers rather than buyers or promoters of prostitution as mentioned above. However, many such laws have changed or are in the process of changing, as arrests of buyers and pimps are made as well as arrests of prostitutes.

The City Club of Portland Task Force on Prostitution published a report in 1984 concluding that legalization with zoning regulations of prostitution was the logical option. In response to this report and

reports from many others such as the Portland Police Department, former prostitutes, neighborhoods, social workers, the Council for Prostitution Alternatives, WHISPER and others, a Task Force on Prostitution by the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon was formed. After studying prostitution as exists in Portland and hearing testimony from many of those mentioned above, the task force concluded that "legalization and zoning as proposed by the City Club of Portland do not appear to the Ecumenical Task Force on Prostitution to offer solutions or alternatives to the serious damage to the individuals and the whole community that results from prostitution" (Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, 1987).

Health consequences of this lifestyle include poor nutrition, sexually transmitted diseases, sterility, pelvic inflammatory disease, anal reconstructive surgery, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), hepatitis and other illnesses and injuries of violence (Boyer, 1988). Mental and emotional consequences have also been reported: depression, suicide, guilt, hostility, poor self-image, anxiety, sexual dysfunction, and alienation from family (Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, 1987).

Because nurses working in clinics in urban areas such as Portland come into contact with prostitutes, they are in unique positions to assess the prostitute's health and lifestyle with her. In fact, health personnel may be her only link to the "straight" world (Deisher, Robinson, & Boyer, 1982). She may not be aware of any alternative choices, or she may believe that she is not capable of other type of work. Further, many prostitutes have had negative experiences with health care workers and with other authority figures. Thus, an understanding of prostitutes' backgrounds and living situations is important. Comprehension of the factors that lead women to become involved in the role of prostitute will enable nurses to deal with members of this population with a practical sense of what type of care is needed.

The researchers for this project concentrated on female prostitution as it exists illegally in Portland, Oregon. With the above health consequences in mind, the researchers initiated this study with the following assumptions:

1. Female prostitution is not a glamorous lifestyle for the majority of women, although it may be portrayed as such to the public.

2. Female prostitution is physically and mentally unhealthy for women and has specific health consequences that require intervention; therefore it is not a viable career option.

The purpose of this study was to explore the factors most frequently found in the lives of Oregon female prostitutes that are associated with their entry into prostitution. What common life events have influenced entry into prostitution? A review of the literature regarding entry into female prostitution helps to focus this question.

#### Literature Review

A computerized literature search from 1963 to the present failed to show any information regarding prostitution in the nursing literature. The literature reviewed came primarily from psychological, sociological and medical journals, consisting of qualitative research findings, theory, and anecdotal information. It is presented by dividing the material under headings of factors associated with entry into prostitution by order of prevalence in the literature. These factors, in descending order, are negative childhood sexual experiences; the dysfunctional family; self-esteem, labeling, and stigmatization; substance

abuse; cultural messages and role modeling; need or desire for money; excitement and adventure. The last section in the literature review, other motivations for entering prostitution, contains assorted themes found infrequently in the literature related to motivations for entering prostitution.

#### Negative Childhood Sexual Experiences

A predominant theme running through the literature was a high percentage of victimization during childhood in the form of molestation, rape, and incest. The largest estimate of the incidence of childhood incest or sexual abuse among prostitutes was 95% (by B. Weant cited in Newton-Ruddy & Handelsman, 1986). This data came to Newton-Ruddy and Handelsman through a personal communication however, without indication as to how the percentage was calculated.

Other authors have provided statistical estimates of the incidence of negative childhood sexual experiences using personal interviews and questionnaires with samples of prostitutes. Boyer (1988) interviewed 133 adolescent females involved in prostitution who were between 12 and 18 years of age. This group had the following history: rape, 51%, molestation prior to first intercourse, 37%; physical

force at first intercourse, 27%; incest experience, 17%; emotional coercion at first intercourse, 15%. Boyer concluded that an early stigmatizing negative sexual experience was the factor most associated with entry into prostitution for females.

James and Meyerding (1977) reported on two separate studies with a total sample of 228 females involved in prostitution. Using questionnaires, interviews and ethnographic field observations, the researchers collected information about early negative sexual experiences from this group as well as information about age at first sexual intercourse, early sources of sex information, and subsequent intercourse with the first partner. The authors found that 65% of prostitutes in the first study and 46% of prostitutes in the second study had been victims or attempted victims of coerced sexual activities including incest, molestation and rape. This data was then compared to previous research on female populations who were not involved in prostitution. A study in 1953 found that 24% of women (non-prostitutes) had experienced a sexual advance by a male at least five years older. A 1965 non-prostitute sample included 28% who had experienced a sexual advance by an older male. James and Meyerding



stated that it was difficult to compare data from different studies because of varying methods of data collection or presentation. Further, it may have been more acceptable to talk about the problems of rape and incest in later years than it was in either 1953 or 1965.

A study of 200 juvenile and adult current and former prostitutes (Silbert & Pines, 1981, 1983) in the San Francisco area demonstrated a strong correlation between childhood sexual abuse and subsequent entry into prostitution. Questionnaires were designed specifically for the study and administered by trained staff members who were former prostitutes themselves and were familiar with street language and lifestyles.

Sixty percent of the study participants said they had experienced sexual abuse before age 16 by an average of two persons. Seventy percent of the women said that these experiences affected their eventual entry into prostitution. Those who were not in this 70% category indicated that they were affected by these experiences with statements such as "My brother could do it; why not everybody else? Might as well make them pay for it" or "My father bought me, so who cares who else does?" (p. 40). The authors also found that 44%

felt guilty or blamed and hated themselves after the experience. Fifty-two percent of victims felt that the person they reported the abuse to was disappointed in them, and 49% of victims felt blamed by the person to whom they reported the abuse. Also, 17% of the women ran away from home to avoid sexual abuse. Silbert and Pines concluded that child sexual abuse was clearly correlated with eventual entry into prostitution, but that it was aided by other factors such as being forced to run away from an abusive home and subsequently needing money or food on the street to survive.

In contrast, Gray (1973) found in her study of 17 adolescent female prostitutes that forced or unpleasant sexual experiences did not usually precede entry into prostitution for this group. In fact, Gray stated that initial sexual experiences for this group did not differ from other non-prostitute teenage females of the same age and social class. Gray's study is reviewed in greater detail later in this paper.

According to several authors, the psychosocial repercussions of negative childhood sexual experiences can lead to prostitution by increasing vulnerability and setting a pattern of victimization (Boyer, 1988; Russell, 1986; Deisher, Robinson, & Boyer, 1982; James

& Meyerding, 1977; Newton-Ruddy & Handelsman, 1986; Silbert, Pines, & Lynch, 1982; Finkelhor & Browne, 1985). Russell (1986) compared a group of 150 women who had experienced incest before age 14 to a sample of over 775 women who had no incest experiences. She found that 65% of the women with incest experiences were sexually revictimized later in their lives. Of the comparison group, 36% had a sexual assault event later in their lives. Russell concluded that early experiences of incest had the effect of damaging one's self-image so that "self-blame and a sense of worthlessness often prevail. These feelings place a victim at greater risk of revictimization, which in turn makes it even more difficult to achieve effective coping strategies" (p. 166). Russell also stated that such early negative sexual events are "a perfect training ground for prostitutes" who begin to see sex as a commodity which can be used to obtain money, favors, or other needs (p. 167).

Silbert and Pines (1983) echoed the theme of revictimization in their study of 200 prostitutes and former prostitutes mentioned above. The authors found that these participants were often willing to endure abusive relationships such as those with abusive

customers and pimps. Silbert and Pines stated that this willingness may have been related to a "psychological paralysis" (p. 288) in which victims had not been able to process their earlier abuses and thus were unable to organize their reactions to present abuses. Eventually the victims of ongoing abuses were left feeling "powerless, out of control of their life, debilitated, and psychologically paralyzed" (p. 288).

Boyer (1988) described how the violation of trusting relations with an authority figure disrupts the ensuing sexual development of the child. This ultimately defeated the normal developmental process of achieving a separate, autonomous identity, and cultivated instead one of "sexual self-objectification" (p. 44). Simultaneously, the victim becomes confused regarding correct behavior toward others, eventually becoming alienated from family and peers. Boyer and others have identified a poor self-image, guilt, shame, powerlessness, and loss of a sense of control over one's own body among prostitutes who have encountered negative childhood sexual experiences (Brown, 1979; Deisher et al., 1982; James & Meyerding, 1977).

Finkelhor and Browne (1985) proposed a framework for understanding the impact of childhood sexual abuse.

The occurrence of four factors within a child's sexual abuse experience act together in this model to produce negative outcomes that are different from other childhood traumas such as divorce or even physical abuse. The first factor, traumatic sexualization, is the process of developing the child's sexuality in an inappropriate and dysfunctional way as a result of sexual abuse. The child is often taught to exchange sex for affection and attention, and over time is able to manipulate others sexually so that her/his own developmental needs can be satisfied. The authors theorized that a consequence of traumatic sexualization may be increased promiscuity and compulsive sexual behavior with a possible higher risk for entering prostitution.

A second factor, betrayal, occurs when the child discovers that a trusted and dependable authority figure has caused harm either by direct abuse or by failing to protect the child against abuse by another. A later effect of betrayal may be an intense need to restore trust and security that may lead to dependency on others to the extent that ability to judge another's trustworthiness is impaired.

The third factor, powerlessness, occurs when the child's will and body space are repeatedly violated. This feeling may not even require physical force--only helpless entrapment. A later possible consequence of powerlessness is poor coping skills and expectation of revictimization.

The fourth factor in the model, stigmatization, refers to the shame and guilt that is communicated to the child around the sexual experience. The child may then incorporate this into her/his self-image. The negative self-image is reinforced when others consider the child "spoiled goods" or blame the child for the abuse. A later effect of stigmatization may be that the victim is left rejected and isolated and so seeks membership in groups with other stigmatized and deviant members.

#### Family Dysfunction

Family dysfunction and alienation between child and parent is prevalent in literature concerned with the background of women involved in prostitution. Alienation is depicted as originating from neglect and physical and/or emotional abuse (Brown, 1979; Deisher et al., 1982; Gray, 1973; James & Meyerding, 1977;

MacVicar and Dillon, 1980; Silbert & Pines, 1981, 1983).

MacVicar and Dillon (1980) conducted case studies of ten female prostitutes who were evaluated and seen in weekly or twice weekly psychotherapy sessions by three women psychiatrists over a period of five months to three and one half years. Of the ten subjects, three women were identified as psychotic, one as neurotic and the remaining six as having borderline character structures. In all cases, the subjects experienced the perception of frequently being alone, unprotected and unloved during childhood along with painful separation from parents, especially the mother. Separation took the form of physical absence of parents and/or absence due to incapacity, depression, or emotional withdrawal. In all families, behavioral expectations were unclear with discipline ranging from harsh to neglectful. This was interpreted as parental apathy by the subjects. All considered their parents' marriages as unhappy, and physical violence between parents was present in half of the cases. As children, three subjects had experienced physical abuse, one incest, and two gross physical neglect. No evidence

was presented to describe the specific form of these abuses.

MacVicar and Dillon described all families in this study as chaotic and identified common factors among the parents of the nonpsychotic women as "obvious defects which prevented them from establishing a warm, nurturing, and emotionally sustaining relationship with their children" (p. 149). Five parents were alcoholic and one addicted to narcotics. Ethnic background of the families consisted of seven Caucasian, two African-American and one Hispanic. MacVicar and Dillon questioned the representativeness of the sample due to the families' high degree of financial success.

Gray (1973) interviewed 17 adolescent females involved in prostitution in an attempt to understand the natural history of early entry into the life. Using an open-ended, unstructured interview guide, information was elicited regarding various areas of the women's experiences. To provide more insight into the etiology of entry into prostitution, Gray used a small control group of four adolescent females who had not prostituted but had been exposed to the opportunity to do so. Although 15 of the informants were incarcerated at the time of the interviews, participation was



voluntary. No information was provided on the numbers of those incarcerated in each group. Mean age of the total sample was 16.9. Gray found that the group tended to come from backgrounds where home relationships in general were poor:

Homes [were] broken by separation or divorce and with many siblings....By the time these girls reach adolescence, parental ties and attachments to their family have become weak. Relationships with both mother and father are poor due to inadequate supervision, lack of intimacy in communication patterns, and consistent failure of the parents to provide positive social reinforcement in the form of attention, affection or effective communication (p. 405).

Gray does not differentiate family attributes of those participants who became involved in prostitution and the control group.

James (1976) also cited family tensions or parental abuse/neglect as a factor influencing entry into prostitution. James concluded from the results of her research with women involved in prostitution, described earlier, that although physical abuse was reported by a significant number of participants, neglect was the

pattern for the majority of informants who experienced a negative relationship with parents. She did not indicate, however, what behaviors constituted neglect or the percentage of the sample with that experience. Other data provided show that within this sample the mean age of leaving home was 16.9 years. For 26.7% of the sample (n = 134), dispute with family was the reason for leaving, ranking as the second most common reason. Physical and emotional abuse was a significant factor in separating 28.84% of the women from their families and the absence of one or more parents (usually the father) was prevalent in 70.37%.

Silbert and Pines (1981, 1983), in a study described earlier, found a relationship between running away from home as a result of sexual, physical and emotional abuse and street work in their research of 200 women involved in prostitution. The majority of juveniles (96%) participating in the study were runaways. When asked about major home problems, other than sexual abuse, influencing their decision to runaway from home, 70% mentioned emotional and 50% physical abuse. In addition, 50% stated that their parents fought and 48% that their parents got drunk regularly. The degree or nature of fighting between

parents in the background of these participants was not clear.

James and Meyerding (1977), in a study previously described, cited a common lack of past parental guidance in sexual matters among women involved in prostitution. They credited this along with neglect and physical and psychological abuse as leading to alienation from parents and an inability "to adequately socialize the conventional mores of 'respectable' society" (p. 1382).

Through a review of literature, Brown (1979) identified common childhood experiences that produced counter-cultural values in women involved in prostitution including alienation from family and parental abuse. She proposed that children of large single-parent families lack sufficient maternal attention and without consistent affection, fail to develop trusting relationships. Citing Gray (1973) and James (1976), Brown concluded that families were generally large with poor relationships, and separation, divorce and battering.

Herman and Hirschman (1981) theorized that a type of family dysfunction is common in the background of women who experienced incest with their fathers:

The father, in effect, forces the daughter to pay with her body for affection and care which should be freely given. In so doing, he destroys the protective bond between parent and child and initiates his daughter into prostitution (p. 4).

Herman and Hirschman developed this theory from an investigation in which they interviewed, via a semi-structured interview, 40 women with a history of incest with a father figure. Reports (1977, 1981) of this research, conducted over a four year period, did not contain information on the research question or the goal they set out to accomplish. Information on the type of questions they asked does offer some insight into the nature of data they were interested in obtaining; specifically, the interview protocol covered questions about the informant's present work and personal life, detailed description of the family of origin, a history of the incestuous relationship and an assessment of the long-term effects of the incest. Participants were recruited through an informal network of therapists in an East Coast city who, through their individual discretion, informed clients of the research. Some participants were clients in psychotherapy with the investigators. Limitations of

the study include simplification and distortion of an adult's memory of childhood, a portrait drawn from the perspective of the victim alone, and use of clients as research subjects.

Although Herman and Hirschman rarely touched on the outcome of prostitution as a result of incest, their insights offer another perception into the types of family dysfunction present in incestuous families where the victims may or may not later enter into a life of prostitution. Another group of authors, Newton-Ruddy and Handelsman (1986) applied the work of Herman and Hirschman in a theoretical analysis of the influence of incest on adolescents in prostitution. Newton-Ruddy and Handelsman summarized the inferences made by Herman and Hirschman which are further summarized here.

In the patriarchal incestuous family, females are devalued with the mother considered inferior to the father who dominates by force and whose superiority is unquestioned. Roles and division of labor are rigidly defined according to gender. The mother is often depressed, ill or absent from home due to hospitalization and demonstrates helplessness and victimization to her daughter. While communication is generally poor between the two, a message is passed on

to the daughter that a woman is defenseless against a man, that her duty is to preserve her marriage and to serve and endure.

Several groups of authors have addressed the feelings of betrayal and alienation from parents experienced by victims of incest (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985; Herman & Hirschman, 1977; Newton-Ruddy & Handelsman, 1986; Silbert & Pines, 1983). Betrayal by the father was a sentiment expressed by many of the informants in the Silbert and Pines study. When participants were asked why they were not protected from incest activities by others of the family they often responded that "he was the one supposed to do the protecting" (p. 286).

Betrayal was a common theme expressed by the participants in Herman and Hirschman's (1977) study of father-daughter incest. They stated that daughters in incestuous families typically feel they have not been protected by their mothers. The message sent by mothers was that fathers were of greater importance than daughters who should fend for themselves. Mothers were dependent on their husbands for survival and so must not challenge their relationship by opposing their husband's actions or sacrifice it for the daughter's

benefit. Some daughters could not recall bonds of caring or trust in the relationship with their mother.

#### Self-Esteem, Labeling, and Stigmatization

Several authors have theorized that a repercussion of early negative sexual experiences, and the psychosocial consequences mentioned earlier, resulted in labeling by the self and stigmatization by others as a "bad girl" (Boyer, 1988; Brown, 1979; Deisher et al., 1982; Finkelhor & Browne, 1985; Gray, 1973; James, 1976; James & Meyerdling, 1977; Silbert & Pines, 1981, 1983).

Gray (1973) concluded from her research:

The teenage prostitute is likely to have quit school voluntarily due to experiences of repeated failure to adjust to the academic setting. As a result of such experience, she does not see education as relevant to her future or as a source of reinforcement for her now or later in her life (p. 406).

Brown postulated that a lack of education combined with labeling by self and others increased susceptibility to a debased self-image inconsistent with female attributes valued by "good society."

Several authors described a process that occurred as a result of stigmatization from early sexual experiences, whether by coercion or choice, and failure in school whereby the female adolescent found relating to and associating with other "outcasts" a secure and comforting niche. Often she would come into contact with pimps or prostitutes who introduced her to the life (Boyer, 1988; Brown, 1979; Deisher et al., 1982; James & Meyerding, 1977). James (1976) explained that associating with "sophisticated deviants" (p. 186) may increase prestige and assuage the anxiety from an earlier loss of status. Some authors postulated that if she has run away from home, the adolescent female is vulnerable to pimps and women involved in prostitution who are adept at luring lonely and frightened girls, convincing them they will be well cared for (Baizerman, Thompson, & Stafford-White, 1979; Brown; Deisher et al., Gray, 1973).

Boyer (1988) proposed a model depicting a common pattern found in the background of women involved in prostitution. The model is composed of four steps which lead to a poor self-image and identification by society as a prostitute: 1) self-discovery that one has been "tainted" by early sexual experiences; 2) the



informal reaction of significant others treating her as "tainted"; 3) formal sanction as the "tainted" woman is expected to be sexually active; and 4) the known prostitute who is arrested for prostitution, officially labeled then ostracized by respectable society.

Silbert et al. (1982) found a similar pattern in their study of 200 juvenile and adult women involved in prostitution and substance abuse in the San Francisco area. The pattern that emerged in their study was one of isolated girls who were rejected by a group to which they would like to belong. Later they found acceptance and friendship within deviant groups who introduced them to prostitution and substance abuse. Findings of this research were based on information received during intensive interviewing performed by persons who had unique rapport and insight to the sample. All interviewers were residents of a nationally acclaimed self-help facility and had histories of prostitution and victimization by various assaults. All interviewers had intensive training for three weeks to assure uniformity in presentation, definition of terms, scoring, sensitivity to subjects and research methodology.

### Substance Abuse

While drug abuse was frequently associated with prostitution in the literature, its role was unclear. Silbert et al. (1982) identified substance abuse coupled with a move into deviance, similar to that described above, as a factor commonly associated with entry into prostitution. The authors found 30% of the sample had become addicted to drugs after involvement in prostitution; 15% became addicted concurrent with entry into prostitution; and 55% prior to prostitution. Silbert et al. concluded that an association of drug abuse with involvement in prostitution did not imply causality but speculated that both were indicative of the "self-destructive pull, the sense of hopelessness, helplessness, negative self-concept and psychological paralysis reported by almost every subject in the study" (p. 197).

Some researchers stated that drugs were abused after entry into prostitution as a way of physically and mentally numbing the pain of selling their bodies (Boyer, 1988; Deisher et al., 1982). This theme was repeated in the film produced by WHISPER (Wynter et al., 1988). One former prostitute being interviewed said, "In order to be with five to ten men a night you

have to be loaded. You can't do that straight--it's impossible to separate your feelings from your body. You have to do that."

In contrast, MacVicar and Dillon (1980) stated that substance abuse caused entry into prostitution for some women: "There will always remain a large segment of the prostitution population who are in extreme financial need because of drug addiction, and for whom prostitution is the only alternative" (p. 147). This conclusion by the authors was puzzling since they also stated none of their ten informants fit this motivation for entering prostitution.

From their work of casefinding, referring, and counseling over 300 teen prostitutes Baizermen et al. (1979) were the only authors to report that some pimps did not allow the use of hard drugs. Substance abuse reportedly served to increase costs to the pimp's operations, raised their prostitutes' chances of arrest, and competed with the pimp for the prostitute's dependency. However, these authors did not use any objective tools for their interviews, and the validity of their own interview items was not reported. Much of their data directly contradicted others' findings.

### Cultural Messages and Role Modeling

Two other factors associated with entry into prostitution were prevailing cultural messages and role modeling by other women. The influence of female role modeling was discussed in the film produced by WHISPER (Wynter, 1988). A young black woman described growing up in a neighborhood where physical and sexual abuse and prostitution were aspects of everyday life. The message projected was that "women were put on earth for men's sexual pleasure in exchange for a roof over your head and food in your stomach." Later this woman also said,

My role was to be a tough black woman, to endure, to take the shit and be loving, to satisfy my man sexually, to not speak out....that [sic] was the messages I got. It was very uncomfortable to me as I started to grow to adjust to this. I thought something was wrong with me because I was not fitting in with women in society because I was hurting too bad (Wynter et al., 1988).

Another woman said that there were many prostitutes in her neighborhood and some among her relatives, thus it seemed an acceptable female role.

Gray (1973) noted in her study of 17 adolescent female prostitutes that the idea of prostitution existed in all of their minds by age 11. Further, all reported knowing someone involved in prostitution intimately before they themselves became prostitutes.

James (1976) studied 136 prostitutes using questionnaires and interviews. When the participants were asked "Where did you first come into actual contact with prostitutes?", over 28% of participants said their friends were prostituting; over 19% had met prostitutes on the street; 24.6% of African-American and over 9% of Caucasian participants saw prostitutes working in their neighborhoods whereas 13% of African-American, and 5.6% of Caucasian participants had family members involved in prostitution. James concluded that the presence of prostitution in one's environment may be a significant motivating factor for some women. James also theorized that our culture accepts normal male sexual needs which require the availability of deviant women to fulfill them. Thus, males are encouraged in their sexuality as a sign of masculinity. Women, however, are "bad" if they are seen as sexual. Further, Boyer (1988) found that in some states it was illegal to sell sex but not to buy sex. "The

expectation that men be sexual and women be chaste generates contradictory needs. This contradiction induces prostitution, which is a culturally constructed deviant role for women" (p. 41). This theme was echoed by a former prostitute interviewed in the film produced by WHISPER (Wynter et al., 1988). She stated, "I didn't choose to be a prostitute. I was taught to be a prostitute by pimps, society, my neighborhood, men in general--that the way to survive is to use my looks and my body."

#### Need or Desire for Money

Financial considerations were another set of factors found to be associated with entry into prostitution. Deisher et al. (1982) found that although some adolescents on the street were first exposed to prostitution when bartering for food, shelter or money, few were motivated by monetary reasons alone. When money was an issue, it was usually needed for survival after leaving an abusive home. Further, prostitution was at times the only alternative when teenagers and children were too young for a work permit and/or feared being traced through a legitimate job and sent back to a negative environment from which they had fled.

Brown (1979) contended that legitimate work holds little promise for girls who lack education and job training. The minimum wage and discrepancy in pay between males and females along with the meaninglessness of most available jobs may be inadequate to convince many women with poor educations and job skills that legitimate work is rewarding.

Gray (1973) found in her study of adolescent prostitutes that 11 out of the 17 she interviewed had legitimate jobs at one time but found that they were boring, not glamorous, and paid too little. Many participants in Gray's study said that financial circumstances were important in making the final decision about whether to enter prostitution.

Baizerman et al. (1979) also found from his study that some women were motivated to enter prostitution by the desire for nice clothes, cars, and an apartment.

#### Excitement and Adventure

The lure of adventure and the "fast life" was mentioned briefly in the literature as a compelling draw for some women to become involved in prostitution (Baizerman et al., 1979; Deisher et al., 1982; Gray, 1973; James, 1976). According to Deisher et al, prostitution may grant "easy access to drugs, and...a

variety of interesting companions involved in exciting and illicit activities...[it] provides some with a sense of accomplishment and a source of attention...[and] may provide an illusion of success" (p. 820).

Gray (1973) found that many (although the numbers were not specified) of the participants in her study reported feeling intrigued by the description of prostitution, given by prostitutes, which sounded exciting and glamorous. James (1976) found a similar motivation for entering prostitution among informants of her study. Excitement and adventure, and attraction to the life style was reported as part of their decision to enter prostitution by 11.6% and 10.29% of the sample respectively.

#### Other Motivations for Entering Prostitution

Two final factors found least often in the literature included coerced entry into prostitution and hostility toward the prostitute's father. MacVicar and Dillon (1980) were the only investigators who found that all ten of their subjects' hostilities toward their fathers were projected onto customers. The subjects saw customers as objects to be used and discarded. They reportedly felt powerful in their



abilities to "trick" men by luring them into arousal and orgasm.

A Portland expert on female prostitution (personal communication, March 1989) stated that there is also some unknown percentage of children and adolescents who are kidnapped and then forced into prostitution with the use of drugs, violence, or both. This theme was repeated by a satanic ritual abuse survivor (personal communication, February 1990). Her definition of ritual abuse is that of a highly stylized and systematic form of bizarre, violent and extremely cruel abuse most commonly associated with satanic cults. Its victims report severe, chronic and prolonged abuse which includes but is not limited to sexual abuse, sexual degradation, child and adult pornography, child prostitution, kidnapping, brainwashing, torture, and even cannibalism and human sacrificial murder. Victims of satanic ritual abuse are emotionally coerced or physically forced to participate in ritual abuse of others and themselves and learn not to feel emotions and not to trust others or themselves. These acts are committed with the intention of turning the child against self, family and society. This belief system

and its practices are differentiated from Paganism or New Age philosophies.

### Conceptual Framework

The investigators condensed the information from the literature review into a conceptual framework that organized life factors associated with entry into prostitution. The factors selected for this study and their defining characteristics are outlined below in order of prevalence in the literature review.

Negative childhood sexual experiences may include rape, sexual molestation, emotional coercion, by one or more relatives or non-family members. Resulting patterns of vulnerability and revictimization may cause further family alienation, shame, and poor self-esteem.

Family dysfunction may include abuse and/or neglect, and a patriarchal family system where the father dominates. In this family model, male superiority is unquestioned and the devaluation of women is expected. The mother may be depressed, ill, absent from the home, or emotionally unavailable.

Self-esteem, labeling, and stigmatization is a process of labeling and stigmatizing. First one identifies oneself as a bad person. Then others identify her as a bad person and reject her. Seeking

acceptance elsewhere, she becomes a member of a group of people who engage in activities labeled deviant by the rest of society--such as prostitution and drug abuse. Society then confirms her deviant status and labels her as a known prostitute. This group often has low education levels and is considered to be more vulnerable to pimps.

Substance abuse is frequently associated with prostitution. It may occur prior to involvement in prostitution, concurrent with entry into prostitution, or after involvement in prostitution has begun.

Cultural messages and role modeling may influence young women considering prostitution whose environment includes and accepts other prostitutes. Prostitution gains more acceptance when the women are perceived as successful in their work. Further, prostitution may be a culturally-created phenomenon in which promiscuous women are needed for men's uses and needs.

The need or desire for money is thought to be a motivating factor either because of a desire for material goods or for survival on the street. Survival needs may inspire a young woman who ran away from an abusive home to barter sexual activities for food, shelter, or money. She may fear being traced by

authorities through a legitimate job, or may be too young to obtain a work permit. In contrast, some women may desire the perceived glamour and material goods that she sees associated with other prostitutes without using prostitution for survival.

Excitement and adventure, another possible factor, includes motivations such as easy access to drugs, a variety of interesting companions, and the excitement of illicit activities. This factor may be associated with the "boredom" of a conventional lifestyle.

Other motivations include those that are infrequently mentioned in the literature such as the possibility that hostility felt against a woman's father is a motivating factor for entering prostitution. Another possibility that has not been investigated is that entry into prostitution for some women may be forced such as through kidnapping or through satanic ritual sexual abuse.

#### Definition of Terms

Prostitution will be defined for the purposes of this study as the heterosexual exchange of female sexual activities for money or things. The term "pimp" is a common street word for a male who facilitates the

sale of sexual acts by those female prostitutes that work for him and give their earnings to him.

Research Question

The question guiding this study is "What factors in women's lives are associated with their subsequent entry into prostitution?"

## Chapter II

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an explanation of the research project. After a discussion of the design, the setting and sample are described, followed by measures used to protect the participants and ethical considerations. Following this is an explanation of instrument development, the data collection process, reliability and validity, and data analysis.

#### Design

A descriptive research design was used. Five women previously involved in prostitution were interviewed in order to identify factors associated with their entry into prostitution. The retrospective nature of the study carries with it some inherent disadvantages such as the biasing influence of time and others' opinions on the memory and interpretation of the participant's life story. When ethically weighing the costs to the participants (and interviewers) against benefits of the research findings, this decision seemed logical for the scope of the study. Ethical considerations for the participants are more fully discussed in a later section.

### Sample

A convenience sample was used, drawing from women involved with a social service agency that assists women to make a transition from a prostitution lifestyle in Portland, Oregon. The researchers originally hoped to enlist eight to ten participants but due to the limitations of time and numbers of women contacted and willing to volunteer, the study was limited to five case studies.

Prior to enlistment, one of the investigators attended a meeting frequented by women involved with the agency in order to establish some familiarity and rapport with the population. At this meeting, the investigator answered health questions and concerns posed by the women in attendance prior to discussing the research project that would soon be under way. The case manager in charge of the meeting suggested this approach as an exchange of service to the women who would later be asked to volunteer their time and energy into the research project.

The investigators visited four routine meetings attended by women involved with the agency in order to enlist participants. The case manager/facilitators had previously asked permission of the regular attendants

for the visits. Health questions and concerns were again addressed, at the first of these meetings, prior to announcing the intent to conduct research and asking for volunteers. The investigators prefaced the request for volunteers with an attempt to engage the womens' interest and investment in the study. They informed the women of the intent to use the findings to assist health care providers to better understand the background typically found in women involved in prostitution and their unique health care needs. The investigators then gave a brief description of the interview methodology along with the estimated time requirement for participants. The researchers stressed that, although volunteers may not benefit directly from participating, they would be helping other women who may be involved in prostitution and are the recipients of health care.

At the end of each agency meeting the investigators handed out flyers with a brief description of the study and their phone numbers (Appendix A). The investigators also hung two posters at the agency to announce and describe the research project and request volunteers in order to reach a wider population than those in attendance at the meetings. The researchers'



phone numbers were attached to the posters on tear-away slips of paper.

The investigators explained the measures they would be taking to maintain confidentiality and anonymity of participants throughout the research process at the meetings, and on the flyers and posters. Those interested in participating were asked to contact the investigators later by phone or after the meeting. The researchers announced they would stay behind after meetings so that those wishing to volunteer could approach them in private. In spite of these measures, most participants volunteered during a meeting while all were in attendance; only one stayed behind after a meeting to express her interest in private. It is likely that since most of the participants share a common history and often disclose parts of their life histories during meetings, they felt no need to volunteer in private. All those volunteering expressed enthusiasm in participating and helping to increase the understanding of health care providers who come in contact with women involved in prostitution. One volunteer stated she had been hoping to do an interview someday in order to tell her story.

Women who volunteered for participation and met the criteria were admitted into the study. The criteria for participation included women who had been clients of the agency for at least six months, were currently free of substance abuse, and had a case manager or other person willing to be available to them during the study.

As mentioned earlier, the investigators originally hoped to enlist eight to ten participants but due to the limitations of time and numbers of women contacted and willing to volunteer, the study was limited to five. A total of 12 different women were present at the four meetings attended by the investigators to recruit participants. Of the 12, seven volunteered, three of whom did not keep appointments for interviews. The investigators had no information about those who did not volunteer, and therefore, do not know how they differ from the study participants.

Two women contacted the investigators by phone after reading a poster. One met all criteria and was admitted into the study. The other decided she did not qualify after hearing the criteria; she had been associated with the agency for just three months and

believed she would not be able to tolerate the interview without using street drugs.

The investigators discontinued attending meetings to recruit after realizing that most women attending had been seen previously and had already either volunteered or chosen not to. The researchers believed that continued recruitment at these meetings would be coercive in nature to those women who had already heard the request for volunteers and decided not to participate.

The sampling procedure introduced several unavoidable limitations to the study. The first of these was a self-selected, non-random convenience sample. Participants were, for the most part, recruited from meetings held in the evenings; the investigators came in contact with only twelve women during those times while more than 70 were participating in the agency's activities. Because the sample is small and self-selected from minimally attended meetings, the researchers cannot assume it is representative of all women associated with the agency, let alone all women involved in prostitution.

Another limitation of the sample procedure was the difference between the participants and women with

ongoing involvement in prostitution, by virtue of having voluntarily chosen to make a transition out of prostitution. The degree of difference in attributes or the influence of the motivating factors in causing them to seek help from a social service agency cannot be determined however.

The last limitation caused by the sampling procedure was that of recall error inherent in the retrospective nature of the study. Another factor affecting recall accuracy was the philosophical bias or influence of the agency on the participants' interpretation of their life-histories.

#### Setting

The agency was chosen as the setting to select and recruit participants for several reasons. First, because of the nature of the prostitution lifestyle, the investigators thought it unlikely that appointments or contacts with participants still on the street could be relied upon. Women at the agency are making the transition out of prostitution and as a result, were more likely to have consistent patterns of activity from day to day. Second, by working within an agency, the danger to the investigators of interacting with pimps who might have believed their operation was

threatened or jeopardized was removed. Third, due to the nature of the study, inquiry was made into sensitive areas of life history. At the agency, participants had support systems in existence with group meetings and case-managers who have been trained in counseling. The investigators considered this crucial in the advent of remembered painful and/or traumatic events that could cause additional trauma or crisis in reminiscence. Finally, the executive director and program coordinator of the agency had indicated their enthusiasm and support of the research project. The executive director provided formal consent by written reply to a request to conduct the research through the agency (Appendix B). Her name and signature as well as the agency letterhead are blanked out on the copy in the appendix in order to protect the confidentiality of study participants.

#### Ethical Considerations

As stated above, the researchers obtained formal consent to conduct research at the agency from the executive director. Each participant signed a consent (Appendix C) after hearing an explanation of the study and the format of the interview. The name of the

agency is blanked out on the consent form in the appendix in order to protect confidentiality.

To promote the assurance of confidentiality, the investigators encouraged participants to use an alias on the consent form and during the interview. After each participant signed the consent form, she was asked to place it in an envelope which she then sealed.

The investigators protected confidentiality throughout the research process. They assigned a random number to each participant prior to the interview and identified her interview guide, written survey and tape recording of the interview by this number for the remainder of the research activity. The investigators stored transcripts and written surveys in a locked file cabinet in a location separate from consent forms which were also kept in a locked cabinet.

The researchers assured privacy by conducting interviews in the participant's room at the agency housing complex or their residence located elsewhere. They also took care to conduct interviews during a time when there would be no interruption by others or when roommates or children were gone.

The investigators decided it would be in the best interest of the participants not to follow through with part of the original research procedure that was included on the consent form. This was the plan about returning to a general meeting at the agency in order to present the findings and ask for evaluation of the conclusions from those in attendance. It was decided that to do so would risk breaking confidentiality of the study participants due to the small sample size. Instead, the investigators plan to contact each participant individually and inform them of the reason the meeting was not held and a summary of the participants' suggestions of what health care providers could do to improve delivery of care to women involved in prostitution.

The investigators addressed beneficence by enlisting casemanager support and other referral sources in the advent of trauma from remembrance of past events during the interview process. Portland Women's Crisis Line (PWCL), the Women's Resource Center (WRC) which operates out of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), and William Temple House were notified regarding the nature of the research project and the investigators' intent to supply participants

with referral to their agency. These agencies use supervised students from nearby universities and colleges who conduct private counseling and/or groups especially for rape or incest survivors. A copy of the flyer given to participants at the end of the interviews, with the referral information, can be seen in Appendix D.

### Data Collection

#### Instrument Development

The investigators developed a structured interview guide with probes and a written survey (Appendix E and F). The probes in the interview guide were derived from themes and factors in the conceptual framework. After review by an expert panel, the first draft was modified.

The investigators then tested the interview guide by role playing with each other. After a few adjustments, the guide and written survey were presented on separate occasions to the case manager coordinator of the agency used to recruit participants, and the case manager supervisor of another agency that assists women who have been involved in prostitution. Both are considered experts by virtue of having carried a caseload of women transiting from a prostitution



lifestyle as well as overseeing other case managers who carry similar caseloads. Their suggestions were then incorporated into the interview guide and written survey.

After the researchers made some modifications in language and added a few questions, the interview guide and survey were resubmitted to the case manager coordinator of the agency for further editing. She, along with a woman who had made the transition out of prostitution, made a few minor suggestions that were incorporated into the tools. This process provided content validity.

#### Interview Process

The investigators developed and followed a protocol for the interviews to increase uniformity between the two researchers' sessions with participants. Some variations naturally occurred in the protocol. These will be discussed later in this section.

Immediately before each appointment, the investigator drew the random number to assign to the interview guide, written survey and tape used in the session. Each investigator then reintroduced themselves to the participant, summarized the research study, discussed how the findings would be used and

gave a brief description of the interview structure. Each participant then received a copy of the interview without probes to prepare her for the type and ordering of questions (Appendix G). At this time, the investigator encouraged the participant to decline answering any question that caused her discomfort or inform the investigator if she became uncomfortable with the questioning and wished to take a break or discontinue the interview. She was also told at this time that there was no right or wrong answer to any question, only what was true for her.

After introduction to the session, the participant received the consent form. She was asked if she would like the investigator to read it to her and/or answer any questions before signing. After signing the form, the participant placed it in an envelop provided for her, sealed it and handed it to the investigator. At this point the investigator turned on the tape recorder and asked the participant to give verbal consent to be recorded on the tape.

After the participant gave consent, the interview began with the structured guide for initial collection of data. The investigators avoided use of the probes in order to prevent leading the participant's response,

but used them when needed to complete or clarify data. After the structured portion of the interview, the researcher asked the participant to complete the written survey in order to obtain background factual information and information not brought out in the interview. The written survey was completed either by the participant alone, or with the assistance of the investigator. Three participants requested the assistance of the investigator and two filled out the survey on their own. The differences between the two groups of women was not known.

After the survey was completed, the participant was asked to discuss the general problems known to her to be present in the backgrounds of women involved in prostitution. Silbert et al. (1982) used this method after their interviews to facilitate closure and allow the participant to regain composure. The investigator also asked the participant about health care she received while still involved in prostitution; specifically if she would have liked to receive health care in a different manner, if she would have wanted health care professionals to intervene for her and/or how, or to provide her with referrals to social service agencies. At the close of the interview session the

investigator supplied the informant with written information about counseling services available through Portland Womens' Crisis Line, William Temple House and the Womens' Resource Center described earlier.

The investigators incorporated other measures in the protocol to enhance the comfort of participants and to facilitate self-disclosure aside from those just mentioned. The investigators took time to introduce themselves and the research project prior to questioning, and arranged the ordering of the interview, beginning with less threatening areas in the hope of allowing the establishment of some rapport between investigator and participant before progressing into increasingly sensitive and threatening areas. This approach was suggested by Lofland and Lofland (1984) and was used by Silbert et al. (1982) when interviewing their sample of women involved in prostitution.

Another approach the investigators used to increase self-disclosure of participants was to discuss the potential use of the findings in helping others involved in or entering into prostitution. It was hoped this would lead the informant into a more personal investment in the research project and at the

same time empower her with the realization of her ability to make a difference in other's lives.

Throughout each interview, the investigators took great care to maintain a non-judgmental attitude and to avoid the appearance of moral offense. They attempted to convey empathy to the informants in response to their disclosures while simultaneously providing an accepting and nonthreatening environment.

On several occasions the investigators gave priority to the role of nurse over that of researcher. During one interview a participant who was pregnant expressed concern that she had not felt her baby move for more than 12 hours. The investigator/nurse elicited more relevant information, provided information to the woman and offered advice about seeking health care. On another occasion, a participant expressed concern about childrearing practices, which the investigator addressed briefly by offering information about child development.

Except in a few cases, the investigators did not deviate from the protocol. While reviewing audio tapes, the researchers also noted some similarities and differences in interview style. The most significant deviation from the protocol was the curtailment of an

interview when friends of the participant came to pick her up for dinner. The last questions concerning health care delivery and professionals was the only segment of the interview affected. This will have some effect on the results of that portion of the findings, however this participant happened to have discussed this topic with the same interviewer on another occasion and her remarks from that incident are included with the data.

The investigators used the probes included with the questions in a similar manner. For the most part, both interviewers avoided using the probes, but found them helpful on occasion to assist in clarifying a question or jogging the informants memory. The researchers did not detect a need to use probes more often with any question in particular or with any one of the participants.

The investigators noted a systematic difference in their interview styles. One investigator consistently redirected participants who wandered off from specifically answering a question back to the interview schedule, while the other allowed informants to tell their story and asked questions to assist them in further exploring the history being related. It is not

surprising that the interviews conducted by the former investigator lasted from 1.2 to 2.5 hours while the latter's spanned from 2 to 4 hours.

Another consistent difference noted by the investigators was the manner of completing the written surveys. The informants filled out the survey during the two interviews conducted by one investigator while all three surveys were filled out by the other investigator with the assistance of participants during her sessions. On reflecting how they presented the surveys to participants, the researchers were unable to identify what factors influenced the decision on the part of the informants to either fill out the survey themselves or collaborate with the interviewer. Positive and negative aspects are present in both outcomes. For example, in one case when the informant filled out the survey by herself, she gave information that conflicted with what she had reported in the interview. This could be due to greater perceived safety in divulging the information privately on the survey rather than verbally during the interview. On the other hand, it could have been a mistake on the part of the informant when filling out the survey but

because it was done without the knowledge of the investigator, it could not be clarified or corrected.

#### Reliability and Validity

The investigators addressed reliability, or the assurance that the interview and survey reflect the characteristics of the sample, by basing questions and probes on factors drawn from the literature review, and modifying the language and adding questions as suggested by the panel of experts. During the interview, the investigators' skills in listening, planning in advance, watching for nonverbal cues, and asking pertinent and clarifying questions influenced reliability.

The pre-coded answers and structured aspect of the interview schedule assisted intra-interviewer reliability by facilitating the investigator to consistently identify similar data segments for coding and classifying data segments into the same categories. This also enhanced the interrater or interanalyst reliability of data.

The researchers evaluated the degree of interrater reliability by listening to the audio tape recordings of each other's interviews, coding the data and then comparing coding with the other investigator. The



investigators found few differences in coding of data. Most cases of coding differences were due to an inability to fully understand the participant's enunciation on recordings. Discrepancies in coding were negotiated by favoring the intuitive judgement of the investigator conducting the interview since she had the advantage of witnessing the gestalt of verbal and nonverbal communication.

Inter-investigator reliability was enhanced by the investigators' role playing the interview with each other prior to data collection; however the different interviewing styles of the investigators, described earlier, had an impact on this aspect of reliability. It is quite likely that the kind of history obtained from a specific informant would vary depending on which of the two investigators was conducting the interview.

Validity, or the assurance that the data collected is truthful and representative of the target population is dependent upon the willingness of the participants to openly and honestly discuss their histories (Leininger, 1985). According to Catanzaro (1988) participants will be more willing to truthfully divulge information during an interview when the investigator has taken specific measures to increase the comfort of

the informant. These measures include the assurance to the participant of confidentiality, the conveyance of acceptance and avoidance of a judgemental attitude, and the provision of a psychologically comfortable environment. Although the investigators took care in providing the above, the degree of truthfulness in the informants answers could only be assumed.

The investigators addressed content validity of the interview guide and written survey by submitting the tools to the panel of experts and making changes according to their recommendations.

#### Data Analysis

As mentioned earlier, the investigators used the probes developed from the review of literature to code the participants' responses. The investigators listened to tapes from all interviews separately and coded them independently. Together the investigators reviewed the coded interview guides, agreed on codes and entered them onto the master grid. When the participant gave a response that was not anticipated, and therefore lacked a predetermined code, new coding was developed and incorporated with the pre-existing probes. All items in the tools were organized according to the conceptual framework.

The investigators developed the master grid by placing all items from the interview guide and written survey on the vertical axis. Participants' identifying numbers were placed on the horizontal axis. Additional details that were deemed important were entered for each participant at the bottom of the grid. The vertical column on the far right was left for inserting frequencies and themes during data analysis.

Specific findings will be described in the following chapter.

### Chapter III

#### FINDINGS

This chapter provides a discussion of the factors associated with entry into prostitution found among the five participants. It begins by defining terms of sexual abuse used in the study. Findings are then presented in order of themes from the conceptual framework. All findings relate to the participants' experiences prior to prostitution. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

##### Definition of Terms

Defining terms of sexual abuse is difficult because there is a lack of common definitions for terms such as rape and molestation. The investigators did not form specific descriptions of these words before the five interviews and in some cases did not clarify a term a participant used. Therefore, it cannot be known exactly what some informants meant when using these terms. For the purposes of this study, the following definitions are given, which are broad enough to include events described by the participants in this study as they are defined by Bass and Davis (1988).

Rape: an aggressive sexual act whose perpetrator may be a family member, a person known by the victim, a spouse, or a stranger.

Molestation: all sexual acts or statements short of sexual intercourse or sodomy, for example, sexual fondling or inappropriate touching.

#### Sample Description

Table 1 provides a summary of sample demographics. The following is a more detailed description of the characteristics.

The participants ranged in age from 21 to 37. Three participants were Caucasian and two African-American. Of the three Caucasians, one described herself as a combination of White, Russian Jew and American Seminole Indian. One of the African-American participants did not indicate her ethnicity on the written survey but stated in the interview that her mother was White and her father Black. Only one of the participants had a steady partner at the time of the interview; this was a man friend who often stayed at her apartment.

All of the women had children, however only one participant's child was living with her. The child of one woman was with the Children's Services Division

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants  
Prior to Entry Into Prostitution (n=5)

<u>Demographic</u> <u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Participants</u>				
	1	2	3	4	5
Age	24	37	20	21	36
Ethnic Group	Cauc	Af-Am	Af-Am	Cauc	Cauc
Current Partner	no	no	no	yes	no
Number of Children	3	5	1	1	2
Last Grade Completed	10	GED	10	GED	6
Liked School	yes	yes	yes	no	UKN
Age Left Home	17	16	8	13	12
Age First Received Money for Sex	20	23	12	15	13
Length in Prostitution	27 mo	6 mo	7 yr	3 yr	20 yr
Time with Agency	8 mo	8 mo	8 mo	10 mo	3 yr

(CSD) in a foster home and she was pregnant with a second at the time of the interview. Two of the participants' children were with other family members, including three who were with their father who had "kidnapped" them and taken them to an unknown location. The fifth woman reported that her two sons were adopted and living with a "nice yuppie family" in a Portland suburb. Her first child, a daughter, had "died as a prostitute" at the age of 12.

None of the participants had completed high school. Of the two who had received General Equivalency Diplomas (GED), one had originally quit school after the ninth grade and the other after the 10th. The woman who attended school through the 6th grade stated she had tried to complete the seventh grade after she was living on the streets working as a prostitute. She had difficulty consistently attending, however, due to frequently being up late at night and the effects of street drugs. Three of the participants had liked school, one disliked it and the fifth could not remember how she had felt about it at the time.

Two of the women left home to get married at ages 16 and 17. Two left home to the custody of CSD; one at age 8 following the death of her mother and the second

after officially reporting sexual abuse by her stepfather. The fifth ran away from home several days before her 13th birthday for the streets of a Midwest City.

Two of the participants first received money for sex after leaving their husbands at the ages of 20 and 23. Two others were in foster care when they first received money or things for sex and were 12 and 15. The fifth had recently turned 13 and was living on her own.

The length of time spent in prostitution ranged from six months to 20 years. The woman who reported six months had spent two discrete periods of time in prostitution, each of which lasted approximately three months. The one reporting 27 months had worked off and on over a four year period. Two, who reported working for three and seven years, had done so off and on while living in foster homes during their teenage years. The fifth had worked almost continuously in prostitution from the age of 13 to 33.

Three of the participants had been with the agency for eight months at the time of the interviews and one for 10 months. The fifth, who had spent three years



with the agency, was currently doing volunteer work there.

Table 2 provides information on additional characteristics; negative childhood sexual experiences, physical abuse and substance abuse. These concepts are discussed more fully in the following section.

### Findings

#### Negative Childhood Sexual Experiences

Experiences. All participants recalled rape and molestation experiences prior to their entry into prostitution. One participant experienced only one incident of molestation, and she was able to push the man, her foster father, away. Others experienced multiple incidences of rape and/or molestation.

Perpetrators were family members, spouses or ex-spouses, father figures, boyfriends, or friends of the family. One woman raped by her husband was married for three years and raped frequently during that time. This participant also reported that a man friend raped her as a teenager when she passed out from excess alcohol. He informed her of the incident later. Another participant related a molestation incident by her stepfather, an attempted rape by several of her brothers' friends, and later rapes by both her husband

Table 2

Characteristics of Participants Prior to Entry  
Into Prostitution

	<u>Participants</u>				
	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Negative Childhood</u>					
<u>Sexual Experiences</u>					
Age of First					
Experience	≤ 1	12	9	9	≤ 3
Sexual Advances					
in Home	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Rape	yes	yes	no	yes	yes
Molestation	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
<u>Physically Abused</u>	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
<u>Substance Abuse</u>					
Substance Abuse					
in Home	yes	yes	no	yes	yes
Age First Tried					
Drugs	13	19	10	12	11
Peer Use of Drugs	yes	no	no	no	yes
Addiction in					
Relation to					
Entry	after	UKN when	none	after	after

and ex-husband. Two participants reported repeated rapes by their fathers. Both subsequently experienced sexual molestation or rape by their stepfathers and stepgrandfather or grandfather as well as other family members and their friends.

One woman said that her father and his friends frequently made sexually suggestive remarks and touched her inappropriately. A participant summarized many of the women's experiences: "If somebody said they loved you, you better make sure that your kids were safe, because that's the only reason why men were with women that had children."

Disclosure. All participants but one had an incident of sexual abuse prior to prostitution that they never disclosed to a parent or authority figure. One participant did not report the rapes by her spouse and ex-spouses because she had no visible injury and was afraid of being abused by the court system. Another told her stepfather that she would report his abuse to her mother, so he gave her money to catch a bus and leave town at age 13. As children, two others were confused or unsure of what had happened with family sexual molestations and did not tell anyone.

All participants but one told family members or mother figures about the sexual abuse but were not believed. Two of these women told their mother or grandmother about abuse by a father or stepfather. One reacted by confronting the participant with her father, the perpetrator, who would not corroborate her story. Her parents decided she was "acting out". Another participant's mother did not believe until the brother asked the mother what his father was doing in another sister's bed. The mother then took both the participant and her sister to the doctor, who helped to confirm that some form of sexual abuse had occurred.

Two participants were punished as children when they attempted to disclose molestations or rape experiences. One was hit by her grandmother when she tried to describe her father's sexual abuses. Another tried to tell a foster mother about the foster father's sexual molestation, but the foster mother aimed a gun at her and told her to get out of the house. Only one participant told her mother about a stepfather's molestation and the mother believed her. But her mother said, "Shh, you're a big girl now, just stay close to your sisters."

Only two participants reported that others were helpful when they disclosed sexual abuse information. In two cases neighbors assisted by either calling the police or giving the child a telephone number to contact CSD. One participant told her sister, who lived in a group home, about abuses by their stepfather and brother. The sister helped arrange for the participant to live with them at the group home.

Control over own body. This theme described experiences in which the participants either could or could not make choices about what happened to them. It is differentiated here from the concept of dissociation.

Two participants felt that they usually retained control over their bodies even though they had experienced several sexual encounters and had many parental physical abuse incidents in which they had no control. Two participants stated that they usually never had control over sexual encounters. Only one participant said that she never felt that she lost control of her body during physically or sexually abusive encounters, and she felt that she deserved abuses that were meant to be punishments from her mother.

Sexual objectification by self and others. All participants but one stated that others saw them or treated them as if they were mainly sexual objects (that is, that they were mostly important for physical or sexual activities) because of their frequent sexual abuse. All four of these women mentioned parental figures who treated them like sexual objects. One informant reported that her mother told her, "If you tease you please, if you start you finish...you're here to please."

Two participants said they perceived themselves as sexual objects. One of these perceived that she was a sexual object after consistently receiving parental messages that she should maintain her physical appearance and please others. The other thought that after her father raped her she was only good for sex. A third participant reported never viewing herself as a sexual object, but also said that she assumed other men who showed any friendliness were interested in her only for sex.

Sex partners other than sexual abuse. Three participants had no sexual experiences with people who were not significant to them or with whom they had not established a relationship. Two of these were married

for three years before entering prostitution. After one divorced her husband she had a man friend who then helped her start prostituting and became her pimp. The third had a steady man friend before entering prostitution and discovered after six months that he was a pimp. He persuaded her then to start prostituting also. Only one participant had no partner or steady relationship before entering prostitution, and only one participant said she had frequent sexual encounters with people she did not know well prior to her entry into prostitution.

How learned about sex. Only one participant reported that her mother talked to her about sex at an early age. Another said that her father brought her books from the doctor's office about sex and menstruation, but he did not discuss it with her. Two participants stated that their boyfriends told them about sexual intercourse at ages 12 and 13, then persuaded them to engage in intercourse with them. Another participant learned about sex and reproduction from her baby-sitter at age 10. One participant recalled attending sex education classes in school; but she did not connect what she learned at school with the sexual abuse she was experiencing at home or with

her subsequent pregnancy. In addition, three of the participants as children saw their mothers having sexual intercourse but did not know what they were witnessing at the time.

#### Family Dysfunction

Who participants lived with. During childhood and prior to entry into prostitution, none of the participants lived with consistent parent figures, all had stepparents and two began living in a succession of foster homes, group homes and juvenile detention centers by age 12. One of these two revealed that she came under the care of the state after her mother was murdered when she was eight years old. The other came under the care of the CSD when she was 11 years old due to several episodes of sexual abuse by men in her family. Three of the participants had lived briefly with relatives. Two lived with grandmothers for approximately three months and the other with an uncle for three weeks.

Two of the women left home when they married at 16 and 17 years of age. Both divorced at age 20 and soon became involved in prostitution. One stated: "I grew up with six dads and three moms and I got married at 17 and left him at 20."



One participant left home and survived on the streets of a city working as a prostitute within several days of her thirteenth birthday. She was able to run away from home by bargaining for bus money with her stepfather in exchange for not telling her mother that he had raped her.

Decision maker at home. Two participants reported that men always made the decisions in their childhood home. This could be any man who was, at least temporarily, serving as the head of house; a father, step-father, grandfather or mother's boyfriend. In contrast, two reported that their mother made all decisions, regardless of men present in the house. The fifth stated that who ever she lived with at any given time, her mother or father, was the adult responsible for making decisions.

One participant reported she was taught as a child to "be seen and not heard," and that she felt her survival was dependent upon obeying this rule. Another reported that her father was very rigid and a "control freak."

Quality of relationships with other family members.

All but one participant recalled unhappy relationships with their families. Reasons included one

participant's belief that she did not get much attention from her parents because she could not be "perfect enough". Another plainly stated that her parents "didn't give a shit about me". One remembered feeling singled out by her mother as a scapegoat, and therefore given harsher treatment than her siblings. She recalled saying to her mother, "You probably resent me because of my father, but I'm not him and I'm not you --I'm my own person."

Two participants described how their mothers were unavailable to them. One, whose mother worked all day and spent many evenings at a local tavern, stated that she often did not see her mother for several days; "she was out doing her own thing and we were supposed to do ours." Another recalled staying home from school on occasion just to clean house with her mother since this was the only time she could be close to her. This mother was described as "mentally not there for us" and the family in general as uncommunicative.

Some women also described relationships with father figures. One had a close relationship to a stepfather and believed he was her biological father until he introduced her as his "'wife's kid'...I was crushed." Another incident involved a stepfather who

was very solicitous to the participant; he called her by a special nickname and bought her treats and gifts. Later, she felt hurt and betrayed when he sexually molested her. Another recounted that the only thing she shared in common with her father "was his incest thing".

One woman recalled how she had felt betrayed by her mother and grandmother who had deserted her, leaving her vulnerable to a perpetrator. Her father, who physically and sexually abused her, wanted the participant to come live with him and persuaded the grandmother to allow it, even though the participant was afraid of him, told the grandmother why and begged her not to make her go. She recalled her grandmother laughing at her and forcing her to go live with her father. She felt deserted by the grandmother who never called to check on her, and her mother who did not contact her, call to ask about her, or provide the participant with her phone number or address.

Out of all family relationships, only two women had trusting relations with a family member. One of these described her relationship with her mother as open and loving until the mother's death when she was eight years old; she was able to talk to her mother about

anything and had also gotten along well with her two half sisters. Another recalled that she could talk to an older brother at any time about any subject.

Parents and own reaction to stress. Parents' reactions to stress were manifested in various ways. This included physical abuse directed at the participant and/or other family members, drinking, leaving the house, yelling, and emotional abuse and neglect.

The most common reaction, experienced by all five women, was physical abuse directed at either the study participant and/or other family members. Three participants were beat by one or both parents with a fist, open hand, electric cord, switch or brass belt buckle. Two were indiscriminately beaten on any part of the body and one on the buttocks and thighs.

Two participants reported physical violence in their homes that would escalate to the point that the police were called, either by the participant after sneaking out of the house, or neighbors. One recalled she had, on several occasions, called the police from the neighbor's house, fearing someone would be killed. She stated she had occasionally spent the night in a motel, with one of her parents, after these fights.

One participant stated there were no open arguments, talking or yelling in the house. This woman stated the worst thing her mother did was "play head games" and become emotionally abusive and neglectful under stress.

The participants reported that they had also reacted to stress in a variety of ways prior to entry into prostitution. Two reported crying and two that they did not react to stress. Other responses included talking to a sibling, "dealing with the problem," writing notes to oneself, yelling, acting out violently at objects or people, inflicting injury upon oneself and night terrors.

Both women who reported not dealing with stress described how they would become more quiet and closed off from their surroundings. One stated, "When things were really bad I'd just go away in my head."

One woman described how she would injure herself out of frustration and as an attempt to produce "visible evidence of the pain." She believed that if she scratched a "big enough hole [in her skin], all the pain could leak out."

Punishment for disobedience. Punishments experienced by participants prior to entry into

prostitution ranged from being lectured to physical abuse. Some participants felt they had been punished at times when they had not disobeyed.

All but one perceived they had been abused on occasion when they were punished. The one who denied being abused related how her mother would have her balance a heavy book on extended arms or on her head while balancing on a staircase or against a wall. This was required for up to 30 minutes. Often, if any visible movement was detected, additional time was required.

Two women stated they had been beaten for disobeying. One described how her mother used a belt to beat her "from head to toe." A foster mother beat the other, causing visible injuries which prompted neighbors to call the police after she had climbed out a bedroom window and gone to their house. Two participants reported they had been spanked with a belt strap, open hand, electric cord or "switch".

Threats of physical violence for disobeying were made to four of the women by parents, foster parents and a man friend of one participant's mother. When one tattled on a sibling, her father informed her that spies were shot in the army; she felt this was a

warning not to inform anyone of the father's incestuous behavior.

Four participants had been punished by being grounded or sent to their rooms. One reported that it always ended sooner than planned; "Mom didn't want us around -we got on her nerves." One woman related that being grounded often involved seclusion in her room for up to one month. She was not allowed to leave her room except to go to school or to the bathroom to either relieve herself or get a glass of water. She was not allowed to talk on the phone, receive guests or listen to the radio; meals were delivered to her door. She reported being punished in this way on several occasions when she had not disobeyed.

Three other women stated they had been punished without disobeying. One was frequently beaten by her father, one was often "hit" and one had occasionally been sent to her room for the evening.

Privacy and safety at home. Four women sought the company of others in order to feel safe when they were children. One, at age 10, had a male friend of the same age who she shared a "special hiding place" with. This is the only time she could recall feeling safe.

Another felt safe only when she was away from her parents, at her grandmother's or at school.

Two women described strategies they employed to deflect sexual abuse by father figures. One kept a baseball bat close which she used to threaten her step father with when she suspected him of contemplating a sexual advance. The other described how she carefully tucked blankets in far under her mattress, making sure the covers were very tight around her, and lined up toys around the edge of her bed in order to make it more difficult for her father to get to her at night. She reported never feeling safe prior to her entry into prostitution; "Even at family picnics my father had his hands on me under the table."

Two participants reported they did not have any privacy at home. Neither had her own bedroom. Another stated she had places to go to be private including her own bedroom.

Only one reported that privacy and safety were not an issue for her prior to prostitution. She felt she had a happy and secure life until the death of her mother, after which she became very angry and "wondered who to destroy next since they were all destroying me."



### Self-Esteem, Labeling and Stigmatization

School and peer influences. Two of the five participants enjoyed school and felt accepted by peers. One of these had been a champion runner and felt this brought her special status in school. She described herself as poor, however, and often hid at lunchtime because she did not have money for food. The second, in describing what her peers thought of her, used adjectives such as, "Nice...a sweet person...fun and kind of crazy."

The other three participants perceived they were regarded negatively by peers. One described herself as unattractive and a "social outcast" due to being a "bookworm in K-Mart clothing". Another said that she was "below the reject pile." The third perceived others thought of her as "ugly...a nerd...disgusting and stupid." Two of these women had difficulty relating to others and the world around them; one stated "I was in a different world" and the other that "I was content just to hang out with myself [since] the world seemed insane to me." All three of these women stated they had trouble making friends; two because of the above perceptions of others opinions and also because they moved frequently. The other stated she

had rarely initiated friendships because she was afraid no one would understand her.

One of the three participants who was unaccepted by peers had enjoyed her studies in school and had performed well. One disliked school and described herself as "slow" and "quiet" and that she "acted stupid" when teachers tried to talk to her.

Trusting relationships and positive regard by others. Only one participant reported having an enduring relationship with a person who was trustworthy and gave them positive regard prior to entry into prostitution. This was an older brother who was mentioned earlier.

Three of the participants could recall only short-term relationships with someone they could talk to. One of these found she could usually talk to teachers or school counselors but could not maintain the relationships because her family frequently moved. Another related she had a special friendship at about 10 years of age which lasted less than a year because she moved away with her family: "He was the only one who acted like he cared about me...he was the best thing, the only thing good in my life."

Another woman recalled that she had a nanny who lived with the family for several years overseas and later was close to an aunt who died at a young age in a motor vehicle accident. This same participant related however, that she had never shared her feelings with anyone in or outside of her family prior to entry into prostitution because she had been taught that expressing feelings was "taboo". Another reflected that, although others probably had made positive comments about her, she was unable to hear them since she did not trust their motives in doing so.

Two of the women related incidents where others had made negative comments directly to them. One remembered she had been puzzled about why prostitution felt "normal" although she knew it was "sick". She later recalled that "it's what my parents always told me I would be. My mother had always told me 'you're gonna be a no good dope fiend like your father' and my father always told me 'you're gonna be a no good two bit alcoholic whore like your mother.'" Another who was part Caucasian and part African-American related how a Caucasian uncle had said to her, "I hate niggers and I hate you!"

Self-concept. Four of the women revealed they had a negative self-concept prior to entry into prostitution. One stated that since she blamed herself for her mother's death she had constantly "downed" herself; "If I hadn't been born my mother wouldn't have had to work in that place [a brothel]." Another stated, "Anything I touched would go bad...I'm a fuck-up!" She believed as a child that she was responsible for her parents' poor marriage, their divorce, her parents' subsequent divorces from her stepparents, and the death of one stepmother. Another revealed, "I didn't care about how I looked so I didn't bathe or change my clothes. I looked bad in school....I felt so low about myself and ugly 'cause I'm half of my dad." She described her father as "crazy" and violent, and because she was his daughter, saw herself as "hard to handle".

The fourth woman stated she lost her personal boundaries and self-esteem as a result of her father's incestual behavior prior to her entry into prostitution. She reflected that there is more stigma with incest than prostitution, but that they have similar meanings -- "power and control".

Happiness and feeling free. Prior to entering prostitution, two participants could not recall ever feeling happy, two stated they had felt happy off and on, and only one could remember being happy for an extended length of time. This last participant recalled that she had always been happy while her mother was alive but felt she did not deserve to be happy after her death. Of the two who were happy off and on, one stated that she was probably never happy for longer than one month at a time and the other that she was often sad and confused as a teenager. One of the women who could not recall ever being happy stated that she could not remember being unhappy either; "everything was a nothingness."

Similarly, two of the participants could not recall ever feeling free, two felt free transiently for brief periods and the fifth had always felt free prior to her mother's death, but afterwards that "everyone was controlling my life and trying to mess it up!" Of the two who never felt free, one stated it was due to "too many games" at home and the other that her life as a child felt like she was "in a prison". The two who had briefly felt free stated this was when one got on a bus

to run away from home, and the other when she first separated from her husband.

### Substance Abuse

Home and school influences and use by self. All participants but one reported substance abuse in their childhood homes including alcohol and prescription drugs. Only two participants reported that peers abused drugs at school.

All participants experimented with drugs between the ages of ten and 19. Three women initially took drugs in part to fit in with others. One of these worked as a carrier who delivered heroin for a dealer and reported that she began using drugs with customers to avoid suspicion that she was a police informant. Another used her mother's diet pills as a child to stay awake at night in order to watch for her father, who frequently molested her.

Addiction. As a condition of the study, none of the participants abused drugs at the time of the interviews. However, all but one had been addicted to various drugs including alcohol, heroin, cocaine, and crack cocaine. Three became addicted after their entry into prostitution. One other participant prostituted

on and off for a time, and it is unclear when her addiction began in relation to entry into prostitution.

Three of the women said they used drugs to "disconnect" or to turn off painful emotions. Reasons given for addiction included "hitting bottom": "I got involved in drugs, right, because, like, well, I just really gave up." Another said, "Dope felt safe....I needed some sanity in an insane world, and it bought me some time. I did the drugs to be safe." Another stated that she used drugs to dissociate while she turned tricks: "You try [having sex with] 20 men all day, you can't do it straight...you just can't disconnect mentally and physically anymore. You need some chemical help."

Three of these women had help from pimps or other "wife-in-laws" (other women working for the same pimp) in obtaining drugs during their addictions. One participant reported that a man working at a convenience store "had a crush on me" and let her take anything from the store including alcohol. Another said that her pimp supplied her with a dose of drugs after each trick while she showered and dressed for the next one. The two would work in this way all day.

Only one participant of the four who had drug addictions said she was careful not to use drugs while turning tricks. She wanted to use her instincts to watch for police and "check out johns" to see if they were safe customers.

#### Cultural Messages and Role Modeling

Family, neighborhood and school influences. All participants but one saw some form of prostitution in their families. One participant described how her mother brought home different men at night, and these men kept them supplied with groceries, a car, and other needs. The participant did not realize that her mother was prostituting at the time. Another participant said of her mother's and aunts' jobs at a local brothel, "We knew what it was, we knew how to do it, but we never knew it was prostitution....You know how most kids play doctor or house, we used to play, like, working at the whore house."

One participant learned at age 12 that her 13 year old sister was prostituting. Another said that prostitution existed in her family in the sense that "if a child cooperated sexually, they would get what they wanted....If [we were] nice to daddy we could get a winter coat." She also reported that women in her



family gave sexual favors to the men in the family in order to gain material needs and security. Another participant reflected on the messages that she received from her parents about becoming a prostitute herself one day:

To be penetrated and abused and pawed like I was by all these strangers, it felt normal for me. And that didn't make sense because this shit was disgusting...[but] this was my lot in life. It's what my parents always told me I would be.

None of the participants saw prostitutes or pimps in their schools among peers, but two saw prostitutes in their neighborhoods or on streets near their childhood homes. Another participant stated that everyone in a juvenile detention center where she was placed had prostituted except herself and one other girl. "I was one of only two virgins." Later she learned more about prostitution and "the fast life" in a group home.

Three of the participants who saw prostitution in their homes or on the streets thought of these women as successful in their work. Most were impressed with the wealth and glamour of these women. One remembered the television portrayal of prostitution as a job with

a "call service, chauffeur, a penthouse, fur coats, the gold and the cadillacs...."

Need or Desire for Money

All participants but one said that they desperately needed money or food and shelter when they began prostituting. Two of these said they had no other job skills or ways of earning money after their marriages failed. One stated, "Nobody really said, 'Hey come try this'...I had reached a desperate point financially." Another said she had hungry children, was two months behind in paying rent, had no oil in the furnace, and welfare wanted her to wait 30 days. She felt she had no other choice but to prostitute. "I really didn't want to be out there in the first place." Two other participants had run away at ages 12 and 13 and needed food and shelter. One feared that if she applied for a legitimate job someone would report her to the authorities.

Only one participant was not financially desperate for food and shelter. She lived in a foster home when she began prostituting with the help of her man friend/pimp. However, she said that she still needed money to buy her own clothes and shoes, and she had to wear her things until they were so shabby they were

almost useless.

None of the five knew how much to charge for their first trick, so they either relied on the pimp or the customer to set the amount. All five participants initially used money earned from prostitution to buy essentials for survival. Two of these gave 100% of their earnings to their pimps, who bought essentials for them.

Three participants learned from a male acquaintance or their man friends that sexual activities could earn them money. These men introduced them to prostitution and eventually became their pimps. One of these participants had also learned from her mother (who prostituted) that money earned in prostitution could buy things they needed. This participant also reported that at age 13 a man offered her a ride home in his car and money in exchange for a sexual act, and she agreed. Another woman stated that sexual activities in return for clothes or simply needing to get along with her father had already occurred in her home for many years, so she was familiar with how to do the same thing on the streets. Only one participant said no one introduced her to prostitution; she knew she could get money for sexual acts because she saw other women on

the street doing it, and she simply went to join them.

#### Excitement and Adventure

All five participants reported that no one had told them that prostituting would be exciting or adventurous. Three of the women also said that the excitement or adventure of prostitution was not their reason for entry. Two other participants stated that prostitution held some appeal for them because "the fast life" seemed both dangerous and fun, and the glamour of fancy clothes and wealth looked exciting.

#### Other Motivations

There were no questions in the interview to elicit information regarding this part of the conceptual framework. None of the participants offered that hostility toward a father was a strong motivating factor for their entry into prostitution. Also, no one reported events such as kidnapping or forced entry into prostitution.

#### Summary of Findings

All participants had at least one incidence of sexual abuse involving a father figure before they began prostituting. While all participants attempted to disclose events of sexual abuse to authority or parent figures, they were thwarted in their efforts by

disbelief, punishment, or acknowledgment without protection.

Only one participant stated that she never lost control over her own body during sexual or other physical encounters. The other four either never had control or had control intermittently. All but one perceived that some people treated them as sexual objects, and three of these women consequently learned to see themselves as sexual objects.

Only one participant had no partner or steady relationship before entering prostitution. Others reported marriages or partnered relationships. Only one participant learned about sex and discussed sex with a parent.

Decision makers in childhood homes were evenly split between father figures and mothers. That is, in two cases a male person (father, stepfather, grandfather or boyfriend of mother) always made decisions in the participant's household while in two the mother made all decisions regardless of the presence of a man. In one case, the participant's mother made the decisions when she lived with her and the father while she lived with him.

All participants experienced physical abuse which occurred when parents were either stressed and/or for punishment as a result of disobedience. Four experienced grounding as a punishment which ranged from severe isolation for up to one month to seclusion for 10 minutes.

Aside from acting out violently, some parents reacted to stress by drinking and/or leaving the home environment. One recalled that her mother became emotionally abusive under stress and played "head games."

Participants reacted to stress by crying, withdrawing, talking to someone, dealing with the source of stress, or writing notes to herself. Two acted out violently; one against objects or people and the other by self-inflicted injury.

Only one participant reported that privacy and safety were not an issue for her prior to her entry into prostitution while two stated they had no privacy at all. Four participants felt the need to be safe from parents in order to protect themselves from either physical or sexual abuse.

Happiness and a feeling of being free were, for the most part, nonexistent for the participants prior to

their entry into prostitution. Two stated they had been happy on occasion but described being unhappy or in despair most of the time. Two, likewise, felt free for a brief period after separating themselves from abusive and/or unhappy family situations. Two could not recall ever being happy and two could not recall ever feeling free. One participant had felt happy and free for her first eight years of life while her mother was alive but experienced neither afterwards.

All participants suffered a lack of enduring and/or meaningful relationships in and outside of their families. This was likely due to the degree of dysfunction in their families, a lack of personal skills and/or self-confidence, and frequent family moves or transfers between foster parents.

Two of the participants felt their peers at school had positive opinions of them while three perceived they had been regarded negatively. Three had liked school, one reported disliking school and the fifth could not remember how she felt about school.

Four of the women described having poor self-concepts prior to their entry into prostitution. Two related how they had taken the blame for family disruptions and tragedies that had been outside of

their control. Two used disparaging adjectives to illustrate how they felt about themselves prior to involvement in prostitution and one stated she had lost a sense of her personal boundaries and self-esteem.

All participants tried illicit drugs between the ages of 10 and 19, and four became addicted to various drugs in order to dissociate from painful events in their lives. Three of these four became addicted after they began prostituting.

All participants but one described some type of prostitution in their families, and two of the women also saw prostitution on streets near their childhood homes. Three participants thought of the prostitutes they saw as successful in their work.

All participants said they were either too young to be employed or did not have any job skills when they began prostituting. All but one were in immediate need for money for survival purposes when they started prostituting. Only two participants stated that they thought of prostitution as exciting and adventurous before they began prostituting.

Discussion of findings follows in the next chapter. It includes comparison of findings of the current study with the conceptual framework and review of literature.



## Chapter IV

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The investigators found strong support for the conceptual framework in the study. Within each subsection of this chapter, the findings are first discussed by examining their consistency with the conceptual framework and then compared in more depth with the review of literature.

#### Negative Childhood Sexual Experiences

Findings from this study supported this concept, which involves childhood sexual experiences that result in patterns of vulnerability, revictimization, and continuation of a cycle of poor self-esteem, shame, and family alienation. All participants in the present study had at least one incidence of sexual abuse by a father figure before they began prostituting, and all but one subsequently experienced additional incidences of sexual abuse prior to their entries into prostitution. Russell (1986) also concluded that early experiences of incest had the effect of damaging one's self-image and making them more vulnerable to later revictimization. Participants in the present study often were met with disbelief, punishment, or

acknowledgment without protection when they attempted to disclose to a parental figure, a finding supported by Silbert and Pines (1981, 1983). Finkelhor and Browne (1985) proposed that betrayal by a trusted authority is part of a framework including traumatic sexualization, powerlessness, and stigmatization. This model is consistent with the thoughts of one participant from the present study who, when entering prostitution, thought that there would be more stigma with incest than with prostitution. She reasoned, "It's better to be raped by a stranger than your own father."

The finding from this study that all participants but one either perceived they never had control or perceived they had only intermittent control over their bodies was supported by other researchers (Boyer, 1988; Deisher et al., 1982; James & Meyerding, 1977). The lack of control and the inability to process earlier violations may contribute to what Silbert and Pines (1981, 1983) termed "psychological paralysis" in which the victims of earlier abuses have not been able to process these events and are thus unable to organize their reactions to present abuses. This contributes to a cycle of revictimization in which victims of earlier

violations are willing to endure relationships with abusive customers and pimps.

All participants but one reported that others treated them as if they were sexual objects and three eventually learned to see themselves this way. This perception contributes to the poor self-esteem that other researchers have identified in prostitutes (Silbert and Pines, 1981, 1983; Brown, 1979; Deisher et al., 1982; Boyer, 1988; James & Meyerding, 1977).

#### Family Dysfunction

The findings from this section of the interview are, for the most part, consistent with the conceptual framework. All participants had experienced physical abuse and some neglect. Two, who experienced father-daughter incest, came from patriarchal family systems in which men dominated and women were devalued. Finally, all participants had been separated either physically or emotionally from their mothers and fathers at an early age.

As stated above, all participants experienced physical abuse. Although one participant denied ever being physically abused by her mother, the investigators believe the treatment she received as punishment from her mother would qualify as physical

abuse. This opinion is based on the story about balancing a heavy book on outstretched arms while balancing between two different steps of a staircase. This participant experienced more overt types of physical abuse in foster homes as did the other four in their family of origin. Abuse occurred as a result of disobedience or when parents were stressed, and involved being "beat from head to toe", with a fist, open hand, electric cord, switch or brass buckle. Physical abuse was cited in the literature review as a factor associated with alienation from family in the backgrounds of women involved in prostitution (James, 1976; James & Meyerding, 1977; MacVicar & Dillon, 1980; Silbert & Pines, 1981).

Emotional abuse and neglect were other factors associated with alienation from families in the literature (James, 1976; MacVicar & Dillon, 1980). In the current study, the investigators found the combination of physical and emotional abuse and neglect experienced by four of the women left them with a feeling of being unloved by their parents and caretakers. This was described in phrases such as "my parents didn't give a shit about me," and "my mother was mentally not there for us." Another attributed the

lack of parental attention she received to "not being perfect enough." One participant stated her mother became emotionally abusive when stressed and the strict seclusion for up to 30 days described by another may be interpreted as an emotionally abusive and neglectful tactic.

In the current study, the parents of all participants had separated or divorced. In one instance, the participant had never met her father and another did not know her father until she was 12 years old. Two participants indicated that their parents divorced by the time they were three years old, two had a succession of stepparents and one participant's parents divorced when she was approximately nine years old. The investigators postulate that in this population, the lack of parental contact due to separation or divorce of parents along with emotional separation or neglect caused alienation from parents, a finding supported by Gray (1973).

It is interesting that the two participants who experienced overt father-daughter incest described family systems that resemble the model proposed by Newton-Ruddy and Handelsman (1986), even though the interview did not specifically ask for that type of

information. In both cases, mothers were afraid of displeasing their husbands who made all decisions. When the fathers were not part of the household (due to separation or divorce), another man, either a man friend, stepfather or grandfather, took over the role of decision maker. These two participants also described their mothers as physically and emotionally unavailable to them but they were not the only two who described that type of relationship with their mothers.

It is also noteworthy that these two women experienced betrayal by their caretakers similar to what was described by Herman and Herschman (1977); that is, a feeling of being unprotected by their mothers. One mother and grandmother did not believe the participant's claim that her father was sexually abusing her on a regular basis; in fact, the grandmother hit the participant when told, and the mother started working evening shift soon after, making the daughter more vulnerable to her father. The other participant described how her grandmother laughed about her fears of her father, and forced her to go live with him. During the time she was living with her father, the participant never heard from her grandmother or her

mother and was not given her mother's phone number or address.

Four of the participants experienced betrayal as described by Finkelhor and Browne (1985); the two participants discussed above experienced betrayal by mothers, grandmothers and their fathers, another when her family refused to believe that her husband sexually and physically abused her, and the fourth when a trusted stepfather sexually molested her. The fifth experienced a similar type of betrayal when a foster father attempted to sexually molest her and the foster mother, when told by the participant, called her a liar, pointed a gun at her and told her to get out. A difference in her experience from the other women is that she stated she did not trust anyone at this time in her life, although she did seem to express some degree of trust when she disclosed the incident to her foster mother.

One participant stands out from the others in this section on family dysfunction. She reported always getting along with her mother and described a trusting relationship in which she could talk with her at any time. She also did not recall her mother ever reacting to stress and denied being physically abused. In

addition, safety was not an issue for her while living with her mother and after her mother's death when she was in foster care where, instead of being concerned about her own safety she wondered "who to destroy next since they were all destroying me." The investigators postulate that after the traumatic loss of her mother who was murdered, the participant idealized her. Also, she may not have experienced betrayal by the mother since she was separated from her at an early age.

#### Self-Esteem, Labeling and Stigmatization

The conceptual framework identifies labeling and stigmatization as a process whereby women involved in prostitution start, at a young age, to identify themselves as bad people. Others then identify her as a bad person and reject her. Seeking acceptance elsewhere, she becomes a member of a group of people who engage in activities labeled deviant by the rest of society; for example, prostitution and drug abuse. Society then confirms her deviant status and labels her as a known prostitute. Finally, this group often has low education levels and is considered to be more vulnerable to pimps.

The investigators of the current study approached this category through the questionnaire and survey by



asking questions about how the participants had been accepted at school by their peers, their ability to make friends, exposure to girls involved in prostitution, if they liked school and the last grade they completed. The participants' stories, elicited by these questions, drew a picture that resembled the conceptual framework in some respects, which will be illustrated.

No questions were included on the questionnaire to elicit information on the participants' self-concept prior to entry into prostitution. However, consistent with the conceptual framework, four of the women offered information that revealed they had a poor self-image prior to entry into prostitution.

One woman stated that she constantly "downed myself" because she blamed herself for her mother's death; "If I hadn't been born my mother wouldn't have had to work in that place" (a brothel). Another stated "Anything I touched would go bad...I'm a fuck-up!" She believed as a child that she was responsible for her parents' poor marriages and divorces, and the death of one stepmother. A third revealed, "I didn't care about how I looked so I didn't bathe or change my clothes. I looked bad in school....I felt so low about myself and

ugly." The fourth woman conveyed an objective observation about the effects of her father's incestuous behavior on her self-concept prior to her entry into prostitution.

Two of the women with a poor self-concept fit the model depicted in the conceptual framework and by several authors in the review of literature (Boyer, 1988; Deisher et al., 1982; Finkelhor & Browne, 1985; James, 1976; James & Meyerdling, 1977; Silbert & Pines, 1981, 1983). This is the self-identification as a "bad girl" that results from early negative sexual experiences. However, the other two participants may have developed the self-concept of a "bad girl" due to factors other than negative sexual experiences; one, because of repeated messages by her parents that she would develop into a "no good dope fiend" like her father and a "two-bit alcoholic whore" like her mother, and the second from blaming herself for her mother's death.

The objective viewpoint of the fourth woman, expressed during the interview, could be explained by several factors. She had more time to reflect on the meaning of her negative life experiences prior to entry into prostitution; in this case father-daughter incest.

She was at least 14 years older than the other three who recalled a poor self concept, and had spent three years with the agency with the benefit of that many years of counseling with a casemanager. The other three had spent just eight to 10 months with the agency.

As mentioned in the findings section, two of the participants believed their peers regarded them positively and stated they were able to make friends without difficulty. Three believed they were regarded negatively by peers and had difficulty making friends.

The two participants who experienced overt sexual abuse by their fathers described their relations with peers and their own self-concepts in a way similar to that described in the literature about stigmatization by others as a result of negative sexual experiences (Boyer, 1988; Brown, 1979; Deisher et al., 1982; Finkelhor & Browne, 1985; Gray, 1973; James, 1976; James & Meyerding, 1977; Silbert & Pines, 1981, 1983). One stated, "I felt so low about myself" and about her peers' opinion of her: "ugly...a nerd...disgusting and stupid." The other stated she had been "below the reject pile." She was able to make friends with a group of people who experimented with street drugs and

who she thought, in retrospect, survived on the streets as prostitutes. This fits the notion, suggested by several authors, that the stigmatized girl finds a secure and comforting niche associating with other social outcasts (Boyer, 1988; Deisher et al., 1982; James, 1976; James and Meyerding, 1977). The third participant who believed others saw her negatively and had difficulty making friends was told by her parents that she was a "bad girl".

Three of the women had enjoyed school, one disliked school and the other could not recall how she had felt about it. The three women who enjoyed school had success in friendship and/or their studies. However, all five participants had dropped out of school by the end of the 10th grade, a finding consistent with that of Gray (1973).

#### Substance Abuse

Findings from this study support this concept in that prostitution and substance abuse are often found together. Three of the women in the present study became dependent on drugs after their entry into prostitution; but only one said she needed drugs in order to "disconnect mentally and physically" while turning tricks.

Other investigators who found that drug abuse occurred after entry into prostitution stated that these women may need to abuse drugs in order to numb the pain of prostitution (Boyer, 1988; Deisher et al., 1982; Wynter et al., 1988). A participant of the present study explained her use of drugs this way: "I did drugs because I needed to be safe, because I needed some sanity....I wasn't out there turning tricks for my dope, I turned tricks to live. I did the dope to keep sane." It is not known whether the three women who became dependent on drugs after their entries into prostitution had to use drugs in order to survive prostitution or whether many areas of their lives were painful. None of the participants in the present study reported entering prostitution in order to financially support their addictions as MacVicar and Dillon (1980) found.

Silbert et al. (1982) found that drug abuse and prostitution are commonly found together and do not signify causation but are signs of one's move into deviance as a result of a sense of "hopelessness, helplessness, negative self-concept and psychological paralysis" (p. 197). It is difficult to conclude from this study that either substance abuse caused a

participant to enter prostitution or that prostitution caused one to abuse drugs. It is more accurate from this small study to say, as Silbert et al. did, that the two are often found together.

#### Cultural Messages and Role Modeling

Findings from the study are supportive of this concept, which associates some women's motivations for entering prostitution with influences from their environments and daily lives (Boyer, 1988; Gray, 1973; James, 1976; Wynter, 1988). All participants saw prostitution in either their homes, neighborhoods, or streets near their childhood homes. Three thought of these women as successful.

#### Need or Desire for Money

The present sample was consistent with this factor in that survival needs inspired the women to obtain money, shelter, or food immediately. The participants do not, however, fit the description of women who found that legitimate jobs were too boring, low-paying, and unglamorous (Gray, 1973; Baizerman, 1979). All participants in the study but one said they desperately needed money or food and shelter when they began prostituting, a finding substantiated by Deisher et al. (1982) and Silbert and Pines (1981, 1983).

### Excitement and Adventure

The participants studied were generally not consistent with this factor as a strong motivation for entering prostitution. Only two of the women stated that the danger and fun as well as the glamour of fancy clothes and wealth were part of their reasons for entering prostitution. Other themes within this factor included easy access to drugs, a variety of interesting companions, and the boredom of a conventional lifestyle. However, none of the participants of this study mentioned any of these themes as part of their decision to enter prostitution.

### Summary of Discussion

Findings from this study were generally consistent with the conceptual framework. Most themes from every concept applied to the present sample except for the categories of Excitement and Adventure, and Other Motivations.

All participants in this study experienced childhood sexual abuse that included rapes and molestations by family members and others. Also consistent with the conceptual framework was each of the participant's experiences of revictimization.

The findings from the dysfunctional family section are, for the most part, consistent with the conceptual framework. All participants had experienced physical abuse and some neglect. Two, who experienced father-daughter incest, came from patriarchal family systems in which men dominated and women were devalued. Finally, all participants had been separated either physically or emotionally from their mothers and fathers at an early age.

The findings derived from questions about self-esteem, stigmatization and labeling follow the conceptual framework in most areas. Consistent with the framework, four of the participants had a negative self concept prior to entry into prostitution. These four also then associated with deviants, but it is not clear if this was due to being rejected by mainstream peers or from exposure in group and foster homes. All five participants dropped out of school by the end of the 10th grade.

Substance abuse as a motivating factor for entering prostitution was consistent with the conceptual framework in that prostitution and drug abuse were found together in four out of five cases. It cannot be determined from this study whether drug abuse prior to



entry, concurrent with entry, or after entry was associated with motivation to begin prostituting.

Cultural messages and role modeling were found in all participants lives, in agreement with the conceptual framework for this factor. All participants knew of prostitutes either in their families, neighborhoods, or streets near their childhood homes.

Factors found in all participants but one also were consistent with the conceptual framework in their need or desire for money. Four started prostituting because they were financially desperate and saw no other options for survival. None entered prostitution because legitimate jobs were too boring or low-paying.

Only two participants said that part of their motivation for entering prostitution was because it sounded exciting and adventurous to them. None said they entered prostitution only because of boredom with a conventional life; indeed, none had a conventional life.

## Chapter V

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This descriptive and retrospective study was done to investigate factors in women's lives that are associated with their subsequent entry into prostitution. The investigators created an interview tool with pre-coded probes and a short written survey. These were developed around seven major factors found in the literature. The seven factors include negative childhood sexual experiences; dysfunctional families; self-esteem, labeling, and stigmatization; substance abuse; cultural messages and role modeling; need or desire for money; and excitement and adventure. Two experts in the field and one former prostitute helped to create the tools in order to assess five female former prostitutes.

This convenience sample of five former prostitutes was from an agency in Portland, Oregon, which assists women to make the transition out of prostitution. The participation of the informants was by voluntary response to the investigators' attendance at a regularly scheduled agency meeting.

The data were organized by the conceptual framework factors to determine which factors were associated with entry into prostitution and the frequency with which these occurred. All five participants experienced some form of sexual abuse by father figures and others before they began to prostitute. All were raised in dysfunctional families. Four described some type of prostitution modeled in their families, four were in desperate need of money for survival needs when they began prostituting, and four became dependent on an illicit drug. Four had negative self-images prior to prostitution, and only two said that prostitution appealed to them because of the excitement and adventure of "the fast life".

The investigators found support for each of the factors in the conceptual framework except for the factor that discussed excitement and adventure as reasons for entering prostitution. Also, no support was found for the factor with miscellaneous themes in it, including hostility toward a father figure and forced entry into prostitution.

#### Limitations

Several limitations to this study have been identified. The first is the investigators' bias that

prostitution is not a viable career option for any woman due to the physical and mental consequences, nor is it glamorous as it is occasionally portrayed in the media. This bias may have limited the objectivity of the researchers.

Another is the limitation of information available in the literature, which affects the scope of the conceptual framework and consequently the scope of information sought on the questionnaire and written survey. It is highly possible that the participants had life experiences, apart from those addressed in the interviews, that had an influence on them becoming involved in prostitution. Along this same line, findings were analyzed with the conceptual framework in mind and so the composite picture of the factors associated with entry into prostitution in this study may or may not be an accurate reflection of reality for this sample.

Some other limitations are the size and manner of choosing the sample. The first is a self-selected, non-random, convenience sample. Next, was the difference between the study sample and women who have not made a decision to make a transition out of prostitution. The last limitation is the unknown

degree of recall error due to the retrospective nature of the study as well as the biasing influence of the agency's philosophy on the participants' perception of their past histories. Due to these limitations, including the small sample size, the findings can not be assumed to be representative of all women involved in the agency, let alone all women involved in prostitution.

Other limitations have to do with development of the tools and interviews. The investigators realized during analysis of the findings that some terms used to define past sexual experience had overlapping meanings; for example, incest and sexual molestation by a relative. If this had been anticipated, clearer definitions could have been formulated prior to the interviews and some confusion avoided. As it turned out, this had a minimal if any effect on the findings.

The last limitation is the difference in interview styles noted when the investigators reviewed each others' tape recorded interviews. One researcher consistently redirected participants, who wandered off from specifically answering a question, back to the interview schedule while the other allowed informants to tell their story and asked questions to assist them

in further exploring the history being related.

#### Nursing Implications

Nurses are in a unique position to come into contact with women and children involved in prostitution and may, in fact, be their only link to the "straight" world. Further, prostitutes have often had negative health care experiences in their pasts and have learned to be suspicious of authority figures (Deisher et al., 1982). Thus nurses need to better understand the lives of women involved in prostitution and the associated factors that may have influenced their entries into prostitution. Creating a trusting relationship with a woman involved in prostitution may provide her with a contrasting positive health care experience.

Some of the participants of this study offered suggestions for nurses and other health care providers in giving women who are currently or were formerly involved in prostitution sensitive and quality health care. One woman told health care workers at a clinic that she had been involved in prostitution, but she later regretted this disclosure:

I felt like I was a disgusting person because they got these yellow labels on everything. 'Hazardous,

don't touch'....It made me feel like I was a piece of pollution or something...a radioactive waste or something that if you touch...you'll die or something. That's what it feels like.

Another participant recalled that after she told a nurse she was involved in prostitution the nurse put on gloves to touch her. She felt offended and thought that the nurse should have explained why she was wearing gloves. This woman also felt insulted that she was offered an HIV test. Reflecting about this she thought she may have accepted it if the nurse had explained to her that the test was in her best interest, not simply for others' information.

The nurse may not want to encourage or force disclosure if she suspects that the client is involved in prostitution. It may be better for the woman to disclose when she feels enough trust has been established.

One participant stated that women involved in prostitution on the street are not aware of agencies that provide them with safety while they try to change lifestyles. She suggested that health care providers offer these referrals.

Another woman advised health care workers not to be suspicious of women in prostitution who are in pain:

It's easier to get drugs from a neighbor or someone on the street--don't think we come to a doctor to get drugs....We're just people; we've come to get help....We have to be pretty damn sick to go to a doctor. We don't live in our bodies, and for us to feel pain, there's got to be a lot. We're so shut down--we've been through some real shit. So for us to feel pain, it's got to be really something.

This woman also asked that health workers ask permission before touching them, especially during a pelvic exam. When nurses and doctors touched her without asking, she said it felt "just like a trick".

Almost all participants requested that health care professionals treat them "like normal people". One woman said, "I've done some things wrong, but I'm still a human."

Health consequences of prostitution that were previously mentioned in this study include: poor nutrition, sexually transmitted diseases, sterility, pelvic inflammatory disease, anal reconstructive surgery, AIDS, hepatitis and other illnesses and injuries of violence (Boyer, 1988). Mental and



emotional consequences have also been reported: depression, suicide, guilt, hostility, poor self-image, anxiety, sexual dysfunction, and alienation from family (Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, 1987).

The nurse will need to discuss health risks with the client as possible problems and decide with her which ones to address, how, and when. Since the client may have experienced a loss of control over her body in physical and sexual encounters before, it is important for the nurse to help her regain control and make her own health decisions after she has the necessary information. The woman may be afraid of a pelvic exam or of being examined in other ways, and it is better to let her decide when she is ready for her exams rather than cause her to become fearful of returning for any visits at all.

In addition, it is important for nurses to be aware that risk factors such as sexual abuse, family dysfunction, and others may increase vulnerability for entering prostitution. Clients are often ashamed about family dysfunction or sexual experiences that were negative or confusing and rarely volunteer such information. Thus it is important to ask clients sensitive questions that may elicit this information.

The practitioner may want to design a history form that includes this type of question routinely.

The nurse should never insist on change but can help a client who is prostituting to explore what feels safest and best for her. Referrals that are specifically designed for women involved in prostitution and that the practitioner has investigated may be appropriate for some clients.

#### Research Implications

Further research needs to be conducted on the associations between prostitution and factors such as childhood sexual abuse, family dysfunction, the need for money to survive, and others that may or may not be mentioned in this study. The most helpful type of study may be one involving women who are still in prostitution. Such informants would be better able to recall their life events without the bias of a social service agency or others who are aiding them to recover from prostitution.

It is also possible that misinformation or low levels of sex education and knowledge about sexual abuse may be related to entry into prostitution. One participant stated that women involved in prostitution know very little about their own bodies, especially

those who left home as children or young adolescents. Two of the participants in this study learned about sex from their man friends just before having intercourse. These men eventually became their pimps. If the women had learned about sex education in an environment such as school, would this have effected their decision to enter prostitution? What levels of sex education and sexual abuse knowledge do females involved in prostitution have, and is this related to their entry into prostitution?

Investigation about nurses' and other health care providers' attitudes toward women in prostitution may also be useful. What are health care providers' attitudes and assumptions about women involved in prostitution, and how does this effect the care they give? This type of study may be most interesting in an immediate care or emergency room setting, since this is where many women involved in prostitution regularly receive health care. It is hoped that the outcome of further studies in this area would improve the quality of health care for this population.

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF  
EMILY COYNE AND MARCIA DE VOIR

Title: Factors Associated With Entry  
Into Female Prostitution

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

Mary Ann Curry, D.N.Sc., Thesis Advisor

This descriptive and retrospective study was done to investigate factors in women's lives that are associated with their subsequent entry into prostitution. The investigators created an interview tool with pre-coded probes and a short written survey. These were developed around seven major factors found in the literature. The seven factors include negative childhood sexual experiences; dysfunctional families; self-esteem, labeling, and stigmatization; substance abuse; cultural messages and role modeling; need or desire for money; and excitement and adventure. Two experts in the field and one former prostitute helped to create the tools in order to assess five female former prostitutes.

This convenience sample of five former prostitutes were from an agency in Portland, Oregon, which assists women to make the transition out of prostitution. The participation of the informants was by voluntary



response to the investigators' attendance at a regularly scheduled agency meeting.

The data were organized by the conceptual framework factors to determine which factors were associated with entry into prostitution and the frequency with which these occurred. All five participants experienced some form of sexual abuse by father figures and others before they began to prostitute. All were raised in dysfunctional families. Four described some type of prostitution modeled in their families, four were in desperate need of money for survival needs when they began prostituting, and four became dependent on an illicit drug. Four had negative self-images prior to prostitution, and only two said that prostitution appealed to them because of the excitement and adventure of "the fast life".

Limitations to the study included convenience sampling, the theoretical bias the agency may have had on the views of the informants' experiences, and the retrospective nature of the design in biasing informants' memories. Nursing implications include giving quality health care that restores the woman's control over her body. Health risks associated with prostitution need to be fully described to the client

and investigated with her permission. It is hoped that this study will help health workers to better understand the lives of women who are involved in prostitution, and to assist them in whatever ways the clients determine acceptable.

Future research is indicated with larger samples of women still involved in prostitution. Relationships between factors such as those studied here and possibly others need more clear definition.

Appendix A  
Flyer to Recruit Volunteers

MARCIA DE VOIR & EMILY COYNE ARE DOING A STUDY  
& NEED YOUR HELP  
WE WANT TO FIND OUT WHAT LEADS A WOMAN INTO BEING  
INVOLVED WITH PROSTITUTION

WE ARE NURSING STUDENTS FROM OREGON HEALTH SCIENCES  
UNIVERSITY AND ARE DOING A RESEARCH STUDY ON WHAT  
LEADS A WOMAN TO BECOME INVOLVED WITH PROSTITUTION.  
WE AS NURSES THINK YOU COULD HELP US UNDERSTAND  
THESE QUESTIONS

WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO PARTICIPATE WITH US IN THIS  
RESEARCH STUDY BY ANSWERING QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT YOUR  
LIFE HAS BEEN LIKE.

NO NAMES WILL BE USED!! WE WILL PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY!!

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO HELP US, PLEASE TALK TO US AFTER  
THIS MEETING OR CALL:

EMILY AT \_\_\_\_\_ OR MARCIA AT \_\_\_\_\_

(IF YOU GET AN ANSWERING MACHINE, YOU CAN SAY YOU ARE  
CALLING ABOUT THE STUDY AND THEN LEAVE YOUR NUMBER AND  
WHEN WE CAN REACH YOU. PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE YOUR NAME.)

THANKS!!

Appendix B  
Formal Consent From the Executive Director  
to Enlist Participants  
From the Agency

July 18, 1989

Emily Coyne  
Marcia De Voir  
Oregon Health Sciences University  
Portland, Oregon

Dear Ms. Coyne and Ms. De Voir,

On behalf of the [agency], I am delighted to extend our support of your research, which, when completed, will document the preconditions which make women vulnerable to being recruited into female sexual slavery. Your research has the possibility of making a real difference in the lives of survivors of prostitution.

I am well aware that, tragically, there is a paucity of research and I welcome and support your research methods and design. Our own statistics are chilling. Each year [agency] is able to provide services to 75 survivors of prostitution; 55% were victims of incest and child abuse, 77% were rape victims, 86% were assault victims, 63% were compelled into prostitution, 73% have not graduated from high school, 62% are pregnant or mothers of young children and 84% are homeless women. At any one time, our waiting list consists of 300 women who desperately need and deserve alternatives to prostitution. The current welfare system has failed to offer them substantive services and continues to perpetuate the myth that prostitution is a job which women freely choose and freely leave.

I will ask our Case Managers to cooperate with your research project allowing you time to present your interview requests at the support groups for survivors of prostitution. Again, the [agency] strongly supports your proposed research project and will cooperate in every way we can to ensure your successes in culminating the research project. Good luck, and thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our unconditional support of your proposal.

Sincerely yours,

Appendix C  
Consent Form

9/8/89

OREGON HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY  
Consent Form

TITLE: Factors Associated with Entry Into Female Prostitution

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: Emily Coyne (\_\_\_\_\_)  
Marcia de Voir (\_\_\_\_\_)

PURPOSE: The purpose of this research study is to determine factors that are commonly associated with entry into prostitution. The intent is to assist nurses and others working with women involved in prostitution to provide compassionate and relevant health care.

One of us (Emily Coyne or Marcia de Voir) will interview you for approximately one hour. After interviewing eight to ten women, we will hold a meeting for clients of \_\_\_\_\_ who attend on a voluntary basis. At this meeting, we will ask the women in attendance to evaluate the conclusions we draw from comparing the information we obtained from all of the interviews. Every effort will be made to protect your privacy at this meeting; names of participants will not be revealed. This last meeting should take about one hour. The interview and open meeting should take place within a two month period.

PROCEDURES: The study will involve interviewing women who have previously been involved in prostitution, and a short survey. To help us accurately interpret the information you give, the interview will be taped with your permission. You will be asked at the beginning of the tape to say that you permit the interview to be taped. The tapes will be kept in a locked container that is accessible only to us (Emily Coyne and Marcia de Voir) until they are transcribed by one of us. The tapes will be erased after they are transcribed. The written survey, transcription and tape will be identified only by a random code number that cannot be traced to you. The consent form will also be kept in a locked container, but kept separate from any other information so that nothing can be associated with your name. We encourage you to use any name you wish during the interview and on the consent form.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS: Even though the interviewer will try to make you comfortable, it is possible that talking about this topic may make you anxious. Please let the interviewer know if you need to stop for awhile or want to stop the



9/8/89

interview. If you like, the interviewer can give you counseling referrals at the end of the interview.

BENEFITS: You may find that the interview will help you talk about your experiences. Although you may not personally benefit from participating in this study, you may contribute new information that will benefit women who are or have been involved in prostitution and health care providers who offer health services to them.

Confidentiality: No information concerning your identity will be communicated outside of the interview process as described above. Neither your name nor your identity will be used for publication or publicity purposes. Records may be reviewed by regulating federal agencies, but your identity will be kept strictly confidential. The investigators are required by law to report any instances, or knowledge of child abuse.

COSTS: You will not be responsible for any costs connected with your participation in the study.

LIABILITY: The Oregon Health Sciences University, as an agency of the State, is covered by the State Liability Fund. If you suffer any injury from the research project, compensation would be available to you only if you establish that the injury occurred through the fault of the University, its officers or employees. If you have further questions, please call Dr. Michael Baird at (503) 279-8014.

If you have further questions regarding any aspect of the study, please call Emily Coyne or Marcia de Voir, or our research advisor, Dr. Mary Ann Curry at (503) 279-8382.

By signing this form I understand that:

- 1) Emily Coyne and Marcia de Voir have offered to answer any questions that I may have.
- 2) I may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study without affecting my relationship with Oregon Health Sciences University or current or future health care there.
- 3) Neither my name nor my identity will be used for publication or publicity purposes.

I have read the above and agree to participate in this study.

---

Participant signature/Date

---

Witness signature/Date

Appendix D

Referrals

If this interview has been upsetting to you, and you would like to talk to someone, here is a list of people we think are good to talk to.

Portland Women's Crisis Line: 235-5333. Someone is there to talk to 24 hours a day, everyday. They also have support groups for rape survivors and domestic violence. To find out about the support groups, call the office: 232-9751. All counseling and support groups are free.

YWCA: You can walk into the Women's Resource Center at 1111 SW 10th Monday through Friday 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, or call 223-6281 and ask for the Women's Resource Center. A two hour session of counseling is free. After that, a 1 hour session costs about \$5.00 to \$10.00. They also have an Incest Survivor Group which you can find out about by calling the office.

William Temple House: 226-3021. They provide free counseling there but will have to put you on a waiting list.

IF YOU NEED TO TALK TO SOMEONE RIGHT AWAY, WE RECOMMEND THE PORTLAND WOMEN'S CRISIS LINE AT 235-5333.

Appendix E  
Researcher's Interview Guide

## RESEARCHER'S INTERVIEW GUIDE

Need for money

1. At the time you became involved with prostitution, what other ways of making money did you have?
  - a. no job skills
  - b. had job that didn't earn enough for needs
  - c. too young to get a good job
  - d. turned down for jobs because of health, or other reasons
  - e. just wanted to do it
2. Do you remember how you learned that sex or other physical activities could get you money and/or things? When was that?
  - a. saw relative in prostitution as I was growing up
  - b. saw others around me doing it
  - c. someone \_\_\_\_\_ (who) told me
3. Before you became involved with prostitution, how much money did you think you might receive for each trick?
  - a. a lot of money
  - b. specific amount \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. not money--did it for other things: food, shelter, drugs, or \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. had no idea how much to charge

4. When you became involved in prostitution, what happened to the money you received?
- a. pimp got all of it
  - b. pimp got \_\_\_%
  - c. I saved it
  - d. pimp took all then gave me \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. used it for daily needs (food, rent, clothes)
  - f. bought street drugs with it

Excitement and adventure

5. Before you got involved in prostitution, did anyone ever tell you that prostitution would be an exciting job? Who was that?
- a. girlfriend/partner
  - b. man friend/partner
  - c. pimp
  - d. no one
6. Before you got involved in prostitution, did you think anything about prostitution would be exciting or adventurous?
- a. meeting different people
  - b. doing something illegal
  - c. different kinds of sex
  - d. nothing

Substance abuse

7. Did you become addicted to street drugs, alcohol, or pharmaceuticals? (i.e. did you need them

regularly?) If yes, when did that happen?

- a. before started prostitution
- b. during prostitution entry
- c. after entering prostitution

8. If yes (above), what kind of drug(s) did you become dependent on?

- a. heroin
- b. cocaine
- c. crack cocaine
- d. crank
- e. alcohol
- f. combination of \_\_\_\_\_

---How did you start using drugs or alcohol or pharmaceuticals?

- a. friend introduced them to me
- b. everyone was using them
- c. needed them to cope
- d. used them to fit in with everyone else

9. Did anyone help you get drugs when you needed them?

- a. no, got them myself
- b. pimp
- c. friends

Self-esteem, labeling, and stigmatization

10. When you were in school, were there "in" kids and "out" kids? That is, popular and unpopular groups of kids? (yes, no)

Which group do you think you were in?

- a. "in" kids
  - b. "out" kids
  - c. sometimes both
  - c. no clearly divided groups, or can't say
11. Were you able to make friends with people at school you really wanted to make friends with? (yes no)
12. What do you think other kids in school thought of you at that time?
- a. thought I was dumb, ugly (used negative descriptors) \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. thought I was OK, cute (used positive descriptors) \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. don't know what anyone thought of me
  - d. did not care what they thought of me
13. Were any of the people you hung around with at school involved in prostitution?
- a. other girls were prostituting
  - b. other boys were prostituting
  - c. other boys were pimps
  - d. no one involved

Family dysfunction

14. When you were growing up (before prostitution) who did you share your feelings with?
- a. no one
  - b. one special friend/peer
  - c. other
  - d. family member \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. other
  - f. my group of friends



15. When you were growing up, who made you feel best about yourself, and what kinds of things did they say or do?
- a. no one made me feel good about myself
  - b. my group of friends \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. one special friend/peer \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. family member \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. other person \_\_\_\_\_
16. Who made the decisions in your house when you were growing up?
- a. made all my own decisions
  - b. mother made all decisions
  - c. mother and father/stepfather made decisions together
  - d. father/stepfather/mother's boyfriend made all decisions
  - e. depends on the situation
17. What happened at your house when your parent(s) were feeling a lot of stress or pain about something?
- a. mother or father: physical harm/beating on family member or myself
  - b. mother/father yelled a lot
  - c. mother/father drank or used other substance

d. talked openly about problem

e. left for length of time\_\_\_\_\_

18. Before prostitution, how did you deal with stress or pain?

a. kicked things

b. hit siblings

c. yelled a lot

d. cried

e. fought with parent

f. talked to\_\_\_\_\_

19. Did you get along with your mother (or stepmother or foster mother) when you were growing up?

(yes no) Could you talk to her easily?

a. always could

b. sometimes could talk with her

c. depends on the subject

d. never could talk with her

20. Did you get along with your father (or stepfather or foster father) when you were growing up?

(yes no) Could you talk to him easily?

a. always could

b. sometimes could talk with him

c. depends on the subject

d. never could talk with him

e. no father growing up

21. Did you get along with your sisters and brothers when you were growing up? (yes no)

Which could you talk with most easily?

- |            |                     |
|------------|---------------------|
| a. sister  | b. stepsister       |
| c. brother | d. stepbrother      |
| e. none    | f. I was only child |

22. When you were younger and growing up (before prostitution) did you have a place to go to feel private and safe? (yes no)---If yes, where was that?

- |                      |             |
|----------------------|-------------|
| a. own room in house | b. my house |
| c. other_____        |             |

---If not, what did you do to feel private and safe?

- |                                    |
|------------------------------------|
| a. went to friend's house          |
| b. went to relative's house        |
| c. wasn't safe; ran away from home |
| d. special hiding place            |
| e. other_____                      |

---At what age do you remember feeling safe?

- |                            |
|----------------------------|
| a. specific age given_____ |
| b. many times              |
| c. off and on              |
| d. never                   |

---At what age do you remember feeling happy?

- |                            |
|----------------------------|
| a. specific age given_____ |
|----------------------------|

- b. many times
- c. never
- d. off and on

---At what age do you remember feeling free (free from control of other people)

- a. specific age given \_\_\_\_\_
- b. many times
- c. never
- d. off and on

23. What happened in your house when you disobeyed a parent or other adult?

- a. physical punishment consisting of \_\_\_\_\_
- b. grounded for a length of time (length) \_\_\_\_\_
- c. had to stay in my room for \_\_\_\_\_ (time)
- d. locked in my room or other room for \_\_\_\_\_ (time)
- e. locked out of house for \_\_\_\_\_ (time)

---Were you ever hit or punished in some way when you did not disobey?

- a. often
- b. occasionally
- c. never

Negative childhood sexual experiences

24. When you were growing up, how did you learn about sex? That is, who do you remember talking to you about sex and when?
- a. mother talked to me at age \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. other relative talked to me at age \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. friend/peer told me at age \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. someone (who) \_\_\_\_\_ wanted me to do something sexual (what) \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. partner/lover talked to me at age \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. other person told me (who) \_\_\_\_\_
25. Before entering prostitution did you ever have a steady partner/lover? (yes no)
- If yes, how long did you have this relationship?
- a. days to a few weeks
  - b. weeks to months
  - c. months to one year
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ years
26. Before you became involved with prostitution, did you ever think that anyone saw you as a physical or sexual object--that is, just interested in you for sexual or other physical activities? (yes no)
- a. always
  - b. occasionally
  - c. never

If yes, why?

- a. the way I looked
- b. the way someone treated me (who) \_\_\_\_\_
- c. someone told me (who) \_\_\_\_\_

27. Before being involved in prostitution, did you ever see yourself as a physical or sexual object? That is, that you were sometimes just important for physical or sexual activities?

- a. often
- b. occasionally
- c. never

If yes, why?

- a. it's what women did/were
- b. it was expected of me by \_\_\_\_\_
- c. I was taught by \_\_\_\_\_

28. Before you became involved with prostitution, did you ever have sex with a person you weren't going with? (i.e. someone you had not been seeing?)

If yes, how often?

- a. all the time
- b. occasionally
- c. never

29. Before becoming involved in prostitution, did things ever happen to you/your body without your permission?

- a. I always have had control

- b. sometimes other person had control without my permission
  - c. things often happened without my control or permission
30. Before you became involved in prostitution, did you usually feel that you had a sense of control over sexual encounters?
- a. always had control
  - b. occasionally did not have control
  - c. I never had control
31. Before you were involved prostitution, did you have any uncomfortable or confusing or scary sexual encounters? If yes, what happened, and did you tell anyone?
- a. raped by \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. sexually molested by \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. incest experiences with \_\_\_\_\_

If you told anyone, what did they do?

Appendix F  
Participants' Written Survey



No. \_\_\_\_\_

## PARTICIPANT'S WRITTEN SURVEY

1. Age now \_\_\_\_\_; Ethnic group (opt.) \_\_\_\_\_
2. Relationship/partner (are you involved with someone now?) \_\_\_\_\_
3. Do you have children? (circle one) yes no  
How many? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Where are they and who are they living with? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Grade last finished at school \_\_\_\_\_
6. Did you like school? (circle one) yes no
7. Did you spend your first 16 years with one or both of your biological parents? (circle one or add)  
one both neither \_\_\_\_\_
8. Did you spend more than one month living with any other relatives? (circle) yes no ; Who and for how long? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Did you spend more than one month living with people who were not your relatives (e.g. foster home or other)? (circle) yes no ; Who and for how long? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. At what age did you leave home to live without parents or other guardians? \_\_\_\_\_

11. Was there physical violence in your home? (circle or add) yes no \_\_\_\_\_  
Were there threats of violence in your home?  
(circle) yes no \_\_\_\_\_ If so, by whom? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Were there unwanted sexual advances in your home?  
(circle or add) yes no \_\_\_\_\_ Who? \_\_\_\_\_
13. In your home was there substance abuse including alcohol or street drugs? (circle or add) yes no  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. Did any of the people you hung around with at school use street drugs or alcohol? (circle or add)  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. Age at which you first tried street drugs \_\_\_\_\_
16. Age when you first had an uncomfortable sexual/physical experience (for example, rape, sexual molesting, or sex with a family member or caretaker) \_\_\_\_\_
17. Did you tell anyone? (circle) yes no  
Who? \_\_\_\_\_  
What did that person do? \_\_\_\_\_
18. Age when you first received money or other things in exchange for a sexual act \_\_\_\_\_

19. Did you see prostitution in your neighborhood or in your family when you were growing up? (circle) yes no ; If yes, in which group (circle or add) family neighborhood\_\_\_\_\_
20. If you did see prostitution in your family or neighborhood, did you think of these women at that time as being successful? (circle) yes no
21. Did you use street drugs when you were involved in prostitution? (circle or add) yes no\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
22. How long were you involved in prostitution?\_\_\_\_\_
23. How long have you been here with this agency?\_\_\_\_\_

Appendix G  
Participants' Interview Guide

## PARTICIPANT'S INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. At the time you became involved with prostitution, what other ways of making money did you have?
2. Do you remember how you learned that sex or other physical activities could get you money and/or things? ---When was that?
3. Before you became involved with prostitution, how much money did you think you might receive for each trick?
4. When you became involved in prostitution, what happened to the money you received?
5. Before you got involved in prostitution, did anyone ever tell you that prostitution is an exciting job? Who was that?
6. Before you got involved in prostitution, did you think anything about prostitution would be exciting or adventurous?
7. Did you become addicted to street drugs, alcohol, or pharmaceuticals? (That is, did you need them regularly?) When was that?
8. If yes, (above) what kind of drug or drugs did you become dependent on? How did you start using drugs?
9. Did anyone help you get drugs or alcohol when you needed them?

10. When you were in school, were there "in" kids and "out" kids? (popular or unpopular groups)  
Which group do you think you were in?
11. Were you able to make friends with people at school that you really wanted to make friends with?
12. What do you think other kids in school thought of you at that time?
13. Were any of the people you hung around with at school involved in prostitution?
14. When you were growing up (before prostitution) who did you share your feelings with?
15. When you were growing up, who made you feel best about yourself, and what kinds of things did they say?
16. Who made the decisions in your house when you were growing up?
17. What happened at your house when your parent(s) were feeling a lot of stress or pain about something?
18. Before prostitution, how did you deal with stress or pain?
19. Did you get along with your mother (or stepmother or foster mother) when you were growing up? Could you talk to her easily?

20. Did you get along with your father (or stepfather or foster father) when you were growing up? Could you talk to him easily?
21. Did you get along with your sisters and brothers when you were growing up, and which of them could you talk with most easily?
22. When you were younger and growing up (before prostitution) did you have a place to go to feel safe and private? If not, what did you do to feel safe? At what age do you remember feeling safe? At what age do you remember feeling happy? At what age do you remember feeling free (free from control of other people)?
23. What happened in your house when you disobeyed a parent or other adult? Were you ever hit or punished in some way when you didn't disobey?
24. When you were younger and growing up, how did you learn about sex? Who do you remember talking to you about sex and when?
25. Before entering prostitution did you ever have a steady partner/lover? If yes, how long did you go with this person or persons?

26. Before you became involved with prostitution did you ever think that anyone saw you as a physical or sexual object--that is, just interested in you for sexual or other physical activities? If yes, why?
27. Before being involved in prostitution, did you ever see yourself as a physical or sexual object--that is, that you were sometimes important just for physical or sexual activities? If yes, why?
28. Before you became involved with prostitution, did you ever have sex with a person you weren't going with--that is, someone you had not been seeing? If yes, how often did that happen?
29. Before becoming involved in prostitution, did things ever happen to you/your body without your permission?
30. Before you became involved in prostitution, did you usually feel that you had a sense of control over sexual encounters?
31. Before you were involved in prostitution, did you have any uncomfortable or confusing or scary sexual or physical encounters?  
If yes, what happened and did you tell anyone?  
What did they do?



